

Njue, J. R. M., Rombo, D., Lutomia, A. N., Smart, L. S., Mwaniki, L. M., & Sore, I. L. (2015). Death, Grief and Culture in Kenya: Experiential Strengths-Based Research. In *The World of Bereavement* (pp. 3-23). Springer International Publishing.

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how families deal with bereavement in Kenya. Our discussion is based on the constructivist assumption that bereaved individuals and families construct the meaning of the death of a loved one, shaped by the cultural context but not determined by it. The colonial experience disrupted and reshaped the traditions and belief systems of the numerous ethnic groups in Kenya. We provide an overview of traditional religion and spirituality in three Kenyan ethnic groups (Luo, Luhya, and Embu), give an overview of Kenyan family structure, and then provide a brief case study of a bereavement experience in each of the three tribes. We apply the family strengths perspective to the case study material, illustrating family strengths with excerpts from the bereaved individuals whom we interviewed. Implications of our findings include that established cultural practices support family and community mourning, but that no rituals are in place to support individual mourning, giving little room for grieving at the individual level. Professionals who work outside of their own culture, particularly internationally, will be effective only to the extent that they have cultural awareness and the ability to make sensitive interventions from a global perspective.