REVIEWS

THE PLACE OF ATTACHMENT IN HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Edited by Colin Murray Parkes and Joan Stevenson-Hinde
Tavistock Publications; London 1982: £14.00

"Losing someone you love is less like losing a very valuable and irreplaceable possession than finding the law of gravity to be invalid". Thus, Peter Marris. writing on Attachment and Society in this "Festschrift" to John Bowlby, describes the unique experience of bereavement. Loss of meaning he suggests is what compounds the sense of loss, and renders former beliefs invalid.

John Bowlby, child psychiatrist and patron of Cruse, has been the inspiration of a group of diverse researchers and theoreticians over the last thirty years. As he writes in an epilogue to this superbly edited tribute to his influence, when he first sketched the outline of attachment theory he was searching for a better way of explaining certain forms of disturbed personality development than that provided by either psychoanalysis or learning theory, both of which had severe limitations. Some of the hypotheses generated by his ideas are tested in elegant studies reported in this book, almost every chapter of which is of the utmost importance to those working with the bereaved.

Attachment behaviour is most evident in young children, but Ainsworth and her colleagues show that a substantial minority of children do not demonstrate "stranger anxiety" and avoid their mothers when under stress. Are these "unattached" children those who are likely to suffer the pathology typified by the avoidance of grief, when bereaved as adults, asks Parkes and should we devise different ways of bereavement counselling for them than for chronic grievers? Or are they, says Hinde, better adapted to survival because more independent and more able to cope if orphaned or faced with unusual situations? Certainly de Lozier's study reported here, shows high level of attachment pathology in the mothers of children who are physically abused. Trowell shows that Caesarian Section may impair attachment. Pound speculates on the effect on attachment of maternal depression and Weiss describes his studies on the continuation of attachment behaviour into adolescent and adult life.

For those of us working with the bereaved in counselling or clinical situations, the key chapters in this stimulating book are by Brown, Raphael Adam and Parkes.

For me, Brown's summary of his team's important studies on working class women in Camberwell and Wandsworth, was the most rewarding chapter. Reviewing earlier studies which came to contradictory conclusions about the association between childhood bereavement and adult depression, he shows the snags which led to the confusion - not controlling for social class, not removing from the control groups the early bereaved, using hospital populations (a selected group) etc. Childhood parental loss produces a vulnerable individual who is more likely to succumb to the vissicitudes of life. Adam shows that early loss predisposes to suicide probably by increasing family instability. Raphael's valuable study of children's reactions to parental loss is the first good study of children at the time of the death and shows the overwhelming impact on the young.

The application of this research briefly considered here by Parkes, must be the prime task of bereavement counsellors. The book will enable them to do their work with confidence.

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THROUGH GRIEF
Betty Collick
Mirfield Publication, Mirfield, York; 1982 Price £1.25

This is an excellent booklet for those who must deal with grief. Its portrayal of the confused emotions of the bereaved is understanding and sensitive. The point is made that the community's withdrawal from this traumatic experience can leave the bereaved both misunderstood and alone. Little is taught in consulting rooms, in churches or indeed in schools where understanding and help might mean a good deal.

The writer examines with considerable detail the emotional pattern in bereavement and her booklet will add usefully to the writing on this subject in the last twenty years. I am inclined to feel that it will do its best work amongst caregivers in the various social services, both statutory and voluntary, and in the Church. It will also help those widows who are rehabilitated and ready to give support to those new to bereavement. I would not put it into the hands of the newly bereaved. At this traumatic time those who are mourning need the person-to-person warmth and understanding of a counsellor who both understands and knows how to listen. Loss, after all, takes each of us differently and, mercifully, we shall not all experience the detailed pattern laid down in this useful guide.

MARGARET TORRIE

DR. MIA PRINGLE

Dr. Mia Pringle, CBE, a Cruse patron, and the first Director of the National Children's Bureau died on February 21. She was 63. One of her most influential books was The Needs of Children, published in 1974. She also made an unparalleled study of a national sample of 17,000 children.