

FACTORS THAT IMPACT GRIEVING FOLLOWING THE LOSS OF
AN ANIMAL COMPANION

A THESIS

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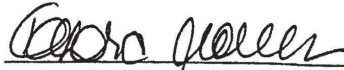
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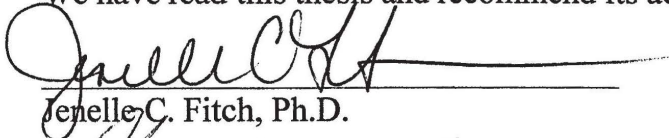
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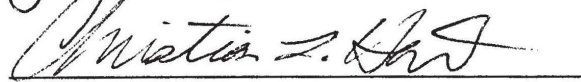
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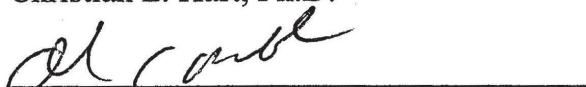
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Natalie Kathleen Rochester entitled "Factors that Impact Grieving Following the Loss of an Animal Companion." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's with a major in Counseling Psychology.


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ABSTRACT

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FACTORS THAT IMPACT GRIEVING FOLLOWING THE LOSS OF AN ANIMAL COMPANION

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Pet loss is a common occurrence. Previous literature on pet loss specifically examines attachment strength; however, this study also investigated attachment style. One hundred fifteen participants recruited from college classrooms, listservs, and social networking sites completed demographic questionnaires, the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (Johnson, Garrity, & Stallones, 1992), Core Bereavement Items (Burnett, Middleton, Raphael, & Martinek, 1997), and a modified Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). It was expected that loss type (death and non-death) would positively correlate with grief levels and insecure attachment would negatively correlate with grief intensity; however, a multiple regression revealed that anxious attachment style correlated to weaker attachment strength and not grief whereas avoidant attachment had no relationship to any variable. As expected, participants' stronger pet attachment correlated with greater grief. A post-hoc analysis showed that more time since the pet losses eased the grief felt by owners.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many people, the experience of losing an animal companion is devastating, and for others, it is easily accepted as part of the cycle of life with little anguish. Grieving the loss of a friend or family member tends to be very distressing for most people (Bowman, 1959; Doka, 1989; Worden, 2009). When one experiences the death of a friend or family member, the loss is typically recognized as a great misfortune, and much sympathy and many condolences are offered in response to the mourner. However, the loss of a pet is generally not met with similar understanding and concession. A comment frequently made in the literature on pet bereavement is that pet owners often lack appropriate support following the death of their pets (Quackenbush, 1982). The dearth of literature on the impact of pet loss indicates the need for further research and education in the area of pet bereavement.

Attachment Theory

Historically, attachment theory has focused on individuals' emotional bond to another person. Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980, 1988) and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978) developed the foundation to understanding the theory and pioneered research in this area. According to Bowlby (1969), attachment exists as a psychological connection between two entities – human or animal. He and others posited that attachment and attachment behaviors are part of a biological system that serves to

increase chances of survival through social cohesion (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Fogle, 1981). An attachment figure is a term often used in attachment research that refers to the individual to whom one is emotionally bonded, typically one's mother or another caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Following the creation of Bowlby's theory of attachment, Ainsworth and colleagues designated a three-category typology of attachment patterns that people develop in childhood (Ainsworth, et al., 1978). Later, the term for these patterns changes to attachment styles in research on attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). An attachment style is a set of behaviors, expectations, and emotions that form a pattern from children's past experiences with caregivers (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005b). There are two main types of attachment: secure and insecure. Insecure attachment can further be divided into anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. The typology was initially recognized through children's interactions with a caregiver. Ainsworth and colleagues found that children with secure attachments became upset when their attachment figure left, but were easily soothed by their reunion (Ainsworth et al., 1978). They felt confident to explore the world around them without fear of abandonment (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Secure attachments among children were highly correlated with the attachment figure's responsiveness to and level of concern for the attached child (Bertherton, 2002).

By contrast, a child who has little reason to believe their attachment figure will be responsive or accessible will likely experience anxiety. A reunion after a separation of the two may not be enough to reduce anxiety and produce security (Stayton & Ainsworth,

1973). Such an individual is thought to have an anxious attachment style. Anxious attachment style is characterized by worry that the caregiver will not be available or responsive to the child in a time of need (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Rejection from an attachment figure tends to activate avoidant attachment behavior which leads the child to avoid and detach from their caregiver during and after a separation (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Consequently, one with an avoidant attachment may be distressed and angry during a period of separation from their attachment figure and then feel defensively detached from the emotions associated with the separation.

Much later, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a four-category model of adult attachment: secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. Secure attachments are the same for the two models; however, the four-category model is based on positive/negative internal working models. Preoccupied individuals view their worthiness as low and attribute others as having high value (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). One with a dismissing-avoidant attachment has a positive self-evaluation and a negative evaluation of others which can lead to avoiding close relationships to prevent disappointment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Someone with a fearful-avoidant negatively evaluates their own and others' worth. By avoiding others, the fearful-avoidant person attempts to protect themselves from possible rejection (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

For all attachment styles, specific attachment behaviors are generated in relation to circumstance; however, attachment as a bond is constant and not largely influenced by

circumstantial factors. The type of behaviors a parent and child may develop in their quest to keep the child safe manifests in many forms – one is attachment behavior. Bowlby referred to this evolutionary development as the attachment behavioral system which provides a secure base to safely explore the environment (Shaver & Hazen, 1994). Bowlby (1988) posited that successful parenting stems from a biological desire for children to grow into happy and healthy adults. Likewise, parenting and a tendency toward attachment originate biologically to some degree (Bowlby, 1988). For example, most individuals have an instinct to protect themselves as well as their children from physical or emotional harm. Although there are biological reasons for attachment, Ainsworth and colleagues and Bowlby agreed that it is developed and maintained throughout one's life, particularly in childhood (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988). The revisionist perspective as described by Fraley (2002) postulated that children's attachment style may change throughout their lives as different relationship experiences inform their internal representation of their attachment style. Thus, pet owners' attachment to their pets may not be the same style of attachment they developed as a child to their caregiver.

One's caregiver is often considered the primary attachment figure during the early years of life, but many researchers suggest a hierarchy of attachment in which other individuals, such as a sibling, friend, romantic partner, or teacher serve as a secure base for the attached in the event that the primary attachment figure is unavailable (Shaver & Hazen, 1994). A hierarchy of attachment exists in adolescence and adulthood as well as

childhood; however, individuals' position may change or be removed while others may be added. An individual is likely to have bonds with more than one living being; however, the needs met by the responsiveness of these attachment figures may vary. For example, children's need to survive influences their caregivers' high rank on the hierarchy of attachment. Conversely, adults' primary need may shift from survival to romantic intimacy and companionship which may place romantic partners and friends in adulthood high on the hierarchy.

While the bulk of attachment theory examines attachment styles, pet research almost exclusively analyzes the strength of people's attachment to pets. Attachment strength refers to the intensity of fondness and connectedness one feels toward their attachment figure (Ainsworth, 1969). The amount of interactions between attachment figure and the attached shape attachment strength (Cairns, 1968). The consistency of interactions largely determines the strength of an attachment. This form of attachment differs from attachment style because, instead of indicating the quality of a bond, attachment strength represents individuals' amount of emotional fondness for another entity such as a pet. Attachment strength is linked to one's attachment style (Feeney, 2002). A securely attached individual will likely have a strong emotional connection with an attachment figure because they are comfortable with the close connection. Insecurely attached individuals may be emotionally distant (avoidant attachment) or slightly connected with a caregiver (anxious attachment) out of caution from being emotionally hurt.

Bowlby (1988) postulated that one's internal working model of attachment consists of the internalized beliefs and meanings of oneself and their relationships which are gleaned from caregivers in childhood. Additionally, individuals' primary attachments may shift toward pets in cases in which one's own parenting as a child lacked the necessary factors for a secure attachment (Rynearson, 1978). Likewise, Margolies (1999) researched how maternal loss affected women's attachment to animal companions. She suggested that an early maternal loss and unresolved grief may lead to an anxious attachment style to pets later in life (Margolies, 1999). The internal working model of attachment these women developed due to early maternal loss was re-created in their relationship with their pets as adults. The bond between pet and human in these incidences may not be one's primary attachment, but occupies a place on some level of his/her hierarchy of attachment. In each attachment style, a behavioral system guides one's actions based on his/her internal working model (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Grief

Death is perceived in different ways for people. Children tend to view death as temporary and somehow mutable (Kubler-Ross, 1969). As people mature, they learn the permanence of death and anticipate their own. For many people, death is typically a frightening life event. Fear of leaving loved ones, being left alone in life, loneliness at the time of death, or anxiety about the existence of an afterlife or supreme being are common (Kubler-Ross, 1969). This fear may be reflected by the use of euphemisms as they are typically used to soften the emotional impact of words regarding a taboo or

uncomfortable subject. In this case, the perceived harshness of *death* or *die* may be abated by euphemisms such as passing away, kicking the bucket, pushing up daisies, departed, expired, and resting in peace. These phrases protect the speaker and listener from acknowledging the finite and unknowingness of death (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Just as we use euphemisms to mask the poignant reality of loss, the expression of grief is sometimes ignored, denied, or censured.

Kubler-Ross (1969) posited that one's attitude toward death strongly influences their quality of life and psychological well-being. Denial, isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance formulate the stages of the grieving process. Once one experiences the loss of a loved one, they may be in one of these stages in any order yet may not experience all of them (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Denial stems from the shock of the permanence of death. This stage is felt by most grieving individuals as a psychological defense which is eventually replaced by partial or full acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Anger, bargaining, and depression relate to the lack of control and helplessness one feels in the face of death. The loss of one's cherished friend or family member is likely to cause a great deal of mourning. Likewise, the deprivation of one's beloved pet may produce a depressing and unwelcomed experience.

The grief associated with pet loss of any kind is often disenfranchised (Barker, 1989; Stewart, Thrush, & Paulus, 1989). Disenfranchisement occurs when there is a deprivation of the privilege of mourning. In the United States, family-based loss is much more recognized than non-kin relationships such as pets, co-workers, and sometimes

friends (Doka, 1989). If the true impact of the loss is not acknowledged by others, then the mourner may not perceive an opportunity to grieve publicly; therefore, they may not receive adequate support or assistance in their circumstance. Neimeyer, Prigerson, and Davies (2002) stated that symbolic rituals following a death often provide resources for the bereaved and facilitates understanding and coping with the significance of loss.

