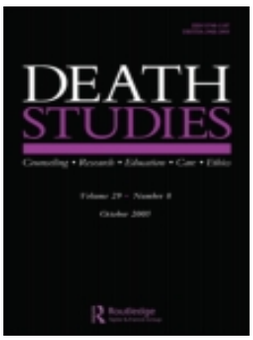

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Margaret Stroebe & Henk Schut

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TO CONTINUE OR RELINQUISH BONDS: A REVIEW OF CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BEREAVED

MARGARET STROEBE and HENK SCHUT
University of Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands

This article reviews research on the continuing-breaking bonds controversy. Across the course of the 20th century a shift in theorizing took place from an emphasis on the benefits of breaking bonds to investigation of the presence and usefulness of continuing bonds with a deceased person. These different theoretical formulations are examined and empirical evidence on the (mal)adaptive value of retaining versus relinquishing bonds is assessed. The review shows that neither is it possible to conclude that continuing nor that relinquishing bonds is generally helpful. Researchers need to work toward understanding how and for whom continuing or relinquishing bonds furthers adjustment.

The grief work notion claims that one has to confront experiences associated with bereavement in order to come to terms with loss and avoid detrimental health consequences (Stroebe, 1992). Although this basic hypothesis appears reasonably straightforward, a major controversy in the bereavement literature arose around the question whether the process and/or purpose of this grief work involves letting go or continuing bonds with the deceased person. What leads to healthy adaptation? The 20th century saw a shift away from the early emphasis on the importance of relinquishing the strong affective bond to the deceased person (cf. Freud, 1917/1957, and other psychoanalytically oriented theorists) to recent claims that continuing an attachment bond facilitates adjustment (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996; Klass & Walter, 2001). *Continuing bonds* is generally understood in the scientific community as denoting the presence of an ongoing inner relationship with the deceased person by the bereaved individual (cf. Field, Gal-Oz, & Bonanno, 2003; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993).

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Address correspondence to Margaret Stroebe, Department of Psychology, University of Utrecht, Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands. E-mail: m.s.stroebe–harrold@fss.uu.nl

How can these apparently contradictory positions be reconciled? What evidence has been brought to bear for or against the one versus the other? Is there really a controversy or can the viewpoints be integrated within a single framework? What implications can be drawn for understanding the grieving process?

A few reviews have recently appeared that have begun to examine some of these questions systematically (e.g., Boerner & Heckhausen, 2003; Fraley & Shaver, 1999; Noppe, 2000; Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005; Wortman & Silver, 2001). However, although regulatory processes (Boerner & Heckhausen, 2003; Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999; Stroebe & Schut, 1999) and individual differences (Noppe, 2000; Stroebe et al., 2005) have been identified, as yet there has been no general reconciliation of the continuing–relinquishing bonds paradigms. There have also been some very useful empirical studies done recently, which add to our understanding of the functions of continuing/relinquishing bonds. Thus, the purpose of this article is to review previous theoretical contributions and the relevant empirical literature and try to reconcile these positions. In doing so, we revisit arguments that were made a decade ago about the cultural context of continuing or breaking bonds (Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, & Stroebe, 1992), discuss interpretations that other theorists brought to bear on these points of view (Fraley & Shaver, 1999; Peskin, 1993; Shaver & Tancredy, 2001) and reconsider earlier conclusions in the light of subsequent insights.[1]

The Relinquishing Bonds Position

Early Formulations: Relinquishing Bonds

Most frequently, the notion that one needs to relinquish bonds after the death of a loved one is traced back to Freud (1917/1957). This classic analysis of grief and mourning, entitled "Mourning and Melancholia," conceptualized love as the attachment (cathexis)

[1]Various terms have been used to denote the nature of bonds (e.g., retaining/continuing versus relinquishing/disengaging/letting go/severing/breaking of ties/bonds/attachments/connections). These terms have different connotations and usages. In formulating our own position, we mostly use the terms *continuing* or *retaining* versus *relinquishing* bonds, but sometimes include other terms as used in the existing literature. Definitional problems are addressed in the text.

