

Meaning Reconstruction Process After Suicide: Life- Story of a Japanese Woman Who Lost Her Son to Suicide

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Daisuke Kawashima¹ and Kenji Kawano²

Abstract

Although Japan has a high suicide rate, there is insufficient research on the experiences of suicide-bereaved individuals. We investigated the qualitative aspects of the meaning reconstruction process after a loss to suicide. We conducted a life-story interview using open-ended questions with one middle-aged Japanese woman who lost her son to suicide. We used a narrative approach to transcribe and code the participant's narratives for analysis. The analysis revealed three meaning groups that structured the participant's reactions to the suicide: making sense of her son's death and life, relationships with other people, and reconstruction of a bond with the deceased. The belief that death is not an eternal split and that there is a connection between the living and the deceased reduced the pain felt by our participant. Furthermore, the narratives worked as scaffolds in the meaning reconstruction process. We discuss our results in the light of cross-cultural differences in the grieving process.

Keywords

suicide, bereavement, meaning reconstruction, narrative, culture

¹School of Psychology, Chukyo University, Japan

²Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan

Corresponding Author:

Daisuke Kawashima, Chukyo University, School of Psychology, 101-2 Yagotohonmachi, Showa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi 466-8666, Japan.

Email: daisuke1102@hotmail.com

Suicide is a critical public health issue. It has been estimated that over 800,000 people die by suicide annually worldwide. The resulting impact on families, friends, and communities is devastating and far-reaching, even long after an individual has taken their own life (World Health Organization, 2014). In his seminal work, Shneidman (1969) estimated that at least six people are impacted per suicide. A recent study implied that Shneidman's estimation is low and reported that a greater number of people identify as suicide survivors¹ (Cerel, Maple, Aldrich, & van de Venne, 2013). Studies and related efforts regarding support for suicide survivors have focused on diverse topics, such as the mental health status of suicide survivors (e.g., Bolton et al., 2013; Sveen & Walby, 2008), the efficacy of interventions (e.g., Jordan & McMenemy, 2004; McDaid, Trowman, Golder, Hawton, & Sowden, 2008), and the need for support (e.g., Cerel & Campbell, 2008; McMenemy, Jordan, & Mitchell, 2008).

In Japan, almost 25,000 deaths occur by suicide annually. Despite a high suicide rate, there have been insufficient studies and related efforts regarding suicide prevention in Japan. To address this situation, the Basic Act for Suicide Prevention came into effect in June 2006. The purpose of the Act is to prevent suicide and enhance support for the suicide bereaved² by comprehensively promoting suicide prevention and support measures. In other words, suicide prevention and support for the bereaved are closely linked in Japan. The basic Act was immediately followed by the launch of the General Principles of Suicide Prevention Policy (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2007). The principles note the demand for postvention for the bereaved as well as prevention and intervention. They also call for more research on the lived experience of suicide survivors.

Several reports have focused on suicide survivors in Japan. For example, Cho (2006) described the mental health and grief reactions of the bereaved. Okura et al. (2013) conducted focus group interviews with bereaved individuals who had experienced the suicide of a spouse and found that they had a need for information and support. Yoshihara (2009) examined narrative construction of loss experiences by conducting interviews with facilitators of a support group for suicide survivors. However, there have been insufficient studies and related efforts regarding support for suicide survivors in Japan (Kawashima, Kawano, Koyama, & Ito, 2010).

Meaning Reconstruction Theory and Grief Resulting From Suicide

Meaning reconstruction theory is founded on the postulate that the central process in grieving is meaning reconstruction in response to a loss (Neimeyer, 2001). Meaning reconstruction theory is based on a constructivist perspective and is consistent with Frankl's (1946) work *Man's Search for Meaning*.

Additionally, the theory is congruent with the proposition that people are driven by a psychological need to find or create a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, even with respect to the most horrific experiences (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Kawashima, 2008). Meaning reconstruction theory further developed through the theoretical examination of other current grief theories, such as trauma theory and attachment theory, making use of constructive perspectives (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Neimeyer & Anderson, 2002).

