

The Perspective of Bereaved Filipino Families on Continuing Bonds

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ABSTRACT

The study explored Filipino experiences on continuing bonds pertaining to loss of a loved one. The phenomenological-qualitative method of research utilizing semi-structured interviews was used. The participants are composed of equal number of surviving parents, children, sibling and spouse respondents from Region I and Cordillera Administrative Region. Data were transcribed, coded, and categorized to obtain results of the study. Findings on the nature of continuing bonds are categorized into (a) concrete representation of the deceased which includes dream visitation, spiritual presence and association with the deceased; (b) preserving the memory of the deceased; (c) sustenance of communication with the deceased involves expressing emotions, asking permission/ consulting with decisions, seeking for guidance and sharing family's achievements and difficulties; and (d) identification with the deceased. From the findings, it is concluded that (a) the relationship of Filipinos continues to exist despite the death of a loved one (b) Filipinos experience connection in the form of a real symbol of their deceased loved ones. It is therefore recommended that bereaved individuals are encouraged to maintain a grief dream journal since it offers a way through healing process. Practitioners should help the bereaved individuals by developing appropriate interventions like group dynamics and psychological debriefing for them to cope with the loss of their family member. Future researchers may also explore loss-related resilience in relation to continuing bonds to investigate the impact of the nature of death.

Keywords: *phenomenological-qualitative research methodology, grief, philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Every individual experiences loss, of one type or another, through the course of his or her life. This loss can take a diversity of forms, such as the loss of a job, loss of a relationship to a significant other, loss of safety, or the loss of a role (e.g., mother, employee, athlete, etc.). Grief is the term relating to the emotional response to such a personal loss. The grief caused by loss is most often related with the death of a loved one, or bereavement.

There is now a developing understanding of the clinical significance of complicated grief (CG) in relation to its latent significance following disasters. Uncomplicated acute grief is frequently severe and disturbing right after a loss but usually becomes gentler and less harming over a period of time. Those people

experiencing complicated grief, though, this change may not happen and acute grief symptoms (e.g., strong feelings of longing, concerned with thoughts or memories of the dead, withdrawal, loss of interest) continue longer (Bryant, Friedman and Spiegel, 2010). In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the difference between pathological versus normal behavior lies in its association with impairment. The DSM-5 states that a mental disorder is characterized by its association with current distress and disability. Following this reasoning, complicated grief reactions should be more strongly related to impairment and distress than normal grief reactions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The current investigation is part of a broader exploratory study that examined the experience of continuing bonds after familial bereavement. Continuing bonds is a relatively new idea in western psychology. Traditional views of adaptive behavior during bereavement included severing all ties with the deceased in order to reinvest one's energy with the living. However, continuing bonds represent the idea of maintaining an emotional connection with the deceased as a way to cope with the loss (Klass, 1996). Continuing bonds may come in psychological or physical form (e.g., a fond memory or a treasured keepsake, respectively) and serve the purpose of preserving the emotional connection between the bereaved and the deceased (Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, 1996).

A continuing bond is generally understood as the presence of an ongoing inner relationship with the deceased person by the bereaved individual (Field, Gal-Oz and Bonanno, 2003) and is a common experience among the bereaved across ages and cultures (Klass et al., 1996). The continued connection to the deceased has sometimes been viewed as a form of unresolved grief. Using this perspective, the likelihood to maintain the bond with the dead loved one reveals the effort to preserve the relationship by combating against the reality that the person is dead. In this case, the task of "grief work" is to break the bond between the living and dead by reviewing the thoughts, memories, and emotions associated with the loss (Stroebe, Schut and Stroebe, 1991).

