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The Role of Culture, Existential Thinking and Meaning Making and their impact on Grief Responses

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Abstract

The present study examines 1) the mediating role of meaning making on the relationship between existentialism and complicated grief 2) the moderating role of positive growth on the existentialism and complicated grief relation and 3) the role of existentialism and meaning making on the grief responses between a masculine (Greece) and a feminine country (Netherlands). A non-clinical sample of a total 223 bereaved individuals from Greece (130) and Netherlands (93) filled out online questionnaires on the ICG scale, the UGRS, the ISLES, the PG and the Existential scale. The results indicated that meaning made of the loss partially mediated the association between existentialism and complicated grief as well as that positive growth moderated the existentialism and grief relation. As per our last hypothesis no differences were found on the course of bereavement with both countries to show high levels of grief regardless their existential level and their ability to make sense of the loss. Furthermore, heightened existential awareness and meaning making was overall more apparent in the feminine country compared to the masculine one. Although based on cross-sectional data, these findings provide additional support for awareness and meaning oriented understandings of adaptation to loss between a feminine and a masculine country.

Keywords: culture, feminine, masculine, grief, bereavement, existential, meaning making, positive growth.

Introduction

The loss of a loved one is a universal experience, which by many people is perceived as an extremely stressful event (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Spurgeon, Jackson, & Beach, 2001). People's responses to loss are unique and often vary widely. Over the last decades several risk factors have been intensively studied and found to play a role into why people grieve differently; insecure attachments and prior adversities in childhood (Vanderwerker et al, 2006), the type of relationship (i.e close, supportive, dependent) one had with the deceased (Bonanno et al., 2007), the expression and maintenance of the continuing bonds (Boelen, Stroebe, Schut, & Zijderveld, 2006a), the difference in sex, age and previous history of anxiety disorders (Melhem, Day, Shear, Reynolds, & Brent, 2004a) , religious beliefs and practices (Herbert, Dang, & Schulz, 2007), as well as the availability of social and emotional support from family and friends (Stroebe et al., 2001), are some of the risk factors that impact grief responses.

However, in order to understand the variety of the responses it is important to highlight first that grief is much more than a process of mourning over the loss. It is not only about the physical loss and being deprived of one's literal presence (which might have been taken for granted) but also being deprived of the relational loss one had with the deceased and their emotional tie (Doka & Martin, 2010). Therefore, in order to understand what produces grief, it would be useful to consider the impact of the secondary losses and the meaning attributed to the loss (Gross, 2015). Given the complexity of the risk factors and the dimensional facets of loss, it is not surprising why some surviving family members and friends experience intense grief, whereas others adapt well over the course of bereavement (Bonanno, Wortman, & Nesse, 2004). Considering such diversity, it becomes essential to explore grief as well as to distinguish among its protective and risk factors.

When people experience the death of their significant other, thoughts concerning their own mortality, how precious time is and what will happen to their loved one, often emerge (Frias, Watkins, Webber, & Foh, 2011). This existential concept is that of the "abyss" which refers to our reluctance to comprehend and acknowledge our own vulnerability, as well as the horrors that are part of human existence (Brewin, 2003). Death is inextricably linked with the concept of "abyss". As Hills (2002, p. 156) stated:

Death is an absolute. It is unchallenged as the event of moment in the hierarchy of human possibilities: the ending of all endings; the loss of all losses. The root of all trauma is not just

the shock or the pain itself, which may be distressing enough, it is the confrontation with the death terror.

However, it can also be seen that when people are confronted with their own mortality they create a higher degree of appreciation for their own life, which means they are more likely to create meaning from their engagement with an existential subject (i.e., death) and adjust it to themselves (Frias et al., 2011). Yet, due to the perceptual and interpretational process, meanings cannot be permanent or final since that would presuppose one's direct knowledge of an ultimate reality (Spinelli, 2005). Existentialism provides the theoretical framework within which demanding aspects of human existence such as death, loss, trauma, pain and suffering can be understood and be dealt with as effectively as possible (Thompson & Walsh, 2010). However, this theoretical framework where reflective experience takes place is not suggestive of a pre-conceptual "purity" simply because this would deny pivotal variables such as culture and history. Phenomenologists argue that our experience and interpretation of reality is indivisible from the reality being perceived and it may only be correct when based on external, objective laws or truths that have universally been ascertained and agreed by a meaning system of a certain culture (Spinelli, 2005). However, the conflict between the authentic way of being and the oppressive spiritual conformity was further explored by Sartre (1991) who challenged the cultural assumptions and expectations of one's upbringing. According to his existentialistic view human beings tend to determine a meaning for their life, more based on their own values and their cultural state of consciousness as the possession of their inherent identity or values is indecisive (Sartre, 1991).

It is believed that culture plays a role in defining a picture, of how emotions are communicated and in underlying the tendencies of how emotions are expressed by the general population. In line with this reasoning is Fernandez-Dols (1997) who stated that the emotional expression and the antecedent of each emotion a person experiences, might be influenced and processed by socially learned norms. Socially learned norms are also considered to determine grief reactions within one culture, while family systems contribute to formation of the social expressions of grief (Clements et al., 2004 & Gross, 2015.) Taking into account the cultural dimension of masculinity and femininity, the differences in emotional reactions could be further understood and the cultural tendencies in emotional communication could also be predicted (Hofstede, 1991). Cultural studies have shown that in feminine countries men can be gentle, feminine,

weak whereas in masculine countries men's vulnerability considered as weakness which is associated with the fear of failure and punishment compared to the feminine countries (Hofstede, 2001). Basabe et al. (1999) indicated that people living in feminine countries felt and expressed more positive emotions than those who lived in more masculine countries. These findings are also in agreement with the study of Fernandez et al. (2000), who suggested that high cultural femininity reinforces the expression of emotion more than in masculine countries as the expression of negative emotions is accepted even in unequal status social context. Finally, this paper will seek to provide a better understanding of the influence culture exerts on the way loss is perceived and experienced as well as how grief expression might differ across cultures.

The fundamental concept in existentialism is that of "being-towards others", thus the rejection of atomism, the idea that each person's existence can be understood separate from the social context (Craib, 2009). This emphasis on the social dimension of existentialism is associated with the idea of "connectedness" as a dimension of spirituality (Canda & Furman, 2009) and refers to be connected not only with those that we have a meaningful relationship with but also with the wider community to which one belongs. In existential terms, experience is a process of "constructing frameworks" of meaning through our individual insight, culture and social influences. However, if one is confronted with the "abyss" and loss, it is often that their fundamental meanings and assumptions are shaken or altered (Rose & Philpot, 2005). In terms of understanding the importance of frameworks of meaning, it is useful to consider the "progressive-regressive method" and the three sets of factors (past, present and future) (Sartre, 1963). This method offers a sophisticated understanding that present needs to be understood by incorporating past (the regressive dimension) and future references (the progressive dimension) as well the effect of aspirations, intentions and fears have on the current circumstances (Sartre, 1963). This understanding is beneficial as it could shed light onto the meaning someone attributes to the loss and their difficulty to maintain a coherent sense of identity in the present because of the things they have taken for granted in the past and the uncertainty and the insecurity the future holds (Thompson & Walsh, 2010). Finally, the process of working through the "frameworks of meaning" has been found to redefine a person's life and goals and has been associated with positive grief outcomes that promote personal growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2001; Schaefer & Moos, 2001).