of libidinal energy to the mental representation of the loved person (the object). According to Freud, when a loved person dies, the libidinal energy remains attached to thoughts and memories of the deceased. Because the pool of energy is limited, the cathexis to the lost object has to be withdrawn in order for the person to regain these energy resources. The ties to the loved object are severed by a process called *hypercathexis*:

> each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the [lost] object is brought up and hypercathected, and detachment of the libido is accomplished in respect of it. (p. 245)

Accordingly, Freud understood the psychological function of grief as one of freeing the individual of his/her ties to the deceased, gaining gradual detachment by means of reviewing the past and dwelling on memories of the deceased: "Mourning [i.e. grief] has a very distinct psychic task to perform, namely to detach the memories and expectations of the survivors from the dead" (Freud, 1913/1938, p. 96).

This process is said to be complete when most of the energy is withdrawn from the lost object and transferred to a new one: Grief work has then been successfully concluded. It is important to emphasize that the process involved in the working through of grief–this need to invest energy in the struggle to "decathect" the loved object–can be interpreted as one of emotional neutralizing, not forgetting.

Freud's (1917/1957) arguments about the need for detachment from the lost person were followed by subsequent psychoanalytically-oriented writers, notably Lindemann (1979):

> This grief work has to do with the effort of reliving and working through in small quantities events which involved the now-deceased and the survivor . . . And gradually the collection of activities which were put together . . . with the person who has died can be torn asunder to be put to other people. (p. 234)

Subsequent Developments: Defining and Specifying Relinquishment

Other bereavement theorists have endorsed the notion that grief work enables the bereaved person to gradually accept that loss is irrevocable. Furthermore, they have extended their analyses to

include aspects of change and development, for example, that changes in assumptions need to be made. Parkes (1972) opened his classic monograph with the words, "When a love tie is severed, a reaction, emotional and behavioural, is set in train, which we call grief" (p. 11). In this sense there is a tearing asunder, just as Tolstoy described: "When a loved one dies, there is a severance, a spiritual wound which, like physical wound, is sometimes fatal, sometimes heals" (*War and Peace*, Vol. 2). However, Parkes used the word *severance* in a specific manner, similar to that of Tolstoy. Throughout his writing, Parkes (e.g., 1972, 1996, 2001) further identified both losses and gains, notably in his psychosocial transition model. This model included the idea that there needs to be a gradual building up of a new identity during bereavement (Parkes, 1972).

This theme of transition has been echoed by others, for example, by Golan (1975) in an article entitled "Wife to widow to woman," Rando (1984), Raphael (1983) and Worden (1982[2]). All of these writers argued that breaking down attachments was indeed necessary for recovery. Along similar lines, Sanders (1989) described the tasks of "letting go" of the tie to the deceased as a necessity for the resolution of grief work and "rebuilding of a life with new rewards and reinforcements" (p. 94).

Although some of these sources write of "severing ties" or "breaking bonds," the idea underlying the use of such phrases (at least in theoretical context) is not that the deceased needs to or will be forgotten. Rather, the bereaved person must come to realize that irrevocable separation has taken place and that the person cannot be brought back. Horowitz (1986, 1997) described the process of coming to terms with a death as requiring repeated confrontation of the changed reality and one's pre-existing working models, until the fact that the person has been irrevocably lost becomes integrated.