Klass and his colleagues defined continuing bonds as the active connection between the bereaved and a dynamic inner representation of the deceased via the use of dreams, mementos, or other means. The role of maintaining continuing bonds with the deceased has often cited ethnographic and anthropological accounts of grief and mourning practices in other cultures. Consequently, they are seen as an enduring exchange between the living and the dead (Gonzalez-Wippler, 1992). In Mexico, the Day of the Dead is a ten-day celebration where family of the deceased honor them by different festivities including candlelight rituals, decoration of family burial plots and lively street performances in Mexico City neighborhoods (PR Newswire US, 2014). In some Asian countries, such as China, bereaved family members burn banknotes, fake money and iPhones to honor their dead loved ones (Calum, 2015). While in Japan,

bereaved family members usually do ancestor worship at the house, and make an altar with a Buddha where they put incense burners, bells, candles and photographs of the dead. They also offer food to the spirits of the deceased loved one on a customary basis (Klass, 2001).

It has also been observed that, when Filipinos grieve for the loss of their loved ones, they are comforted by the idea that their loved ones are in heaven. In other instances, they look to the Lord for guidance during times of grieving. Moreover, healthy grieving by creating a new life is also being practiced. The role of other members of the family, as well as the community, is given importance in helping the bereaved cope with the loss (Mendoza, n.d.).

As her conclusion, Mendoza (n.d.) stated that the process of loss, grief, bereavement, coping, and letting go is not as linear as it seems to be. There is no equation with regards to life after losing a child, particularly in the Philippine setting. Culture seems to play a dynamic role in this. Mothers seem to be living well whether they exhibit adaptive or maladaptive continuing bonds. The sadness will always be there, but they have the capacity to cope with it and live a normal life. Religion seems to be the defining factor in the process. The type of continuing bonds, coping mechanisms, anger, and feelings of injustice, and other themes revolve around religiosity, which is a big factor in the Philippine setting.

The most common death ritual among Filipinos is the Novena, in which prayers are said for nine (9) consecutive nights following a death. During this time, it is customary for family members to take turns watching over the body. If the deceased was a husband, his widow cannot go out unaccompanied during this time. On the night of the ninth day, a feast (“pasiyam”) is prepared. Friends and family come to the house and eat the favorite foods of the deceased. It is believed that a place at the table should be set for the dead so he or she can also eat. In many cases, personal belongings are buried with the dead so the deceased will not come back and ask for those items (razors, soap, glasses, and such). When a child dies, white is worn to the funeral because it is believed that children are angels and angels do not wear black (Braun, 1997).

It is also observed that when leaving the mortuary, visitors cleanse their hands in a pot of water with lemon leaves on it. This is for purification, signifying that the person is dead and is already in another world and that the mourner must return to his or her own world again. Another memorial service is held 40 days after burial. Moreover, graves are often visited on during All Souls Day (November 1), All Saints Day (November 2) and birth and death anniversaries. A widow must wear a veil through the novena and customarily wears black clothes for a year. Sons and daughters wear black clothes too for six (6) months. Children are not expected to wear black but often wear black ribbons tied in a bow and pinned on their clothing to show

that they are mourning. After a death in the family, people are not supposed to attend parties for a year out of respect for the deceased.

Some people would say that it is also possible to converse to the deceased. When the dead person speaks through the living, the soft to medium sound is heard because it is the voice of the dead that is heard. For example, in one particular funeral, a woman went into a trance, and the voice of her deceased husband started to speak through her. This voluntary dissociative experience is a common aspect of the Philippine culture. Bulatao (1987) showed preference for terms such as hypnosis and altered state of consciousness (ASC) does occasionally acknowledge that these are actually dissociative phenomena. Dissociation is being defined in the DSM-5 as disturbance of and/or discontinuity in the normal integration of consciousness, memory, identity, emotion, perception, body representation, motor control, and behavior. The dissociative symptoms may possibly disrupt every area of psychological functioning.

Ang (2010) on the other hand conducted a research examining how Filipino widows continue their relationships with their deceased spouses and the effectiveness of continuing bonds as a coping mechanism. Results showed that Filipino religious beliefs are critical in continuing a bond with the deceased. Based on interviews conducted with 10 widows, supplemented by survey results from 128 widows, the bereaved continue to communicate, sense their husbands' presence, give value to their legacies, and perceive them as angels and saints or someone who is more powerful among others. Furthermore, quantitative results showed that continuing bonds strongly predict both complicated grief and post traumatic growth, though the benefits seem to outweigh the drawbacks.