Beyond simple recognition of the relationship, some losses are not recognized as significant. Socially-sanctioned rituals for the griever of a lost pet do not typically exist in the United States (Quackenbush, 1985). Pet loss is often not thought to be significant enough for a socially-expected and fully-accepted ceremony, a condolence card, or leave from work (Bento, 1994; Bhasin, 1998; Hazen, 2008; Quackenbush, 1985). The dismissal of the pet owner's grief invalidates the experience and could potentially cause confusion for the pet owner about how to respond to the loss of their beloved pet.

Types of Pet Loss

Grief may vary depending on the type of loss. One may lose a pet through sudden death, death via euthanasia, compulsory adoption/sale, or running away. When one loses a companion animal suddenly, whether to death or by another means, denial is often quickly felt very strongly (Quackenbush, 1985). Because the owner does not have time to process the spontaneous event to make sense of it, confusion and guilt are also very common grief responses (Quackenbush, 1985). Some examples of sudden loss include a car accident, poisoning, gunshot, an unidentified health condition such as a heart attack, or an escape from a home or yard to an unknown place. Guilt may stem from the fear of

the owner's carelessness in preventing such a situation. Euthanasia is another form of death that often causes great strife for the owner. Terminal illnesses, old age, irreparable critical injuries, or other seriously debilitating medical conditions are some of the common reasons people chose to euthanize an animal companion. In general, guilt is the most prevalent emotion reported in response to euthanasia (Cowles, 1985; McCutcheon & Fleming, 2002). Euthanasia creates a strange situation for owners. Up until the decision to euthanize, they have had to make choices about their animal companion's health, happiness, and how to best continue with his/her life; however, euthanasia addresses the opposite dilemma - how, why, and when to end their life humanely (Quackenbush, 1985). Owners may question their motives, timing, the necessity to euthanize the pet, and whether they overlooked an alternative because they hold the power to make such a decision. Additionally, many owners believe that an attempt to keep their pet alive past a certain subjective point would have stemmed from selfish motives to be with their companion animal (Cowles, 1985). Some people may feel relief that their pet is no longer suffering. If the decision to euthanize is received with support by friends and veterinarians, the owner's doubt in their decision may wane (Cowles, 1985).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact different types of pet loss has on the grief experienced by pet owners and how attachment to their pets moderate the relationship between types of loss and grief. Ties with pets, just like connections with

friends and family, tend to be important influences in one's life. Researching the intricacies involved in such a relationship may provide owners, their friends and family, and counselors with an educated appreciation for the role of pets in an individual's life. Perhaps, with the knowledge gained, bereaved pet owners will be met with greater sensitivity from those around them.

The field of counseling psychology encompasses an array of topic areas. With a major focus on how the environment influences one's ability to function, life satisfaction, and overall condition, understanding the factors involved in grief after the loss of a pet may help inform counseling psychologists' work with clients and students. Simply investigating death only captures part of the phenomenon of loss; therefore, exploring the impact of other types of pet loss and various contextual variables provides an integral element to the discipline of counseling psychology. Much is known about several forms of loss in an individual's life such as job loss, divorce, and the death of a child, but comparably very little is known about the impact of losing an animal companion which underscores the importance of pet bereavement research and a greater understanding of the overall problem.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Pet Ownership

According to the American Veterinarian Medical Association, in the United States, there are more than 72 million pet dogs and nearly 82 million pet cats registered to their human owners (AVMA & Center for Information Management Staff, 2007). These numbers do not include the many unregistered dogs and cats or the other species of animal companions. Nearly half of all pet owners claim that their pets are members of their family (AVMA & Center for Information Management Staff, 2007). With so many individuals and families owning pets, one may speculate that pets provide some benefits to their owners.

For many people, their pets provide a source of companionship, comfort, and joy. Staats, Wallace, and Anderson (2008) revealed that avoiding loneliness was the main reason people gave for owning pets; the second motive was to increase daily activity. A study exploring attachments showed that individuals living alone with pets consistently had stronger attachments to their animal friends than individuals living with other people and without pets had to their roommates; therefore, an opportunity for a unique life condition may occur when owning a pet (Holcomb, Williams & Richards, 1985). The

pet's constant presence in a pet owner's life may reinforce the bond between the owner and pet. Pets usually happily greet their guardian upon their return and may whine or express anxiety in their owner's absence. This attentive affection may instill a feeling of importance and need for an individual. Similarly, one may deeply appreciate the consistent loyalty, forgiveness, and willingness to give from their pet. Some people say that their pets provide these and other benefits in a manner that human beings generally do not (Wood, Giles-Corti, Bulsara, & Bosch, 2007).

Many researchers have found that pet owners receive health advantages from pet ownership. People living alone with pets tend to report greater psychological well-being than those who do not. Turner, Rieger, and Gytax (2003) studied single individuals in Switzerland and found that participants who lived with a cat were less likely to be in a bad mood than participants who lived alone without a cat. Likewise, studies in the United States have found that women who lived alone with a pet were less lonely than women who lived alone without a pet (Goldmeier, 1986; Zasloff & Kidd, 1994). Additionally, another study indicated that non-partnered women with a pet have far fewer depressive symptoms than their counterparts without a pet (Tower & Nokota, 2006). Additionally, pet ownership tends to be associated with lower cholesterol and blood pressure (Allen, Blascovich, & Mendes, 2002; Anderson, Reid, & Jennings, 1992). Moreover, individuals suffering from a chronic illness tend to fare better with animal assistance and company than those who do not (Giaquinto & Valentini, 2009)

In a broader sense, animals tend to benefit people in treatment for physical illness or mental distress. Animal-assisted therapy is often used to aid the therapeutic process of psychotherapy or medical treatment (Beck, 2000). In a study examining the effects of animal assisted therapy on self-reported depression using the Beck Depression Inventory in college students, significant results were found. Students in the animal bonding alone group reported markedly decreased depression scores at the end of the 7 weeks than the control group (without psychotherapy or animal bonding.) Although the group psychotherapy plus animal bonding was successful in reducing depressive symptoms, the animal bonding alone group reported fewer depressive symptoms than those in the psychotherapy plus animal bonding group (Folse, Minder, Avcock, & Santana, 1995). Beck (2000) found that Alzheimer's patients' interaction with dogs in nursing homes increased social behaviors, such as smiles, touches, and kind looks. Likewise, another study showed that psychiatric patients engaged more with others and participated in much more discussion in a room with caged birds than the patients in the same room without the birds (Beck, Seraydarian, & Hunter, 1986).

While the majority of research has explored the benefits individuals enjoy from interaction with their pets, Wood et al. (2007) discovered that pet ownership also impacted community well-being. Pet ownership was reported to have increased social interaction and pet owners were more likely to exchange favors for others in a community which facilitated a positive friendly perception of the neighborhood (Wood et al., 2007). This study showed that pets generated a greater sense of community through

improving the lives of their owners such as decreasing loneliness and creating a ripple effect of these benefits to non-pet owners and the community as a whole (Wood et al., 2007).

Because pets may provide a unique source of support for their owners, individuals often grow particularly fond of and close to their animal friends. Gosse and Barnes (1994) discovered that the precipitating factors for high levels of grief after an individual's pet's death were strong attachments to the pet (high intensity of emotional closeness) regardless of the attachment style. Although attachment influences the amount of grief one feels, high stress from non-death related life events and low social support in the midst of a loss were also found to predict high levels of grief (Gosse & Barnes, 1994). Examining a stressful life event such as a hurricane, the companionship of pets was found to decrease their owner's stress and grief following the hurricane's destruction compared to those who lost their pet during the hurricane (Lowe, Rhodes, Zwiebach, & Chan, 2009). Perhaps the comfort that the survivors felt from their pets' companionship abated their stress and grief from other hurricane losses. In light of the benefits to having an animal companion, it follows that the loss of a pet might cause great distress to a pet owner.

Attachment

Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) posited that attachment security or insecurity informs one's self-representation as worthy and competent. With a secure attachment style in primary relationships, one can learn to extend their secure relational response to

others. As a child with a secure attachment grows through adolescence and adulthood, they are able to engage in relationships with peers, romantic partners, and colleagues in a mutually satisfying and comforting manner (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Individuals with an insecure attachment style tend either to remain anxious and uncertain in relationships as an adult or wary of becoming too emotionally involved with others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Attachment styles are often considered a maintained trait throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Belsky, 2002; Bowlby, 1988; George & Solomon, 1999). While one's attachment style may vary in short spans in childhood, research suggests that internal working models, which are cultivated through particular attachment styles developed in childhood, are fairly stable across the lifespan (Belsky, 1999). Despite rather conflicting views on the stability of attachment style, when incorporated into research, many researchers assume that attachment style is reasonably stable (Belsky, 2002).

Bowlby (1973) emphasized the impact of attachment behaviors on the development of a bond to one's attachment figure. Attachment behavior is any behavior that brings one person in proximity to another favored entity or attachment figure (Bowlby, 1973). These behaviors provide a catalyst for a particular attachment style and are largely shaped by the attachment figure's accessibility and responsiveness (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005b). For a secure attachment, the attachment figure's behaviors may appear as consistently positive and loving interactions with appropriate

and careful timing of solitude for the child, followed by the parent's calm return (Bowlby, 1988). In this way, attachment behavior becomes goal-directed in early development (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Bowlby stated that responses to separation from one's attachment figure are learned because such behaviors do not occur at birth, but rather between one-half and one year of age (Bowlby, 1973). The behaviors which lead to the development of attachment usually begin between parent and child; however, attachments may later be for other people, places, pets, or objects (Bowlby, 1973).

Like childhood attachment, adult romantic attachment is shaped by the same behavioral system and exists for the same purpose (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). For example, an adult seeks comfort, safety, responsiveness, and consistency from their romantic partner similarly to a child from their primary caregiver. In contrast to attachment in the early stages of life, adult attachment theoretically involves four styles of attachment. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) postulated that avoidance could be divided into fearful-avoidant and dismissing-avoidant. The fearfully-attached individual avoids getting hurt or disappointed in a relationship and the dismissingly-attached adult preserves their independence and self-reliance by defensively avoiding a potentially hurtful romantic partnership (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Furthermore, adult romantic attachment styles consist of two representational models for the self and others. Each of the four attachment styles are formed from individuals' positive or negative perceptions of themselves and others (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Because childhood and adult attachments are conceptualized slightly differently, research analyzing adult attachment

should utilize an adult attachment measure and interpret the results consistently with attachment theory pertaining to adults.