Previous studies have reported that bereaved individuals face many difficulties when attempting to make sense of the loss of their loved ones by violent death, such as accident or homicide (Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000; Lehman, Wortman, & Williams, 1987; Murphy, Johnson, & Lohan, 2003). For example, Murphy et al. (2003) reported that parents who had lost their children by violent death, such as accidents, homicide, or suicide, constructed not only positive meanings (e.g., realistic acceptance) but also negative meanings (e.g., unfairness of the death) around the death. However, Jordan (2001) has noted that people bereaved by suicide and those bereaved by other types of traumatic death ascribe different meanings to the death.

Drawing on the perspective of meaning reconstruction theory, Sands (2009) has proposed a tripartite model of suicide grief informed by clinical experiences. Although studies of meaning reconstruction in suicide-bereaved individuals are rare in Japan, Kawashima et al. (2010) investigated the aftermath of suicide in Japan and the corresponding process of meaning reconstruction. They assessed meaning reconstruction using single-item questions on a Likert-type scale about three types of activities (i.e., sense making, benefit finding, and identity change: Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006). They found that bereaved individuals faced many difficulties when attempting to make sense of the loss, and that sense-making activities predicted adaptation to a loss to suicide (Kawashima & Kawano, forthcoming; Kawashima et al., 2010). However, the qualitative aspects of meaning reconstruction in suicide survivors in Japan have not been fully identified. In this study, we investigated the qualitative aspects of the meaning reconstruction process after loss to suicide.

Methods

Participant

The participant, referred here as Fumiko (a pseudonym), was a middle-aged woman in her early 50s who lost her eldest son (in his early 20s at the time of death) to suicide almost 4 years before we interviewed her. Her son's name was Taku (a pseudonym), and he was a university student who lived far away from his family at the time of death. At the time of the interview, Fumiko was living in a city in Japan with her husband and three daughters. She was in good

health and had recently attended suicide survivor support groups. She had participated in a previous questionnaire study (Kawashima et al., 2010) and consented to participate in a subsequent qualitative study.

We invited Fumiko to be part of our investigation for the following reasons. First, losing a child, especially by suicide, challenges a bereaved person's sense of narrative coherence (e.g., Maple, Edwards, Minichiello, & Plummer, 2012; Maple, Edwards, Plummer, & Minichiello, 2010; Sugrue, McGilloway, & Keegan, 2014); nonetheless, Fumiko narrated her experience of the loss in detail and tried to integrate the event into her life. Second, little is known about the experiences of mothers following the death of a child (Sugrue et al., 2014). Fumiko's narratives contained multiple meanings regarding the loss, which offered us a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of a Japanese mother who has lost her child to suicide. Third, the position from which she narrated her experience transitioned during the interview sessions, suggesting that relationships (Maple et al., 2012) or continued bonds (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996) between the living and the deceased are more dynamic than previously thought and represent an ongoing process. In other words, we chose to study this particular case because "it [was] expected to advance our understanding of" (Stake, 1994, p. 237) the connection between the living and the deceased, which is often discussed in Western countries, as we will consider later in this article.

Procedure

We conducted a life-story interview using an interview guide. The interview guide was constructed from the perspective of meaning reconstruction theory (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Kawashima, 2008). Previous work shows that the sense-making activity of suicide survivors predicts their adaptation to loss (Kawashima et al., 2010; Kawashima & Kawano, forthcoming). Thus, the guide included questions related to the meaning reconstruction process, such as profiles of the deceased, feelings and thoughts about the deceased, making sense of the loss, finding benefits in the loss, and identity change. Furthermore, it has been reported that suicide survivors are frequently "wounded," and frequently supported, by their social surroundings: family members, relatives, professionals, and others (Kawashima & Kawano, forthcoming). Therefore, questions about social support and secondary wounding from others were also incorporated into the interview guide. All questions were open ended, and the interview focused on the mother's narratives regarding the above topics. The interview lasted 3 hours and 26 minutes. Every narrative during the interview was recorded and transcribed. The institutional review board of the Japanese National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry approved the study.