Evidence for the Efficacy of Relinquishing Bonds

To our knowledge, no systematic, methodologically sound empirical studies have found support for the theoretical notion that bereaved people need to relinquish their ties to the deceased in

[2]See Worden (2002) for revision of his position with respect to withdrawing from vs. relocation of the deceased.

order to adjust well to their loss. Instead, support for this hypothesis comes mainly from the counseling and therapy literature. Principles of intervention across the course of the 20th century typically advocated the breaking down of an attachment, loosening of the tie to the deceased, forming of a new identity, and reinvesting in other relationships (see Raphael, Minkov, & Dobson, 2001; Raphael & Nunn, 1988, for reviews). For example, Raphael and Nunn described the role of counsellors of the bereaved as one in which they need to:

> facilitate... the process of psychological mourning–the gradual undoing of the bonds to the lost person [and]... to facilitate the undoing of some of these ties, so that the bereaved is not obsessed with and governed by bonds with the dead to the detriment of future life with the living (pp. 200–201).

So far we have discussed the impact of breaking bonds on general adjustment. It is also important to address the more specific question: Do bereaved people who persist in retaining rather than relinquishing bonds to a deceased person run a higher risk of complicated forms of grief? Following the lines of reasoning outlined above, this would indeed be expected. In fact, many leading authorities on pathological grief endorse this view. Worden (1982/1991) argued that counseling or therapy might be necessary in cases where emotional withdrawal has not been achieved. Here he was speaking of extreme clinging to the past attachment figure, a refusal to let go and move on, which would hinder the grieving process. Extreme cases of continued bonding were also described by Gorer (1965) in terms of the syndromes *mummification* and *despair*. These syndromes are characterized by incessant dwelling on the deceased and retention of the life routine as it was before the deceased person's death. Along similar lines, Parkes and Weiss (1983) identified problematic bonds to a marital partner before death as a cause of complications in bereavement. Their so-called *ambivalent grief syndrome* referred to a conflicted relationship in which elements of love and hate coexisted. Such conflicted marriages would be associated with continued attachment insecurities during bereavement and troubled grieving. A second syndrome described by Parkes and Weiss (1983), called the *chronic grief syndrome*, identified the types of marital relationships characterized as highly dependent or clinging. Here again, grief after the ending of such a relationship would

likely be complicated by insecurities and continued preoccupation, dependence and problems in moving on.

Conclusions

It has become evident that statements made by experts arguing for relinquishing ties do not claim that *retaining* bonds is generally harmful. Rather, in cases where the bond to the deceased was problematic during the person's lifetime, this type of insecure, dependent, or conflicted bonding is likely to cause problems during bereavement. This is because the relationship will be clung to in a detrimental way. Intervention to loosen ties in such cases may help these persons move on. It is also important to note that many theorists and experts on intervention for the bereaved across the 20th century have identified the important functions of relinquishing ties, linking cases of extreme, ongoing affectional bonding with complicated forms of grief. Evidence thus far is lacking, or at least, it is limited to inferences from professional' understanding of complicated forms of grieving, and the principles that have been derived for intervention. What, then, is the case for continuing bonds in general? Before considering this question, we need to discuss Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) perspective separately, given discussion about its placement as a continuing/relinquishing bonds perspective.

Bowlby's Position: Relinquishing or Continuing Bonds?

Within the general continuing versus relinquishing bonds controversy, more specific debate has taken place about where precisely the theoretical approach of Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) should be placed with respect to bonds. Stroebe and colleagues (Stroebe et al., 1992) interpreted Bowlby's approach as basically one of "breaking bonds." This interpretation of Bowlby's views has been criticized by Peskin (1993) and reiterated by Fraley and Shaver (1999), and Shaver and Tancredy (2001). These latter investigators assigned a central role to continuing bonds in Bowlby's theory. By contrast, Noppe (2000) concluded, "it is not really clear what Bowlby (1979, 1980) meant by a 'healthy' response to the death of an attachment figure. Depending upon the point of view of the reader, one can find many passages which support the broken bond orientation . . . as well as passages . . . which suggest

that long-term continuity of such bonds is characteristic of the grief response" (p. 524). Bowlby recognized the adaptive functions of retained bonds, but relinquishing bonds was also fundamental to his theory of the impact of separation: Relinquishment was also considered integral to successful adaptation. In Bowlby's (1980) own words: "The resolution of grief is not to sever bonds but to establish a changed bond with the dead person" (p. 399).