Attachment to Pets

Attachment theory extends itself beyond a primary attachment bond as in caregiver-child relationship in the early years of life or romantic partnerships in adulthood (Beck & Madresh, 2008). Bonds between friends and siblings are other types of relationships which researchers have explored in the last several years (Beitel & Cecero, 2003; Caspers, Yucuis, Troutman, Arndt, & Langbehn, 2007). Shore, Douglas, and Riley (2005) compared pet owners' quality of caretaking behaviors for their pets with their attachment to their pet and discovered that essential care of pets was not significantly correlated to the strength of individuals' attachments to their pets. In light of their findings, the researchers proposed that analyzing pet owners' attachment to their pets may play a restricted role in examining the advantages of human-pet relationships. Nevertheless, attachment theory has proven useful in investigating various kinds of relationships, including those between humans and their pets, by providing a framework to comprehend the effect that bonds with those in our lives may have on our relationships and well-being (Beck & Madresh, 2008). When exploring one's attachment to her/his pet, an integral part of the human-pet dynamic is captured and the consideration of attachment to pets is necessary to understanding the impact pets have in the lives of their owners. Although examining pet attachment may not be beneficial for studying certain dynamics of the human-pet bond, findings from pet attachment research has contributed to a deeper

understanding of the human connection with pets, specifically the impact of pet loss and human bereavement. Many researchers have discovered that pet owners' intensity of grief after their pet loss is directly related to their attachment strength to their animal companion (Field, Orsini, Gavish, & Packman, 2009; Gosse & Barnes, 1994; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006; Planchon, Templer, Stokes, Keller, 2002). Although attachment strength has been identified as influential to human response to pet loss, attachment style to pets has not been specifically investigated in relation to pet owners' grief following the loss of their pet. Additionally, a lack of understanding of the role one's attachment to his/her pet plays in their emotional response to pet loss may perpetuate dismissing remarks made to the pet owner in regards to their pet loss. Such comments were found disparaging to individuals and, subsequently, the bereaved pet owner's job performance or relationship quality may be adversely affected (Eyetssemitan, 1998). Therefore, studying pet attachment is pivotal in acknowledging the systemic impact of the human-animal bond.

Pets may play a variety of roles in their owners' lives; nevertheless, the people caring for these pets tend to become attached to them in some manner. Often, pet owners think of their pets as children (Fogle, 1981; Katcher & Rosenberg, 1979). Much of the early research on attachment emphasized human to human interaction; therefore, a human being's attachment to an animal may not fit specifically into some explanations for the existence of attachment, especially in light of evolutionary perspectives. Although pets are not their owners' biological descendents and do not pass on genetic material, they benefit their human family in many ways. Pets can provide emotional comfort, constant

companionship, loyalty, and serve as a dependent being to nurture (Fogle, 1981). Humans often respond to pets as attachment figures in which the pet serves one or more of the mechanisms of attachment described by Bowlby (1973, 1988) and Ainsworth et al. (1978). Some of these mechanisms include proximity, nurturing behaviors, dependency, sharing of experiences, positive feelings elicited by the pet, and touch (Fogle, 1981). The intensity of the emotion involved in attachment is paramount in understanding the ties between an individual and their attachment figure (Bowlby, 1988). The positive emotional experiences between a human being and their pet, like those between a parent and child, enhance the relational connectedness and closeness (Fogle, 1981). Behaviors such as acting happy when the owner returns home, reaching for affection, and showing affection for the owner boost the attachment between pet and owner through increasing a sense of well-being or being loved (Fogle, 1981).

Human attachment to pets is seen in the owners' affirmation of the pet, such as verbal proclamations of their love for their animal companion and the owners' behaviors. People generally work to keep their animal companions safe and close to them via leash, collar with identification tag, microchipping, fences, cages, or keeping them indoors. When owners leave their pet at home, they may return sooner than if they did not have their pet, perhaps because they miss their company (Fogle, 1981). In addition, pet owners will often tolerate a degree of destruction and other types of misbehavior from their animal friend because they have a vested interest in, and attachment to, their pet (Fogle, 1981). In many cases, pet owners will move residences to avoid continued complaints

from neighbors about the pet or changes in the pet policy at their residence, and at times, put up with being bitten or scratched to evade euthanizing the animal (Fogle, 1981). Clearly, pet owners will go to great lengths to keep their companion animals in their lives.

In research on the human-animal bond, attachment strength has been studied rather than attachment style to the pet with few exceptions. Focusing on the level of fondness for one's pet disregards the tenets of attachment theory which emphasizes domain-specific behaviors and emotions, such as attachment security and insecurity (Beck & Madresh, 2008). To test whether adult attachment measures were useful for measuring human attachment style to pets and compare adult romantic attachment style with pet attachment style, Beck and Madresh (2008) modified the Experiences of Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R: Fraley et al., 2000) measure to fit the human-pet bond. Beck and Madresh found that people tend to have more secure relationships with their pet than with their romantic partners. Regarding the association between adult romantic attachment style and pet attachment style, the researchers concluded that one's attachment style to pets and romantic partners are weakly correlated, perhaps due to different established internal working models. Although romantic and pet relationships are internally represented in individuals differently, Beck and Madresh (2008) found that the ECR-R is a reliable and valid measurements of pet attachment style. Furthermore, in several studies, the ECR-R has proven successful in tapping into general nonromantic adult attachments (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005a; Vilchinsky,

Findler, & Werner, 2010; Wright & Perrone, 2010). Beck and Madresh (2008) explored attachment style between pet owners and their pets; however, their study did not examine how this attachment style may affect one's grieving after losing their pet.

Attachment as a Mediating Variable

Krause-Parello (2008) investigated the relationship between loneliness and women's general health as well as the possible mediation of pet attachment strength to the relationship. The researchers found a positive relationship between loneliness and pet attachment which suggested that the lonelier older women got, the more they may depend on their pets for companionship (Krause-Parello, 2008). Pet attachment mediated the relationship between the participants' loneliness and health (Krause-Parello, 2008). Just as attachment has been found to mediate the relationship between grief resulting from the death of a pet and a particular life condition like loneliness, attachment is related to pet loss grief and other conditions specific to owners' relationship with pets.

Attachment Strength

Planchon et al. (2002) studied the intensity and duration of grief symptoms of veterinarian clients and college students whose pets have died. Specifically, the researchers examined general depression, death depression, and various contextual variables such as time since death and length of ownership. General depression correlated positively with grief symptoms. Attachment strength was measured using the Pet Attitude Scale and was found to positively correlate with grief as well. With a stronger attachment or fondness for their pet, pet owners felt more intense grief.

Attachment strength (intensity of emotional bond) and style (secure or insecure) to the deceased animal was found greatly predictive of complicated grief for pet owners (Field et al., 2009). The researchers used the Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), a measure of adult attachment style to other human beings, to generalize the participants' reported attachment style to pets. This method may be flawed in light of Beck and Madresh's (2008) findings that delineated a weak correlation between adult relationship attachment and adult attachments to pets; however, the Field et al. (2009) and Beck and Madresh (2008) studies indicate an insufficient acknowledgement of attachment style's role in human-pet bond research. Nevertheless, Field et al. (2009) found that if the owner felt a sense of connection with their pet after the loss, the impact of the grief was less than those who lost or distanced themselves from the connection they had with their furry friends. An interaction between anxious and avoidant attachment styles and the anxious attachment style alone were found predictive of complicated grief which was not mediated by attachment strength or the bond after the pet's death. These discoveries emphasize the importance of differentiating between attachment strength from attachment style in evaluating the role attachment plays in one's response to pet loss (Field et al., 2009). These studies also suggest that attachment to one's pet may impact the amount of grief experienced by the bereaved owner. Furthering the research to investigate the degree to which attachment mediates the grief felt while considering other variables such as the type of loss beyond pet death alone may fill a gap in the existing literature.

Cultural pressures or expectations to simply get over the distress of losing a pet may encourage the emotional distancing of or detaching from one's bond with the deceased animal (Doughty, 2009). This behavior is similar to the avoidant attachment style and may lead to a faster decline in mourning pet loss than one would experience with a human loss. Wrobel and Dye (2003) searched for an average grieving period of time for bereaved pet owners and found that grief symptoms decreased after six to ten months of the death of a pet. An earlier veterinarian study revealed a six to eight week average for heavy grieving specifically (Barker, 1989).

Grief

Bereavement research begins with understanding the relationship between loss and attachment (Cassem, 1975). The intensity of grief is thought to be dependent on the strength of attachment one has with the deceased (Bowlby 1980; Cassem, 1975). Since attachment strength is linked to attachment style, it is conceivable that grief may be dependent on attachment style as well. The loss of one's cherished friend or family member is likely to cause a great deal of mourning. Likewise, the deprivation of one's beloved pet may produce a depressing and unwelcomed experience.

Grief is distinct from mourning via the mechanisms used in each. Grief consists of the psychological, physiological, and emotional reactions to loss while mourning deals with cultural displays of grief often contrived in a symbolic fashion, such as wearing black clothing and conducting funerals (Averill, 1968). While grief is a natural phenomenon, mourning may not be acceptable in some environments. For example,

crying, hugging people for comfort, or constantly wearing black clothing to work may not be welcomed or considered culturally acceptable workplace decorum.

While the grief following the loss of a pet varies depending on the individual's life situation or perspective, a study found that elderly retired individuals felt a moderate to severe amount of distress after the death of their pet compared to half of the much younger working individuals examined (Cowles, 1985). Like the loss of a human family member or friend, sadness, emptiness, and pain were the common emotions felt after the loss of an animal friend (Cowles, 1985). The death of an animal companion tends to be considered the loss of a safe space in the owner's life because one loses the perceived unconditional affection and devotion pets tend to provide (Barker, 1989; Quackenbush, 1985).

As pets are often considered members of a family or close friends of a family, studies have examined the impact pet loss has on the emotional well-being of families. In a study of married couples, Gage and Holcomb (1991) found that 40% of wives and 28% of husbands said that they felt "quite" or "extremely" disturbed after the death of their animal companions. In fact, the men in their study rated the death of their pet as stressful as losing a close friend and more stressful than their children leaving home or getting married. Women in the study ranked their pets' death as stressful as losing touch with their married children and more stress-producing than losing a close friend.