In addition to this, existentialism also refers to the process by which meaning of all the behavioural and cognitive conceptualisations of grief, is conceptualised and integrated (Boelen

et al., 2006, Steger et al., 2006). However, if these conceptualisations are not properly processed or contextualised this might result in poor integration (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). Based on existentialism, mourners in order to maintain or restore equilibrium engage in one of the two meaning making strategies (Neimeyer, 2006). The first alternative, assimilation, enables the griever to process the death based on the pre-loss way of construing, often in terms of spiritual explanations while recruiting support from their faith and social network (Ott, 2003). Alternatively, grievers can accommodate the death by reconstructing their beliefs to accept the loss which in turn leads them to identity changes and the formation of new social relationships (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006). Whether assimilation or accommodation is employed, studies substantiate grieving as meaning making process (Neimeyer & Sands, 2011) where most of individuals are able to retain or restore a sense of meaning in their lives, whereas others who present difficulties in meaning making are highly linked to complicated grief (Currier, Holland and Neimeyer, 2006).

For instance, recent research has shown that poor integration and meaning making mediated the relationship between risk factors and complicated grief when controlled for negative cognitions, avoidance and depression (Boelen, 2010, Boelen, de Keijser, & Smid, 2015). In addition to these findings, strong continuing bonds between survivor and the deceased predicted higher levels of complicated grief but only when the survivor was not able to make sense of the loss in personal, practical, existential and spiritual terms (Neimeyer, Baldwin & Gillies 2006). Yet many find that meaning making does not come easily. The studies of Wortman (2004) and Keesee et al.'s (2008) found that only 36 and 53%, respectively, of bereaved parents were able to make sense of their loss but that was only years later, whereas the longitudinal study of Coleman and Neimeyer (2010), found that the meaning making in the early months of loss predicted the widower's grief over the 4 years that followed. Contrariwise the spouses who were able to make sense of the loss – usually in spiritual terms experienced feelings of optimism and a sense of accomplishment over this same period.

Many researchers have stated that through the process of struggling with the unknown, changes emerge which drive an individual to reach higher level of functioning and therefore post traumatic growth (Linlay & Joseph, 2004). Post traumatic growth has been associated to meaning-making process, existential meaning and existential re-evaluation, suggesting that those who have high levels of post traumatic growth are likely to have high levels of existential thinking after ruminating their traumatic experiences (Janoff-Bulman, 2004; Kashdan, Kane, 2011). Jayawickreme, Blackie and Laura (2014) suggested that post traumatic growth leads to

a positive change as people incorporate new perspectives in their lives and begin to experience changes such as personal strength, existential and spiritual growth as well as appreciation of life. Finally, research studies dealing with other types of crisis events, proposed positive reframing to be essential for accepting unexpected events and be more flexible in adjusting life goals and priorities (Carver et al., 1989). Based on the assumption that post death existentialism and meaning making adds to the differential responses of grief while also integrating the cultural dimensions of masculinity and femininity, the aim of the current study was to explore the relationship between the two concepts and their impact on grief responses while highlighting the cultural tendencies influencing these responses. It is therefore hypothesized that 1) meaning making explains the relationship between existential thinking and high levels of grief 2) personal growth changes the relationship between existentialism and grief 3) lower scores in existential thinking and meaning making are associated with high levels of grief in masculine countries more than in feminine.

Methods:

Participants and Procedure:

A sample of 223 participants (N =223) who were grieving of a loved one, 130 participants from Greece (N =130) and 93 from the Netherlands (N= 93), gave their informed consent and participated in the study. Based on Hofstede (2001) standards, Greece and Netherlands were used as representatives for masculine and feminine countries accordingly for the purposes of displaying cultural differences in bereavement. Out of the total sample 132 were female (59.2%) and regarding the age range 18 to 29 comprised 22.0% (n=49), 30 to 39 years 26.0% (n=58), 40 to 49 years 20.2% (n=45), 50 to 59 years 20.6% (n=46) and 60 and over groups 11.2% (n=25). Table 1 shows the sample characteristics. The inclusion criteria for the participants considered the 18 years of age and to have lost a first degree-relative, partner or a close friend within the last three years. Information about the study was posted on grief-related websites (i.e. peer support websites) between February and March 2020. The email also contained a link to an online survey tool (Qualtrics). Participants were informed of the aim of the study, the estimated time needed for completion, the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and finally how to provide their electronic consent (i.e. by finishing and submitting the questionnaire); participants had the right to withdraw from the study any time. Overall, the

estimated time for completion was 20minutes and all the incomplete responses were excluded from the study. See Table 1

Table 1: Demographical characteristics of study population and Chi Square results.

	Greek (n=130)		Dutch (n=93)		χ^2
<u>Gender</u>					
Female	80	(61.5%)	52	(55.9%)	$\chi^2(2)=3.49, p=.197$
Male	50	(38.5%)	39	(41.9%)	
Not say	0	(0.0%)	2	(2.2%)	
<u>Age of Participant</u>					
18-29	25	(19.2%)	24	(25.8%)	$\chi^2(4)=3.41, p=.492$
30-39	32	(24.6%)	26	(28.0%)	
40-49	31	(23.8%)	14	(15.1%)	
50-59	27	(20.8%)	19	(20.4%)	
60+	15	(11.5%)	10	(10.8%)	
<u>Marital Status</u>					
Single	37	(28.5%)	40	(43.3%)	$\chi^2(4)=28.04, p<.001$
Rather not say	1	(0.8%)	2	(2.2%)	
Married	54	(41.5%)	24	(25.8%)	
Separated or Divorced	7	(5.4%)	20	(21.5%)	
Widowed	31	(23.8%)	7	(7.5%)	
<u>Do you have children?</u>					
No	79	(60.8%)	57	(61.3%)	$\chi^2(1)=.01, p=.937$
Yes	51	(39.2%)	36	(38.7%)	
<u>Are you working?</u>					
No	83	(63.8%)	34	(36.6%)	$\chi^2(1)=16.19, p<.001$
Yes	47	(36.2%)	59	(63.4%)	
<u>The person who died was</u>					
Spouse or Partner	31	(23.8%)	9	(9.7%)	$\chi^2(6)=86.85, p<.001$
Child	28	(21.5%)	7	(7.5%)	
Parent	26	(20.1%)	0	(0.0%)	
Grandparents	16	(12.3%)	0	(0.0%)	
Brother/Sister	11	(8.5%)	13	(14.0%)	
Close friend	9	(6.9%)	22	(23.7%)	
Other	9	(6.9%)	39	(41.9%)	
Missing	0	(0.0%)	3	(3.2%)	
<u>Age of Death</u>					
0-18	16	(12.3%)	0	(0.0%)	
18-29	21	(16.1%)	24	(25.8%)	
30-39	14	(10.8%)	26	(28.0%)	

40-49	8	(6.2%)	14	(15.1%)	$\chi^2(5)=41.03, p<.001$
50-59	24	(18.5%)	19	(20.4%)	
60+	47	(36.1%)	10	(10.8%)	

Anticipated/Unexpected reason of death

Completely unexpected	29	(22.3%)	19	(20.4%)	$\chi^2(4)=18.12, p=.001$
Somehow unexpected	20	(15.4%)	20	(21.5%)	
Neither expected or anticipated	2	(1.6%)	12	(12.9%)	
Somehow anticipated	61	(46.9%)	25	(26.9%)	
Entirely anticipated	18	(13.8%)	14	(15.0%)	
Missing	0	(0.0%)	3	(3.2%)	

Reason of death

Illness	92	(70.8%)	55	(59.1%)	$\chi^2(2)=2.80, p=.247$
Accident	22	(16.9%)	14	(15.1%)	
Other	16	(12.3%)	18	(19.4%)	
Missing	0	(0.0%)	6	(6.5%)	

