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Understanding University Support for Suicide Bereavement and Bereaved Experiences: A Phenomenological Study

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Understanding University Support for Suicide Bereavement and Bereaved Experiences:
A Phenomenological Study

by

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Brittany M. Lee, Addalee K. Lyon

A research paper presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Marital and Family Therapy
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In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy with a specialization in Art Therapy

May 1, 2024

Committee Page

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Abstract

In recent years, a multitude of literature have discussed the turbulent nature for young adults to navigate the difficulties of suicide bereavement with lack of support. This experience can be further cumbersome when the bereavement is co-occurring within an academic profession, such as attending university. This study explored three participants experience of suicide bereavement support at a university level, utilizing a phenomenological arts-based approach for inquiry. Data analysis revealed eight common themes that reflect the university students' lived experiences of the phenomenon discussed: Acknowledgment of the communicated loss by faculty, provision of academic support, lack/absence of practice, reluctance, emotional response, non-faculty support, recall, omission. The findings within this study highlight the unique nature of arts expression and the use of it as a communicative tool to those experiencing a death loss. Results suggest a reluctance to disclose for fear of a further loss of professionalism within the University setting and the absence of a solidified grievance plan that left individuals feeling further unsupported. Furthermore, individuals spoke to a heightened need for meaning making of the experience to facilitate the bereavement process and a reliance on the self rather than community due to previous fears of disclosure. Our understanding of suicide bereavement would benefit from an inclusion of non-art affiliated participants, a wider sample size and individuals that associate outside of the female identification for a more diverse range of experiences.

Keywords: support networks, university, suicide bereavement, grief, arts based research, phenomenology

Introduction

Study Topic

This study is an arts-based interpretative phenomenological study. The focus of the study sought to understand the lived experiences of college students who have lost someone they had a meaningful relationship with to suicide during their higher education. The research explored how universities respond to bereavement from suicide and what the lived experience of support was for individuals who have experienced this type of loss.

Significance of Study

In reviewing the current literature it became clear that limited data is available on how universities respond to grieving students. This lack of insight appeals to the necessity to pursue research highlighting how universities respond to students who are grieving, with specific attention to suicide bereavement. Suicide grief has been linked to increased internalizations around one's responsibility to the deceased (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020). This includes feelings of self-blame and ideas around one's perceived role in what they should or should not have done to prevent death loss (Neimeyer et al., 2014). This also includes feelings of guilt and shame attached to the stigma of suicide which often increases the already distressing aspects of grief (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020). Thus, grief due to a suicide loss often leaves the bereaved at risk of developing “complicated grief” (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020). Complicated grief is defined by intense experiences individuals have related to a loss that persists beyond 12 months (Beaumont, 2013). Understanding students' lived experience of their universities' response to experiencing the loss of a loved one through suicide, will help future colleges and universities to orchestrate better protocols for the development of meaningful and appropriate responses. Our research questions are as follows: “What are the current practices for responding to grief in the university

setting for students affected by the death of a meaningful relationship as a result of suicide? And, what was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a loss by suicide as seen through their art expression?"

Background of the Study

Prior to beginning this research, it is critical to assess the groundwork and history of suicide bereavement and typical university responses. Although limited information was found connecting the two topics, many observations have been made historically about their independent significance. This study is meant to provide further explorations about university responses to suicide bereavement within the college population of students.

The experience of grief during college often impacts one's personal, social, and academic functioning (McNally, 2021). Grieving varies in intensity among students, however, students' support systems, geography, and academics appear to have significant impacts on students' experiences (Fajgenbaum et al, 2012). Suicide loss has frequently been linked to social stigma causing more complications for individuals within the grieving process (Hall, 2014). For comparison, losses from natural causes appear to be associated with more positive outcomes, specifically feelings of growth and benefit for the bereaved (Neimeyer et al., 2014). It has been noted that students who experience prolonged grief disorder are more likely to have difficulty with concentration and focus, have challenges with motivation, sleep disturbances, social isolation, lower grades, thoughts of suicide, and increased drop-out rates. Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) is characterized by consistent symptoms of grief that impact daily life. In addition, these students are more likely to experience related mental and physical health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and illness (Glickman, 2021).

Research about the integration of art-making and narrative therapy in grief management has shown to meaningfully help externalize grief resulting from the loss of a loved one, whether due to suicide or other causes. (Bat-Or et al. 2019; Nelson et al. 2022).

From a psychological perspective, Neimeyer et al., (2014) propose that the process of narrating the life and loss of the loved one from a plot-oriented beginning, middle, and end, allows the griever to process the deceased's life in a neurophysiological way, within the temporal lobe. By using narrative storytelling as a metaphor for one's loss it can be used to reconstruct new meanings (Beaumont, 2013). These findings are crucial to considering how the artwork created within this study may impact our research questions relating to lived experience and university support when experiencing a suicide loss.

Literature Review

Grief research into young adults, including suicide loss occurring while attending university, has focused on the effects of loss at this age (Tan et al., 2021). Effects of loss can influence personal, social and academic functioning during this period of life (McNally, 2021). Our research question considers how universities respond to loss from suicide while a student is attending or has attended a higher education school. Our timeframe being examined would be experiencing loss within the past 5 years. Personal experiences and visual representations of suicide loss and support felt during that experience were looked at in this research. Support systems, geographic location and academic demands of the individual student can impact their experience of grief (Fajgenbaum et al, 2012). Experiencing the death of a meaningful relationship is a phenomenon that about one in three college students experience (Glickman, 2021). The frequency of grief occurring in a person's life prior and during college is insightful for institutions to adequately respond to and support their needs (Roberts, 2016). The closeness of the relationship of the student and deceased has been looked at to better understand how they communicated academic needs with professors (McNally et. al, 2021). They found that the closer a student was with the deceased, the stronger they advocated for requesting alternative ways to complete a course post death (McNally et. al, 2021).

The experience of grief is a result of a significant loss, often associated with the passing of a loved one. Grief research identified two types of grief, acute grief and complicated or prolonged grief disorder. Acute grief typically begins after a person finds out that a loved one has died (Shear, 2015). There are two main components to acute grief, separation response and stress response. Acute grief is also associated with longing and sadness for the person who died (Shear, 2015). There are also notable health complications that are associated with the

experience of grief. During the bereavement period, individuals often lose a sense of their identity, disengage in social activities, and are at an increased risk for health challenges associated with the symptoms of acute grief extending beyond a period of 6 months (Glickman, 2021).

Grief theories

Neimeyer et al. (2014) argue that the Western model of grief, which often focuses on the intrapsychic, misses the social and communal components necessary to process grief. One of the key components argues that grief processing stems from the social levels of discourse which appear to provide a sense of meaning-making for the bereaved. It is argued that grief is not “ a private or dispassionate cognitive process” (Neimeyer et al, 2014, p.486), rather grief becomes a component of life in which one must assess the meaning of the loss and the meaning of the impact on the bereaved life. Along with meaning making, it is vital to consider the stage of development that an individual is in to appropriately respond to one's loss (WilsonHarris, 2010).

Neimeyer points out that “parents' sense-making regarding the death of their child, alternately undertaken in spiritual, secular, or practical terms, predicts five to 15 times the amount of intensity in grief symptomatology than do the length of time since loss and cause of death”. (Neimeyer et al., 2014, p.487) Thus the themes of the narrative are key predictors to the length and intensity of the grief. Narrative reconstruction could serve as a means for uncovering and reconstructing narratives towards better understanding the intensity of their grief symptoms (Beaumont, 2013). Continued bonds is also a term that comes up with grief of a meaningful relationship and can be applied to the reconstruction of narratives (Root, 2013).

Those who have lost someone through causes such as suicide, homicide, or fatal accidents are likely to include the theme of “imperfection of the world and brevity of life, but also an appreciation for the preciousness of that life” (Neimeyer et al., 2014, p.488). With losses

linked to suicide, they could be heavily impacted by social stigma which could complicate the grieving process (Hall, 2014). Yet, individuals who have lost loved ones to more natural causes are “more likely to find benefit in the loss in terms of personal growth”(Neimeyer et al., 2014, p.488).

Complex Grief

Complex grief includes the prolonged experience of grief which impacts one's daily life (Livi-Belz & Aisenberg, 2021). Grief research identified two types of grief, acute grief and complicated or prolonged grief disorder (Shear, 2015). There are two main components to acute grief, separation response and stress response. Symptoms of complicated grief can surface in behaviors such as depression, chronic illness, feelings of guilt and suicidal ideation (McNally et al., 2021.) For those who have experienced bereavement, complex grief can strongly impact one's mental and physical health when compared to non bereaved individuals (Buckley et al., 2012., Livi-Belz & Aisenberg, 2021).

Often, grief related to suicide falls under the umbrella of complex grief (Young, 2023). Complex grief was a repetitive concept that came up within multiple articles when discussing the loss of a close friend or family member to suicide (Beaumont, 2013, Livi-Belz, 2023). It was found that when suicide loss is comorbid with complex grief the rate of suicidal ideation increases compared to non CG individuals (Young, 2023). Complex grief includes the prolonged experience of grief which impacts one's daily life (Livi-Belz & Aisenberg, 2021).The nature of the death often leaves loved ones wondering if they could have played a role in preventing the loss (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020). Feigelman and Cerel (2020) sought to understand how feelings of blameworthiness interact with other factors in grief, specifically focusing on suicide, drug-related deaths, ordinary accidents, and death by natural causes. “ suicide bereaved will usually be haunted by feelings of guilt, self-doubt about what with could or should have done prior to the

death to avoid it, anger at the deceased and shame about the death itself that gave suicide its uniquely highly distressing elements for the bereaved, leading them to be more prone to more complicated grief” (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020, p.2). The results of this study indicate that over half of parents who have experienced the loss of a child via suicide expressed strong to moderate feelings of blameworthiness at the time of the death (Feigelman & Cerel, 2020).