The Continuing Bonds Position

Continuing Bonds in Historical Context

The pendulum swing toward emphasizing the importance of continuing bonds occurred comparatively recently, with the publication of Klass et al.'s (1996) edited volume *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief.* However, the positive impact of retaining of ties to a deceased person was argued and discussed much earlier in the literature. In fact, consideration goes back a long way, a fact which has been little acknowledged by later researchers (see Archer, 1999). A contemporary of Freud, the British psychologist Shand (1914, 1920), drew attention to the struggle by bereaved persons to retain their ties to a deceased loved one. Bowlby (1980) did refer briefly to Shand's work, noting: "The urge to regain the person lost [Shand] points out, is powerful and often persists long after any reason has deemed it useless" (p. 27). Archer (1999) also referred to Shand's (1914, 1920) description of the continued tie to the deceased. However, the question of interest here, namely, whether Shand linked continued ties to recovery or adaptation, or to difficulties in ongoing life, has not been passed down in the scientific literature. Interestingly, inspection of the early monograph shows that Shand (1920) did actually address this question. He derived the following laws of sorrow (numbers 62 & 63), in his analysis of the foundations of human character:

> (62) The absence, injury or destruction of an object of joy tends to arouse a type of sorrow which is distinguished by its impulse of restoration, and derives from the preceding joy an impulse of attraction to its object; (63) According as these impulses of attraction and restoration of sorrow are furthered, impeded, or frustrated, the emotion is itself diminished, increased, or reaches its maximum. (pp. 331–332)

Shand seems to be acknowledging the presence and impact of both retaining ("attraction") and relinquishing ("restoration") bonds. According to the nature of the tie, the consequence of either retaining or relinquishing will likewise be either grief-enhancing or grief-diminishing. Although it is not surprising that Shand's work was lost to bereavement researchers for many years–not least because discussion focuses on sorrow rather than grief–if our interpretation is correct, then Shand already set the stage for the continuing bonds arguments that we will present later on.

There were also other forerunners to Klass et al. (1996). For example, a scholarly analysis by Rosenblatt (1983) compared theories of grief and notions about continuing ties in the 19th compared with the 20th century. Rosenblatt's source of evidence was unconventional: He examined unpublished diaries from the earlier century and their themes of retaining ties, comparing these with theoretical constructs of the 20th century. He observed that there was much less struggle to detach in the 19th century. Ties were retained in all manner of ways, including child-naming, a strong sense of presence, spiritism, and communication through spirit media, and prayer. Clearly, this was a qualitative investigation, not one that compared the frequency of these resources or their adaptive functions in grieving, within the two centuries. Later, Shuchter and Zisook (1993) provided more quantitative evidence that continued attachments to the deceased are common. For example, they reported that 13 months after a spouse's death, 63% of respondents felt that their spouse was with them at times, 47% felt he/she was watching out for them, and 34% talked regularly to them. Again here, though, no links were made with adaptation.

Appraisal of Klass et al.'s (1996) Continuing Bonds Position

The most extensive treatment of continuing bonds to date has been incorporated in Klass et al.'s (1996) edited volume. The basic thesis, set out in the introductory chapter, was that "the resolution of grief involves continuing bonds that survivors maintain with the deceased . . . these continuing bonds can be a healthy part of the survivor's ongoing life" (Silverman & Klass, 1996, p. 22). Evidence for components of this claim was drawn from a variety of sources, including the editor's own research programs, for example, their studies on the retaining of ties in other cultures (Klass, 1996) and