Were you closed to the deceased

Not at all	7	(5.4%)	4	(4.3%)	$\chi^2(2)=4.60, p=.101$
Somehow close	39	(30.0%)	16	(17.2%)	
Very close	84	(64.6%)	70	(75.2%)	
Missing	0	(0.0%)	3	(3.2%)	

Time since death

0-2 months	15	(11.5%)	6	(6.5%)	$\chi^2(5)=26.65, p<.001$
3-6 months	13	(10.0%)	10	(10.8%)	
7-12 months	19	(14.6%)	16	(17.2%)	
1 Year	34	(26.2%)	26	(28.0%)	
2 Years	23	(17.7%)	32	(34.4%)	
3 Years	26	(20.0%)	0	(0.0%)	
Missing	0	(0.0%)	3	(3.2%)	

Materials:

Demographics and loss related information

In addition to the following questionnaires, respondents were asked to provide demographic data including their age, gender, ethnicity/race, religion as well as loss-related information. Loss related variables comprised time since loss (less than 3 months; 3-6 months; 6-12 months; 12 months to 3 years), relationship to the deceased (i.e parent, child, sibling, grandparents, partner/spouse, other) and educational level.

Inventory of Complicated Grief

The ICG is a widely used self-report instrument which measures the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral symptoms of Complicated Grief (Prigerson et al., 1995). The questionnaire consists of 19 items related to the post death thoughts and behaviors on a 5-point scale (0-4), ranging from "never" to "always", while assessing indicators of pathological grief such as anger, disbelief and hallucinations. A cut-off score of 25 or higher are considered at higher risk (Prigerson et al., 1995). ICG has reported a high internal consistency ($\alpha = .94$) and 6-month test-retest reliability ($r = .80$) (Prigerson et al., 1995) as well as satisfactory concurrent validity (Eric Bui et al., 2015). In this study the Cronbach's alpha is ($\alpha = .91$).

Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES)

The Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES) (Holland, Currier, Coleman, & Neimeyer, 2010) was used to assess the extent to which a stressful event has been adaptively integrated with one's global meaning, or broader life narrative. The ISLES is a self-report measure and consists of 16 items and two major subscales: Footing in the World ($\alpha = .91$) and the Comprehensibility subscales ($\alpha = .83$). Items were scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and higher scores indicated adaptive integration of the loss. It has also been demonstrated that the ISLES had high internal consistency and convergent validity (Holland et al., 2010; Holland, 2016) with Cronbach's alpha .93.

Grief Rumination

The Utrecht Grief Rumination Scale (Eisma et al., 2014) was used to assess the causes and consequences of the loss and related negative emotions. The questionnaire consists of 15 items and is categorized in 5 subdomains of three items each: reactions ($\alpha = .84$) measuring the frequency with which participants analyse their emotions after loss, injustice ($\alpha = .88$) refers to

the thoughts related to the injustice of the loss, counterfactuals ($\alpha = .89$) assesses the counterfactual thinking of the events that led to the loss, meaning ($\alpha = .84$) measures the thoughts about the meaning and the consequences of the loss and relationships ($\alpha = .74$) which assesses thoughts related to reactions from the social environment (Eisma et al., 2014). Answers indicating how often they experienced each of these items in the past month, were rated on five-point scale ranging from 1(never) to 5 (very often). The questionnaire has proven to have excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$) and validity ($d > 1.60$) (Doering et al., 2018).

Existential Thinking Scale

The Scale for Existential Thinking (SET; Shearer & Allen, 2012) is an 11 item instrument that measures the process of reflecting on human existence. Participants rated the frequency of their engagement in various existential thinking behaviours on a 6-point scale ranging from *no or every once in a while*, to *all the time*. The final item was *I don't know*. Shearer and Allan's (2012) results revealed a very strong reliability ($\alpha = .93$) and convergent validity.

Personal Growth

Personal growth scale was measured using the Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist (HGRC; Hogan et al., 2001) to assess positive outcomes following the experience of stressful events. The factor 3 of personal growth consists of 12 items (i.e. measuring forgiveness empathy hope) out of 61 items in total. Item responses were rated from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 5 (describes me very well). Higher scores indicate more grief reactions over the past two weeks. HGRC has been found by Hogan et al. (2001), to have high values of reliability ranging from .79 to .90 indicating that a removal of a variable would not affect the overall value of the questionnaire. The Personal Growth subscale had a good reliability ($\alpha = .96$) in this study while the validation findings from the study of Hogan, Daryl and Lee (2001) reported consistent correlations with the conceptual structure of the HGRC.

For the purposes of this study, all the questionnaires were translated in Greek and Dutch (Translator #1) and then independently back-translated (Translator #2) by experts in the psychology field to ensure the meaning is as close to the original as possible.

Results:

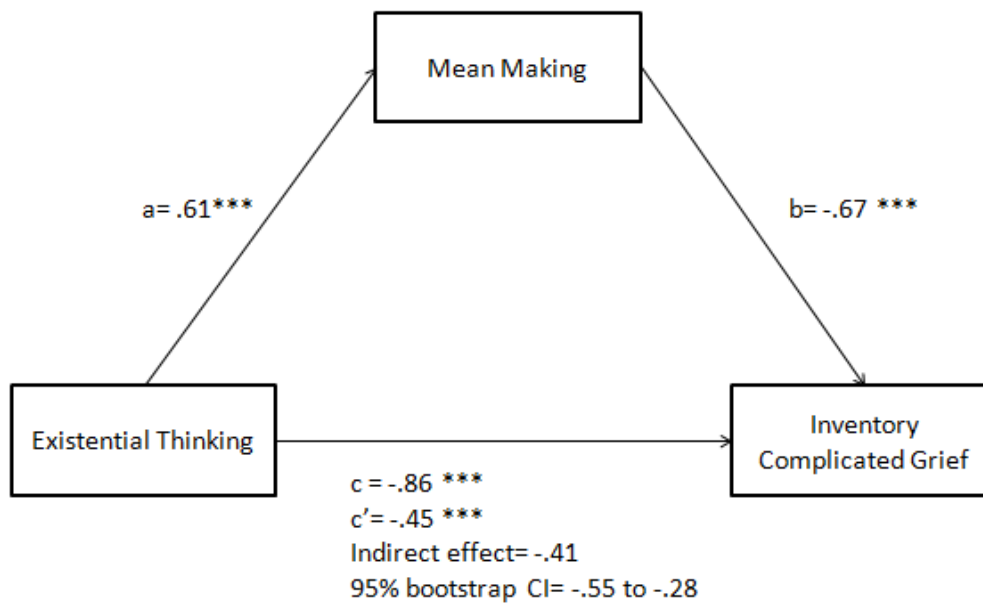
Correlation Analysis:

Prior to performing the main analyses, a Pearson moment correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the questionnaires. Overall, there is a negative correlation between Complicated Grief and Meaning Making ($r = -.77$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and its subscales Footing In The World ($r = -.72$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and Comprehensibility ($r = -.74$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), Existentialism ($r = -.70$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and Personal Growth ($r = -.57$, $df=128$, $p < .01$) indicating that higher scores in these scales are associated with lower scores in complicated grief. However, Rumination and its subscales Meaning ($r = .68$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), Relationships ($r = .57$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), Counterfactuals ($r = .59$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), Injustice ($r = -.64$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and Reactions ($r = .44$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) was the only scale that was positively correlated with Complicated Grief ($r = .75$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and negatively correlated with Meaning Making ($r = -.66$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and its subscales Footing In The World ($r = -.63$, $df=128$, $p < .001$) and Comprehensibility ($r = -.61$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), Existentialism ($r = -.45$, $df=128$, $p < .001$), and Personal Growth ($r = -.42$, $df=128$, $p < .001$).