Some of the outcomes for students faced with prolonged grief disorder (PGD) are “a lack of concentration and focus, lack of motivation, sleep difficulties, isolation from friends and family, suicidal ideation, poor grades, and possible drop-out or dismissal, in addition to mental and physical health problems common to adults with PGD such as anxiety, depression, and chronic illness” (Glickman, 2021, p.2). Shame and self criticism were common themes found when researching the effects of suicide loss and complex grief (Levi-Belz, 2023). Existing research points out that “problematic thoughts, such as ruminations about why or how the person died or behaviors such as avoidance of reminders of the loss can interfere with the normal healing process, resulting in prolonged and intense state of grief” (Glickman, 2021, p.2). The research presented by Gilckman (2021), provided significant statistics. It was highlighted that “the rate of PGD was higher for those who were bereaved due to suicide (30%)” (Glickman, 2021). In addition, PGD was found to be more prevalent in black students 16.7%, versus 8.8% in white students, 15.8% in Asians, and 10.5% in Hispanics. When considering social support, it was found that “the majority of participants sought help from a friend (80%) or family members (76%). The least utilized support person was a professor (11%) and a college mental health counselor (14%)” (Glickman, 2021, p.4).

Young population and loss

Bereavement during college years can have negative consequences on students’ success in academics, social integration, and attainment of developmental milestones such as the

formation of a stable identity, developing a sense of career direction, and forming lasting, intimate relationships (Newton & Ohrt, 2018). Grief during one's college experience likely impairs one's ability to “concentrate on their academics” and causes “difficulties with studying” (McNally et al., 2021, p.69). College students who have higher levels of psychological sense of community present with a strong sense of integration and fulfillment of needs as well as a shared emotional connection with others in college” (McNally et al., 2021, p.75). It was also found that college students who are grieving earn significantly lower GPAs than their non-grieving counterparts, in the first semester of their grief (McNally et al., 2021). Educational institutions have been aware of this impact in the United States as early as 1927 and was considered a phenomenon named as “suicide wave” or “epidemic” that launched the broadcast documentary: *College Can Be Killing* in 1978 (Brown, 2014, p.36). This broadcast recounted events regarding the suicide of a Northern University student, including the lack of support and isolation other students had felt on campus thereafter. The public perception shifted the conversation regarding response to suicide following the program’s airing, leading to articles focusing on campus response regarding student suicide (Brown, 2014). These articles provided avenues for discussion for academic institutions and students alike about how and what should be implemented in the occurrence of any death on a campus (Cecchin, H. F, et al., 2022). By the late 1970s, the term “postvention” was created by Shneidman in order to describe the help and intervention of others that is needed by all survivors of suicide (Rickgarn, 1994) and differing models for campus postvention started appearing in the later 1990s for campus’ to reference for the purpose of gaining insight on actionable steps (Swenson & Ginsberg, 1996). However, these actionable steps have been difficult for academic institutions to implement as academics have what is defined as a “special relationship” with its students (Appelbaum, 2019, p.351). The

Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), in reference to a college suicide case in Massachusetts, noted that the “special relationship” is one where the primary functionality is academic but academic institutions broadly supply students with community through organized activities, promotion of mental support and housing (Grey, 2023, p.108). Regardless of the students in question being adults with their own autonomy to then seek out that community (Grey, 2023). Recognizing this, the SJC states that responsibility to take action exists when an academic institution has viable awareness of a student's previous suicide attempt or stated plans or intentions to engage in self-harm (Appelbaum, 2019). Following these judgements, colleges and universities have gotten an increased heightened awareness of the liability they hold and are incentivized to minimize risk with students that have been affected by or engage in suicidal ideation. Therefore, students who are most in need of postvention have instead been advised to take time off and are left isolated from networks on campus that could be potential sources of support (Appelbaum, 2019). In more severe cases, students that have been affected by suicide have had their behaviors and experiences subject to potential punishment from their institutions; such as behavioral contracts, suspension, or even expulsion (Lund, 2022). Outcomes have been a culture where students may be unlikely to seek out campus mental health services or be open to discussing their experiences for fear of judgment or further stigma (El-Hachem & Lakkis et al., 2023).

Bereavement among college students attending the University of Melbourne, Australia was researched with semi-structured interviews via telehealth (Tan, et. al., 2021). The researchers noted how grief is typically looked at through the lens of negative implications after experiencing a death of a family member or close friend where they wanted to take a different approach (Tan, et. al., 2021). They focused on the positive effects of experiencing a death in a person's adolescence and early adulthood from the ages of 13 to 27 years old (Tan, et. al., 2021,

p.4). One participant's father died by suicide (age 27) and mentioned in their interview, "Deep down in my heart, and I do want him to be around me for everyday life, but when I am awake, I just want to erase the bad memory." This statement attest to the hardships that come with grieving a parent from suicide and provides reason for researching how institutions are supporting students (Tan, et. al., 2021, p.7). "College students' level of closeness to the deceased loved one plays a large role in their academic experiences and it influenced the degree to which they had academic difficulties (McNally et al., 2021, p.69). Complicated grief can occur when one experiences intense long term effects of loss which plays a large role in their life. Bereaving a close friend or family member can turn into complicated grief for some individuals depending on how that experience impacts their life (Beaumont, 2013). McNally et al., 2021 found that students that had high rates of grief had a closer relationship to the person who died.

Understanding how grief affects diverse college populations provides insight into universities' responses to the grieving process. It is apparent that much of the existing research does not consider the implications of grief within diverse populations. However, Glickman's (2021) research highlights some of the disparities associated with different populations. First, in observing prolonged grief disorder in college students, it is argued that "one-third of all traditional college-age students have lost at least one family member or friend in the past year" (Glickman, 2021, p.6). Experiencing bereavement during attending college can lead to negative effects on school attendance and work (Newton & Ohrt, 2018, McNally et al., 2021). With this knowledge, knowing about one third of students may experience bereavement during this time it appears relevant to explore emotional and social connections during this time (Newton & Ohrt, 2018). In addition, almost one-half of all students have lost someone within the last two years. It is noted that college students are faced with unique challenges due to "the pressures of juggling

school, work, and family responsibilities and for some being separated from familiar support systems”(Glickman, 2021, p.2). People who have experiences suicide bereavement are at higher risk for suicidal ideation in their own life (Young, 2023). It is noted that students of color may be at an increased disadvantage with limitations to resources, such as quality and affordable health care (Glickman, 2021). McNally et al, argue that “social support from family members and close friends has been found to be particularly beneficial when processing the death loss of a spouse or partner and that receiving support, helping others in their grief and loss, as well as the reciprocal nature of social support all appear to be very important in dealing with such death loss”(McNally et al., 2021, p.68).

McNally, Winterowd, and Farra (2021) conducted research regarding college students' experience with grief in relationship to their psychological sense of community, and perceived social support. They define a psychological sense of community as “recognizing one's commonalities with others, a sense of ‘interdependence, and feeling part of a community of support that is ‘dependable’” (McNally et al., 2021, p.68). With our knowledge that about one third of college students have experienced a loss it seems relevant to explore support system networks (Glickman, 2021). In addition, social support is understood as having a network of community ranging from friends and family to colleagues and other social relationships (McNally et al., 2021).

College students who felt closer to the deceased were more likely to advocate for their academic well-being in that they: 1) talked with their professors, 2) felt more comfortable in interacting with their professors, 3) requested homework/test extensions complete their course requirements, and 4) change their study habits (McNally et al., 2021), as compared to students who did not feel as close to the loved one they lost.

Art therapy interventions and Suicide Loss

Arts-based research and art therapy interventions have been used to process complicated grief and the loss of a loved one. Arts-based research has addressed grief and loss through a variety of approaches and trends (Brinkmann et al., 2019) whereas art therapy specific interventions offer individuals who are bereaved the opportunity to make meaning and sense of the trauma of losing a loved one (Bat-Or et al., 2019; Law et al., 2022; Nelson et al., 2022).

Whether the grief is solely focused on the loss of someone as a result of suicide or the significant loss of a loved one by other means we can see how the role of art and narrative therapy can help the bereaved process their grief in an external and meaningful way (Bat-Or et al. 2019, Nelson et al. 2022). The specific usage of collage-making as an art medium was used in two of the studies “Healing from the loss of a loved one to suicide” Renzi-Callaghan (2018) and “Snipping, Gluing, Writing: The Properties of Collage as an Arts-Based Research Practice in Art Therapy” Gioia et al. (2014) as a unique method to reconstruct and make meaning of the trauma in grief and loss. Many of the articles examined on arts-based research utilized self-reported quantitative and qualitative data from scales to assess mood and the impact of the treatment pre and post-art intervention Law et al. (2022), Gioia et al. (2014), Edmonds et al. (2016).

With the intersect of Art Therapy and suicide loss, research was found providing helpful interventions and treatment plans for this specific population (Brooke & Miraglia, 2015). Community based support groups have been found to be an effective framework in alliance with art therapy interventions (Young, 2007). Using narrative storytelling as a metaphor for one's loss has been used to reconstruct new meanings (Beaumont, 2013). Self regulation and intrapersonal coherency have been found to be benefited from utilizing writing exercises focusing on the reconstruction of their experience. Self narratives also provide an individual the agency to be the author of their own story rather than viewing death as something that happened to them

(Beaumont, 2013). It has been found that embracing a meaning making approach with bereavement from suicide reduces symptoms of grief (Neimeyer, 2012). Through self narratives, similar to the memory intervention there is room for exploring new ways of viewing the loss and person who died in their life (Beaumont, 2013). Art may serve as a tool to express the aspects and experiences that one goes through where verbally communicating is not comfortable (Arellano, 2018). The integration of art into therapy may also create a safe space for one to let out complex emotions (Arellano, 2018). Art holds the possibilities of metaphors to arise which can address grief and loss in a non-confrontational way that supports the individual's needs (Arellano, 2018).

Art Therapy interventions can be a metaphorical way to address bereavement from suicide through experimenting with story telling and exploring narratives for how the experience impacted the individual (Beaumont, 2013). Autoethnography can create a space for processing and better understanding complex emotions following the death of a loved one to suicide (Renzi-Callaghan, 2018.) Beaumont, et. al. created a journal focusing on meaning-making approaches focusing specifically on complicated grief and art therapy practices. In this article, they brought up the significance of narrative story telling about the person who died and conjured a memory they have of them with the ability to reconstruct previous narratives attached to that memory (Beaumont, 2013). Through multiple sources, it appears the integration of storytelling and healing is a useful intervention for populations that have experienced loss by suicide (Beaumont, 2013., Renzi-Callaghan, 2018). The main goal of these directives would be to integrate their experience of loss into their self narrative in present time to create a healthy relationship with their memories attached to the deceased (Beaumont, 2013).