Responses to Grieving the Loss of a Pet

A grieving individual may struggle to recreate meaning in their life which was altered by their loss (Neimeyer et al., 2002). For a bereaved pet owner, this process may be confusing since the impact and meaning of the loss is often underestimated. Pet loss may be a socially negated loss which sends the message to the mourner that their loss is not much of a loss at all (Worden, 2009). Quackenbush (1982) cited that common remarks made to bereaved pet owners tend to be insensitive, invalidating, and minimizing. Comments such as, “It was only a cat/dog” or “Why don’t you get another cat/dog?” highlight some of the dismissive statements pet owners receive from others which may rebuff their experience. It may be difficult to imagine someone responding to a newly widowed wife with comments and question such as, “He was only your husband” or “Why don’t you get another husband?” Such remarks for pet owners show disregard for the value of the animal-human bond and the basic need for mourning and grief after the death of one’s pet.

When one’s family member or friend dies, a funeral usually takes place. A funeral is a symbolic ceremony to honor and provide some closure for the deceased and their survivors. Ramshaw (2010) commented that funerals offer comfort from sympathetic attendees, give a sense of assurance to the reality of the death, and for some, relieve fear through religious promises. Symbolic rituals such as funerals rarely occur for pet owners. Major cities tend to offer a few companies which serve pet owners’ burial, memorial, and cremation needs; however, this practice is not at all commonplace.

Cultural norms for expressing grief after a death of a person close to an individual largely entail the generally acceptable practices of crying, sharing memories, and taking time away from work; however, the same practices are less accepted after the loss of a companion animal (Stewart et al., 1989). Fogle (1981) mentioned that throughout his career as a veterinarian, he has recognized the benefit of validation for the owner's loss and grief. He and other researchers have discovered that symbolic practices such as funerals or creating a photo album may help many bereaved owners cope better with their grief (Fogle, 1981; Stewart et al., 1989).

Disenfranchisement of Grief

The bulk of literature on disenfranchised grief explores the workplace environment. In this vein, grief of any kind is considered unwelcome, including pet loss. As previously mentioned, some losses are perceived as insignificant. Pet losses are one such circumstance in which employers tend to expect a quick emotional rebound with little, if any, time off or support given (Bento, 1994; Hazen, 2008). Not only would supervisors and employers be expected to treat the grieving employee differently than they would an employee not experiencing grief, they also have to handle the mourning employee's peers' awkwardness and uncomfortable feelings around the griever (Bhasin, 1998). Nevertheless, research indicates that newly-mourning employees may experience a decrease in occupational productivity and output through a drop in self-confidence, interest, or as a result of preoccupied thoughts (Bhasin, 1998). An employer tends to see such business ramifications as a loss and possibly detrimental to the company. Even so,

disenfranchised grief often produces an escalation of grief, feelings of isolation, resentment, and possibly devaluation of the self (Stewart et al., 1989). As a result of the disenfranchisement of grief, some individuals may not know how or when to speak about their grief due to the pervasive lack of explicit recognition of death since childhood through such methods as censoring language and avoidance (Wolfson, 1975).

Often pet loss' impact on an individual is undermined and viewed separately and unlike the loss of a human friend or family member; however, it has been discovered that the grieving process for pet loss is experienced in a fashion very similar to human loss. A study conducted by Quackenbush (1985) suggested that people experience sleep loss, high psychological and emotional distress, social difficulty, and missed days from work similarly after the loss of a human or pet. Other grieving behaviors such as searching, obsessive rumination of the events leading up to the death, thoughts of prior significant deaths, and fears of losing control are also found to be commonly experienced after the loss of a human or pet alike (Cowles, 1985).

Types of Loss

Euthanasia

Stemming from Greek origins, the term euthanasia literally means a good death (AVMA, 2007). With the aim to end an animal's suffering with minimal pain and as peacefully as possible, the method of euthanasia may provide a companion animal with a good death. McCutcheon and Fleming (2002) found that owners who chose to euthanize a pet had significantly stronger attachments to their pets and experienced more grief than

owners who opted not to euthanize their pet but chose to let their animal companions die naturally. Furthermore, the same researchers discovered significant interactions between type of death, gender, and replacement of pet and for type of death and age of owner (McCutcheon & Fleming, 2002). McCutcheon and Fleming (2002) found that those who chose to allow their pets to die naturally felt a greater loss of control and potentially had higher social isolation than their counterparts who chose euthanasia. The authors of the study suggested that lack of preparation for the pet's death and a sense of control in deciding how and when their pet died may have caused some of the difference between the two groups (McCutcheon & Fleming, 2002). In another study, variables such as demographics and religious affiliations were not strong predictors of distress following the death of a pet, but, like the McCutcheon and Fleming (2002) study, the euthanization of one's pet was a strong predictor of severe grief following the death of the pet (Davis et al., 2003). Davis et al., (2003) investigated the role of religion in grief associated with pet death. While specific religious denomination did not affect pet owner's grief, a belief in an afterlife was found comforting for nearly half of the participants.

Sudden Death

Archer and Winchester (1994) studied pet death and grief specifically and discovered a significant positive correlation with the suddenness of death and the grief experienced. When the death of a pet occurred spontaneously, the owner felt a much higher level of grief than the owners who were forewarned of the pet's impending death (Archer & Winchester, 1994). The researchers' findings are in contrast to some previous

studies which have not found a significant difference in grief based on the cause of death (Gerwolls & Labott, 1994). The Archer and Winchester (1994) study consisted of twice as many participants than the Gerwolls and Labott (1994) study which had a fairly small sample. Additionally, Archer and Winchester (1994) included participants who lost a pet within the previous year of the study, whereas the other study involved participants who lost a pet within the last three weeks of the investigation's inception. The inconclusive findings may be caused by sampling discrepancies and distinctions in time since pet loss.

While some people may speculate that caring for a terminally ill loved one may only yield negative consequences due to inevitable death, Sanjo et al. (2009) discovered many positive aspects of providing care to such persons. In this study, the perceived advantages and disadvantages of caregiving for ill individuals in Japan were examined (Sanjo et al., 2009). The researchers found that bereaved survivors reported that the rewards of caregiving for the deceased before their death included personal growth, reprioritization, an increased sense of life purpose, appreciation for others, satisfaction, and feeling in control of the deceased's life. Although advantages to caregiving exists, a common burden associated with caring for a terminally-ill loved one is the prolonged bereavement experience and a sense of failure in providing adequate care (Sanjo et al., 2009). Planchon et al. (2002) found that participants whose pet died due to an accident and those who chose not to euthanize their pet had much greater extended grief than those participants whose pet did not die due to an accident and those who chose euthanasia (Planchon et al., 2002). Perhaps the owners blamed themselves for not doing

more to prevent the accident or alleviate the pet's suffering by refusing euthanasia.

Similarly, Quackenbush and Glickman (1984) studied the grief associated with pet death and found that mourning pet owners often felt guilty if they believed they did something to cause or did not prevent the death of their pet. Perceived preventability of the loss may have an impact on an owner's grief experience after a pet loss.

Sudden losses occur spontaneously and sometimes inexplicably. Car accidents, heart attacks, gunshot, poisoning, runaways, or an immediate decision to place the pet up for adoption are some of the ways an owner may experience a sudden loss. Researchers exploring sudden death and bereavement have found that grief due to sudden loss is much more difficult to overcome than a death which was preceded by a warning (Davis et al., 2003; McCutcheon & Fleming, 2002; Stephens & Hill, 1996; Worden, 2009). A greater sense of shock and, possibly, a lack of explanation, may contribute to this difference. Archer and Winchester (1994) found that attachment and suddenness of death were positively correlated with grief. Specifically, the stronger the emotional attachment, the more intense the grief felt by the bereaved pet owner. In cases when the death was sudden, the pet owner felt particularly strong grief.

Significance of the Study

A significant amount of literature on pet loss and grief define pet loss as the death of an animal companion; however, the meaning of the term loss extends beyond death alone. Loss refers to the deprivation of something once had; therefore, the present study attempts to fill a gap in the literature by examining various types of pet loss – euthanasia,

sudden death, runaway, petnapping (a stolen pet), and other forms of loss. The findings may inform mental health professionals, employers, and the general public about the tangible effects that losing a pet can have on an individual.

Bowlby (1977) postulated that one's attachment style will influence the manner and intensity of their grieving after the death/separation of an attachment figure and the one attached. If the quality of one's attachment (attachment style) is likely to guide their grief response, it is conceivable that investigating this construct in pet loss research is necessary. Attachment style is often explored in the literature regarding human-to-human interaction; however, human-to-pet attachment styles are rarely analyzed, especially in respect to its effect on grief. When attachment is studied in pet loss research, the strength of attachment has been inspected (Field et al., 2009; Gerwolls & Labott, 1994; Gosse & Barnes, 1994; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006; Krause-Parello, 2008; Planchon et al., 2002; Woodward & Bauer, 2007; Wrobel & Dye, 2003). Field et al. (2009) generalized participants' attachment style to their romantic partners to their attachment style to their pets; however, Beck and Madresh (2008) discovered that these attachments are poorly associated which suggests that the method employed by Field et al. (2009) is not sound. Nevertheless, Beck and Madresh (2008) utilized the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (Fraley et al., 2000) measure to apply to human-pet interactions and found that the measure was a highly reliable and valid approach to capturing pet owners' attachment style to their pets. Investigating how one's attachment style to pets may impact the degree of grief they experience after the loss of their pet may sharpen researchers' and

clinicians' awareness of the intricacies of one's attachment to their pet and the importance of acknowledging the reality of their grief. Thus, studying human attachment style to pets will fill a significant gap in the literature. Perhaps a better understanding of the factors which predict grief intensity may help reduce the disenfranchisement of grief associated with pet loss and increase support for and recognition of the effects of pet loss.

Hypotheses

This study proposed the following hypotheses:

H1. A pet owner's insecure attachment will negatively correlate with levels of grief after the loss of the pet.

H2. Pet death and non-death related pet loss (i.e. runaway, petnap) will positively correlate with levels of grief.

H3. The strength of an owner's attachment to the pet will positively correlate to levels of grief felt after the pet loss.