Relationship between existentialism and grief moderated by meaning making (H1)

In order to test if Meaning Making explains the relationship between Existential Thinking and Complicated Grief the four steps mediation was conducted Kenny (year). In Step 1, the correlation of Existential Thinking on Complicated Grief, ignoring the mediator (Meaning Making), was significant, $b = -.86$, $t(128) = -10.96$, $p < .001$. Step 2 showed that the regression of the Existential Thinking on the mediator, Meaning Making, was also significant, $b = .61$, $t(128) = 8.62$, $p < .001$. Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (Meaning Making), controlling for Existential Thinking, was significant, $b = -.67$, $t(127) = -8.58$, $p < .001$. Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator (Meaning Making), Existential Thinking was still a significant predictor of Complicated Grief, $b = -.45$, $t(127) = -5.71$, $p < .001$, but smaller in absolute value than in the 1st step. A Sobel test was conducted and found partial mediation in the model ($z = -6.07$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that Meaning Making partially mediates the relationship between Existential Thinking and Complicated Grief. See Table 2

Table 2: Regression coefficients for the relationship between Existential Thinking and Complicated Grief as mediated by Meaning Making.



* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Relationship between existentialism and grief moderated by personal growth (H2)

Moderation Analysis was performed to determine whether personal growth moderates the relationship between Existentialism and Complicated Grief. At the 1st step Existentialism ($b = -0.68, t = -7.36, df = 129, p < .001$) and Personal Growth ($b = -0.29, t = -3.43, df = 129, p = .001$) explained a significant proportion of the variance of the dependent variable ICG, $R^2 = 52.8\%, F(2,127) = 70.94, p < .001$, and when their interaction term was added, it increased the total variance increased from 52.8.3 to 56.1%, $R^2 = 56.1\%, F(3,126) = 53.64, p < .001$. The addition of the interaction term interpreted an additional 3.3% of the variance of ICG, $\Delta R^2 = 0.033, F(1,126) = 9.51, p = .003$. This moderation analysis shows that, there is a significant moderation of personal growth on existentialism and complicated grief indicating that as personal growth increases it reduces the relationship between Existentialism and complicated grief after loss. The results can be found in the plot below and Figure 3.

Table 3: *Linear Model of Personal Growth in interaction with Existentialism as predictor of ICG scale*

	<i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	ΔR^2
Model 2						
Step 1					52.8%	
Constant	68.64			<0.001		
Exist	-0.68	-0.55	-7.36	<0.001		
PG	-0.28	-0.26	-3.43	0.001		
Step 2					56.1%	3.3%
Constant	93.04		10.99	<0.001		
Exist	-1.40	-1.13	-5.60	<0.001		
PG	-0.91	-0.82	-4.17	<0.001		
Exist x PG	0.018	1.03	3.08	0.003		

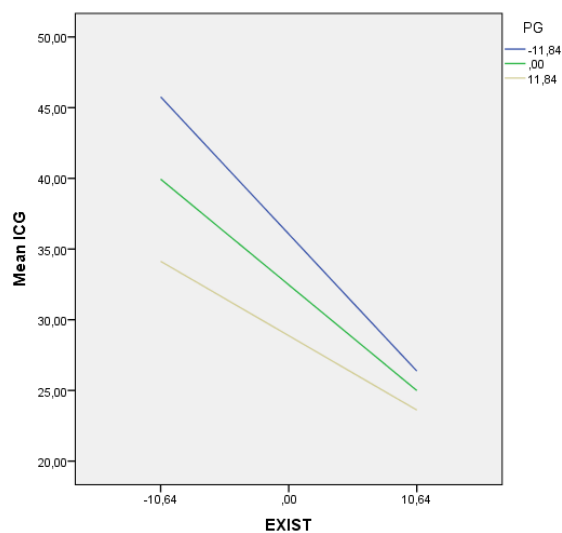


Figure 3: Line Graph of Interaction between Personal Growth and Existentialism as Predictors of ICG

Three way analysis of variance (H3)

A 2 (Country) x 2 (Existentialism) x 2 (Meaning Making) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on participants' scores of ICG. "Time since death" was included as (categorical)

covariate in the model but was found to not be statistically significant ($F(1, 211) = 0.17, p = .682$). The main effect of Culture was not statistically significant ($F(1, 211) = 3.60, p = .059$). The main effect of Existentialism ($F(1, 211) = 6.70, p = .001$), as well as the main effect of Meaning Making ($F(1, 211) = 10.25, p = .002$) were both significant. There was no two-way interaction effect between Existentialism and Meaning Making ($F(1, 211) = .05, p = .829$). The two-way interaction effect between Country and Meaning Making ($F(1, 211) = 9.97, p = .002$) and between Country and Existentialism ($F(1, 211) = 67.48, p < .001$) were both significant. As it can be seen from Figure 5 Greece and Netherlands exhibit different levels of complicated grief depending on the existential levels. In Greece low levels of existentialism are associated with high levels of complicated grief whereas in Netherlands high levels of existentialism are associated with high levels of complicated grief. Equally the same results exist for meaning making too (Figure 6). Finally, the three-way interaction between Country, Existentialism, and Meaning Making was not significant ($F(1, 211) = 0.828, p = .364$). See Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics ICG scores as a function of Existentialism x Mean Making x Culture design.

Country	Exist	Mean Making	M	SD	N
GR	Low	Low	47,30	12,84	33
		High	36,25	8,56	16
	High	Low	34,85	9,28	13
		High	26,34	8,83	68
NL	Low	Low	19,59	11,68	56
		High	44,21	10,07	14
	High	Low	23,00	13,25	10
		High	43,00	21,63	10
		Total	33,00	20,25	20

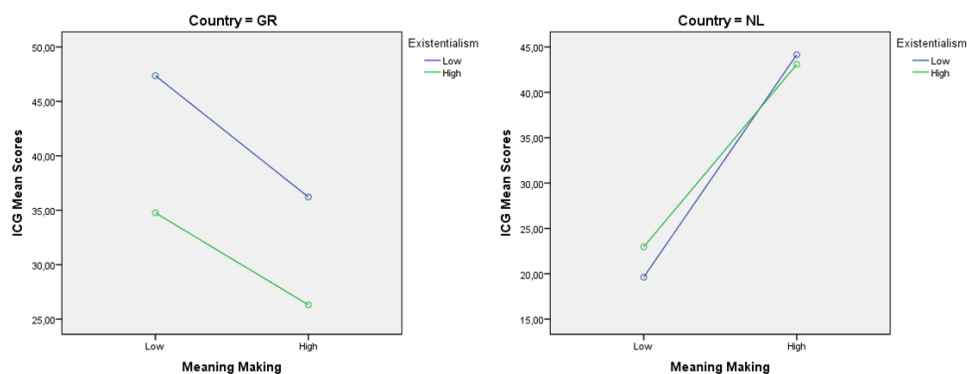


Figure 4: Interaction Effect of Existentialism, Meaning Making, and Country with ICG as a Dependent Variable.