From a psychological perspective, Neimeyer et al., (2014) propose that the process of narrating the life and loss of the loved one from a plot-oriented beginning, middle, and end, allows the griever to process the deceased's life in a neurophysiological way, within the temporal lobe. Episodic processing helps to consolidate the larger autobiographical memories (Neimeyer et al., 2014). Art Therapy practices that integrate narrative theory can be an asset towards processing grief (Beaumont, 2013). On a family level, dialectical, dialogical, and dynamic elements are embedded into the family's systematic response which imposes a level of awareness around “engaging the loss and each other in a way that is comforting rather than overwhelming” (Neimeyer et al., 2014, p.487).

Conclusion

Throughout this review, researchers took a multidimensional approach to gathering information regarding current practices in place regarding academic institutions and art therapy interventions for suicide bereavement. Major contributions show that art therapeutic practices appear to be an effective avenue towards healing and understanding the individual's loss (Beaumont, 2013).

This evaluation of research done on art therapy and arts-based research regarding grief and loss has shown several limitations and gaps that could be addressed in future studies. In a broader capacity, a large part of the research being done has been focused on the clinician's perceptions of effective treatment for bereaved clients rather than the client's beliefs around effective treatment procedures they experienced (Bat-Or et al. 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2019; Chilton et al. 2014). In other research studies that had examined the clients they were asked to self-report using scales like the “Satisfaction with Life Scale” or SWL, the Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Law et al., 2022), the Inventory of Traumatic Grief, Zung Self-Rated Depression Scale, and the Beck Depression Inventory. (Edmonds, 2016) to report their mood and

emotional progress in the study as opposed to the perceived effectiveness of the study itself. One study reported that a major limitation was created as a result of attempting to maintain confidentiality; they had chosen to ignore the participant demographics and personal characteristics which limited the future usage and interpretation of the data in diverse populations (Nelson et al. 2022). Additional flaws in methodology include an identified need for supervision, because clinicians often participating in this kind of research might have their own losses and grief they are processing which can help or hinder the research, “as participants [therapists] were invited to reflect on the roles of art through the making of art itself, they confronted personal losses and painful memories from their own pasts” (Bat-Or et al., 2019, pp. 201). Due to the nature of the topic many studies had encountered similar issues of having limited participants and limited time in the study. This is important to note as a gap in research because only limited perspectives, experiences, or results could be garnered from the studies (Bat-Or et al. 2019; Brinkmann et al., 2019; Chilton et al. 2014; Edmonds, 2016; Renzi-Callaghan 2018; Law et al., 2022; Nelson et al. 2022).

Current limitations for research with quantitative focus are generally less prioritized with the correlation of social support and mental health, as that has already been proven to be positively linked (Kleiman, Riskind, et al., 2014). Contributions suggest shifting the focus towards the types and qualities of support rather than general frequent social contact, as that does likewise inform mental well being (Hefner, & Eisenberg, et al., 2009). Current targets for future research within studies additionally highlight a lack of generalizability across campus communities and those in differing class brackets. Taking into account how substantial support can contrast for a range of sociodemographic communities, “interventions to target certain groups (e.g., men, Asian students, and international students) in an effort to improve the quality

of social ties and reduce mental health risk” (Hefner, & Eisenberg, et al., 2009, p.497).

Measurement bias has moreover been a factor for self-reported studies as “college students may underreport suicidal behaviors” which can affect a student of a lower socioeconomic background, as students could face further alienation (Assari, 2018, p.88). Modifying interventions to account for diverse communities may also account for culture differences that attribute to students not seeking campus support and further sharing of experiences (Seeman & N, et al., 2017).

Research Approach

The research approach utilized was an Arts Based Research (ABR) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), qualitative approaches in which researchers aim to understand an individual's experience through their own interpretation (Alase, 2017). These modalities were chosen to highlight the genuine stories and experiences that our student survivors of a suicide loss go through combining both verbal and non-verbal research. We have an understanding that arts based research can allow for a deeper exploration of people's lived experience that they may not be able to access verbally. We approached our research by conducting the semi-structured interviews after we had evaluated the self-report surveys with the participants or students who were enrolled in the university at the time of the suicide loss. In addition, to enrich the understanding of the participants' lived experiences, we allowed participants to share their analysis of the artworks created post-interview as a vital component of our arts-based research. This was later further put through analysis by the research team. Through this approach, we aimed to unearth a nuanced and meaningful understanding of the complex thoughts and emotions of those who have faced the profound impact of a loss by suicide and analyzed the efficacy of their universities grief response and support.

The interviews were conducted individually by multiple research team members to mitigate bias and address potential misinterpretations of phrases or assumptions. Additionally, a separate researcher viewed the recorded video while transcribing it to check for errors and possible missed words. The art pieces created during the research process were organized based on similar themes and possible connecting symbolism that related to the research questions. The art materials provided for the art pieces were: patterned, colored, and blank papers, textiles, markers, glue, tissue paper, scissors, and foam board.

What are the current practices for responding to grief in the university setting for students affected by the death of a meaningful relationship as a result of suicide? And, what was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a loss by suicide as seen through their art expression?

Information and artwork produced by the subjects about their lived experiences were taken into consideration throughout the information organization process. Additionally, the subjects' pre-established interpretations of animals, colors and shapes were also taken into consideration.

When analyzing this interpretative phenomenological research study we looked at themes that arose from the verbal and creative interview to track possible trends and patterns (Lith, 2008.) Interpretive Phenomenological research gives insight to how individuals conceptualize their lived experience in response to a phenomenon occurring in their life (Smith, 2009.) A recurring phrase was noted if it had been stated at least two times among participants (Lith, 2008.) The verbal and artistic repetitions were also reviewed and compared to see if there were congruences in findings across both modalities (Lith, 2008.) These repetitions were then clustered into like findings to determine if significant themes were observed from the research study conducted (Wilson, 2020.) The “lived experience” was portrayed through this type of data analysis by providing a space for participants to share their story from their own narrative (Smith, 2009).

Research Strategy

In order to gather relevant information on the topics of arts-based research, art therapy, and grief and loss surrounding suicide the following terms were utilized in the search: *Arts-based research, art therapy, complex grief, prolonged grief, grief difficulties, college students, trauma, university support, grief and loss, loss of a loved one, suicide, bereavement experiences, therapeutic intervention, grief, arts-based inquiry, ethnography, and ethnographies social*

support, Biomedical Social Sciences, self help groups, risk factors (suicide related), and general bereavement. The research of these keywords focused on delineating current research on grief and loss, specific to university students, and the practices that are in place to support grief. The articles collected supported the current research question and the potential responses to this information were included. The following sources were used to find pertinent scholarly and peer-reviewed sources: Pubmed, Research Gate, Journal of Loss and Trauma, Psycinfo, Frontiers in Psychology, Psychiatryonline, SpringerLink, Routledge, Journal of Mental Health Counseling, Google Scholar and Sage Journals. The research presented was conducted in the following formats: mixed methods, quantitative, case studies, phenomenological studies, conceptual review, and quantitative studies. Synthesizing differing strands of data allows for one to inform the other and possibly provide new avenues of interpretation. The variety of research styles were important to the research process because it allowed the research team to see how the results of arts-based research, art therapy, and treatment of grief & loss surrounding suicide are being studied by other practitioners.

Researchers Bias

Our research team consists of four university students from the same Marital and Family Therapy and Art Therapy graduate program. Three members of the team identify as female and prefer she/her pronouns, while the fourth member identifies as non-binary and prefers they/them pronouns. The gender composition of both the majority of the research team and the participants, who were all female-identifying, may have contributed to potential biases in the analysis of gender-related aspects. Additionally, the background of having an art therapy interpretive lens may have influenced how the researchers interpreted the artwork and data during the analysis. In addition to this, a member of the research team had a personal connection related to the subject matter of the phenomenon being explored: the loss of a loved one by suicide. Personal reactions

to the subject matter were preemptively addressed by excluding this researcher from the face-to-face interviewing process with the participants. Continual check-ins were provided between researchers to assess potential biases and countertransference issues. Since the research team consisted of actively enrolled students this may have also affected the researcher's prior assumptions of university support due to their own experiences as a student.

Methods

Definition of Terms

1. Autoethnography

A form of ethnographic research in which a researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings. (*insert source*)

2. Art as Therapy

Art as Therapy is an activity used to help enrich an individual's life through art-making (Dalley, 2008).

3. Art Intervention

An art intervention is a technique used within art therapy to improve a situation or symptom (Dalley, 2008).

4. Bereavement

Bereavement is the term used for the process in which an individual experiences a loss (Li, J., et al, 2014).

5. Acute Grief

Acute grief is defined as the symptoms of powerful yearning, longing, and sadness for an individual or individuals who are deceased (Shear, 2015). These symptoms may include intrusive thoughts of the deceased person and may carry a strong sense of loss (Shear, 2015).

6. Complex Grief

Complex grief is the continued occurrences of grief that significantly impact day-to-day functioning and do not fade over time (Livi-Belz & Aisenberg, 2021).

7. Complicated grief

Complicated grief is defined by intense experiences individuals have related to a loss that persists beyond 12 months (Beaumont, 2013). Complicated grief can create complex grief (Beaumont, 2013).

8. Continued bonds

Continued bonds are the lingering feelings within a meaningful relationship with a deceased individual (Root, 2013).

9. Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)

Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) is characterized by consistent symptoms of grief that impact daily life (Glickman, 2021). Symptoms may include avoidance, intense loneliness, isolation, suicidal ideation, and sleep difficulties (Glickman, 2021).

10. Postvention

Postvention is the term for the aid and interference of outside individuals necessary for survivors of suicide (Rickgarn, 1994).

11. Suicide

Suicide is the intentional removal of one's own life (Tal Young, I., et al, 2012).

12. Suicide loss / Confirmed suicide loss

Suicide loss / confirmed suicide loss is defined by specific feelings of grief associated with a suicide or confirmed suicide (Tal Young, I., et al, 2012).

13. Meaningful relationship

A meaningful relationship is defined as how interconnected, close, or distant an individual feels concerning another person (Gächter, et al, 2015).

