

A B S T R A C T S

A comparison of grief as related to miscarriage and termination for fetal abnormality

Keefe-Cooperman K. *Omega* 2004-2005: **50**(4); 281-300

The purpose of this study was to discover whether the grief reactions of women who experienced miscarriage and women who terminated for fetal abnormality would differ, and to identify the factors that differentiated the two groups. In fact, the author found that the reactions were substantially similar in terms of loss of self-esteem in three areas: biological self-esteem, moral self-esteem and social self-esteem. The groups were then combined to analyse within-group factors. Six fixed variables were found to be related to vulnerability for a grief reaction. These factors included: the time since the most recent loss; the intervention of counselling; employment outside the home; feeling responsible for the perinatal loss; the age of the mother as related to guilt; and the gestational length of pregnancy. Further research is needed to include, among other factors, a wider range of ethical and socioeconomic backgrounds among the women being studied, and further investigation into the role of counselling in facilitating the grieving process.

'Was life worth living'? Older widowers and their explicit discourses of the decision to live

Bennett KM. *Mortality* 2005: **10**(2); 144-154

Many people have to face widowhood in later life. There are two particular issues that turn the focus on widowers: first, there is evidence that they are more likely to die earlier than widows and, secondly, that they are often believed to cope less well. However, explanations for this are not well developed. During two studies of widowhood in 60 older men, there was an explicit discussion about the decision, by a third of the men, to continue with life following the death of their spouses. Issues which were covered included the meaning of their lives, their age, their responsibilities, and the mortality of their friends. There was often a clear expression of stoicism in their decision to keep on living, and to make their lives positive.

Psychological and religious coping strategies of mothers bereaved by the sudden death of a child

Anderson MJ, Marwit SJ, Vandenberg B, Chibnall JT. *Death Studies* 2005: **29**(9); 811-826

This article examines how a group of mothers coped with the sudden accidental and/or violent death of a child. It discusses three types of psychological coping (task-based, emotion-based, avoidance), two types of religious coping (positive, negative) and their interactions with the mothers' grief. The authors conclude that neither a task-orientated nor a positive religious approach, used on its own, may have a good outcome, whereas used in conjunction they are likely to result in lower levels of grief. They point out, however, that their study has limitations, especially the small size of the sample, and the fact that it spanned a relatively long time since death and addressed a particularly difficult type of loss that may not typify the relation between grief and coping found in other types of loss.

To continue or relinquish bonds: a review of consequences for the bereaved

Stroebe M, Schut H. *Death Studies* 2005: **29**(6); 477-494

This article reviews research on the fundamental question of whether the bond with a deceased person should be continued or broken. During the 20th century a shift took place from an emphasis on the benefit of breaking these bonds to an investigation of the benefit of keeping them. The different beneficial formulations are examined, and the empirical evidence relating to the (mal)adaptive value of retaining or relinquishing bonds is assessed. The review shows that according to the available literature there is simply no choosing between the two apparent alternatives: certain types of continuing bonds may sometimes be either helpful or harmful, while the same may be said of relinquishing certain types of bonds. Researchers need to work towards an understanding of how, and for whom, continuing or relinquishing bonds furthers adjustment. ●

Sheila Hodges and John Bush

V A L E D I C T I O N

Sheila Hodges and John Bush

The topic of bereavement crosses the boundary between psychology, sociology, medicine, social work and other disciplines. It follows that articles about bereavement can be found in many journals and it has always been difficult for the editors of *Bereavement Care* to keep track of them. We were very fortunate when, 12 years ago, Sheila Hodges and John Bush volunteered to take on the role of locating and reviewing significant new papers for our journal.

As directors of Victor Gollancz, both had a background in editing and publishing and, after Victor retired, John ran that company for 17 years while Sheila continued to edit the prestigious list of authors, including Daphne du Maurier. When they, in turn, retired they became volunteers to St Christopher's Hospice, London, where they helped with the regular support groups for bereaved families. But they were also keen to use their literary skills for the benefit of bereaved people. The library at St Christopher's contains what is probably the most comprehensive collection of books and journals on bereavement in the world and it was the librarian who suggested that I meet the Bushes

to discuss how they could be of use.

Since that time John and Sheila have scanned hundreds of journals in search of articles on bereavement. They have created our regular column of reviews, kept us informed of developments in the field and introduced us to many fascinating and unexpected byways. As the editor to whom they have regularly sent their reviews I have found my task made very easy; in fact their articulate contributions have seldom needed editing at all, and it has always been a pleasure to receive them. We owe them a great debt. Sadly Sheila and John have now decided to retire from this role and the editors wish to thank them both for all that they have done and the high standard that they have set.

Their place will be taken by one of the very few people whose knowledge and understanding of the literature on bereavement matches their own, Denise Brady. Denise is senior librarian at St Christopher's Hospice and an authority on bereavement in her own right. Indeed she already writes a well informed bereavement blog-spot on the internet at <http://bereavementupdate.blogspot.com/>. We look forward to her contribution. ● *CMP*

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