H4. A pet owner's attachment strength will negatively correlate with insecure attachment style.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

One hundred fifteen participants were recruited from introductory psychology courses at a public university primarily for women in a Southwestern state, advertisements on online social networking sites, websites related to pet loss, and university listservs. Criteria for participation in the study included being at least 18 years of age and ownership of a lost pet. The species of pets were not restricted and various types of loss (i.e., death, runaway) were permissible for participation.

Instrumentation

The research packet consisted of a consent form (see Appendix A), demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B), the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS; Johnson et al., 1992) (see Appendix C), the Core Bereavement Items (CBI; Burnett et al. 1997) (see Appendix D), and the modified Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) (see Appendix E).

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants completed a demographic questionnaire which included information pertaining to participants' sex, age, race/ethnicity, education level, relationship status at

the time of the pet loss, living arrangement, and whether children lived in the home at the time of loss. In addition, participants were asked to specify the following: (a) the species of their pet, (b) length of ownership of lost pet, (c) time since the loss, (d) number of other pets during the time of loss, (e) the type of pet loss, (f) whether the owner was present during the euthanasia if it was used, (g) the reason for euthanasia, (h) how the remains were handled if the pet died, (i) whether the owner got a new pet after the loss, (j) and whether a memorial or rituals were conducted.

Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS)

The Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS; Johnson et al., 1992) is a 23-item scale that was used to measure the attachment strength (degree of emotional connection) a pet owner had with their pet. The response set used is a 4-point Likert scale with higher scores signifying stronger attachment strength. Example items include, “My pet means more to me than any of my friends” and “I am not very attached to my pet” (items 8 and 21 were reverse scored). The LAPS has a Cronbach’s alpha of .94 which indicates high reliability. A minimum alpha level of .50 is recommended for research (Nunnally, 1978). The current study had a Cronbach’s alpha of .70. The LAPS has also been found to have strong content validity based on multiple interviews with pet owners as well as good construct validity by comparing the LAPS to other pet attachment scales developed (Johnson et al., 1992). For purposes of the present study, the researcher modified the tense used in most of the items to reflect the participants’ thoughts or feeling of their pet loss.

Core Bereavement Items (CBI)

The Core Bereavement Items questionnaire (CBI; Burnett et al., 1997) is a 17-item measure used to determine the intensity of the bereavement/grief response of a mourning individual. The measure uses a 4-point Likert response scale with higher scores indicating a more grief symptoms. The psychometrics for this measure are satisfactory. The CBI has a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .91 and demonstrated good construct validity from a factor analysis and discriminate validity based on the expected responses of particular individuals who possessed a trait which may interfere assessing only grief, such as depression (Burnett et al., 1997). An example of an item is, "Do thoughts of x make you feel distressed?" The investigator in the current study replaced the "x" written in each item in the survey with "pet" to fit the aim of the study and changed the word "death" in the first question to "loss" to fit the study's intention to assess various types of pet loss. The CBI is an ideal measure for pet loss due to its intended purpose to provide an instrument that could be used with various bereaved populations.

Modified Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R)

The Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised scale (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) consists of 36 items (18 items on an anxiety scale and 18 items on an avoidance scale) to assess one's attachment style in an intimate relationship. The response set is a 7-point Likert scale. The measure has adequate convergent and discriminant validity based on a series of studies comparing this instrument to others which have been shown to

accurately assess attachment style (Sibley, Fischer, & Lui, 2005). The anxiety scale and the avoidance scale have a reported Cronbach's alpha of .95 .93, respectively (Sibley & Liu, 2004). Many researchers have used the ECR-R to assess for general attachment style rather than romantic relationships (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005a; Vilchinsky et al., 2010; Wright & Perrone, 2010); therefore, it has been widely agreed that the ECR-R can serve as a measure of adult attachment for non-romantic relationships (Beck, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005a). In an attempt to assess human attachment style to pets, Beck and Madresh (2008) modified the ECR-R with the suggestions from Fraley et al. (2000). The modified version consisted of eight items for each of the anxiety and avoidance scales which presented items that may pertain to pets. Additionally, Beck and Madresh (2008) reworded some items to create the reverse to balance the scales with secure and insecure items. The item, "I often discuss my problems with my partner" was changed to read, "I often share my problems with my pet." Internal consistency for the modified scales was .81 for avoidance and .75 for anxiety. The present study used the modified version of the ECR-R and was worded in the past tense to fit the nature of pet loss. The current study had a Cronbach's alpha of .55 for avoidance and .14 for anxiety.

Procedure

Participants were supplied with a research packet online via PsychData, a professional website for researchers to collect data in a protected fashion. The packet consisted of a consent form and the four questionnaires [demographic questionnaire, CBI (Burnett et al., 1997), LAPS (Johnson et al., 1992), and the attachment style measure

Beck & Madresh (2008) modified from the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000)] listed previously. The consent form stated the purpose of the study and potential benefits and risks. As a measure to reduce the risk of confidentiality loss, the names and addresses collected were stored separately in an unlinked data file on PsychData. The statement, “There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions” was added to the initial steps of the online study process. Additionally, Psychdata uses Secure Socket Layer (SSL) 256-bit encryption technology to protect data with state-of-the art SSL encryption algorithms to provide added protection. After participants indicated their consent, they completed all four surveys. The researcher provided the participants with counseling resources including the university counseling center and two pet loss websites in the event that they needed support with difficult emotions generated by participation in the study. Student participants were awarded credit in the course. Non-student participants were entered into a drawing to receive a \$20 gift card.

Statistical Analyses

The purpose of this research was to investigate the grief impact of pet loss on pet owners. The first hypothesis predicted that pet owners’ secure attachment style would positively correlate with levels of grief after the loss of the pets. The researcher also expected that pet owners’ insecure attachment style would positively correlate with levels of grief after the loss of the pets. Additionally, it was predicted that the strength of the owners’ attachment to their pets would positively correlate to levels of grief felt after the

pet loss. The fourth hypothesis predicted the relationship between the pet owners' attachment strength and their attachment style would be positively correlated was predicted. A multiple regression was used to test all four hypotheses. Finally, in a post-hoc analysis, a multiple regression tested the relationship between time since the pet losses and pet owners' grief intensity. Figure 1 displays the expected relationship between attachment strength, insecure attachment style and type of loss (death and non-death) and grief intensity.

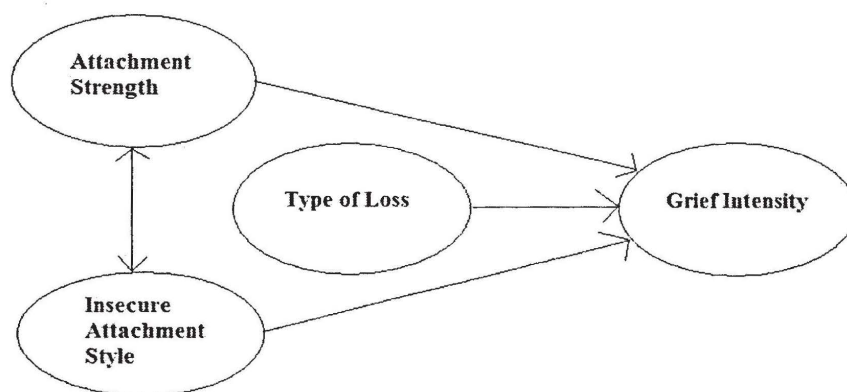


Figure .1 Theoretical model. A relationship between attachment strength, insecure attachment style and type of loss (death and non-death) and grief intensity was predicted. Attachment strength and attachment style were also predicted to be correlated.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The present study consisted of 115 participants from 144 submitted surveys. Because 29 participants did not complete the survey or meet the criteria for participation (ownership of a pet they lost within the last three years), their surveys were not considered in data analysis. The sample consisted of 22 men and 93 women with an age range of 18 to 65 years ($M=37$; $SD=13.3$). Among the participants, 85% were Caucasian and 11% were Hispanic. The remainder of the participants were Asian, African American, and Native American. More than half the participants had obtained education at or beyond the Bachelor's degree level (see Table 1). At the time the participants lost their pet, 41% were single, while 51.4% identified as partnered or married. The sample consisted of 6% divorced individuals and less than 2% were separated or widowed. Furthermore, among the sample, 25% lived alone and 75% lived with at least one other person at the time they lost their pets. Of those living with another person, 34 participants had children in their household.

Table 1

Highest Level of Education Achieved by Participants (n=115)

Education Level	Percentage
Some High School	0.9
High School Diploma/GED	23.5
Associates/Vocational	17.4
Bachelor's Degree	29.6
Master's Degree	23.5
Doctorate/Medical Degree	5.2
Total	100

Along with demographic questions, participants were asked a series of questions related to their pets and pet losses. The sample consisted of 33.9% who lost a cat and 59.1% lost a dog. The remaining 7% reported that they lost a rabbit, wolf hybrid, bird, fish, hermit crab, or horse. The participants' length of ownership of their lost pets is shown in Table 2 and the amount of time since the participants lost their pet is displayed in Table 3. Additionally, 29.6% of participants did not have other pets at the time they lost their pets while 60.9% had four or fewer other pets in their household. The type of loss was examined. It was found that 89.6% of the sample's pets died and 10.4% of the pets were lost in a manner other than death. Table 4 indicates the participants' loss by type. Other participants said that their pet died from natural causes (i.e., old age), negative effects of surgery, a birth defect, or an unknown cause. Participants who did not

lose a pet by death, runaway, or adoption reported losing their animal companion through a divorce or suspected another animal killed their pet. Among those who chose to euthanize their pets, 33 of 47 participants in the current study chose to be with their pet in their last moments before death. The events which precipitated euthanasia were one accident and 38 illnesses. Of the 47 individuals who chose euthanasia, 8 said their pets were very old and their quality of life was not well.

Table 2

Length of Ownership of Lost Pets

Time	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Less than a year	4	3.5
1 year	6	5.2
2 years	5	4.3
3 years	8	7.0
4 years	6	5.2
5 years	5	4.3
6 years	5	4.3
7 years	10	8.7

Note. n=115

Table 3

Time Elapsed Since the Pet Loss and Survey Completion

Time	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Less than a week	9	7.8
1 month	19	16.5
3 months	7	6.1
6 months	8	7.0
9 months	5	4.3
1 year	14	12.2
2 years	24	20.9
3 years	17	14.8
Total	103	89.9

Note. *n*=115. Table does not show 10.4% of participants who indicated a specific time between 1 day and 3 years.