Design of Study

Gathering of Data

Interested participants will be scheduled to come in person to the faculty sponsor's office (University Hall 2517, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045) in which a member of the investigation team will provide a printed informed consent form. Once informed consent is discussed and signed, the interview will commence. Interviews will be video/audio recorded via an appropriate and secure device. Recorded interviews that include the video, audio, artwork, and all notes taken will be uploaded into a password-protected laptop and secured into a password-protected file. After transcription is completed, all recorded interviews will be deleted immediately. After five years, all data collected will be deleted from the researcher's laptop. After the verbal interview is completed, the participant will be asked to engage in an art experiential to understand and convey their experience further concerning university support. Participants will be informed that the art created during the interview will be collected by the research team for analysis (as outlined in the informed consent). The investigator will present the art experience verbally through use of a prompt stating "Consider what your experience of grief was like at the university level. If the experience was unsupportive, how would you have preferred the experience to be?" Subjects will be invited to use a variety of art materials (collage, markers, paper, scissors, glue) to create an image of their experience of being a grieving college student and experiencing a loss by suicide. After engaging in the art experience, participants will be provided with a recommended list of resources for mental health services for further follow-up outside support. The semi-structured interview document is attached.

Sample

Adult participants (18+) of all genders who speak English, are enrolled full-time in a college or university (Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctorate, etc) or were enrolled at the time of the death, who have experienced the loss of a meaningful relationship (parent, child, sibling, spouse, cohabitee, friend, colleague, etc) within the last 5 years will be selected for consideration. If allowed, 3-12 subjects will be interviewed within the study. Subjects will be contacted after recruitment via LMU email by a member of our investigation team. An investigator will inform the subject that they qualify for participation in the study via email after reviewing their completed screening form (see the screening form attached). The investigator will then work with the subject in an in-person interview at the subject's convenience.

Participants will be recruited through convenience sampling with the aid of the snowball method, being sent a flier/information about the study through email through investigators' networks. The flier outlines the overall purpose of the study and the criteria that must be met to participate. Interested participants will be directed to the flier to fill out the screening form or to contact the researcher directly through email if they have additional questions. The link that will be used is attached below. Once a researcher receives a completed screening form and the participant is deemed appropriate for the research as evidenced by meeting all inclusion criteria, the researcher will send a follow-up email to participants directly to invite them to the study and schedule a time for the interview.

Analysis of Data

The process of the raw data (interview and artwork created) being analyzed occurred through the categorization of information. The criteria for the interviews categorization was

through finding repetitions within the phenomenological experience and response to the suicide loss. The artwork would then provide further information through a creative lens about the personal lived experience for each participant. The artmaking was a part of the data analysis process through visual and representative metaphors that were analyzed with the interviews. Elements of the artmaking that was shared among participants were clustered together to determine if any phenomenological trends or patterns occurred among gathered data. Once categories were created, relevant codes and themes were created to solidify shared experiences among the three participants in the research.

Results

Presentation of Data

At the onset of this study, the research team developed a screening questionnaire (See Appendix) that identified qualified candidates to participate in the study. The qualifications for the screening questionnaire were as follows: are you at least 18 years of age, have you lost someone you had a meaningful relationship with to suicide, did the loss occur in the last five years, were you enrolled in university when the death loss occurred, and are you available for a 1-hour in-person interview. There were four total responses from the screening questionnaire. All four individuals who completed the screening questionnaire qualified to participate in the study, however, one qualifying candidate did not participate.

This study interviewed three individuals who identified experiencing a loss due to suicide in the last five years while attending university (see Table 1). All three participants identified as female. The participants' ethnicities were identified as Middle East/White, East Asian/Taiwanese, and Mixed. The participants of the study ranged from 25 - 33 years old. The death losses occurred between 2019 and 2023. Two of the participants were graduate students, while the third was an undergraduate student, when the death loss occurred. Each participant identified who they lost, this included friends, classmates, and family friends. Additionally each participant identified that they were artists in the field of art therapy.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Alias	Interview Date	Age	Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Year of loss	Who did you lose?	Year in college at loss
MM	2/10/24	25	Middle Eastern/ White	Female	April 2023	Little brother's best friend	2nd Year Graduate School
CO	2/20/24	29	East Asian/ Taiwanese	Female	2019	Friend/ Classmate	Sophomore/ Junior
SM	2/20/2024	33	Mixed	Female	Early 2020	Friend/ Art community member	1st Year Graduate School

Participants***MM.***

MM is a female-identified participant who is 25 years old. MM noted her ethnicity as being “Middle Eastern and White.” She appeared prepared for the interview shown by her affect towards researchers and high perceived willingness to participate at the beginning of the interview. MM was a second year graduate student when she experienced the suicide loss. The suicide loss was from a family friend who was in close relation to her brother. This loss occurred in April of 2023. This participant noted being an art therapist and being in graduate school for art therapy at the time of the suicide loss.

MM had an emotional reaction to partaking in the interview, crying throughout the verbal and creative expression sectors of the interview. She stated "I'm also like PMS'ing today, so I'm like extra emotional.", followed by "I'm a crybaby" later in the interview. The art she created used materials she selected from the provided assortment of patterned, colored, blank papers, textiles, markers, glue, tissue paper, scissors, and foam board. She chose to use the smallest piece

of paper as the base of the artwork (See Figure 1). MM took 5:58 minutes during the art portion of the interview which was significantly less time than other participants (see Table 2).

Figure 1

MM's Artwork in response to suicide loss

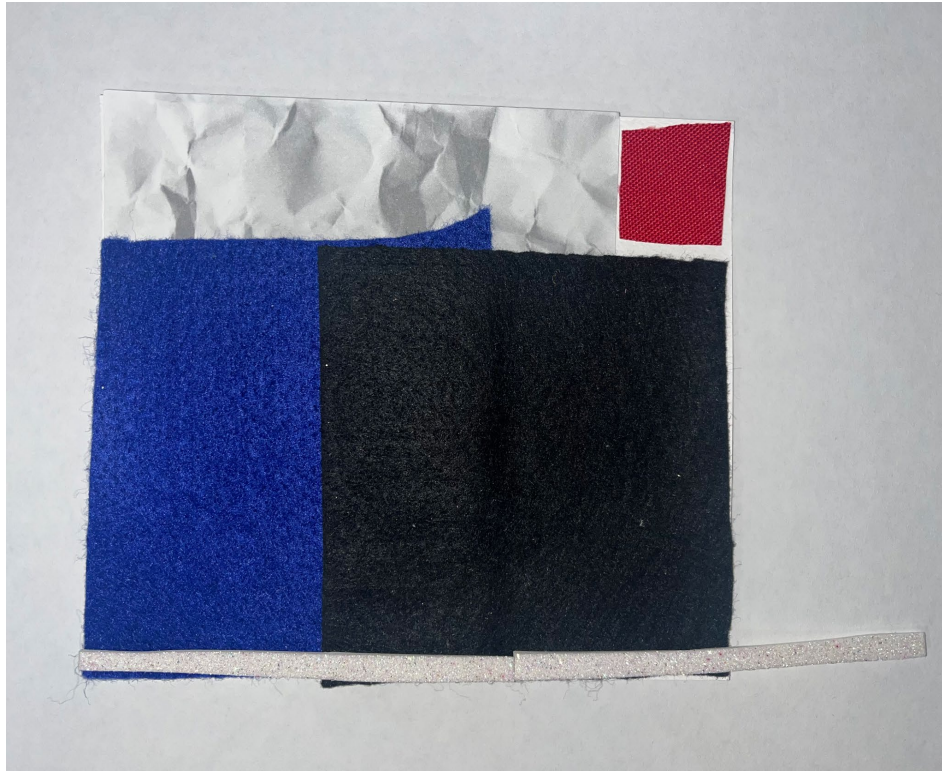


Table 2

Participant Engagement

Alias	Duration of Art Making	Duration of Interview
MM	5:58 Minutes	29:54 minutes
CO	19:21 Minutes	37:09 minutes
SM	17:78 Minutes	40:23 minutes

CO.

The research participant, referred to as CO for anonymity, is a 29-year-old self-identified Tawainese American female. CO presented as slightly anxious during the research interview as evidenced by her lack of eye contact and restless hand movements. CO utilized laughter throughout the interview during questioning and paused often during their speech to gather her thoughts. CO appeared more comfortable as the interview went on and their speech changed from slow to full with more intense eye contact. CO experienced the death loss of a friend and classmate in their undergraduate program in 2019.

CO took about 20 minutes in total to engage in the art making, taking quickly to the art materials (see Table 2). CO used the largest sheet, choosing it immediately and spent a significant amount of time looking through each of the art materials provided. When the art making had concluded, CO discussed at length how the queer studies class she had taken with her friend had heavily influenced her art. CO was the only participant that wrote using a marker, the words written “Silence = Death.” (See Figure 2). CO discussed this by stating:

“We learned a lot about pivotal moments...so it was specific to LA Los Angeles, LGBTQ plus history...It just reminded me of like the one of the org- organizations: Act Up, and how they said, silence equals death. I think what stays with me with um...my friend, stuff is that like they felt like they couldn't ask for help” (CO).