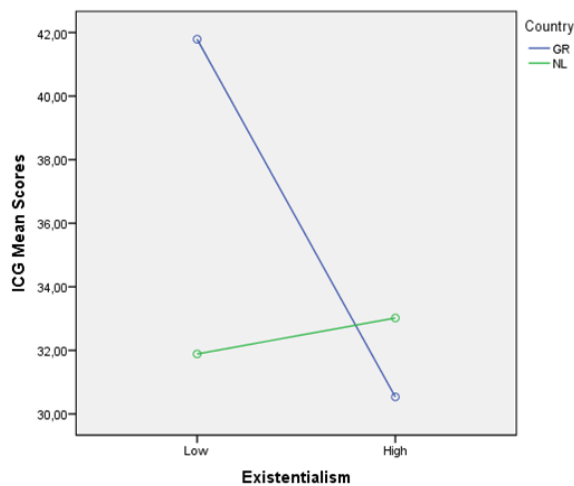


Figure 5: Interaction Effect of Existentialism and Country with ICG as a Dependent Variable.

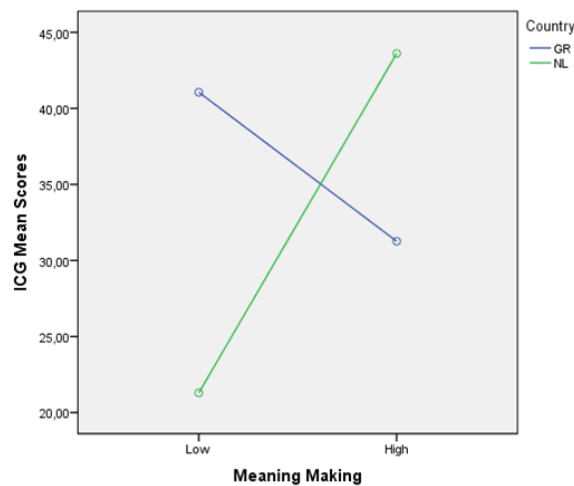


Figure 6: Interaction Effect of Meaning Making and Country with ICG as a Dependent Variable.

Discussion:

The current study investigated the role of existential awareness and meaning making as protective cognitive strategies for processing grief as also tested these variables to identify potential differences in the way masculine and feminine countries grieve. To our knowledge, this is the first investigation to evaluate existential beliefs and sensemaking between cultures when these are challenged by loss (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Neimeyer & Anderson, 2002). Thus, the aim of the present study was to explore the links between existentialism, meaning making and symptoms of CG after the death of a loved one (H1) (Currier et al., 2006), to examine the effect of positive growth on existentialism and CG (H2) (Rogers et al., 2008) and

finally to investigate the associations between existentialism, meaning making and grief symptoms in both masculine and feminine countries (H3) (Bonanno et al., 2008).

In terms of our first hypothesis the possible mediating role of meaning making between the existential thinking and complicated grief was evaluated. The findings show that meaning made of loss, acted as a partial mediator between existentialism and complicated grief, with existentialism still being significantly associated with CG above and beyond indirect effects through meaning made of loss. This finding indicates that there are likely other important variables that may explain this link. Although we can only assume, one additional explanatory variable could be the set of existing beliefs individuals have about themselves and the world, prior to the loss experience. (Kauffman, 2002). If the loss fits into the survivor's existing "assumptive worldview" then the post loss interpretation it is likely to have occurred within the context of their current system of meaning, therefore the "making sense" pathway would have been more effective when processing grief (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). However, if one's self narratives and schemas (Boelen, Van Den Hout, & Van Den Bout, 2006) struggle to adapt into the new reality, then mourners would be influenced to engage in avoidance strategies and probably prolong grief rather than ameliorate grief reactions (Bonanno et al., 2007).

Another variable that could also explain this link is "existential uncertainty" (Vess et al., 2009). That is because, people who are uncertain, when are faced with the inevitable nature of loss might wonder if they have the skills or personality to enact the behaviors needed (Coelho et al, 2020). Therefore, people should employ strategies such as reducing existential uncertainty or finding a way to make it tolerable and cognitively manageable, so they can deal better with their awareness of death (Van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Overall it is important for people to manage their personal uncertainty and reexamine their core beliefs so they can experience death as an understandable and comprehensible event, consistent with their assumptive world beliefs, or view death as "unnatural" and thus as a challenge to their assumptive worlds (Cann et al., 2010).

In Hypothesis 2 the results of the analysis highlighted a negative association between existentialism and complicated grief. These findings are consistent with one possible mode of the association between existentialism and complicated grief that is, higher the existentialism, lower the grief (Rogers et al., 2008). Grieving persons who are cognitively engaged with fundamental questions about death, have been found to report positive changes from their struggle with their challenges and losses (Hogan, Greenfield, & Schmidt, 2001). However, in

the study of Lieberman (2006) bereaved spouses who belonged in the existentially aware group reported higher symptoms of grief while at the same time scoring higher on personal effectivity (self-esteem and well-being). Particularly, heightened existential awareness (i.e personal finiteness, life meaning, awareness of freedom, groundlessness and personal responsibility) was found to be associated with personal growth when assessed a year later. Consequently, the assumption that the loss of a loved one only produces inevitable and enduring suffering might not be correct for all the bereaved individuals; as the engagement itself with the existential questions might be experienced as growth (Bonanno et al., 2004).

Moreover, the present results show that positive growth moderates the association of existentialism with complicated grief. Specifically, our results show that higher levels of existentialism were associated with lower levels of complicated grief when people reported higher scores on a scale of positive growth. There might be some explanations of why this moderation occurred. First it could be attributed to the contingency of the individual's initial belief system, willingness and capacity for self-exploration and personal change (Cadell, Regehr, & Hemsworth, 2003). Second it is possible that persons with a solid existential awareness are more able to adapt effective cognitive strategies when it comes to dealing with the loss (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) and third it is likely that one's engagement with dispositional factors such as positive reframing, optimism and active coping would facilitate the adaptation of one's existential assumptions and thus result in less CG symptomatology (Riley et al., 2007).

As per our last hypothesis, the results indicated that in the masculine country (Greece), low levels of existentialism and meaning making were associated with high levels of complicated grief, whereas in the feminine country (Netherlands) high levels of existentialism and meaning making were associated with high levels of complicated grief. There are some explanations that could possibly justify the nature of these results. First, the low existential levels and meaning making that were found in masculine country could be attributed to Greeks' underlying tendency to avoid conversations related to issues of death, as speaking about it maybe foresee an "omen that the evil will soon enter the doors of that home" (Lobar et al., 2006). The phenomenon of avoiding talking about death is called "fear of thanatophobia" and is rather dominant in the Greek Culture, whereas the willingness to overcome these emotions is not (Lobar et al., 2006). In particular during the wake, family and friends are wailing and mourning and expressing their emotions in an intense and demonstrative way, so to indicate the importance of the deceased and how much they were loved (Scheff, 2007).

On the other hand, ritual gestures such as applauding the deceased, collective demonstrations (Venbrux, Peelen & Altena, 2009), whole body donations to anatomical centers (Verloop, Mooren & Boelen, 2019) and tangible monuments for stillborn children are some of the innovative patterns, Dutch use to approach death (Venbrux et al., 2009). Specifically, Netherlands holds a liberal attitude to euthanasia and death which is difficult to leave symbolically undefined, as it allows the expression of one's immediacy and intimacy (Hockey, Katz & Small, 2001). This attitude and worldview conceptualization could also be justified by the belief in transcendent reality the so-called somethingism (ietsisme), which implies the power of community and individualism (Goodhead, 2010). Thus, the findings of heightened existential awareness and sensemaking do not come as a surprise as through these mortuary rites important values and basic assumptions of the Dutch culture are conveyed (Bonanno et al., 2008). Overall, the findings reveal no differences on the course of bereavement with both countries to show high levels of grief regardless their existential level and their ability to make sense of the loss with the feminine country to score higher on these scales compared to the masculine one. Future studies should focus more on the cultural impact of these two variables on positive growth instead of bereavement.