Table 4

Type of Death or Loss

Type	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Accidental Death	9	7.8
Illness	31	27.0
Euthanasia	47	40.9
Runaway	6	5.2
Adoption	2	1.7
Total	95	--

Note. *n*=115. Percentages are not cumulative. Percentages based on type of loss (death or non-death.)

Participants were also asked about events after the loss of their pet. Of the participants who experienced the death of their pet, 32.2% of participants buried their pet, 48% used cremation, and the remaining participants reported that either the deceased pet

was picked up by animal control, given to the vet for disposal, put into the trash, or were unsure how the remains were handled. One individual wrote, “We memorialized them by putting them in a special shoebox and keep them on the shelf in a closet.” After their animal companions’ loss, 44.3% of participants got a new pet within three years of their departure. Table 5 depicts when the new pet was obtained. Among those who elected to write a specific time reported that they gained ownership of a new pet 4 or 5 months after the loss or rescued another dog before their pet died of an illness. Furthermore, over half of the participants had a memorial or ritual following the loss of their pet (60%). Of 46 people who held a memorial or ritual in honor of their lost pet, there were 25 funerals, 13 online memorials, and 24 photo albums. Other participants reported that they said prayers, placed a grave marker, represented their pet at Samhain ritual (Pagan ritual honoring the dead), bought a nice urn, blogged and talked about memories, laid stones on ground to signify a grave, made a keepsake, made a DVD of pictures, placed ashes in a special cushion, lit a memorial candle, made a print of their pets’ paws in clay, donated money to animal sanctuaries or veterinarian schools, created alters, wrote poems and books, conducted a passing over ceremony, and meditated.

Table 5

Time After Pet Loss that Participants Gained Ownership of New Pet

Time After Loss	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Less than 1 week	2	1.7
1 week	9	7.8

Table Cont'd

1 month	10	8.7
3 months	6	5.2
6 months	2	1.7
9 months	8	7.0
1 year	8	7.0
2 years	1	0.9

Note. $n=115$. Table does not include participants who indicated a time not indicated in the categories provided (e.g., 4 months).

A multiple regression was conducted to test the four hypotheses. Attachment style variables were logarithmically transformed because the variables were positively skewed. The original model was significant, $F(4, 110) = 15.43, p < .001$, and accounted for 33.6% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .336$). The results indicated that avoidant attachment style did not fit the model well (see Table 6) and had high collinearity. Because avoidant attachment was found not to be a significant predictor of grief intensity and its collinearity, this variable was removed from the model and a second multiple regression analysis was conducted. Without the avoidant attachment style, the model was still significant $F(4, 110) = 20.05, p < .001$, and accounted for 33.4% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .334$). Having an anxious attachment style, attachment strength, and time since the losses were all found to make a significant contribution to the model (see Table 7). Figure 2 shows the final model that resulted from data analysis. Means and standard deviations for the instruments utilized in the present study were calculated (see Table 8).

The first hypothesis predicted that a pet owner's anxious or avoidant attachment would negatively correlate with levels of grief after the loss of the pet. The results indicated that this hypothesis was not supported as anxious and avoidant attachment styles were not significantly correlated with grief intensity. Among the 115 participants, 11 had lost a pet in a manner other than death which was not a large enough sample to consider in the overall model. Therefore, the second hypothesis was unable to be tested due to an insufficient number of participants who had lost a pet in a manner other than death. Nevertheless, hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported by the findings. Attachment strength had a negative moderate correlation to anxious attachment style ($r(115) = -.484, p = .001$). Additionally, participants' strength of attachment to their pets was positively correlated with the amount of grief felt after the loss.

Attachment strength (intensity of bond to the pet) was found to be the strongest predictor of grief intensity ($Beta = .612, p < .001$) which had a moderate positive correlation with grief intensity. Anxious attachment style and time since the losses were also good predictors of grief intensity $Beta = .211, p < .05$ and $Beta = -.185, p < .05$, respectively. Although not originally hypothesized, additional analysis revealed that the time since the losses had a small negative correlation with the intensity of grief following the loss of a pet ($r(115) = -.249, p = .01$)

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analyses of Attachment Strength, Attachment Style, and Time Since Loss

	Unstandardized				
	B	SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-22.5	14.18		-1.59	.115
Avoidant Attachment Style	3.68	3.15	.137	1.17	.245
Anxious Attachment Style	4.93	2.62	.174	1.88	.063
Attachment Strength	.779	.124	.689	6.27	.000
Time Since Loss	-.877	.343	-.200	-2.56	.012

Note. $F(4, 110) = 15.43$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .336$. $n=115$.

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analyses of Attachment Strength, Attachment Style, and Type of Loss

	Unstandardized				
	B	SE	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-11.2	10.4		-1.08	.283
Anxious Attachment Style	5.97	2.48	.211	2.41	.018
Attachment Strength	.692	.099	.612	6.97	.000
Time Since Loss	-.811	.339	-.185	-2.40	.018

Note. $F(4, 110) = 20.05$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .334$. $n=115$.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Attachment Strength, Attachment Style, and Time Since Loss

	Mean	SD	Max.	Min.
Avoidant Attachment Style	28.1	11.5	56	8
Anxious Attachment Style	2.56	.429	56	8
Attachment Strength	2.55	.407	17	68
Time Since Loss	5.40	2.63	156	1

Note. $n=115$. Maximum and minimum scores for the attachment style reflect points on a 7-point Likert scale for 8 items. Scores for the time since the losses are recorded in number of weeks.

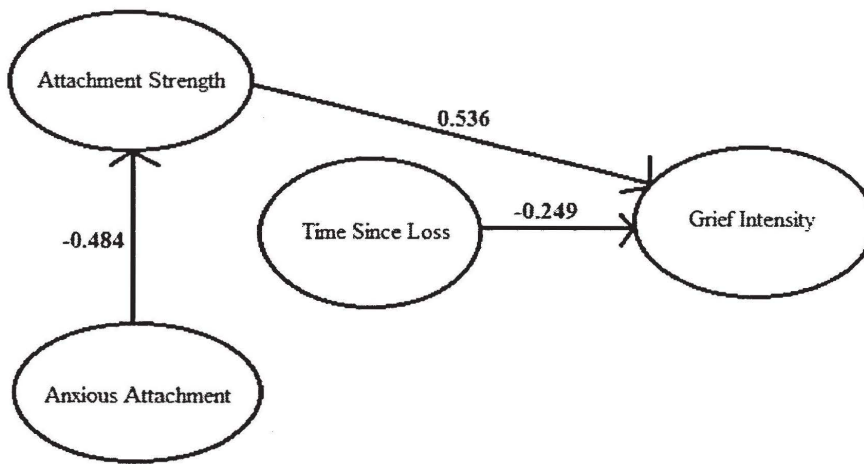


Figure 2. Final model. A relationship between attachment strength, anxious attachment style, time since loss, and grief intensity was tested.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The present study sought to explore the relationships between attachment strength, attachment style, type of loss, and grief intensity. Due to an insufficient amount of participants who lost pets in a manner other than death (i.e., stolen, runaway), the relationship between type of loss and grief was not able to be tested. Furthermore, avoidant attachment was removed from the statistical analysis because it was too closely related to anxious attachment; therefore, separate effects for both styles of attachment could not be delineated. Additionally, avoidant attachment had a low probability of having a significant influence on grief felt after the loss of pets. The final analysis indicated that pet owners' anxious attachment style did not impact the amount of grief they experienced after their losses; however, the more anxious their attachments, the weaker their bond or attachment strength was to their pets. Furthermore, the higher participants' emotional connection (attachment strength) to their lost pets were, the more intense their grief.

Integration of Findings with Existing Literature

Although the findings of the present investigation complemented the existing literature on pet loss, it also offered new information regarding pet loss. When participants had greater strength of attachment to their pets, the amount of grief they experienced following the loss of their companion animals was greater as well. The stronger their bond to their pets, the more intense the grief felt by bereaved pet owners. This finding complements previous research findings in the area of strength of attachment to pets (Field et al., 2009; Gosse & Barnes, 1994; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2006; Planchon et al., 2002). Field et al. (2009) suggested that attachment strength and attachment style be differentiated in research due to the found importance of pet owners' emotional bond to their pet when predicting grief intensity. Unlike attachment strength, attachment style has rarely been investigated in pet loss research. The current study's results revealed that insecure attachment style (particularly anxious attachment) was directly related to attachment strength which influenced the amount of grief experienced after the loss of a pet. These results suggest that when researchers evaluate pet owners' strength of attachment to their pets, they should also consider the type of attachment since the two constructs appear to be related. This idea has not been studied or discovered in prior pet loss research.

Field et al. (2009) found that anxious attachment but not avoidant attachment was predictive of the bereaved pet owners' grief. The present study showed that attachment anxiety was the only type of insecure attachment which related to any variable

(attachment strength). Although anxious attachment was not found to be directly influential to grief in the current study, the current study as well as the one conducted by Field et al.(2009) suggest that avoidant attachment does not impact the grief of a bereaved pet owner. Field et al. (2009) discovered an interaction effect for anxious and avoidant attachment similar to findings from Farley and Bonanno (2004) in regard to human losses. Although no effect was found for the dismissing type of attachment, fearful-avoidant attachment (individuals high in anxious and avoidant attachment) did have an effect on grief (Field et al., 2009). Because of the similarities between Field et al. and Farley and Bonanno (2004), Field et al. suggested that avoidant attachment should be further divided into fearful-avoidant and dismissing avoidant (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). The present study used the modified ECR-R (Beck & Medesh, 2008) which does not differentiate between type of avoidant attachment; therefore, it is possible that the instrument only used questions which tapped into dismissing-avoidant attachment which led to no significant effect.

Unlike Field et al. (2009), the current study found that the time since the pet losses were related to the severity of grief participants felt. This means that the more time that passed, the more the grief abated for the bereaved pet owners. Cowles (1985) stated that grieving is a necessary part of loss and, if done correctly for the particular individual, then the felt grief will dissipate through time; however, if the grief is not dealt with in a healthy manner, the bereaved pet owner will continue to grieve. Over half of the current study's sample had a memorial or ritual (prayers, alters, photo albums, funerals, online

memorials, etc) in honor of their pets' loss. This suggests that the memorials or rituals may have served as a healthy way to grieve which may be related to the found decrease in grief over time.