Analysis

The narratives were transcribed and analyzed using the narrative approach (Bruner, 1990; Kawashima, 2011; Polkinghorne, 1988) to enable us to precisely and thoroughly study the multiple meanings presented in the data. This was a case study of an individual who was suicide bereaved. Stake (1994) distinguished three types of case studies: intrinsic case studies, instrumental case studies, and collective case studies. In the light of these distinctions, we used an instrumental case study method, as our aim was to gain insights on specific issues, such as meaning reconstruction in the suicide bereaved and reconsideration of the bonds between the living and the deceased.

Our analysis involved five steps and used qualitative methodology (e.g., Kawashima, 2011; Kvale & Brinkman, 2008). First, the complete transcription was read through to get a sense of the entire interview. Then, the meaning units of the text were determined. Third, the theme (or meaning label) that dominated each meaning unit was restated, condensing the participant's meaning. In the fourth step, meaning labels were grouped according to similarity. Finally, we established three meaning groups for the participant: making sense of her son's death and life, relationships with other people, and reconstruction of a bond with the deceased. At this point, the contents of the meaning groups and the interrelationships between them were interpreted.

Results

Making Sense of Her Son's Death and Life

Previous studies have shown that making sense of the death is a central activity in the meaning reconstruction process of suicide survivors (Kawashima et al., 2010; Sands, 2009; Sands, Jordan, & Neimeyer, 2011). Searching for explanations and a desire to understand why the suicide occurred are common features among suicide survivors (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011). In this study, Fumiko described her process of searching for the "what and who" that led to her son's death, as shown (in the following narratives, "F" indicates the interviewee, Fumiko, and "K" designates the interviewer).

F: I used to search for what and who led to my son's death. You know, if someone died by suicide because of bullying or debt, the bereaved searches for the cause. Like them, I checked my son's email and daily journal to search for the cause. I read his daily entries and mail. I was searching for the reason why he died, thinking that it would come from some time in the past.

K: Was this about a month after his passing?

F: Yes. It was after the beginning of my bereavement. I couldn't have acted in any other way, but by depending on it [the process of searching for the cause].

Fumiko also stated that she felt that her son's letters contained indicators that he was suicidal. As a result, she felt guilty because, although she recognized these signs in his letters, she felt that she could not have protected her son from his suffering. Then, she described how she felt responsible for her son's death because she was his mother.

F: When I was writing personal notes about my experience, I realized that I am responsible for the crime. It's me, his mother. I couldn't save his life, even though he sent me suicidal messages. After all, I bear the responsibility for causing his death because I gave birth to and reared my son. I will never forgive myself for the rest of my life. I have no choice but to live in pain, waiting for a sign of goodwill from beyond.

Many survivors feel that someone was "responsible" for the death, and the focus of blame may be other people, such as other family members and friends (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011). This blaming process may lead to the scapegoating of other people, drawing the focus away from oneself. People who attribute the cause of death to themselves or to other people show more distress than people who attribute the death to God or fate (Downey, Silver, & Wortman, 1990). Bereaved mothers whose children have died by suicide tend to report failure and self-blaming (Sugrue et al., 2014); Fumiko attributed the cause of her son's death to herself. However, her story went far beyond self-blaming, and it may have played a large role in how she structured her life. More precisely, as a mother, she felt responsible for her son's death, and so she was resolved to live with pain for the rest of her life. This narrative might indicate that she had moved from a feeling of "being pain" to "having pain" (Attig, 2001). How was she able to move from being absorbed by the pain to committing to live while continuing to carry sadness and heartache? Sociocultural narratives play an important role in the way that people reconstruct meaning after a significant loss (Klass, 2001; Klass et al., 1996). In this case, Japanese folk images may have provided a scaffold for her meaning reconstruction. Yamada (1988) described the importance of the image of the "self wrapped by the mother" in understanding the family relationships of Japanese people, and how this idea contrasts with the self—other dichotomy in Western countries. In Japanese, *tsutsumu* (wrapping) is the symbol for a mother who is pregnant in *kanji* (Chinese characters); the image is associated with the idea of being warm and safe in the mother's womb. In this study, Fumiko frequently used the word "mother" to make sense of her grief process, which may indicate that she was trying to protect her motherhood—herself as a mother—according to Japanese culture.