CO elaborated on her use of the sparkling foam by stating:

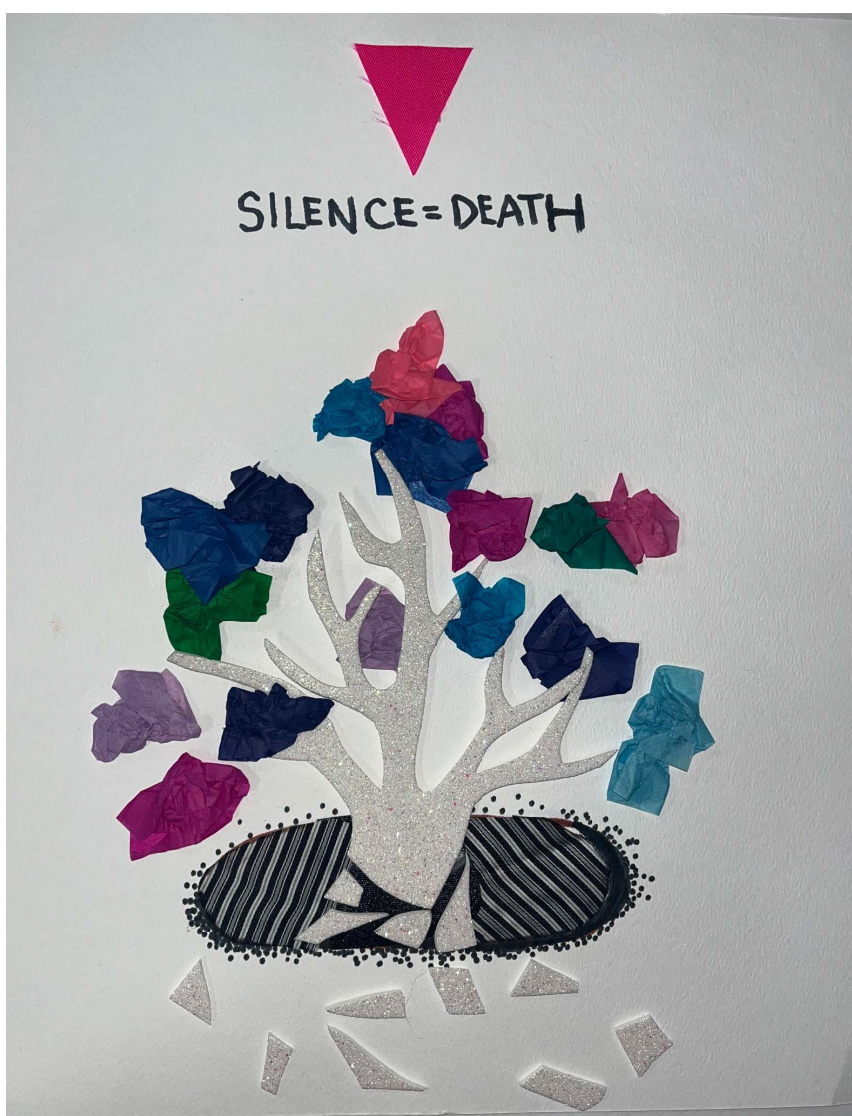
“Well I like the sparkle because I think they would have appreciated it and the colors...But also I was just thinking of like kind of these pieces, like kind of like a shattered...um how something can be kind of like shattered or appear broken, but it can

still be beautiful and hold a lot of meaning...kind of like being able to hold those 2... truths” (CO).

Throughout the discussion of the art, CO referenced the queer course and the activism that her professor instilled within the students; Something that followed her through her loss and even in the current day. This theme, alongside “community”, “chosen family”, and “mental health” additionally emerged during discussion.

Figure 2

CO's Artwork in response to suicide loss



SM.

The research participant, referred to as SM for anonymity, is a 33-year-old female art therapist who identifies herself as mixed-race. SM gave informed consent to participate in this arts-based interpretive phenomenological study, agreeing to share her lived experiences and perceptions of university support regarding suicide bereavement. SM presented as relaxed and comfortable as evidenced by her open posture and demeanor throughout the interview process. Occasional contemplative fidgeting occurred such as tapping her feet and holding the heel of her shoe while speaking. SM experienced the loss of a close friend to suicide during their first year of graduate school and reported no significant effects on her academic performance or ability to graduate.

Once the art-making process began, SM spent approximately 2 minutes searching for materials and a total of 18 minutes creating her artwork (see Table 2). She opted not to use any of the 3 paper sizes offered but rather used fabric as the foundation for her art piece roughly resembling the smallest size paper offered. SM spent most of her time cutting and rearranging the fabric pieces before gluing them to resemble what she would call a creek scene.

After the interview, SM chose to keep a piece of the background tie-dye fabric scraps as a memento. The final reflection SM made on her art piece suggested that the artwork expanded beyond her recollection of her university support experience and became more of a personal “homage” or tribute to the deceased. Her use of words like “homage,” “offering,” “careful,” and the desire to make it “beautiful for the person” suggests a degree of emotional processing, longing, and intentionality in the artwork. The themes that emerged from her experience of grief at the university level included: her mental health struggles during that period, her connection of

the suicide loss with nature, and the process of grieving the suicide loss itself. These themes took precedence in her artwork over seeking an alternative form of support offered by the university.

Figure 3

SM's Artwork in response to suicide loss



Data Analysis

Methods

IPA

The research team utilized a combination of mixed methods for the purpose of analyzing our data. Initially we used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the

transcripts from each participant interview. In phase one of the IPA the team watched a recording of each interview and together highlighted themes that appeared in the dialogue. In the second phase, the research team transcribed the interviews into transcripts which were then reanalyzed to support the initial findings. Then the team created a matrix which highlighted significant statements which were interpreted for meaning and then categorized by identified themes from both observing the videos and reviewing the transcripts. After conducting the formal analysis through using IPA and the framework of FEATS analysis, our team identified the definitive themes for both research questions. This process allowed us to interpret the nuanced lived experience of each participant.

FEATS

Then we used elements of the The FEATS (Formal Elements Art Therapy Scale) as a measurement scaling system for assessing the artwork's visual characteristics for diagnostic classification (Gantt, 2009, pp. 124). The FEATS manual allowed the research team to identify themes that were present in each participant's reflective art response. In the third phase, the research team laid out the art made by each participant and assessed each participant's art for prominence of color, detail, use of realism, space, size, material and orientation of the page. The team looked for general commonalities between each participant's art and made cross-references between their art and their lived experience of support. IPA and FEATS were used for the analysis process cohesively to gain a multidisciplinary perspective.

Results

Themes

After transcribing and reviewing all of the interviews the research team identified several codes that appeared throughout the interviews. The codes were then assessed for meaning and significance to the research questions, which then allowed the team to decipher themes present in the interviews. Research group collectively read through each transcript and then read it a second time individually. Researchers gathered specifiers in a data spreadsheet matrix in order to organize findings. These themes provided the necessary qualitative data that supported the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and the arts-based research. (started it but break it down more, step by step) According to the IPA analysis, the research team delineated the codes relevant to the IPV analysis through the verbal responses given in the interview.

Then the team observed the art each participant made in response to the directive, “Create an image of what your grief experience was like at the university level”. Researchers used components of the FEATS Manual to determine elements relevant to the art and analyze the art each participant made. Prominence of color, detail, use of realism, space, size, material and orientation of the page were considered when analyzing the work created by participants. Formal elements from each category appeared in the artwork which were categorized by applicable findings. Findings were then compared and contrasted to determine if any significant trends appeared. The team then assessed for themes in research questions 1 and 2 to identify phenomenological themes present for each participant's art response.

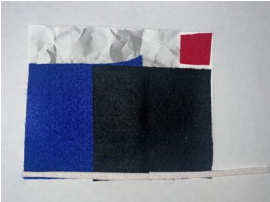


For Research Question #1: “What are the current practices for responding to grief in the university setting for students affected by the death of a meaningful relationship as a result of suicide?” The research team identified 8 notable codes. They are: communication, suicide loss

disclosure, motivation to disclose loss to professors, current university practices, response from professors, time off, peer support, and the perception of university support. These codes were assessed and evaluated for similarities which led to the identification of three main themes: acknowledgment of the communicated loss by faculty, provision of academic support, and lack/absence of practice (see Table 3).

For Research Question #2: “What was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a suicide loss as seen through their art expression?” there were 16 identified codes. The codes included: individuals obligation to share story, dismissal of identity, recall of events, level of attachment, relationship with professors and supervisors, professionalism, language used to describe death loss, justification of emotions, support conceptualization, and art making. We took these codes and assessed how they supported our second research question, which ultimately led to identifying 5 phenomenological themes: reluctance, emotional response, non-faculty support, recall, and omission (see Table 4). Additionally, in RQ2, the research team used the FEATS Manual as an assessment tool to analyze the art each participant made. We assessed the prominence of color, details of objects in the environment, realism, space used, size, materials used, and metaphorical meaning to support the themes we identified in the interviews.

Table 3

FEATS Analysis

Alias	MM	CO	SM	ALL
Main Categories RQ.2 What was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a suicide loss as seen through their art expression?				
Artwork				N/A
Prominence of color	<p>Darker toned colors that were linked with intense emotions to each item. The sparkle paper was signifying the connection with peers that went on past the grad school time period. The participant started crying when discussing the black area that they referred to as “not talking part” / Blue area: Initial shock / Tears up before the black / Black area: Not telling anyone.</p>	<p>"I like the sparkle because I think they would have appreciated it and the colors..." - In honor of the person who they lost.</p>	<p>"They are very like natural colors or like occurring in nature. But I was very drawn to these colors that seemed extremely bright and vivid"/"Like vulnerable, like kind of like without skin, like everything felt very vivid and bright. And so to me, these colors I definitely associate with like an elevated mental, not elevated mental state, like elevated mood state."</p>	<p>All participants did not discuss the significance of specific colors/shapes. There was a silence that was represented in the art making - an omission of information/the stigma of silence.</p>
Details of objects in environment	<p>Abstracted through cut out pieces of colored paper and felt material.</p>	<p>"...like kind of these pieces, like kind of like a shattered...um how something can be kind of like shattered or appear broken, but it can still be beautiful and hold a lot of meaning...kind of like being able to hold those 2... truths".</p>	<p>“Jagged edges...”/“these look like clouds and the water.”/“it looks like a creek to me.”/“remind me of that terrain”/“I see a night sky”</p>	<p>Each participant used thick cut materials to create detail in the environment. All of these materials were thicker than traditional paper. Each participant used materials that had or were crumpled in their aesthetic.</p>

Realism	Abstract	Semi-Realistic - Abstracted	Semi-realistic.	Each has abstract elements to their work processing the complexity of the loss/ ambiguity.
Space used	entire page / went off the page with white glitter paper	Left white space but most of the sheet was used	Entire page, over the borders of the background piece	Layering and complexity - material extending off of the page
Size	Smallest sheet	Largest sheet of paper	Roughly the size of the smallest sheet. No paper used.	N/A
Materials used	Crimped printed paper, felt paper (different sizes), white glitter foam board	Tissue Paper, White glitter foam board, black and white striped patterned paper, black marker, and pink construction paper	Felt, fabric, glue, scissors	N/A
Metaphorical meaning	Described the art in a timeline fashion with details about each time period of the loss (at the time, after).	"And kind of just like kind of like a metaphor, a lot for um I think people that struggle with mental health issues and um...who are good at masking. So I think it's kind of...with the hole, It's supposed to feel like kind of like an overwhelming feeling of like despair or grief. But then, kind of like a lot of history that we were learning um is kind of the LGBTQ plus community was able to build a lot of things out of	"Even though I knew it was like about my experience and my memory, it still felt like this is an offering for that person. This is something for that person. And so I became very careful about things. Like I wanted it to be beautiful for the person." "I also thought a lot about how this piece felt like an homage or like it it felt important."	N/A

		nothing, out of necessity and make things, tough things...harsh things that they experienced into something beautiful."		
Rotation (Orientation scale 13)	Horizontal	Portrait	Horizontal	N/A
Other:	MM did not take a photo or any part of the interview artwork physically home.	After the interview was done (the recording), CO was very specific about having a picture (and getting a good image/took multiple pictures) to remember the art and the person they have lost.	At the conclusion of the interview, SM chose to keep a piece of the background tie-dye fabric scraps as a memento. Stating: "Can I keep a piece?"	All participants asked about how much time was allotted for art making - All participants were art therapists - All participants used multiple layers in their art making. / The silence was brought up through the omission of certain parts of the art not being talked about in depth.