The concept of continuing bonds is also discussed relative to grief in children but only in the context of parental loss (Christ, Siegel, and Christ, 2002). These studies illustrate how children preserve the relationship with their parents by maintaining their bond. The occurrence of continuing bonds has not been labeled as such in the literature of sibling bereavement. Although similar concepts have been explained relative to sibling bereavement, in general, this has been fairly limited to date (Devita-Raeburn, 2004). In the current study, continuing bonds will be explored in relation to the deceased parent, spouse, son or daughter or sibling.

To date, systematic reviews of the bereavement experience of the Filipino families in the Philippines is limited. Given the literature about continuing bonds, it can be argued that there are still gaps and inconsistencies among the presented studies. For one, there are limited studies that have been done about familial continuing bonds considering the Filipino Psyche, as this topic is fairly new. Thus, further research can still be done with regard to the changes in continuing bonds manifested by Filipino family members.

Findings from this topic could serve as grounds to understand and strengthen the inner and external continuing bond of bereaved Filipino families when providing action like psychological aid or debriefing. For clinical practitioners, the result could serve as baseline information for them to respond appropriately to their clients. In the school setting, the administrators and concerned individuals may conceptualize group dynamic activities to bereaved students. Data from this study could also help counselors organize an intervention program like group dynamics to help said bereaved students to cope with the pain and loss. This study may serve as a reference material for future studies involving continuing bonds.

This study aimed to find out the nature of continuing bonds in the familial bereavement among Filipinos. Specifically, it answered on how Filipinos perceive the nature of their continuing bonds. The goal of this study was not just to add existing knowledge regarding continuing bonds but also to create an opportunity to help those who had experienced bereavement. Results gained from this research can provide purposeful means for certain interventions like grief therapy and psychological debriefing in the event of bereavement or after the loss of a loved one.

METHODOLOGY

The phenomenological-qualitative method of research was used. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. Its goal is to explore a lived experience, and it stresses that only those who have experienced phenomena can communicate them to the outside world (Todres and Holloway, 2004). The respondents were selected based on the following criteria: those a) who experienced familial bereavement in the past six to sixty months, b) who lost either a parent (P), spouse(SP), son/daughter (SD) or sibling (S), c) at any age from the time of bereavement, d) have exhibited certain expression of continuing bonds with the deceased e.g. talking to their deceased loved one, greeting them good morning, just asking how they are, and asking help from them in their daily struggles and e) able to read and understand Filipino. The researcher used semi-structured interview with a researcher-made Interview Guide to gather the nature of continuing bonds from the 19 participants of Region 1 and Cordillera Administrative Region. This is a series of guide questions in English translated to Filipino. This has been content-validated by two (2) experts in the field of Psychology.

The respondents were recruited via requests posted online, requests sent via email, and direct personal solicitations. Respondents were accessed through friends, relatives and social network sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Viber, Line, and WeChat. A semi-structured interview was facilitated that lasted for about one and a half to two hours for each of the 19 respondents. The interviews were conducted privately in the participant's home where the researcher and the participant seated in a face-to-face arrangement. Consent from each respondent was personally secured by

the researcher. Specific questions on continuing bonds were hence put forward and discussed between the researcher and respondent. Additional questions were also asked when there were vague or inconsistent answers. The researcher recorded the interview with the signed consent form of the respondents. The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim including the probing questions asked by the researcher, any false starts, significant pauses, laughs and other important features.

The researcher transcribed and coded the themes from the interviews by tagging the transcripts. The interviews were content analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a contemporary qualitative methodology, which provides a framework to explore individual's lived experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) in relation to the nature of their continuing bonds.

In the analysis phase, the researcher immersed herself in the original transcript. Free association and exploring semantic content (e.g. by writing notes in the margin) were executed. The researcher focused on chunks of transcript and analysis of notes made into themes. This is followed by searching for connections across emergent themes. Moving to the next case, the researcher tried to bracket previous themes and kept open-minded in order to do justice to the individuality of each new case. Patterns of shared higher order qualities across cases were looked and idiosyncratic instances were noted. The interview sessions were independently evaluated by three raters, one of whom is the main author of this research. The raters held a meeting to finalize the emerging themes. Common themes were drawn from the responses. The final phase of the analysis process was interpretation which involved explaining the findings and attaching significance to particular results and putting patterns into an analytic framework. This stage translated the themes into a narrative account, which is like a persuasive story. The results were a joint product of the researcher and the research (Smith et al., 2009).