Ultimately, the present study provided a new perspective in the pet loss literature. Unlike common behaviors among avoidantly attached individuals, if necessary grieving is done and not avoided, bereaved pet owners' grief may decrease with time. The current study complements and augments the relationship between attachment theory and grief as well as offers a nuanced view of the effects of time on grief.

Implications for Theory

Because attachment style has been limited in scope in the pet loss literature, the current study offers insight into attachment theory as it pertains to humans and their animal companions. Participants' attachment strength was related to their attachment style. The stronger the attachment to their pets, the more secure their attachment was to their lost pets. As Ainsworth (1969) noted, one's bond to their attachment figure is shaped by their dependency relationship. Similar to an infant in dependency on its caregiver, an adult may be dependent on their pet to meet a number of emotional needs. If an individual can receive what is needed from the attachment figure, she/he may develop a stronger bond or attachment to them (Ainsworth, 1969). Knowing that one's attachment figure is responsive, reliable, and trustworthy may help create a secure attachment and one may also more likely develop a stronger bond to the attachment figure. Likewise, if

one cannot depend on another for their needs, they would be missing a key element to generating a substantial bond at all.

For many people, pets provide companionship, affection, and comfort. Wood et al. (2007) found that most pet owners believed that they benefited from their relationships with their pets more than their connections with other human beings. Many studies have discovered that pet owners were more psychologically healthy than non-pets owners (Allen et al., 2002; Anderson et al., 1992; Giaquinto & Valentini, 2009; Goldmeier, 1986; Tower & Nokota, 2006; Turner et al., 2003; Zasloff & Kidd, 1994). With attachment to animal companions creating unique and beneficial relationships in their owners' lives, considering attachment in pet loss research is valuable and necessary.

Anxious attachment was predictive of the strength of the pet owners' bond; however, avoidant attachment was not. As mentioned previously, Field et al. (2009) also did not find that avoidant attachment impacted the intensity of grief pet owners felt. Shaver and Hazen (1994) postulated that individuals with avoidant attachment style had their feeling-related behaviors controlled so well as to not emotionally or behaviorally respond to a seemingly distressing event. This suggests that avoidantly attached pet owners may temper their grief responses captured by the Core Bereavement Items (Burnett et al., 1997) instrument. Because those with avoidant attachments tend to withdraw from their attachment figures due to the attachment figures' lack of responsiveness and unreliability, it is likely that a substantial connection was not made,

thereby not allowing for a statistical difference to occur. However, individuals with an anxious attachment may be more invested in the relationship to create a detectable bond.

Research, as well as theory, indicates that attachment style and strength are related. Weimer, Kerns, and Oldenburg (2004) discovered that secure attachments were far more telling of close intimacy between friends than insecure attachments. Alford, Lyddon, and Schreiber (2006) found that college students' secure attachment was highly associated with a stronger sense of connectedness with others. In the present study, attachment style was not influential on the intensity of grief felt after the loss of the pets. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that an indirect relationship occurs via attachment strength. Since one's strength of attachment is higher when they feel a more secure connection to their pet, perhaps the strength of the bond is essentially the component being evaluated or a pathway exists from attachment style to attachment strength which impacts the intensity of grief experienced following pet loss. In either case, if attachment strength is paramount in discovering attachment's effect on grief, attachment style may not directly impact grief in research. It is possible that when evaluating the severity of grief felt after a loss, the intensity of the bond may be the best predictor to consider. Nevertheless, because attachment style is related to attachment strength, researchers can still infer pet owners' type of attachment through the strength of their bond

Although a prediction regarding the time since the pet loss was not hypothesized, exploratory findings showed it had a negative correlation with grief intensity, such that the more time passed, the less grief bereaved pet owners felt. Studies have indicated that

the more time that passes after the death of a human friend or family member, the less grief is experienced (McCarthy et al., 2010; Wayment & Vierthaler, 2002). Just as previous research has indicated an effect of time in lessening grief after human loss, the present study suggests that bereaved pet owners' grief subsides with time as well. Such a finding suggests that the dynamics between the two types of relationships (human and pet) are relatively similar.

Implications for Research

Researchers who wish to advance the scholarship in the area of pet loss and attachment should take into consideration various elements, such as pet owners' religious/spiritual affiliation, whether this is the first pet they have lost, and how much upkeep they felt their pet was. Other future research could also take into account the emotional intelligence of the mourner or their stage of life when analyzing differences in the grief experience after pet loss. Investigating whether memorials or rituals may aid in abating grief symptoms through time may guide mental health professionals in their treatment of bereaved pet owners. Furthermore, specifically analyzing the pet owners' other life experiences at the time of the losses may show that how other life events can complicate the reactions to their losses.

More than half of the participants in the current study had earned a bachelor's level degree or beyond which may spur future researchers to investigate how socioeconomic status may affect the grief owners feel after the loss of their pet. Perhaps a close bond with an animal companion serves as a buffer for low socioeconomic status.

Most of the present study's sample had a burial or cremation of their lost pet; however, those who come from lower socioeconomic classes may not be able to pursue these options after the death of a pet. Investigating the relationship between individuals' socioeconomic status, their attachments to their pets, and the grief they experience may unravel an untapped piece of pet loss research.

In addition, considering one's caregiving behaviors towards their pets is an area neglected by current literature on pet loss. It is possible that caring for another, be it a human or animal companion, may increase our sense of belonging in the relationship and, consequently, lead to a stronger attachment strength to our attachment figure. Pets that require more focused and prolonged care, such as dogs and cats, may engender strong attachment than those who require less, such as fish and hermit crabs. Future research should investigate whether caregiving as well as socioeconomic status impacts attachment to an individual's pet and their grief following the loss of that pet.

Collecting data from a variety of sources targeted to a general population as well as individuals who have lost a pet through death as well as in a non-death manner are essential to the generalizability of the findings. Perhaps collecting data only from individuals who lost a pet in ways other than death would uncover different factors impacting grief than those that affect owners bereaved after pet death. Recruiting participants from sources that do not directly target bereaved owners or grieving individuals, but broadly attracts individuals for general purposes similar to this study's

use of social media websites, will aid in better generalizing the results to the overall population.

Future researchers investigating individuals bereaving the loss of an animal companion should expand on the specific aspects contributing to the commonly perceived notion that pet losses would cause a minimal impact on pet owners. Perhaps an in-depth look at the United States cultural influence on grieving styles, emotion, gender, and prescribed ideas about pets or animals in general could prove insightful. Exploring the relationship between parental instinct and bereavement of a pet may provide a rich source of information as well.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study may inform the practice of veterinarians, mental health professionals, and counseling psychologists. Greater understanding of how pet owners bond to their pets and the effects of the bonds' intensity provides clinicians with insight into a potentially integral part of their clients' lives. The manner in which professionals respond to grieving pet owners may offer solace or add to their distress; therefore, it is important for clinicians to enhance their knowledge through research. Margolies (1999) asserted that typical mourning rituals like mass funeral services, viewings, obituaries, and wakes do not occur in the event of the death of a pet, although they are *de rigueur* for people. Because grief over the loss of a pet is often misunderstood and/or unvalued, delving into the pet loss experience in more depth may encourage sympathy and greater appreciation for the impact of the loss. Previous research consistently finds that pets

provide their owners with a positive, supportive, and joyful presence in their lives. Since millions of United States citizens own at least one animal companion, it is imperative to recognize the impact these pets have on their owners' psychological and emotional well-being.

This study showed the significance of pets in people's lives and highlights the serious effects losing a pet can have on an individual. As the findings indicated, the way pet owners speak about their pets can denote the style or strength of their attachment and, consequently, signifies the amount and intensity of their grief after loss. Clinicians should take note of pet owners' choice of words about their beloved pets and seek to understand the meaning of that relationship in their lives. When dealing with a bereaved pet owner, offering space to speak about their loss and connection to their pet will validate the clients' experiences. More attention needs to be paid in taking care and making allowances for those who have lost a pet. According to findings to Hazen (2008), bereaving employees are usually met with apprehension and a lack of empathy. The grief experienced may be stifled in the workplace in part because colleagues may not know how to respond to mourning individuals in an environment where production and company directives are emphasized or valued over support and the reality of the human experience. Perhaps research such as the present study can promote employers to implement supportive and accommodating policies for employees mourning the loss of their precious pet as well as inform clinicians of bereaved pet owners' challenges in the workplace following the loss of pets.

Limitations

Although the current study offers insightful findings, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. This study recruited participants from various online sources, some of which were designed to provide grief support. This fact could potentially influence the generalizability of the findings because the people who may be willing or interested in participating may share similar traits which are not representative of the overall population. Not every individual who loses a pet will be interested in or aware of online grief support services; therefore, those who do visit these websites likely reflect those with a strong grief response and may not represent the entire population. Likewise, it is likely that the people who completed the survey were more likely to be highly motivated or interested in research compared to people who did not finish the survey or elect to participate.

Another possible limitation to the present study is the type of variables considered. The study aimed to investigate type of loss, attachment style, attachment strength, and grief intensity which is not a comprehensive list of variables which may impact grief following the loss of a companion animal. Potentially, other variables could have influenced grief or mediated the relationship between variables, just as the present study discovered that an exploratory variable (time since loss) ended up being more influential to the overall model than an originally predicted variable, such as avoidant attachment. Perhaps considering whether it was the owners' first pet loss or examining their religious/spiritual affiliation may uncover an untapped component to the grief

response. Furthermore, this study explored the impact that types of loss only within the last three years had on bereaved owners. While limited in scope, researchers lack knowledge of the longevity of grief associated with pet loss which may have provided helpful information regarding the true influence of owners' attachment to their animal companions. Unfortunately, a variable which has not been empirically studied was not able to be evaluated in the present study either – type of loss. Without a sufficient number of participants who had lost a pet through means other than death, this variable was not able to be tested; therefore, we do not know its impact on grief experienced by bereaved pet owners.

Another variable which was not considered was secure attachment. The modified ECR-R (Beck & Madresh, 2008) only measures insecure attachments (avoidant and anxious attachment styles). While it may be possible to assume that if one is less insecure, then they are more secure in their attachments, that assumption needs clarification through direct observation rather than speculation. Nevertheless, avoidant attachment, as opposed to anxious attachment, proved to be an insignificant predictor of the model and was not considered in the final analysis.

The type of analysis may present its own limitations as well. With all regressions, one can only ascertain relationships and not draw conclusions regarding causality. Therefore, we cannot say that the strength of the attachment, attachment style, or time since the losses directly causes more or less grief experienced by the owner. Despite the limits of correlational studies, we can say that grief is influenced by these variables.