Table 4

Themes identified in RQ.1

Main Categories RQ.1 What are the current practices for responding to grief in the university setting for students affected by the death of a meaningful relationship as a result of suicide?	Acknowledgment of the communicated loss by faculty	Provision of academic support	Lack/ Absence of practice
	Communication	Extensions	Lack of guidance
	Response from professor	Time off	No inter-faculty communication on the loss
	Condolences given		No resources offered
			No follow up after disclosing loss
			Did not get response

RQ1 Themes

Through our interviews with each participant, we discovered several relevant themes that address our research questions 1 and 2, respectively. When examining the current practices for responding to grief in the university setting for students affected by the death of a meaningful relationship as a result of suicide we highlighted 3 major themes: acknowledgment of the communicated loss by faculty, provision of academic support, the lack or absence of practice (see Table 3). We observed a noticeably higher number of themes emerge for research question 2 in our study. This examined, “What was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a suicide loss as seen through their art expression?”. The identified themes were: reluctance, emotional response, non-faculty support, recall, and omission (see Table 4).

Acknowledgment of the communicated loss by faculty

Among the participants, it was observed that the initial communication of the suicide loss and motivation to disclose showed slight variation, but overall indicated a reluctance to disclose unless necessary for academic performance. Participant MM chose to communicate the loss via e-mail to one professor to request an extension but overall denied telling the larger University or relevant course professors. Both participants CO and SM indicated they did not seek support from the university therefore they did not communicate the loss in any formal or academic capacity. CO offered support to a professor stating, "I remember um reaching out to like a professor, that taught that class and just like people uh checking in and sharing news, seeing how they're feeling, seeing if they were able to attend their funeral.". The data we acquired about the acknowledgment and response from professors were limited due to the lack of initial disclosure; however, MM quoted their professor as offering general words of concern stating, "I think he said something like reach out if you need support or something like that". None of the participants recalled or stated receiving any specific condolences for their loss by the university or professors.

Provision of academic support

The tangible provisions of academic support can be consolidated into two categories: receiving time off or receiving an extension on assignments. Both CO and SM did not receive any time off from courses or extensions on their assignments. However, due to their reluctance to communicate the loss it is unclear whether these provisions could or would have been offered. Participant MM stated that their school practicum allotted 2 days for bereavement and one professor offered an extension on her final paper. She states, "I guess I can add that my

practicum let me take two days off...It happened on a Wednesday and I took Thursday and Friday off."

Lack/absence of practice

It seems that the participant's motivation to disclose and seek support is largely rooted in their perception of the University's support. This can be observed in their statements regarding prior university experiences, time left till graduation, and the pressure to remain professional in the academic space. MM shared her experience of witnessing other members of her cohort lose loved ones and how that informed her decision to limit who she reached out to,

"I mean I think it was kind of informed by like my first year we had a few family member deaths of other people in my cohort and the response was basically like deal with it or take a gap year from most of the professors. And so I think that kind of like, in some ways, informed my decision to not really speak up. So I was like, what's the point?"(MM).

CO stated, "I would say it was up to me." regarding disclosing the loss, highlighting that she did not have expectations from the university to support her. Her perceptions informed her decision stating, "I didn't really pursue like any of college resources but that class was very like small...I wanna say it was less than even 20 people". SM had a similar sentiment recalling "I knew I had heard that resources were available to us, but I didn't consider it as something to reach out for." additionally noting, "It would have been up to me to look for it, but I also did not overtly like ask." The consistent theme throughout suggests that there is a widespread lack of trust in the perception of university support from all participants.

As of this research, we have noted that current university practices have shown that professors and the university staff have a lack of procedural protocol for supporting the bereaved. This would include inadequate guidance after the loss, especially regarding mental health or

grievance resources, insufficient inter-faculty communication regarding the student's loss, and a lack of further follow-up with the student after disclosing the loss.

RQ2 Themes

Reluctance

Reluctance was a recurring theme within the three participants. We define reluctance as a disinclination to share or provide information about the suicide loss to others (peers/university staff). We found similar themes in relation to reluctance which were: Relationship to professor, willingness to disclose, desire to be professional and support conceptualization. Relationships to their professors was a significant area to consider because two of the participants (MM/SM) chose non-disclosure to staff or only told one staff member. MM reported this reasoning having to do with a desire to be professional within this institution because of the reality of being colleagues after graduating. SM mentioned, "Definitely did not really reach out to anyone in the program because I had a very like, I had an approach of looking at my cohort as colleagues rather than friends." This conceptualization of viewing school as a professional workplace appears to have created a reluctance to share about the suicide loss. MM stated "I like wasn't talking about it during class. I was trying to like hold it together" when reflecting on how she coped with the loss while still in school. When considering both phenomenon it appears that reluctance could have a correlation to professionalism which impacted their willingness to disclose to their professors and peers. CO disclosed having a different type of experience stating, "It was so close knit. And you know, I mean, our professor is really great at practicing what she preached about like the importance of community." CO brought in the relevance of community and supporting one another, especially during difficult times where her university was able to provide that through their connection with her professor.

Emotional Response

An emotional response while discussing the suicide loss was another significant area that was noted throughout the interviews with participants. Justification of emotions and the complexity of layers in the artmaking were valuable in this study. Verbally, MM stated, "I'm also like PMS'ing today, so I'm like extra emotional." and "I'm a crybaby" when she started having an emotional response while talking about the suicide loss. This participant had experienced the suicide loss less than a year before coming in for the interview whereas the other two participants (CO, SM) had experienced the loss 3-5 years prior. The time frame of the loss appears to be an important factor when conceptualizing all of their verbal and non-verbal responses to research questions. During the artmaking process CO stated, "it made me really angry, because, especially someone who's really passionate about mental health and making that accessible to everyone...and just to know that they felt like they couldn't share with anyone or find support." It appears that CO was able to express and advocate for the person who died from suicide through their artmaking. CO also stated, "I knew that they were a very creative person" where perhaps the artmaking became a way to

Non-faculty support

Participants described varied usage of non-faculty support (peers, colleagues) as a part of their lived experience as seen throughout the interviews. Participants MM and CO both stated finding the most amount of community through their available non-faculty. During MM's art making experience, they described a section of the art created featuring a long strip of sparkling white foam that continues off the page as that backing. MM stated:

“And then this was probably like cohort support...I told my whole like cohort friend group and I got a lot of support from them, which continued past graduation, which is kind of like here [Refers to sparkling piece].”(MM)

MM continued later, reminiscing on their perceived lack of support from the university itself during their first year and how that had influenced their decision making when they had later needed similar support. MM went on to say:

“I mean I think it was kind of informed by like my first year we had a few family member deaths of other people in my cohort and the response was basically like deal with it or take a gap year from most of the professors. And so I think that kind of like, in some ways, informed my decision to not really speak up. So I was like, what's the point?... I was kind of like, well, what are they going to do about it? And I think that's why I leaned on my cohort more than the university.”(MM)

CO similarly discussed in the reflection of their art how their non-faculty support was impactful to their understanding of the suicide loss. CO additionally also used the sparkly white foam within their artwork; Attributing the choice of the material as a way to honor the individual that had passed. CO stated:“Well I like the sparkle because I think they would have appreciated it and the colors...” (CO)

This idea of remembrance through the artwork repeated with SM, who was particular about the materials used. SM stated:

“Even though I knew it was like about my experience and my memory, it still felt like this is an offering for that person. This is something for that person. And so I became very careful about things. Like I wanted it to be beautiful for the person.” (SM)

Moreover, when asked about if the support they received in their course, despite stating that they did not receive support from their university's faculty: CO attributed their course professors facilitation of the classrooms environment, to how strong the community support became after the suicide loss. Noting the "close knit" nature allowed for a bonding through the previously taught curriculum that was significant to their experience. CO elaborated:

"I mean, our professor is really great at practicing what she preached about like the importance of community... activism and showing up for each other because a lot of times, um especially older generations...um weren't as accepting right? So you obviously, you wouldn't really have your connections anymore. You'd have to lean on your friends or chosen family...um it became a good part of that experience, kind of being able to put yourself in that position to see what your community needs and know the impact of that, even though I knew this person like for one semester in a class...I mean, after like 5 years, I still remember them and their impact."(CO)

Within the themes of non-faculty support, there was furthermore the lingering theme of yearning for connection in regards to their experience; Whether that be through the individual that had passed or other means. CO discussed when attending the funeral of the individual that had passed, a lot of discoveries were made about shared hobbies or interests that individual had with them. Continuing further:"...I wish you know, we had time to connect with that like when they were still here."(CO). MM similarly states in reference to when they had learned of the suicide loss and where wrapping up their time in academia. Alluding to feeling like they had "blended in" with the emotions of the end of their semester, stating: "No one was like, oh, something's like up. Everyone was like, oh, she's so sad the semester's ending. So I kind of went under the radar." (MM)

Recall

The ability to recall and express lived experiences of support following a suicide loss appeared as a theme for all participants throughout the interviews. On the whole, participants seemed to struggle with the lack of concrete dates and times when it came to the suicide loss (when they first received information regarding the death loss). MM spent significant time during the interview attempting to recall dates and times, even looking through their cellular device in order to make sure they had correct dates; Despite not being asked to. MM spent more time looking for the actual dates and times than they did engaging in the art making. Going through the interview with statements like:

"I'm trying to remember if I did tell anyone else...Like it's possible...I can't remember. I feel like [REDACTED] said something like I can check my email...I think I said something. I can't -like, it's not loading [Checking phone for information]...I don't know when, because I see the day it happened, but I don't see my email."