Limitations:

There are several limitations to this study. First this study utilized a cross-sectional design, and it is not possible to discern causal statements. Second even though the groups differed regarding their demographic characteristics, it is still only representing a narrow set of the population mainly due to participants' accessibility to the survey through media and social platforms. Third this study used an online survey methodology which could have affected some of the results, as people living in remote areas could not have participated, therefore a combination of an offline and online approach might yield more diverse samples with greater variability. Fourth although the study's sample was diverse the sample characteristics might have been biased as all the different types of losses have distinct features which contribute uniquely to the experiences of the bereft population. Therefore, the sample may have decreased the representativeness of the study's findings.

Conclusion:

Despite these limitations the findings of this study allow us to determine the degree of existential awareness and meaning making and the consequences of such awareness on the

course of bereavement between a feminine and a masculine country. The findings of the current study have provided initial evidence for the distinctive role of culture in understanding the differential grief responses. Additionally, the study highlights the moderation effect of positive growth on existentialism and complicated grief, suggesting that through discussing critical events a form of fundamental meaning can be obtained which can then facilitate adaptation and even personal growth (Kashdan & Kane, 2011). These results have also clinical implications as they emphasize on the potential benefits of applying a meaning-based intervention which amplifies the cognitive mechanisms targeting existential beliefs. Future research should also examine these constructs using a longitudinal design to determine the directionality of this association but also the clinical relevance of heightened existential awareness on positive bereavement.

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Appendix

1) Inventory of Complicated Grief (ICG) (Prigerson et al., 1995)- English

1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always

1. I think about this person so much that it's hard for me to do the things I normally do...
2. Memories of the person who died upset me
3. I feel I cannot, accept the death of the person who died...
4. I feel, myself longing for the person who died...
5. I feel drawn to places and things associated with the person who died...
6. I can't help feeling angry about his/her death...
7. I feel, disbelief over what happened...
8. I feel stunned or dazed over what happened...
9. Ever since s/he died it is hard for me to trust people...
10. Ever since s/he died I feel like I have lost the ability to care about other people 01 I feel distant from people I care about...
11. I have pain in the same area of my body or have some of the same symptoms as the person who died...
12. I go out of my way to avoid reminders of the person who died...
13. I feel that life is empty without the person who died...
14. I hear the voice of the person who died speak to me...
15. I see the person who died stand before me...
16. I feel that it is unfair that I should live when this person died...
17. I feel, bitter over this person's death...
18. I feel envious of others who have no, lost someone close...
19. I feel lonely a great deal of the time ever since s/he died...

Inventory of Complicated Grief (ICG) (Prigerson et al., 1995)-

Greek

1 = ποτέ, 2 = σπάνια, 3 = μερικές φορές, 4 = συχνά, 5 = πάντα

1. Σκέφτομαι το άτομο τόσο συχνά που μου είναι δύσκολο να κάνω τα πράγματα που κάνω συνήθως
2. Οι αναμνήσεις του ατόμου που πέθανε με αναστατώνουν
3. Αισθάνομαι ότι δεν μπορώ να αποδεχτώ τον θάνατο αυτού του προσώπου
4. Μου λείπει το πρόσωπο που πέθανε
5. Νιώθω έλξη σε μέρη και πράγματα που συσχετίζονται με το πρόσωπο που πέθανε
6. Νιώθω θυμό για το χαμό αυτού του προσώπου
7. Δεν μπορώ να συνειδητοποιήσω τι έχει συμβεί
8. Νιώθω ταραγμένος και ζαλισμένος με αυτό που έχει συμβεί
9. Απο τότε που πέθανε αυτός / αυτή μου είναι δύσκολο να δείξω εμπιστοσύνη σε άλλους ανθρώπους
10. Απο τότε που πέθανε, έχω την αίσθηση ότι έχω χάσει το ενδιαφέρον μου για τους άλλους ανθρώπους και νιώθω απόμακρος από αυτούς που νοιάζομαι
11. Έχω πόνους στα ίδια σημεία του σώματος και έχω τα ίδια συμπτώματα με το άτομο που πέθανε
12. Προσπαθώ να αποφύγω υπενθυμίσεις που αφορούν το θάνατο αυτού του ανθρώπου
13. Νιώθω ότι η ζωή είναι άδεια χωρίς το άτομο που πέθανε
14. Ακούω τη φωνή του ατόμου που πέθανε να απευθύνεται σε εμένα
15. Βλέπω το άτομο που πέθανε να εμφανίζεται μπροστά μου
16. Αισθάνομαι ότι είναι άδικο που συνεχίζω να ζω ενώ το άτομο αυτό πέθανε
17. Αισθάνομαι πικρία με το θάνατο του ατόμου που πέθανε
18. Ζηλεύω τους ανθρώπους που δεν έχουν χάσει κάποιον

19. Νιώθω μοναξιά τον περισσότερο χρόνο από τότε που πέθανε

Inventory of Complicated Grief (ICG) (Prigerson et al., 1995)-

Dutch

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Soms, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Altijd

1. Ik denk zo veel aan hem/haar dat het moeilijk voor me is de dingen te doen die ik normaal doe.
2. Herinneringen aan hem/haar maken me van streek.
3. Ik kan zijn/haar dood niet aanvaarden.
4. Ik voel een sterk verlangen naar hem/haar.
5. Ik voel me naar de plaatsen en dingen toegetrokken die verband houden met hem/haar.
6. Ik kan er niets aan doen, maar ik ben boos over zijn/haar dood.
7. Ik kan nauwelijks geloven dat hij/zij dood is.
8. Ik voel me verbijsterd of verdoofd over zijn/haar dood.
9. Sinds hij/zij overleden is, vind ik het moeilijk om mensen te vertrouwen.
10. Sinds hij/zij overleden is, heb ik het gevoel dat ik niet meer om anderen kan geven of voel ik afstand tot de mensen om wie ik geef.
11. Ik heb pijn op dezelfde plaatsen in mijn lichaam, of ik heb dezelfde (ziekte)symptomen als de overledene had.
12. Ik doe alles om maar niet aan hem/ haar herinnerd te worden.
13. Ik vind het leven leeg en zonder betekenis zonder hem/haar.
14. Ik hoor hem/haar tegen mij praten.
15. Ik zie hem/haar voor me staan.

16. Ik vind het niet eerlijk dat ik nog leef, terwijl hij/zij dood is.
17. Ik voel me bitter gestemd over zijn/haar dood.
18. Ik ben jaloers op andere mensen die niet een dierbare hebben verloren.
19. Ik voel me eenzaam sinds hij/zij is overleden.