among bereaved children (Silverman & Nickman, 1996). Examples of continuing bonds were easy to find not only across cultures in Klass's investigations (see also Klass & Walter, 2001), but also among the children in Silverman and Nickman's. Klass (1996), for example, described ancestor worship in Japan, whereby an elaborate set of rituals enable the living to maintain emotional bonds with their deceased loved ones. Ancestor worship, seen within the context of Buddhist beliefs and practices, was understood to be "an expression of the human community that cannot be separated by death . . . the rituals provide a vehicle by which resolution of grief is accomplished" (Klass, 1996, p. 59). Intuitively convincing though these interpretations may be, in line with the qualitative approach of this volume, no quantitative empirical validation was provided. In general, it is important to note that the quality of the cultural evidence on the value of continuing bonds is poor. Most evidence is based on observational or historical studies. To our knowledge, there has yet to be a systematic, carefully conducted comparative bereavement study across cultures.

Silverman and Nickman (1996; see also Silverman & Worden, 1992, 1993) conducted a very different type of investigation on the presence and impact of continuing bonds. They interviewed children in the United States, between the ages of 6 and 17 years in addition to their surviving parent, to find out how the children retained ties to their deceased parent.[3] These investigators identified five primary strategies whereby connections were maintained, for example, experiencing the deceased as a disciplinarian, keeping a belonging of the deceased parent, or reminiscing about the joint past. Although Silverman and colleagues interpreted the continued connection as enhancing adjustment for these children, there were some children who were frightened by the idea of their parent watching over and seeing everything that they did.

Taken together, these studies showed that continuing bonds may be correlates of "healthy" grieving (at least, they are a common phenomenon among non-clinical samples). However, they have not shown that continuing bonds leads to healthy adjustment.

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[3]It needs to be noted that children's memories and relationships with deceased parents are probably unique: How children remember their deceased parents or relate to the bond with them is undoubtedly different in many ways from how people relate to deceased spouses, or how parents relate to deceased children.

It is unfortunate for current purposes that the editors of *Continuing Bonds* rejected quantitative methodology (the book is a mine of information on other aspects, e.g., the myriad of ways through which bonds may be continued). Klass et al. (1996) argued that quantitative methodology has its roots in the "logical positivism of modernity. . .based on the same inadequate assumptions underlying the model of grief that [Silverman & Klass in their volume] set out to correct" (Silverman & Klass, 1996, p. 4). However, in our view, qualitative analyses can go hand in hand with those of a quanitative nature (cf. Stroebe, Hansson, Stroebe, & Schut, 2001). Clearly, these two positions are debatable.

Thus, although intuitively compelling in showing how bereaved persons maintain a continuing bond to their deceased, most of the research that is reported in the Klass et al. (1996) volume fails to demonstrate that continuing bonds are actually associated with a healthy ongoing life. Nor does it document the existence of continuing ties in a systematic way. Even more importantly, Klass et al. (1996) failed to provide evidence that the continuing of ties brings about the improvements in adjustment that the editors and many of the authors claimed to be the case. For example, simply showing the presence of retained ties in very different cultures does not tell us about the efficacy of these cultural patterns in adaptation to loss. Most critically, in a recent review of empirical studies on the presence of continuing bonds by Boerner and Heckhausen (2003), few of the empirical chapters in Klass et al.'s volume reached the methodological standard for inclusion. And yet, the belief that bereaved persons continue to incorporate the deceased into their lives in useful ways, ones that help adjustment, has remained predominant (cf. Attig, 1996; Benore & Park, 2004; Fisher, 2001; Neimeyer, 2001; Reisman, 2001; Russac, Steighner, & Canto, 2002).

Further Evidence on the Efficacy of Continuing Bonds?