Ethical Considerations

The autonomy of informants was central to the study. Permission was gained from the informants through the Informed Consent. Furthermore, the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence whereby the researcher made an effort to prevent harm to the informants were assured. The researcher was also aware of the distressing and sensitive content of each interview and that informants may withdraw from the interview without repercussions anytime. Remaining attentive to this principle, the researcher was also cautious of the questions within each interview so that potential psychological distress to the informants was minimized. Finally, the principle of justice where each informant received fair treatment and privacy was applied in this study. Confidentiality and data protection procedures were employed as a minimum standard. These included: Voice files/transcripts being numbered rather than using the informant's names; pseudonyms were used in transcripts/quotations; access to

raw data were confined to the researcher and supervision team; voice files were deleted after transcription and informants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their replies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below is a table of the themes and subthemes that emerged in the conduct of the study.

<p>Theme 1: Representation of the deceased in one's consciousness</p> <p>Subthemes:</p> <p>Dream Visitation</p>	<p>Respondents reported their experiences of having a symbolic substitution of surviving family members with deceased immediate family member. Their experiences may be in the form of dream visitation, spiritual presence or association with the deceased.</p> <p>The respondents found many ways of developing a relationship with their deceased immediate family members. Dreams were one way of remaining connected. They consider this as an opportunity to interact and continue to experience a dead parent. Dreaming permits many possibilities of completing the unfinished business that comes with loss. Especially when these conflicts are horrible, dreams of fighting, reliving past hurts, and anger are possible after a loved one has passed away. These dreams are reminders of the complexity of relationships and the emotional burdens that come with being close to one another. These flashes offer reconciliation, or letting go of bitterness and old grudges. As such, SD2 was visited by his deceased son in his dream. In his experience, he narrated that when his son was still alive; they had a conversation about something his son wants him to buy. He was not able to give the request of his son. Then his son appeared to his dream reassuring him that everything is okay.</p> <p>Some visitations, however, are not so plainly healing. Sometimes, these dreams about dead loved ones bring up other emotions and realizations. S2 shared a touching example of a dream visitation wherein the death of her brother made her emotional and realized some things about the death of his brother. Another respondent who lost a sister saw dreams as a way of receiving messages. S1 narrated a part of her dream wherein her sister appeared in her dream. When asked about her earliest memories with her sister, S1 started sharing about</p>
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<p>Spiritual Presence</p>	<p>their childhood memories and mentioned that she even dreamt about her deceased sister.</p> <p>Visits from an earthbound spirit of a deceased family member, usually bears several signs. The respondents stated that the presence of their deceased family member is typically not comforting. Some of the respondents (SD1, P4 and SD2) feel watched even if they are alone in the room. Other respondents (SP2 and SD2) might even begin to feel or witness movements from the things around. As such, they may feel abrupt cold areas in the room. In several cases, they may even see a ghostly human image for just a moment. Some respondents even experienced a flash of movement or seeing a kind of shadow when no one else is in the room.</p> <p>In other cases, the respondents experienced a visit from their deceased family member in a manner that they typically do not feel nervous or uncomfortable when it happens. They said that they may begin to reflect on the memories of the deceased loved one along with the slight shift of temperature. The spiritual presence of the dead may be conveyed by the bereaved family members as encouragement and guidance. It is in this sense that they may possibly feel loved and comforted when their dead are around. When a deceased loved one is around, they often start thinking of them and feeling their presence. When the deceased father of P4 appeared to his son, his presence was as if a message that his deceased father is guiding them.</p>
<p>Association with the deceased</p>	<p>A visit from a deceased loved one in a manner that the surviving family members typically do not feel nervous or uncomfortable happened when SD2 asked his deceased son to appear to him. Further, the appearance of the deceased son made it possible to SD2 to see him and feel his presence.</p> <p>Bereaved family members often experience receiving varied physical signs from their deceased loved ones. There may be instances of lights or lamps blinking on and off; mechanical objects, and toys being turned on; moving photographs, pictures, and other items. For some they also include their dead loved ones in their social media accounts like Facebook or Instagram.</p> <p>Majority of the responses illustrate a visual representation of the deceased loved one. SP3 affirmed that he can, there is</p>