2) **Utrecht Grief Rumination Scale (Eisma et al., 2014)- English**

1 = never, 2= sometimes, 3= regularly, 4= often, 5= very often

1. ...think about the consequences that his / her death has for you
2. ...analyze what the personal meaning of the loss is for you
3. ...query whether you receive the right support from family members
4. ...analyze whether you could have prevented his/her death
5. ...ask yourself why you deserved this loss
6. ...try to analyze your feelings about this loss precisely
7. ...ask yourself whether you react normally to this loss
8. ...ask yourself whether his/her death could have prevented if the circumstance had been different
9. ...ask yourself whether you get adequate support from friends and acquaintances
10. ...ask yourself whether his /her death could have been prevented if others had reacted differently
11. ...wonder why this had to happen to you and not someone else
12. ...think about the unfairness of this loss
13. ...try to understand your feelings about the loss
14. ...think about how you would like other people to react to your loss

15. ...think how your life has been changed through his/her death

Utrecht Grief Rumination Scale (Eisma et al., 2014)- Greek

*1 = ποτέ , 2= κάποιες φορές , 3= σπάνια , 4= συχνά, 5= πολύ
συχνά*

1. ...σκέφτεστε τις συνέπειες που έχει ο θάνατος του/ της σε εσάς
2. ...αναλύσατε την προσωπική ερμηνεία της απώλειας για εσάς
3. ...θεωρείτε οτι έχετε την κατάλληλη συμπαράσταση από τα μέλη της οικογένειάς σας.
4. ...αναλύετε αν θα μπορούσατε να εμποδίσετε αυτό τον θάνατο
5. ...διερωτάστε εάν σας αξίζει αυτός ο χαμός
6. ...προσπαθείτε να αναλύσετε τα συναισθήματα αυτού του χαμού επακριβώς
7. ...αναρωτιέστε αν αντιδράτε φυσιολογικά σε αυτό τον χαμό
8. ...αναρωτιέστε αν ο θάνατος του/της θα μπορούσε να αποφευχθεί αν οι συνθήκες ήταν διαφορετικές
9. ...αναρωτιέστε αν δέχεστε επαρκή συμπαράσταση από φίλους και γνωστούς
10. ...αναρωτιέστε αν ο θάνατος του/της μπορούσε να αποφευχθεί αν κάποιος είχε δράσει διαφορετικά
11. ... αναρωτιέστε γιατί αυτό συνέβη σε εσάς και όχι σε κάποιον άλλο
12. ...σκέφτεστε σχετικά με την αδικία αυτού του χαμού
13. ...προσπαθείτε να κατανοήσετε τα συναισθήματά σας σχετικά με τον χαμό
14. ...σκέφτεστε πως άλλα άτομα θα θέλατε να αντιδρούσαν απέναντι σας σχετικά με τον χαμό
15. ...σκέφτεστε πως άλλαξε η ζωή σας μετά απο αυτό τον χαμό

Utrecht Grief Rumination Scale (Eisma et al., 2014)- Dutch

1 = Nooit, 2= Soms, 3= Regelmatig, 4= Vaak, 5= Zeer vaak

1. ...dacht u na over de consequenties die het verlies voor u heeft.
2. ...analyseerde u wat de persoonlijke betekenis van het verlies voor u is.
3. ...vroeg u zichzelf af of u de juiste steun ontvangt van familieleden.
4. ...analyseerde u of u zijn/haar dood had kunnen voorkomen.
5. ...vroeg u zichzelf af waaraan u dit verlies heeft verdiend.
6. ...probeerde u uw gevoelens over dit verlies precies te analyseren.
7. ...vroeg u zichzelf af of u normaal op dit verlies reageert.
8. ...vroeg u zichzelf af of zijn/haar dood voorkomen had kunnen worden als de omstandigheden anders waren geweest.
9. ...vroeg u zichzelf af of u adequate steun ontvangt van familie en vrienden.
10. ...vroeg u zichzelf af of zijn/haar dood voorkomen had kunnen worden als anderen anders hadden gehandeld.
11. ...vroeg u zichzelf af waarom dit jou moest overkomen en niet iemand anders.
12. ...dacht u na over de oneerlijkheid van dit verlies.
13. ...probeerde u uw gevoelens over het verlies te begrijpen.
14. ...dacht u na over hoe je zou willen dat anderen zouden reageren op het verlies.
15. ...dacht u na over hoe jouw leven is veranderd door zijn/haar dood.

3) **The Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES) (Holland et al., 2010)- English**

1= Strongly Agree , 2= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor Disagree, 4= Disagree , 5= Strongly Disagree

1. Since this loss , the world seems like a confusing and scary place
2. I have made sense of this loss

3. If or when I talk about this loss I believe people see me differently
4. I have difficulty integrating this loss into my understanding about the world
5. Since this loss, I feel like I'm in a crisis of faith
6. This loss is incomprehensible to me
7. My previous goals and hopes for the future don't make sense anymore since this loss
8. I'm perplexed by what happened
9. Since this loss happened, I don't know where to go next in my life
10. I would have an easier time talking about my life if I left this loss out
11. My beliefs and values are less clear since this loss
12. I don't understand myself anymore since this loss
13. Since this loss, I have a harder time feeling like I'm part of something larger than myself
14. This loss has made me feel less purposeful
15. I haven't been able to put the pieces of my life back together since this loss
16. After this loss, life seems more random.

The Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES) (Holland et al., 2010)- Greek

1= Συμφωνώ κάθεται , 2= Συμφωνώ, 3= Ούτε συμφωνώ ούτε διαφωνώ, 4= Διαφωνώ, 5= Διαφωνώ κάθεται

1. Μετά το χαμό του/της, ο κόσμος μοιάζει με ένα μπερδεμένο και επικίνδυνο μέρος
2. Έχω κατανοήσει γιατί συνέβη ο χαμός αυτός
3. Αν ή όταν μιλάω γι'αυτό τον χαμό νομίζω πως οι άνθρωποι με βλέπουν διαφορετικά
4. Έχω δυσκολία να ενσωματώσω αυτό τον χαμό στον τρόπο που αντιλαμβάνομαι τον κόσμο
5. Μετά απο αυτό τον χαμό, αισθάνομαι σαν να έχω κρίση πίστης
6. Αυτός ο χαμός είναι ένα ακατανόητο γεγονός για εμένα
7. Οι προηγούμενοί μου στόχοι και ελπίδες για το μέλλον δεν έχουν νόημα μετά τον χαμό
8. Νιώθω αμήχανα με αυτό που συνέβη
9. Μετά το χαμό δεν ξέρω πως να συνεχίσω το επόμενο στάδιο της ζωής μου
10. Μου είναι πιο εύκολο να μιλήσω για τη ζωή μου αν δεν αναφερθώ στο χαμό αυτό
11. Οι απόψεις μου και οι αξίες μου είναι λιγότερο ξεκάθαρες μετά τον χαμό
12. Δεν καταλαβαίνω τον εαυτό μου μετά τον χαμό
13. Μετά τον χαμό μου είναι πιο δύσκολο να αισθανθώ μέρος του ευρύτερου συνόλου πέρα απο τον εαυτό μου

14. Αυτός ο χαμός με κάνει να αισθάνομαι χωρίς σκοπό
15. Δεν έχω καταφέρει να ξαναφτιάξω τη ζωή μου μετά τον χαμό
16. Μετά την απώλεια η ζωή μου μοιάζει να είναι περισσότερο τυχαία

The Integration of Stressful Life Experiences Scale (ISLES) (Holland et al., 2010)- Dutch