Is there evidence from other sources? Boerner and Heckhausen (2003) provided a comprehensive review of the most methodologically sound investigations, including recent ones by Rubin (1992; Rubin & Malkinson, 2001), Bonanno and colleagues (e.g. Bonanno, Mihalecz, & LeJeune, 1999; Bonanno, Notarius, Gunzerath, Keltner, & Horowitz, 1998), Field, Nichols, Holen, and Horowitz

(1999), and Stroebe and Stroebe (1991). In one of these studies, Field et al. (1999) examined how four different types of retained ties (e.g., sensing the deceased's presence; seeking comfort through memories or possessions) related to grief symptomatology. These investigators concluded that different types of connections were more or less adaptive. For example, they reported that those who tried to gain comfort by keeping possessions showed higher levels of grief intensity. However, equally well, one might interpret the patterns as showing that clinging is a sign of maladaptive grieving, and happy reminiscing about the deceased a sign of coming to terms with grief (i.e., the connections are correlates and not causal to recovery). Furthermore, as Wortman and Silver (2001) pointed out, many forms of attachment that had been identified in earlier studies (e.g., adopting the virtues of the deceased) were not examined in the Field et al. (1999) study. Thus, information about the adaptive value of many major types of connection was not available.

Evaluating the results of the various studies as a whole, Boerner and Heckhausen (2003) came to the conclusion that "different types of connections may be more or less adaptive" (p. 211). They suggested the need for specification of processes. However–and this is critical–they noted that it remained unclear whether a particular outcome was actually the cause or the effect of a certain type of continuing bond to the deceased.

To our knowledge, only two further empirical investigations of continuing bonds have appeared subsequent to the Boerner and Heckhausen (2003) review, namely the most recent in the series of Bonnano and Field analyses on their longitudinal data set (cf., e.g., Field et al., 1999). In the first of these studies, Field et al. (2003) examined the long-term outcomes of bereaved participants (26 women and 13 men). Results were apparently contrary to the Klass et al. (1996) conclusions: At 5 years post-loss, those with higher grief scores retained closer continuing bonds. The authors concluded that the bereaved's extent of continuing bonds use (close retained relationship) was an important factor associated with bereavement-related adjustment (high grief intensity). Although the authors are careful not to make explicit causal statements, the investigation's interest is clearly to test the impact of bonds on grief, rather than vice versa. Thus, the problem of causality must be kept in mind: Is it intense grief that leads to clinging to the deceased and a continuation of the bond, or does

the fact that one thinks a lot about the deceased and keeps the bond going the *cause* of intense grief? The question also arises as to whether continuing bonds and grief intensity are related in a correlative or causal manner. Further research should address the problems of causality and conceptual overlap.

In the most recent of the studies, Field and Friedrichs (2004) investigated the impact of continuing bonds on mood among a sample of widows. The respondents were 15 early-bereaved widows, whose husband had died on average 4 months previously, and 15 later-bereaved widows, who had been lost their husbands on average 2 years previously. These respondents were electronically signaled every three hours, to record their positive and negative mood and continuing bonds coping, four times a day for 14 successive days. Continuing bonds coping included items such as tried to do things that would have made my husband happy and tried to think of good memories of my husband. Continuing bonds coping was found to be positively related to positive mood for later- but not for early-bereaved widows. Continuing bonds were positively related to negative mood among the early- as well as the later-bereaved widows. These results seem similar to the earlier studies, but they also suggest a comforting function of ties to the deceased after the acute time of grieving has passed. Again in this study, as the authors acknowledge, one cannot draw strong conclusions about the direction of causality in the relationships between the variables. Furthermore, a control group of bereaved persons who did not have to complete all the repeated measures was lacking. It is evident that bonds are called up whenever the signal goes and the questionnaire is answered (most respondents noted that it was helpful to fill out the questionnaires). So the authors may have influenced the very process they were studying.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that bonds to deceased persons are frequently continued.[4] However, there is no sound empirical foundation for

[4]The recent trend to create and visit memorial Web sites provides fascinating new opportunities to study connections between the bereft and deceased, see de Vries and Roberts (2004). Roberts (2004) provides preliminary evidence, using subjective accounts, on the efficacy of using such sites.