	<p>still a connection between him and his deceased wife. He also emphasized that the connection is even stronger especially when he has the chance to see the picture of his deceased wife.</p>
<p>Theme 2: Preserving the memory of the deceased</p>	<p>Filipinos embrace a wide range of beliefs on bereavement, death and the afterlife. Different beliefs stem from religion, customs, traditions, and personal conceptions. Filipinos from different parts of the country have various ways of honoring and remembering their departed loved ones. It is typical for Filipinos to celebrate the death of their loved ones as a family.</p> <p>Some of the respondents declared that they have family celebrations to remember their deceased loved ones. Others remember them during the birth and death anniversaries. Their manifestations of remembering may be in the form of offering mass or a simple family celebration.</p> <p>Another respondent who remembered his deceased father during November 1 and his birth or death anniversaries is P4. In the case of P3, they are having novena when they commemorate her deceased mother. After the prayer, they have simple get together. SP2 has also the same experience where she offers mass for her deceased husband. She remembers a moment that everytime she receives a blessing, she always offers mass for him and all her departed loved ones.</p> <p>Aside from the respondents' offering mass and celebrating the birth and death anniversaries of their deceased loved ones, some also maintain their connection through food offering. Just like the experience of S2, she shared that they give snacks to her deceased brother. Sometimes they also offer mass and light him a candle. S2 added that years from now her connection with her deceased brother is still the same. Even if he is already gone, she considers her brother important.</p> <p>In the case of P5, she admitted that it is her family members living in Manila who visit the grave of their father very often. However if they are all together, they make it a point to visit their deceased father in the cemetery.</p>
<p>Theme 3: Sustenance of communication</p>	<p>There were surviving family members who admitted that they still maintain their communication with the deceased father/mother, son/daughter, spouse and sibling. This manifestation can either be to express emotions, to ask</p>

<p>with the deceased</p> <p>Subthemes:</p> <p>To express emotions</p> <p>To ask permission/ to consult with decisions</p> <p>To seek for guidance</p> <p>To share family's achievements and difficulties</p>	<p>permission/ to consult their decisions, to seek for guidance or to share family's achievements and difficulties.</p> <p>The respondents found many ways of developing a relationship with their deceased loved ones. Sustenance of communication to express emotion was one way of remaining connected. This was considered an opportunity to interact and continue to experience a dead loved one. P1 remembered that she does things to stay connected with her dead father. Similarly for SP3, he recalled that there were times that he tends to share to his deceased wife his frustration to bring her back.</p> <p>To ask permission or to consult with decisions refers to the surviving family members getting a consent from their deceased loved ones about the choices they are about to make. For some respondents, their recollections of continued bond with their deceased family member involved asking permission or consulting the deceased with their decisions. For example, S3 confirmed that there were times that she talked to her deceased brother. For SP4, she said that before she makes her decision, she consults it first to her deceased husband.</p> <p>To seek for guidance means that the surviving family members asking their deceased loved ones to watch over them. Some see the deceased as a role model from whose wisdom and learning they can draw. They sometimes turn to the deceased for guidance. As P2 recalls and narrates how she maintains her bond to her deceased mother, she narrated her experience with a very soft tone of voice.</p> <p>To share family's achievements and difficulties refers to the surviving family members informing their deceased loved ones about the events happening to them. There were also respondents who maintained their bonds with their deceased loved one through sharing the achievements and difficulties of their surviving family members. They talk about their experience regarding how they maintain the bond with their deceased loved ones. They said that they still talk with their deceased loved one.</p>
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Theme 4: Identification with the deceased	Many believe the deceased are there to intervene and support them. In doing so, they build the connection out of the structure of daily life and the sense of the deceased they carry within them. Some respondents disclosed that one way for them to maintain their connection with their deceased family member is to identify with the deceased. P1 talked about getting her strength to face her problems from her relationship with her deceased father. For P2, she said that there is still a connection between her and the deceased mother. She expressed that she took the role of her mother in their family.
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This study attempted to widen the work on continuing bonds by considering the nature manifested by Filipinos. The present study supports the idea that continuing bond (CB) expression is a multidimensional construct in determining the relationship to grief outcomes and in mediating the effects of bereavement characteristics. Given the earlier conceptualizations of CB, this study has outlined two subdimensions of CB as internalized and externalized expressions. The respondents' continuing bond manifestations are based internally (e.g., memories), emphasizing psychological proximity. This subdimension was termed internalized because the items capture both the sense of a loving presence of the deceased as well as using the deceased as an autonomy-promoting secure base. Some examples are "As long as I live. I feel that I will never forget him.", "Sometimes I pray, "Mother, please guide us. Help us especially your grandchildren and us, siblings. Please guide us always and continue praying for us.", "I get my strength to face my problems from the relationship we have. That is my inspiration to face my problems."