1= Sterk met oneens, 2= Oneens, 3= Neutraal, 4= Eens, 5= Sterk met eens

1. Sinds dit verlies lijkt de wereld een verwarrende en beangstigende plaats
2. Ik zie de zin van dit verlies
3. Wanneer ik over het verlies praat, geloof ik dat mensen me anders zien
4. Ik heb moeite dit verlies te integreren in mijn begrip van de wereld
5. Sinds dit verlies heb ik het gevoel dat ik in een crisis verkeer over mijn vertrouwen in de wereld
6. Dit verlies is voor mij onbegrijpelijk
7. Mijn vorige doelen en verwachtingen voor de toekomst hebben geen zin meer sinds dit verlies
8. Ik ben perplex over wat er is gebeurd
9. Omdat dit verlies heeft plaatsgevonden, weet ik niet waar het naartoe moet met mijn leven
10. Ik zou het gemakkelijker hebben als ik over mijn leven praat zonder dit verlies te vermelden.
11. Mijn overtuigingen en waarden zijn minder duidelijk sinds dit verlies
12. Ik begrijp mezelf niet meer sinds dit verlies
13. Sinds dit verlies vind ik het moeilijk het gevoel te hebben dat ik deel uitmaak van iets dat groter is dan mijzelf
14. Door dit verlies voel ik me minder doelgericht

15. Ik ben sinds dit verlies niet in staat geweest om de stukjes van mijn leven weer in elkaar te zetten

16. Na dit verlies lijkt het leven meer willekeurig.

4) The Scale for existential thinking (Allan & Shearer, 2012)- English

1= No or rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3= often, 4= Almost all the time, 5= All the time, 6= I don't know

1. Do you ever reflect on your purpose in life?
2. Do you ever think about the human spirit or what happens to life after death?
3. Have you ever spent time reading, thinking about, or discussing philosophy or beliefs?
4. Do you have a philosophy of life that helps you to manage stress or make important decisions?
5. Do you think about ideas such as eternity, truth, justice and goodness?
6. Do you spend time in meditation, prayer or reflecting on the mysteries of life?
7. Do you ever think about a grand plan or process that human beings are part of?
8. Do you ever think about a grand plan or process that human beings are part of?
9. Have you ever thought about what is beyond the “here and now” of your daily life?
10. Do you ever think about life's Big Questions?
11. Have you ever reflected on the nature of reality or the universe?

The Scale for existential thinking (Allan & Shearer, 2012)- Greek

1= Όχι η σπάνια, 2= Μερικές φορές, 3= Συχνά, 4= Σχεδόν όλη την ώρα, 5= Όλη την ώρα, 6= Δεν ξέρω

1. Αναρωτιέστε για το νόημα της ζωής.
2. Συλλογίζεστε το ανθρώπινο πνέυμα ή εάν υπάρχει ζωή μετά το θάνατο;
3. Έχετε αφιερώσει χρόνο σε διάβασμα στοχασμό, φιλοσοφία η θρησκεία;
4. Έχετε κάποια φιλοσοφία ζωής που σας βοηθάει να διαχειρίζεστε το άγχος σας;
5. Διαλογίζεστε πάνω σε ιδέες όπως αιωνιότητα, αλήθεια, διακοσύνη και καλοσύνη;
6. Αφιερώνετε χρόνο σε διαλογισμό, προσευχή, ή προβληματίζεστε με τα μυστήρια της ζωής;
7. Συζητάτε η κάνετε ερωτήσεις για να ερευνήσετε εις βάθος αναλυτικά το νόημα της ζωής;

8. Σας περνάει απο το μυαλό οτι ο κάθε άνθρωπος είναι μέρος ενός μεγάλου σχεδίου η διαδικασίας;
9. Έχετε σκεφτεί ποτέ τι είναι πέρα απο το εδώ και τώρα της καθημερινής ζωής.
10. Αναλογίζεστε ποτέ τα μεγάλα ερωτήματα της ζωής;
11. Προβληματίζεστε πάνω σε ζητήματα πραγματικότητας και σύμπαντος;

The Scale for existential thinking (Allan & Shearer, 2012)- Dutch

1= Nooit, 2= Soms, 3= Vaak, 4= Bijna altijd, 5= Altijd, 6= Weet ik niet

1. Denkt u ooit na over de zin van het leven?
2. Denkt u ooit na over de ziel of wat er gebeurt met het leven na de dood?
3. Heeft u ooit tijd besteed aan het lezen, nadenken of bespreken van filosofische of levensbeschouwelijke zaken?
4. Heeft u een levensfilosofie die helpt in stressvolle situaties of bij belangrijke beslissingen?
5. Denkt u weleens na over ideeën zoals eeuwigheid, waarheid, rechtvaardigheid en goedheid?
6. Houdt u zich bezig met meditatie, gebed of nadenken over de mysteries van het leven?
7. Bespreek je, of stel je wel eens vragen om de betekenis van het leven te onderzoeken?
8. Denkt u ooit aan een groot plan of proces waar mensen deel van uitmaken?
9. Heeft u ooit nagedacht over of er iets buiten het 'hier en nu' van het dagelijkse leven ligt?
10. Denkt u weleens na over de grote vragen van het leven?
11. Heeft u weleens nagedacht over wat de werkelijkheid is of over het universum?

5) Personal Growth (Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist) (Hogan, Greenfield & Schmidt, 2001)- English

1= it doesn't describe me at all , 2= it doesn't describe me enough, 3= it describes me adequately , 4= it describes me adequately well , 5= it describes me very well

1. I have learned to cope better with life
2. I feel as though I am a better person

3. I have a better outlook on life
4. I have more compassion for others
5. I am stronger because of the grief I have experienced
6. I am a more forgiving person
7. I am more tolerant of myself
8. I am more tolerant of others
9. I have hope for the future
10. I reached a turning point where I began to let go of some of my grief
11. I am having more good days than bad
12. I care more deeply for others

Personal Growth (Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist) (Hogan, Greenfield & Schmidt, 2001)- Greek

1=δεν με περιγράφει καθόλου , 2= δεν με περιγράφει αρκετά, 3= με περιγράφει καλά , 4= με περιγράφει αρκετά καλά , 5= με περιγράφει πολύ καλά.

1. Έχω μάθει να ανταπεξέρχομαι στη ζωή καλύτερα
2. Νιώθω ότι έχω γίνει καλύτερος άνθρωπος
3. Έχω αποκτήσει καλύτερη στάση στη ζωή
4. Δείχνω περισσότερη συμπόνοια προς τους άλλους
5. Είμαι πιο δυνατός εξαιτίας του θρήνου που βίωσα
6. Συγχωρώ πιο εύκολα
7. Είμαι πιο ανεκτικός έναντι του εαυτού μου
8. Είμαι πιο ανεκτικός με τους γύρω μου
9. Έχω ελπίδα για το μέλλον
10. Είμαι σε ένα σημείο που έχω ξεπεράσει ένα μέρος του θρήνου μου
11. Έχω περισσότερες καλές μέρες από ότι κακές
12. Νοιάζομαι περισσότερο για τους άλλους

Personal Growth (Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist) (Hogan, Greenfield & Schmidt, 2001)- Dutch

1= Beschrijft me helemaal niet goed, 2= Beschrijft me niet helemaal, 3= Beschrijft me redelijk goed, 4= Beschrijft me goed, 5= Beschrijft me heel goed

1. Ik heb geleerd beter met het leven om te gaan
- 2.. Ik heb het gevoel dat ik een beter persoon ben geworden
3. Ik heb een betere kijk op het leven
4. Ik heb meer compassie voor anderen gekregen
5. Ik ben sterker geworden door het verdriet dat ik heb ervaren
6. Ik ben een meer vergevingsgezind persoon geworden
7. Ik ben toleranter voor mezelf geworden
8. Ik ben toleranter naar anderen geworden
9. Ik heb hoop voor de toekomst
10. Ik heb een keerpunt bereikt toen ik mijn verdriet begon los te laten.
11. Ik heb meer goede dagen dan slechte.
12. Ik maak me veel zorgen voor anderen.