



BA FILM & TV

By: Marta Parreira (1900434)



TUTOR: KYLIE BOON

1425 WORDS

A quote by Aeschylus states “There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief”. We as people go through many different emotions throughout our life, with differing intensities depending on the situation. Most people go through the basic human emotions of sadness, happiness, fear, anger and others, but the intensity in which people feel said emotions depend on both the situation the person is facing and any background information that may intensify or repress said emotion. Within these primary emotions reside other related feelings many of us will have either felt ourselves or been made aware of by other means. An example of this would be the feeling of grief. Grief is an intense emotional response most people go through when experiencing significant loss. While grief is traditionally associated to the passing of a loved one, it can also be experienced when losing a job, a relationship, or a pet. Taking into consideration how complex grief can be, how can we find a meaningful way to represent this within media?

Like it has been mentioned, grief is an intense emotional response people can go through. Working with grief can be complicated, but to make the process of its representation easier, it’s worth researching its effects on the mind and body. An editor doesn’t simply take clips and puts them together. An editor takes footage and uses it to portray emotions and feelings, which is why I find it important to research and understand these topics and how to better represent them.

Grief comes in different ways and its effects can also differ depending on circumstances and on who is experiencing it. However, there seems to be a trend that those suffering from heightened forms of grief for a prolonged period. Studies by Ott (2010), Prigerson *et al.* (2001) and Lannen *et al.* (2008) highlight how those who go through complicated or traumatic grief or even those who simply haven’t properly worked through their grief seem to be at an increased risk of long-term dysfunctions, both mentally and physically. Ott’s (2010) and Prigerson *et al.* (2001) mention the 6-month mark as an important indicator on whether someone will need further psychiatric and possibly medial help in the future or not. While all of this information is extremely important when learning about grief, a different study by Kentor and Kaplow (2020) highlights the important aspect of how grief experienced in adulthood is completely different from that experienced in childhood or

adolescence. Children and teens who have lost someone close to them I believe get exposed to their grief in ways adults would be able to deal with better. Children and teenagers in school are often exposed to holidays like mothers or fathers' days and sometimes forced to participate despite their grief, and there might also be situations where bereavement heavily influences their life, possibly leading to bullying by their peers. An article titled "Grief and Bullying" (*Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss*, no date) mentions how children may cry while in school and subsequently get teased and bullied. While these situations depend on what the community the child is in is like, one can easily see how the effects of these events can influence a child differently than it would an already established adult.

And although these scientific studies might look irrelevant, I find it important to make a distinction between adult and childhood bereavement effects. While both scenarios include the heavy loss of someone they love, the effects each experience will inherently be different due to their timeline. In my production, I will be trying to convey this idea of early loss, which makes this distinction more even relevant to mention and research for a more accurate representation of this type of grief.

But regardless of studies, how has this information been translated into the media industry, into films, and how effective are these representations?

Grief has been a topic depicted on the big screen for a long time now, both in big Hollywood films and in children's films such as Disney, where many of their movies have included the topic in one way or another.

An article by AK Lander (2019) has different bloggers voice their opinion and experience when watching different movies depicting grief. Blogger Roising, when talking about "P.S. I Love You" explains how the movie had always moved her. However, after the death of their husband, when rewatching that movie, Roisin explains how she was able to relate to the movie on a deeper level, and how it's depiction of bereavement was quite realistic and on par with what they experienced. Another blogger, Stephanie, explains how "Sorry For Your Loss" was a piece she could identify with in many different ways after she became a widow herself.

Another example would be blogger Toni describing how “Inside Out”, a Disney film, resonated with him and his emotions after having lost his mother following his wedding. He describes how being able to experience and feel grief makes it so we don’t lose ourselves in it.

These bloggers’ opinions on these films are important real-life examples of how these depictions are represented in a realistic manner to what people feel in real life.

Some might think that films are purely fictional or greatly exaggerated, and some are, like a lot of sci-fi and even some romance movies. But we cannot ignore or deny that there are a lot of emotional moments in movies that are incredibly well done and resonate with us on an emotional level. As someone who hopes to become an editor, the best way to overcome this issue would be through research, both scientific but also personal. Portraying reality in a way that will resonate with people is what I would be looking for, and further research on how to deal with this will happen as I learn more within the industry.

But can movies truly help people process their grief?

Throughout AK Lander’s (2019) article, different bloggers explain how the way certain movies were represented such as “P.S. I Love you”, “Sorry for Your Loss” and even “Inside Out” have not only reminded them of their own personal experiences but also, as blogger Roisin mentioned in her review, these movies can also be a way to reassure some that life goes on. In this article, blogger Emma also brought to attention how watching movies about grief can make people aware of the reality of grief and how it can affect those grieving. Movies like this have the power to help us in remembering and grieving but also to learn and overcome it.

But the way grief is represented and interpreted can differ wildly from person to person. A study by Dawson, Hay and Rosling (2021) explored the different experiences people have with grief and the effects of its portrayal. The study concluded that films could help some with their grief it also seems to imply that others might not be as receptive of this visualisation of their pain.

Understanding this is important when working with topics like this. I find it is important to go in with the understanding that not everyone will understand, like, or positively receive the message from

such movies. Different reactions can come from the stage of bereavement the person is at, their relationship with the person who passed or the continuous effects the death has had in their lives. Regardless, it's important to keep in mind that this topic isn't as straightforward as it may seem, and reactions will vary widely from person to person.

To conclude, representing grief in a meaningful way is not only possible but also complex. Creating a film that will help everyone might be impossible but creating a film that can communicate with some while depicting the realities that grief can bring is the goal. The way these topics are represented can be different, some films represent it in a more light-hearted way, like "Inside Out" while others take a more direct approach, but both can and will work. Having done this research, I realise that when it comes to making this piece more meaningful, I want to put it together in a way that won't look too theatrical. I have realised that film is something that can be extremely complex, and the best course of action for me working on a production in this topic would be to try to make it as authentic to myself as I can and make it more mine by turning it into something that speaks to me.

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