The internalized subscale is described as a positive form to maintain the connection with the deceased, consisting of items that relate to identification with the deceased (taking on the deceased's value and carrying out the deceased's wishes), using the deceased as a standard (using the deceased's viewpoint in decision-making), internalization of the deceased (keeping and carrying on the positive influence of the deceased), reminiscence of the deceased (reminiscing with others experiences with the deceased), and having a sense of loving presence of the deceased (sharing interesting life experiences or daily tasks with the deceased) (Ho, Chan, Ma, and Field, 2013).

On the other hand, other respondents manifest externalized (e.g., seeing visions of the deceased) continuing bonds which emphasize physical proximity. In addition, these may be perceived as interfering or distressing by the bereaved family members; these involve illusions and hallucinations with the deceased (Field and Filanosky, 2010). Examples are "It seems like someone is nearby when a food suddenly falls down or as if someone passes instantaneously.", "Ah, I think my son is as if sensing

him because sometimes if he is alone in the living room, he says, “Tatay is here” and when the house is not yet finished you can sense him at early morning, as if someone is going up the staircase.

The externalized CB subscale contains items that are related to illusory types of contact with the deceased. These quasi-perceptual experiences consist of misrepresentation of the external presence of the deceased in the visual, auditory, and tactile modalities (Field, 2006).

The results of this study appear to be consistent with that of Field et al. (2009) on confirmatory factor analysis on survey data, and with Field et al.’s (2013) structured interviews with bereaved mothers. Further, the study validates the findings of Field and Filanosky (2010) that an externalized CB would be positively related to both anxious attachment style and grief symptoms, and internalized CB would be associated with less grief symptoms.

The subdivision internalized CB expressions aligned with those of Field et al. (2013), Field et al. (2010), and Field et al. (2004) in including such items as obtaining comfort through fond memories, dreams, looking at photographs of the deceased, and a subjective sense of presence which were predictive of more positive grief outcomes. Furthermore, the results of this current study associating internalized CB expressions to personal growth was supported by the results of Field et al. (2010) and Field et al. (2004).

Contrary to the traditional viewpoint, modern theories of bereavement indicate that the bereaved may involve an ongoing attachment with the deceased (Klass et al., 1996). The cognitive stress theory is often referred to in the adult bereavement literature to clarify a subjective response of individuals to grief as well as its relationship to physical and emotional well-being (Bonanno and Kaltman, 1999). Cognitive stress theory is based on the principle that significant life events, such as the death of a loved one, create stress and require survivors to adjust and modify to their situations (Stroebe et al., 1996 as cited by Sirmine, 2013). This theory also emphasized that given each individual’s responses to death are unique and subjective, the stress caused by the death of a loved one is also unique and subjective. This explains why some surviving family members may experience grief reactions including anxiety, fear, or sadness in response to the death of their family members but such feelings may not result in lasting stress.