the claim that continuing bonds serve a generally adaptive function in coming to terms with bereavement. As Boerner and Heckhausen (2003) and Wortman and Silver (2001) emphasized, and as the results of the Field et al. (1999) study suggested, research needs to differentiate further between the types of continued bonds that provide comfort and promote adjustment and those that reflect severe grief reactions. Furthermore, as the study by Field and Friedrichs (2004) illustrated, the relationship of continuing bonds may be moderated by the duration of bereavement. As Wortman and Silver (2001) expressed,

> it is indeed common for individuals to maintain an attachment to the deceased. . . . this link can be perceived as comforting or frightening, and . . . there are many different forms that this attachment may take. What is less clear, however, is whether there is a relationship between specific attachment behaviors and subsequent resolution of grief . . . whether continuing attachment with the deceased is adaptive or maladaptive may depend on the form that this attachment takes. (p. 417)

It follows that we need to identify subgroups of bereaved persons for whom it will be more conducive to adjustment to retain versus those who need to relinquish their ties to a deceased person.

General Conclusions: Ending the Relinquishing/Continuing Bonds Debate

The above review of scientific contributions to the continuing–relinquishing bonds debate indicates that neither can we conclude categorically that continuing, nor that relinquishing, bonds will be helpful for bereaved persons in coming to terms with their grief. This conclusion is not based on the lack of scientific evidence for the one or the other position (although the fact that there is so little evidence could be interpreted as supporting our conclusions), as much as on analysis at the conceptual level. There is simply no choosing between the two apparent alternatives. Put simply, it has become evident from the available literature that certain types of continuing bonds may sometimes be helpful/harmful, whereas certain types of relinquishing bonds may sometimes be helpful/harmful.

Patterns emerge as follows: Bereaved persons who have difficulties in adjusting may need to work at loosening their tie to their

deceased loved one and learn to "relocate" the person.[5] In other words, there may be a need for further transformation in the nature of the bond. Shuchter and Zisook (1993) described transformation as a shift "from what had been a relationship operating on several levels of actual, symbolic, internalised, and imagined relatedness to one in which the actual ("living and breathing") relationship has been lost, but the other forms remain or may even develop in more elaborate forms" (p. 34).

Our conclusion on the need for further relocation/transformation follows the original psychoanalytic formulation. It does not mean that there is a need for these bereaved people to forget the deceased person. Nor does this conclusion apply to the majority of bereaved persons whose continued tie is causing them no harm (in the sense of complicating the grieving process; it is clear that there will still be grieving and distress). Possibly, for the latter, relocation has taken or is taking its natural course. In our view, there has been overgeneralization from the needs of clinical samples to bereaved persons in general. Similarly, continuing a bond in a clinging, and/or highly preoccupied manner, to the extent that other relationships and "moving on" are impeded, is likely to be harmful (and again, the minority of persons who suffer from this type of over-dependence may need professional help). By contrast, using the deceased as a source for guidance about decision making may be conducive to adjustment and is probably a strategy that is an integral part of normal, uncomplicated grieving for many people.

Thus, research efforts need to be channelled toward establishing who among the bereaved actually benefit from retaining versus relinquishing their ties. In other words, we need to ascertain patterns of individual (and cultural) differences in the (mal)adaptive functions of continuing or relinquishing bonds. Attachment theory provides a useful framework for systematic exploration of individual differences (Stroebe et al., 2005). Furthermore, we need to learn what precisely the nature of these bonds is. The research of Field and collaborators has already given lead in this direction, notably through the development of a scale to measure different

[5]An analogy for "relocation" would be the placement of a treasured object within a glass cabinet, where it can be viewed, remembered and accessed but where it is, in a sense, put away for safe keeping, behind closed doors.

types of bonding (Field et al., 2003; Field et al., 1999). Well-controlled cross-cultural studies would provide valuable information here too. Finally, more research is needed to define how bonds are continued or relinquished. Investigations into regulatory processes in coping with bereavement provide a useful starting point with respect to this latter concern (Boerner & Heckhausen, 2003; Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999; Stroebe & Schut, 1999).

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