Even going as far as to repeatedly specify whether it was a day, week, month and or what day certain events within their experience happened. For example, MM states:

"I think like it happened on... April 19th and the semester ended like the last week of April, I think, and the graduation was the following week. So it was like literally like a week and a half left of the semester."(MM)

Equivalently, CO struggled to remember what year of academia they were in when the suicide loss occurred. Even apologizing as they attempted their recall: "Um, I'm trying to remember. Cause I transferred there...umm...I think it was like sophomore? I was a sophomore undergraduate? Sorry, maybe Junior. Maybe Junior."(CO). Comparatively, SM repeatedly

mentions the month that the suicide loss happened. Following each mention with a note that it was significant in some way; Stating:

“It actually happened in February 2020. Super interesting because it was before the pandemic...there's also this theme here where I'm like what is up with February?...I think that took me to where I felt in the at least a good month after happening literally February before the pandemic. So there was a lot going on.”(SM)

This can show a desire to further make meaning of their experience. By attaching a date or time to the event, it can make the event more concrete and less analogous in someone's mind. Furthermore, this can harken back to the act of remembrance that was discussed in the art-making previously. By remembering the time it happened, they could be honoring the individual by making sure the information presented is accurate. This bridges the subtheme of obligation that was additionally found throughout the interviews. Participants MM and CO both described a level of responsibility as a result of their loss experience to engage in the research to some capacity. MM stated “I feel like when I got the email, I was like, well, this is so specific that it would be like wrong for me not.”

Discussing the content of the artwork that they had created, CO reviewed the day they attended the funeral. Leaning into the activist themes that were discussed within their interview as they highlighted the act of remembrance beyond death. Further explaining how the event is held by them even in the current day. Calling the individual:

"...such an amazing person...Very inspiring. It clearly touched a lot of people and kind of just motivates me to... well, be a good friend and also um continue fighting for things I care about...be an example that, it's okay to share that you're struggling."(CO)

Omissions

The omission of certain elements within the artwork and verbal descriptions of the artwork became recurring. With the use of materials it became evident that certain areas of each artwork were not specifically discussed or described from the participant. MM did not disclose the meaning or significance of the small red square in the upper right corner. Every other element was given a specific meaning in the timeline of their suicide loss experience. It could be interpreted that the red element may be an area of the loss that they are still processing. The time of loss being under a year ago may also have implications for the omission of describing the red square. CO did not provide meaning to the large pink triangle at the top of the artwork. Their descriptions for all other elements of the artwork were specific and in depth relating to a growth component and positive angle connected to the suicide loss. SM decided not to use any of the provided white pieces of paper to begin creating their artwork and utilized the felt material only for their artwork without a white paper base. This was not discussed as to the reasonings for this choice by the participant.

Omission of disclosure of the loss occurring while attending school was a recurring theme among participants. Whether they told solely their professor or seldom peers there was a lack of communicating the type of loss to suicide. When interpreting this phenomenon, it appears there may have been a universal experience of stigma and professional pressure which reverted to withholding information.

Table 5

Themes identified in RQ.2

Codes RQ.2 What was the lived experience of support within the university setting for college students who have experienced a suicide loss as seen through their art expression?	Reluctance	Emotional response	Non-faculty support	Recall	Omission
	Relationship to professor	Justification of emotions	Peer-support	Specific dates and events surrounding	Materials
	Willingness to disclose	Complexity and layering of art making - the layers of emotional response	Yearning for connection	Verbiage of recall	Descriptive omission
	Desire to be professional		Support Conceptualization	Desire to recall	Question 8
	Support Conceptualization		Through the art they represented the desire to reach beyond / signified peer relationships past school	Obligation	Not discussing the significance of specific colors/shapes - a silence that was represented in the art making - an omission of information - the stigma of silence
				Death loss recall	
				Means of suicide	

Findings/Meanings

It seemed that each participant's experiences of support at the university level was relatively limited. Prior literature has suggested that universities have increased their awareness of the liability they hold and are incentivized to minimize risk with students that have been affected by or engage in suicidal ideation. Therefore, students who are most in need of postvention have instead been advised to take time off and are left isolated from networks on

campus that could be potential sources of support (Appelbaum, 2019). It seems that the students' understanding and expectations of what the university would do or how they would respond tended to guide the individual's decision to not engage in sharing, which ultimately limited the universities ability to respond. From our collected data, it was evident that all three participants were not aware of any practices in place by the institution they attend. This resulted in their decision to not disclose the loss to a higher level within the institution and only tell their professors or no one at all.

It was noted in the literature review that, in more severe cases, students that have been affected by suicide have had their behaviors and experiences subject to potential punishment from their institutions; such as behavioral contracts, suspension, or even expulsion (Lund, 2022). Our research suggests that students seem to have the perception that support would not be provided and feel that they were possibly insignificant in the greater academic system, as evidenced by the attitude that they would experience retaliation, be expected to withdraw from the program, or be overlooked due to the population size at their institution.

Additionally, it was found that little support was provided to the students in part due to reluctance to share. Although stigma was not identified by any of the participants it is possible that the inherent social attitudes around stigmatization may have also influenced their decision not to share. Prior research suggests that students may be unlikely to seek out campus mental health services or be open to discussing their experiences for fear of judgment or further stigma (El-Hachem & Lakkis et al., 2023). The omissions seen with each participant in the interview process may be a subconscious representation of the decision to omit or not communicate with the faculty or the university. It's possible that there is a link between their decision to not disclose to the university and their decision not to disclose specific details of their art. One notable

finding argues that individuals' reluctance to seek support may stem from the idea that the academic environment was intended to be a professional space, and as such students may not have wanted to address their grief with the perception that it might impede on their professionalism. Lastly, students' grief may be seen as a private or personal topic which may ultimately lead to maintaining confidentiality of their loss. In reflecting on the participants interviews and assessing the connection between university support and the lives experiences of the students, it seems that ultimately there is a limitation and disconnection between perceived university support and the possibility of provisional support for individuals bereaved by suicide.

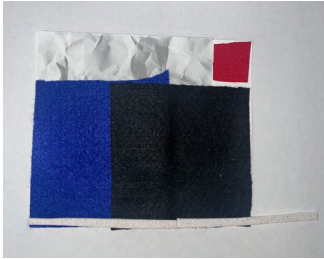
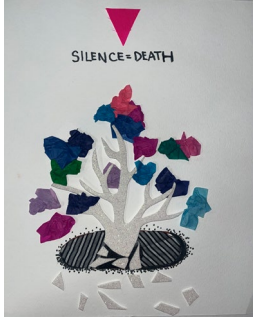

Art

When analyzing the artwork created and interviews, it became apparent that meaning making was crucial throughout the study. Art Therapy interventions can be a metaphorical way to address bereavement from suicide through experimenting with story telling and exploring narratives for how the experience impacted the individual (Beaumont, 2013). Each participant produced artwork that either mapped out their experience of suicide loss, described the impact of the loss or finding a connection with the bereaved individual through creative expression. This connection provides significance to how art can become a communicative tool for people who have experience a death loss to suicide.

The omission aspect of the verbal interviews was always reflected in the artwork with each participant having areas of their work in which they did not share about. This could have been a subconscious mechanism or a protective layer to their lived experience. Each participants further decided to omit how the person in their life died by suicide which could have been a purposeful omission or in relation to the researchers not asking specifically for this detail.

Table 6

Participants phenomenological responses

	RQ1: University Support	RQ2: Lived Experience	Artwork	Art Reflection
MM	Disclosed to one professor via email, got an extension for two days on an assignment, no further support	Feeling alone, stated she went “under the radar” during school.		Sequential timeline through the artwork with each color having meaning. Used art as a meaning making tool.
CO	Did not disclose to university, did not “pursue” any college resources, got support from peers at university rather than the institution itself	Yearned for closeness with the person they lost. Close relationship with professor and peers through shared interest within a queer studies course.		Used art as a meaning making tool to stay connected with the person who died by suicide.
SM	Did not disclose to professors or university, stated “it would have been up to me to look for it”	Preferred being alone after the suicide loss and being outdoors. Mentioned looking to people outside of the academic sphere.		Artwork represents the conceptual idea of where they geographically were when the loss occurred.

Conclusion

Upon revisiting our research questions, we were able to see that the identified themes offered valuable insights into our research. Specifically for research question 1, which inquired about the participants Universities current practices at the time of the loss, we found that there was little known about the practices other than individual professor determined provisions of academic support. This was partly due to the participants' reluctance to disclose due to the nature of the loss but also the proven need for university systems to assess how to create space and safety for students to feel comfortable sharing about their losses should they occur. A need for professionalism on part of the participants was also related to the non-disclosure of the loss to others (university/staff/peers). The absence of mental health or grievance resources, insufficient inter-faculty communication regarding the student's loss, and a lack of further follow-up with the student after disclosing the loss culminates to a “lack of a practice” provided by Universities and speaks to the greater need for reassessment of protocols in place.

Within Research Question 2, we inquired about the lived experience of students who experienced a suicide loss. This lived experience was verbal through the interview and creative through the artwork. For two of the participants (MM and SM) it was evident that they had a heightened care placed on professionalism and self reliance with the loss that occurred. CO reported having a stronger support system in relation to the suicide loss with her peers. We found that all participants were able to finish their degrees at their colleges. Their artwork was a strong reflection of how they each processed the suicide loss. Meaning making was a phenomenon throughout the art responses where they were either mapping out their lived experience, story telling how they dealt with it or recreated the scenario that they were in when it occurred. It

became evident that the timeframe of the loss was important to consider with how they lived experience was currently impacted from the suicide loss.

Reflections

In reflecting on the research it may be important to include individuals who are non-art affiliated participants. In this we also noted that the individuals who participated in this study may have skewed (biased) responses due to their own background and education within the field of art and psychotherapy. A larger sample size may also provide a higher validity within the findings. All participants identified as females where having a broader gender diaspora could provide more information about lived experiences and discourses that may impact loss.