Few researches exist on the impact of the deceased’s age at death on bereavement. However, this study found that deceased’s age at death was positively associated with transference and negatively associated with personal growth. According to Field et al. (2009), this result would suggest that the bereaved has not achieved personal growth, which can be seen in the successful integration of the

survivor's loss of their family member. This finding is consistent with Scholtes and Browne (2015) "caregiving behavioral system" in that the bereaved is motivated to provide protection to the deceased. Therefore, to provide protection the bereaved will attempt to recover the deceased, searching behaviors or transference may be produced to reinvoke feelings experienced preceding the family member's death.

Finally, continuing bond expressions vary in whether the deceased and or bereaved individual is shed in an active or passive role (e.g., the bereaved seeking contact with the deceased vs. continuing bond experiences believed to be deceased-initiated or controlled; Foster et al., 2011). This facet has implications for the adaptiveness of continuing bonds as well. Perhaps the experience of deceased-initiated contact may be perceived as intrusive and frightening by the bereaved individual, whereas connections initiated purposely by the bereaved may foster a sense of control over the bond. On the other hand, it is distressing for the bereaved if the deceased family member does not initiate contact to him or her, more so if the contact is expected.

The current findings give insight into how bereaved family members in a non-clinical population respond and cope with such a significant loss. These emphasize that there are manifestations of continuing bonds that can be purposeful, growth-promoter, and an alternative factor of bereavement that allow the bereaved to reinvest in their own lives. Some externalized expressions of continuing bonds, though not necessarily symptomatic of a clinical diagnosis, nonetheless appear to be discomforting while others are comforting. The implication for practice with bereaved family members struggling with bereavement is certainly to monitor the form of CB expression and encourage a gradual shift from discomforting to comforting expressions.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the current study concludes that: Filipinos maintain a connection with their deceased loved ones because they are known for having close family ties. To a Filipino, family comes first and family is everything. This family solidarity keeps a Filipino to be positive amidst the death of a loved one. Filipino deceased loved ones are no longer sensibly present to them in life but they are already more alive internally in their memories, meditations, prayers and in dreams.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the different findings and conclusions of the study. These are addressed to people and institutions that are possible sources of support in helping bereaved Filipino families. First, bereaved individuals are encouraged to work with their dreams about their deceased since grief

dreams offer the opportunity for healing. In addition, keeping a grief dream journal offers a way through pain to memory and meaning. Second, although the topic of familial bereavement was the subject for this study, it became evident to the researcher that trauma in bereaved families and how the family deals with this trauma are important to study for those social workers working with distressed families. In general, more study is needed in the area of youth and family bereavement. Third, given most adults in this study identified ways in which they maintained an attachment to the deceased, it is very important for practitioners to assess for CABs at the start of bereavement work with a client. In addition, practitioners should develop interventions, especially those involving the processing of CABs that are developmentally appropriate. As an example, practitioners must be sensitive that youth may not look for comfort in talking about the deceased to others but may prefer to write a journal about or discuss favorite memories instead. Fourth, for the Higher Education Institutions specifically the Office of Student Affairs or Student Personnel Services, they may extend as part of their student services program a special treatment or attention to young bereaved students by providing them the guidance and counseling they need for them to continue with their goals and dreams in life despite the pain and sorrow they have experienced as a result of loss. Fifth, the teachers may also offer their services in the form of tutoring, extra support, or temporary changes in their test schedules or other classroom demands. Sixth, knowing the experiences and struggles of the bereaved members, counselors may include in their Guidance Program an intervention program like group dynamics on how to help these bereaved students to cope with the pain and struggles of separation as they face life. Seventh, future researchers may also explore loss-related resilience in relation to continuing bonds. Since there is no cut-off age on the respondents of this current study, future studies may also determine continuing bonds in a particular developmental stage. Since the continuing bond is more focused on its nature, it is recommended to look into the length and depth of depressive episodes of the bereaved persons. This may also be tried on with varying number of months of bereavement including the age or sex of the respondents. Future researchers may also explore if the content and interpretation of dreams reflect attachment or emotional issues with the deceased and why the experience of sensing the deceased can be comforting for some while discomfoting for others.

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