Conclusions

In pet loss literature, humans' attachment to pets has recently been investigated (Beck & Madesh, 2008; Field et al., 2009; Planchon et al., 2002). The vast majority of the research has examined the human-pet dynamic based on the strength of the attachment. The present study offers a new perspective regarding attachment's influence on grief following the loss of a companion animal. By including attachment style, this study delves into an untapped common factor which shapes the lens individuals use in their multiple relationships, including pets. This is the only study that has investigated the influence of attachment style on grief severity felt by bereaved pet owners. Furthering the pet loss research by examining other variables which would expand our knowledge of the intricacies of the human-pet relationship may better inform the practice of counseling psychologists, other mental health professionals, and veterinarians. With so many households containing animal companions, it is important to recognize the important role these pets play in our lives and to better our response to those bereaving the loss of their furry friends. This is not an issue of simple recognition, but one of honoring the bond between humans and their pets.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

NOTE: The return of this survey constitutes your consent to participate in this research.

Title: Factors that impact grieving following the loss of an animal companion

Investigator: Natalie RochesterNRochester@mail.twu.edu 940-368-2353

Advisor: Debra Mollen, PhD.....dmollen@mail.twu.edu 940-898-2317

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Natalie Rochester's thesis at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to determine how attachment and type of pet loss impacts grieving for pet owners who have lost a pet within the last three years. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are have lost a pet within the last three years.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend 15 minutes of your time completing a short series of surveys. The surveys will ask about your attachment style to your pet, the strength of attachment, the type of loss experienced, and the grief you may feel. You will be able to decide when and where you complete this study online. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years old and have lost a pet (death, runaway, stolen, adoption, etc) within the past three years.

Potential Risks

The surveys will ask questions about your emotional response to the loss of your

pet and your emotional connection with the lost pet. A possible risk in this study is emotional discomfort with these topics and questions. If you become tired or upset you may take breaks and return to the survey as often as needed. Should you feel emotional discomfort or distress for any reason upon completion of this study, please contact Texas Woman's University Counseling Center at (940) 898-3801 for TWU students or petloss.com and aplb.org for a list of therapists in your area. Additionally, loss of time is a potential risk from participation in this study; however, participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw their participation at any time without penalty.

Loss of confidentiality is another potential risk in this study. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. Your name will not be used while completing the surveys. After completing the surveys, you will be directed to another unlinked webpage to include personal information to receive course credit for participation or a chance to win a \$20 gift card for non-TWU students. Due to the use of electronic transactions, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all emails, downloading, and internet transactions. Psychdata uses Secure Socket Layer (SSL) 256-bit encryption technology to protect data with state-of-the art SSL encryption algorithms to provide additional protection. Additionally, all information will be deleted by 05/13/2014. Any identifying information provided will not be linked to the data for this study.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. For TWU students, following the completion of this study, you will receive two stamps worth 30 minutes each for your class credit. For non-TWU student participants, after completing this study, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$20 gift card. If you would like to know the results of this study, we will mail them to you.

Questions Regarding the Study

You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

APPENDIX B

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Answer the questions about your pet in regard to your most recent pet loss.

1. Sex:

- ☐ Female (1)
- ☐ Male (2)
- ☐ Intersex (3)

2. Current age: _____

3. Race/Ethnicity (Check one):

- ☐ African American (1)
- ☐ Asian/Asian American (2)
- ☐ Caucasian/White/European American (3)
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino(a) (4)
- ☐ Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Native American (6)
- ☐ Bi-/Multiracial/Ethnic (7)
- ☐ Other (8)

4. What is your highest level of completed education?

- ☐ Some high school (1)
- ☐ High school diploma/GED (2)
- ☐ Associates/Vocational degree (3)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree (4)
- ☐ Master's degree (5)
- ☐ Doctorate/ Medical degree (6)

5. Relationship status at the time of your pet loss

- ☐ Single (1)
- ☐ Married (2)
- ☐ Partnered (3)
- ☐ Separated (4)
- ☐ Divorced (5)
- ☐ Widowed (6)

6. Indicate your living arrangement at the time your pet loss:

- ☐ Alone (1)
- ☐ With at least one other person (2)

6a. If with another person, were there any children in the household during that time?

- ☐ No(1) ☐ Yes(2)

7. What type of animal was your lost or deceased pet?

- ☐ Cat (1)
- ☐ Dog (2)
- ☐ Other (3) (Please specify _____)

8. How long did you own your lost or deceased pet?
 _____ Years _____ Months _____ Days
9. How long ago did you lose your pet?
 _____ Years _____ Months _____ Days
10. Did you have other pets at the time you lost your pet?
 _____ No (1)
 _____ Yes (2)
- 10a. If yes, how many? _____
11. What type of pet loss did you experience?
 _____ Death (1) (Skip to #12)
 _____ Non-Death (Runaway, stolen, adoption, etc.) (2) (Skip to #13)
12. How did your pet die? (Please check one)
 _____ Accident leading to death (1) (Skip to #16)
 _____ Illness leading to death (2) (Skip to #16)
 _____ Euthanasia (3) (Skip to #14)
 _____ Other (4) (Please specify _____)
13. How did you lose your pet? (Please check one)
 _____ Runaway (1) (Skip to #17)
 _____ Stolen (2) (Skip to #17)
 _____ Adoption (3) (Skip to #17)
 _____ Taken by authorities (4) (Skip to #17)
 _____ Other (5) (Please specify _____) (Skip to #17)
14. Were you present during the euthanasia?
 _____ No (1)
 _____ Yes (2)
15. What led to your pet's euthanasia?
 _____ Accident (1)
 _____ Illness (2)
 _____ Behavioral problems (3)
 _____ Other (4)
16. How were your pet's remains handled?
 _____ Burial (1)
 _____ Cremation (2)
 _____ Don't know (3)
 _____ Other (4)
17. Have you gotten any new pets since the time of the pet's loss?
 _____ No (1)
 _____ Yes (2)
- 17a. If yes, at what point did you obtain the new pet?
 _____ Years _____ Months _____ Days
18. What sort of memorial or ritual did you have for your lost pet?
 _____ Did not have any memorial or ritual (1)

____ Funeral (2)
____ Online memorial (3)
____ Photo album (4)
____ Other (5) Please specify _____

APPENDIX C

Lexington Attachment to Pets Survey (LAPS)

Lexington Attachment to Pets Survey (Johnson et al., 1992)

Select one number to indicate the answer choice which best applies to your thoughts and feeling about your most recent pet loss.

0	1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My pet meant more to me than any of my friends.			
0	1	2	3
2. Quite often I confided in my pet.			
0	1	2	3
3. I believe that pets should have the same rights and privileges as family members.			
0	1	2	3
4. I believe my pet was my best friend.			
0	1	2	3
5. Quite often, my feelings toward people were affected by the way they reacted to my pet.			
0	1	2	3
6. I loved my pet because she/he was more loyal to me than most of the people in my life.			
0	1	2	3
7. I enjoyed showing other people pictures of my pet.			
0	1	2	3
8. I thought my pet was just a pet.			
0	1	2	3
9. I loved my pet because she/he never judged me.			
0	1	2	3
10. My pet knew when I was feeling bad.			
0	1	2	3
11. I often talked to other people about my pet.			
0	1	2	3
12. My pet understood me.			
0	1	2	3
13. I believe that loving my pet helped me stay healthy.			
0	1	2	3
14. Pets deserve as much respect as people do.			
0	1	2	3
15. My pet and I had a very close relationship.			
0	1	2	3
16. I would have done almost anything to take care of my pet.			
0	1	2	3

17. I played with my pet quite often.	0	1	2	3
18. I considered my pet to be a great companion.	0	1	2	3
19. My pet made me feel happy.	0	1	2	3
20. I felt that my pet was a part of my own family.	0	1	2	3
21. I was not very attached to my pet.	0	1	2	3
22. Owning a pet added to my happiness.	0	1	2	3
23. I considered my pet to be a friend.	0	1	2	3

APPENDIX D

Core Bereavement Items (CBI)

Core Bereavement Items (Burnett et al., 1997)

Select one number to indicate the answer choice which best applies to your thoughts and feeling about your most recent pet loss.

- | | 0
Never | 1
A little bit of the time | 2
Quite a bit of the time | 3
Continuously |
|---|------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Do you experience images of the events surrounding your pet's loss? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Do thoughts of your pet come into your mind whether you wish it or not? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Do thoughts of your pet make you feel distressed? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Do you think about your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Do images of your pet make you feel distressed? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Do you find yourself preoccupied with images or memories of your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Do you find yourself thinking of reunion with your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Do you find yourself missing your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. Are you reminded by familiar objects (photos, possessions, rooms, etc.) of your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. Do you find yourself pining for/yearning for your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. Do you find yourself looking for your pet in familiar places? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. Do you feel distress/pain if for any reason you are confronted with the reality that your pet is not present/not coming back? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. Do reminders of your pet such as photos, situations, music, places, cause you to feel longing for your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. Do reminders of your pet such as photos, situations, music, places, etc. cause you to feel loneliness? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 15. Do reminders of your pet such as photos, situations, music, places, etc. cause you to cry about your pet? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

0 1 2 3

16. Do reminders of your pet such as photos, situations, music, places, etc. cause you to feel sadness?

0 1 2 3

17. Do reminders of your pet such as photos, situations, music, places, etc. cause you to feel loss of enjoyment?

APPENDIX E

Modified Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R)

Modified Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (Beck & Medresh, 2008)

Select one number to indicate the answer choice which best applies to your thoughts and feeling about your most recent pet loss.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly			Neutral			Strongly
Disagree						Agree

1. It was easy for me to be affectionate with my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

2. I don't feel comfortable opening up to pets.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3. It helped to turn to my pet in times of need.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

4. I am nervous when pets get too close to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

5. I found it relatively hard to get close to my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

6. I preferred not to show a pet how I feel deep down.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

7. I usually shared my problems and concerns with my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

8. I felt comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

9. I was afraid that I would lose my pet's love.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

10. I was confident that my pet would want to stay with me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

11. I knew that pets cared about me as much as I care about them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

12. I knew my pet loved me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

13. My pet made me feel confident.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

14. I found that my pets didn't want to get as close as I would have liked.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

15. It made me mad that I didn't get the affection and support I needed from my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

16. My desire to be very close sometimes scared pets away.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7