Implications

The far-reaching implications of this research study suggest that we implore Universities to consider implementing more proactive procedures for the bereaved by loss of a loved one by suicide. Due to the general lack of disclosure of this kind of loss it is important for the University to swiftly address the incident if it is made known. This can be done by providing easy-to-understand access to resources and encouragement of faculty to communicate to the bereaved and amongst other faculty acknowledgment of the loss. Additionally, encouraging universities to assess their available resources and their means of communication of support for individuals who do reach out when they are grieving. It may be necessary to delineate expectations for communication with the university to foster a stronger sense of community and support. Prior research argued that, “college students who have higher levels of psychological sense of community present with a strong sense of integration and fulfillment of needs as well as a shared emotional connection with others in college”(McNally et al., 2021). Universities may consider communicating their expected provisional support with students prior to the experience of loss

thus encouraging a stronger psychological sense of community for students and reducing stress from ambiguous university or faculty responses.

Stigma related to suicide loss is another component when considering the implications for this research study and universities responses to suicide loss. Continued conversation and dialogues about suicide and suicide loss may shift perspectives towards sharing about their loss rather than non-disclosure.

Suggestions for future research

For future research studies, we have identified several ways for researchers to improve upon our study regarding the experiences of bereaved individuals within university settings, specifically related to suicide loss. Firstly, by employing a larger sample size and a diverse range of genders we can provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenological experience. Additionally we can look to examine perspectives from various types of schools and include that within the data such as private institutions, community colleges, or religious-based universities. These distinctions may potentially highlight nuanced differences in support systems and resources available to bereaved students. Another perspective that could be interesting to include would be that of the professors and University staff. By interviewing them about their roles and experiences in supporting bereaved students they can offer an untapped viewpoint of university practice expectations.

It was noted in prior research that “college students’ level of closeness to the deceased loved one played a large role in their academic experience and influenced the degree to which they had academic difficulties (McNally et al., 2021). Further research may also consider how the reported level of closeness and its impact on the degree of grief could influence the results of the study. “College students who felt closer to the deceased were more likely to advocate for

their academic well-being in that they: 1) talked with their professors, 2) felt more comfortable in interacting with their professors, 3) requested homework/test extensions complete their course requirements, and 4) change their study habits" (McNally et al., 2021), as compared to students who did not feel as close to the loved one they lost. In this study we had two participants who identified having a meaningful relationship with a classmate or colleague. It is possible that although the relationship was meaningful, the level of closeness or depth of the felt grief may have influenced students' decisions not to share with the university or seek help. In further research, it may be beneficial to gain a more concise grasp on the perceived level of closeness to the loved one. Further investigation may lend more information on when students do decide to inform the university and seek support.

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Appendix

Informed Consent Form

Loyola Marymount University Informed Consent Form

- TITLE:** An arts-based phenomenological study of university students' experiences of support when grieving a suicide loss
- INVESTIGATORS:** Neishamia Kayizzi, Addalee Lyon, Brittany Lee, Kristin Anderson.
- ADVISOR:** Maru Serricchio-Joiner, Marriage and Family Therapy, Loyola Marymount University, 310-338-7674
- PURPOSE:** You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate students' experience of universities' responses to experiencing grief due to a suicide loss of a meaningful relationship (family, friend, classmate, co-worker, etc.). You will be asked to engage in a semi-structured in-person interview and an art experience. The art portion will ask the participant to reflect and create an art response based on the interview questions. The interview will be videotaped after consent has been given, for the duration of the interview's expected length (~1 hour). No artistic ability is needed.
- RISKS:** Risks associated with this study include: participants engaging in this study are not subject to any physical risk and are unlikely to experience any disturbances in their normal daily activity. However, participants may be at risk for emotional distress connected to the research topic. Risks may include discomfort, grief, sadness, anger, fear, regret, anxiety, guilt, sorrow, or feelings of depression. In response to the potential risks, the research team will provide a list of mental health resources available to the participants. After engaging in the research, a member of the research team will review the list of resources with the participants to ensure appropriate support is available and to reduce any possible risks to the participants. The resource list is available in the Risks to Participants section of the informed consent.
- BENEFITS:** The benefits of the study seek to improve the overall response of universities to students who are grieving the loss of a suicide. The aim of the study will benefit participants by allowing them to share their own experiences and provide a sense of hope and ownership

over their story, while also driving systemic change at the university level. In addition, the study will benefit the community by highlighting areas of change that will ultimately trickle down to the social and relational qualities of future students experiencing grief. These communities will benefit by having pre-established protocols that will help with the potential experience of complicated grief and reduce potential harm. The study will also support future grief research specific to suicide and universities.

- INCENTIVES:** Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.
- CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). All research materials and consent forms will be stored beyond numerous sealed entryways and password-encrypted folders for digital information. Only individuals within the research team (investigators and advisors) will have access to stored information. When the collected data analysis ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.
- RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing, or your relationship with Loyola Marymount University.
- SUMMARY OF RESULTS:** A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. Please Email Brittany Lee at BLee60@Lmu.lion.edu. A summary of the results should be available to the participants at the end of April.
- VOLUNTARY CONSENT:** I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project. I certify that I give consent to be recorded and for my artwork to be photographed.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. Steve Heller, Institutional Review Board,

Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at irb@lmu.edu.

Participant's Signature

Date

Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss

Resources for Survivors of Suicide Loss

After A Suicide Resource Directory: Coping with Grief, Trauma, and Distress

<http://www.personalgriefcoach.net>

This online directory links people who are grieving after a suicide death to resources and information.

CALL 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Survivors

<http://www.allianceofhope.org>

This organization for survivors of suicide loss provides information sheets, a blog, and a community forum through which survivors can share with each other.

CALL 847-868-3313

Didi Hirsch

<https://didihirsch.org/services/suicide-prevention/therapy-support/>

Didi Hirsch pioneered many of the support group models for people affected by suicide that are in use around the nation and world. Because no one understands the pain of losing someone to suicide like other survivors, Didi Hirsch's bereavement groups for adults and teens are co-facilitated by a clinician and a peer who has successfully completed the program

CALL 888-807-7250

Friends for Survival

<http://www.friendsforsurvival.org>

This organization is for suicide loss survivors and professionals who work with them. It produces a monthly newsletter and runs the Suicide Loss Helpline (1-800-646-7322). It also published *Pathways to Purpose and Hope*, a guide to building a community-based suicide survivor support program.

CALL (916) 392-0664

CALL Toll Free: (800) 646-7322

HEARTBEAT: Grief Support Following Suicide

<http://heartbeatsurvivorsaftersuicide.org>

This organization has chapters providing support groups for survivors of suicide loss in Colorado and some other states. Its website provides information sheets for survivors and a leader's guide on how to start a new chapter of HEARTBEAT.

Kevin & Betty Van Thournout Meeting Facilitators 719. 229.9657

Chuck Smith Meeting Facilitator 719.238.2289

Parents of Suicides and Friends & Families of Suicides (POS-FFOS)

<http://www.pos-ffos.com>

This website provides a public message board called Suicide Grief Support Forum, a listserv for parents, a separate listserv for others, and an online chat room for survivors of suicide loss.

CALL 1-800-273-TALK OR (1-800-273-8255)

1-800-SUICIDE OR (1-800-784-2433)

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

<https://www.taps.org/suicide>

This organization provides resources and programs for people grieving the loss of a loved one who died while serving in the U.S. armed forces or as a result of their service. It has special resources and programs for suicide loss survivors.

CALL 800-959-TAPS (8277)

United Survivors

<https://unitesurvivors.org/>

This organization is a place where people who have experienced suicide loss, suicide attempts, and suicidal thoughts and feelings, and their friends and families, can connect to use their lived experience to advocate for policy, systems, and cultural change.

The four national suicide prevention organizations below have special sections of their websites containing a wide variety of resources for suicide loss survivors.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

<https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone>

AFSP is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, including those who have experienced a loss. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health by engaging in the following core strategies:

Funding scientific research

Educating the public about mental health and suicide prevention

Advocating for public policies in mental health and suicide prevention

Supporting survivors of suicide loss and those affected by suicide

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/loss-survivors/>

CALL 988

SAVE

<https://save.org/what-we-do/grief-support/>

<https://save.org/find-help/coping-with-loss>

TEXT SAVE TO 741741

Screening Questionnaire

This questionnaire functions as a tool to screen potential subjects for research conducted by LMU Graduate students, in Marriage and Family Therapy with a specialization in Art Therapy.

1. Are you at least 18 years old?

Yes

No

2. Have you lost someone you had a meaningful relationship with to suicide?

Yes

No

3. Did the loss occur in the last 5 years?

Yes

No

4. Were you enrolled in university (undergrad, grad, or doctorate) when the death loss occurred?

Yes

No

5. Are you available for a 1 hour in-person interview?

Yes

No

6. What is the best email for us to contact you?

7. Please list your availability:

Recruitment Flier

Opportunity to Participate in Research Study

Our names are Neishamia Kayizzi, Addalee Lyon, Brittany Lee, Kristin Anderson, and we are students of Dr. Maru Serricchio-Joiner in the Marital and Family Therapy with Specialization in Art Therapy at Loyola Marymount University. We are conducting a research study on college students who are experiencing grief and loss by suicide of a close relationship. We would like to know what your experience of support within the university setting was once experienced loss by suicide.

Who can participate in this study?

This study is for people who meet the following criteria:

- Is 18 years in age or older
- Enrolled full-time in a college or university (Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctorate, etc) or was enrolled at the time of the death loss
- Has experienced a death loss by suicide of a meaningful relationship (as defined by the participant)
- Death loss occurred within the last 5 years
- Is available for 1 hour in-person interview

What happens if I participate?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to conduct an interview with a member from our investigation team, in which you will be asked about your lived experience with college support after the loss of a close relationship. The interview process includes a structured questionnaire and a follow-up art experiential. You do not need to have artistic ability. The complete interview will take between 1 and 2 hours and will be carried out in-person.

What do I do if I am interested in participating?

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the [screening form](#) and a member of our research team will follow up with you once responses are received.



Or, if you would like more information, please contact Brittany Lee at BLee60@lion.lmu.edu.