Fumiko had contacted the police officers who conducted the inquest into her son's death and knew that her son died without pain. She was comforted by this knowledge. She also emphasized the value of her son's life. For example,

she affirmed that she had been blessed with an excellent friend in her son.

F: I think he [Taku] was blessed with friends. There are people who die by suicide because of bullying, you know. But Taku lived happily with excellent friends. Many of his friends came to his funeral and told me their memories about Taku. He seemed truly blessed.

These narratives may also reflect Fumiko's efforts to maintain the self-image of being a mother. In other words, after losing her son (a child being wrapped by its mother), she was trying to retrieve the core of the experience of motherhood and to maintain a sense of self as a mother by feeling responsible for the death and deciding to live with pain.

Relationships With Other People

Fumiko spoke of her relationships with other people, such as her other children and her son's friends. She was worried about her daughter's marriage when her son died. She also mentioned that she did not cry in front of her other children after her son's death. Similar narratives have been reported by Sugrue et al. (2014), who noted that suicide-bereaved mothers have a tendency to keep their emotions and pain hidden. Fumiko also stated that she felt glad that she did not let her other children watch over the body of her son. This attitude seemed to represent her feeling of responsibility as a mother (*tsutsumu* in Japanese also means wrapping something to keep it hidden).

F: I didn't cry in front of the other children. I love him very much, of course. I've leaned on him. To be honest, my only son was so cute. But I was worried about my daughters' marriages first, when he died. You know, [how the death] might affect their relationships. I am still the mother of my daughters even if I've lost my son. So, I've been careful not to get upset in front of my children. I have never said "Why are you dead, Taku?" I've never said that. I do not show that I am suffering. But my daughters are also distressed about their brother's death, you know. If I get upset, they might feel more distress and they may think that their mother loves their brother the most. So, even now, I don't reveal much of what I feel toward my son to my daughters.

Her feelings of responsibility were apparent when she spoke about her son's friends. For example, she stated that she was very sorry that his death gave his friends pain. She also said that parents feel responsible for the loss of their children by other tragic incidents, such as murder. After the loss of her son to suicide, she met some children who were dying from terminal illnesses. She felt sorry for them because her son, who had a healthy body, died by suicide. She stated that she now thinks that dying because of an illness, instead of suicide, is fortunate.

Fumiko told several stories about her son's death and reconstructed the meaning of each to create a coherent story. Bereavement of a loved one shatters one's assumptions (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) or meaning constructs (Gilles & Neimeyer, 2006) "because bereavement is, among other things, a crisis in meaning" (Neimeyer & Anderson, 2002, p. 61). The act of searching for coherence in one's personal narratives by reauthoring or reconstructing their meanings is central to the grieving process. This is because significant loss presents a challenge to one's sense of narrative coherence (Neimeyer, 2001).

Fumiko stated that she was now able to talk laughingly about her son with other children. However, she pointed out, this does not mean that her suffering is over. She also mentioned a lack of support from her husband. In addition, she stated that she feels left out and sad when she sees close families in town and commercials that depict the growth of a child. She also described the past with statements like "I thought I could not be happier."

F: He and the other children were playing the family game in the living room. They were playing and laughing . . . and I saw them from the kitchen while I was making dinner. I thought I could not be happier. Such a thought might cause misfortune . . . But, I thought I could not have been happier. I've never been happier.

The meaning-making process is not characterized by one coherent story but by complex and ongoing stories that involve conflicts and ambivalence, as illustrated by Fumiko's narratives. Furthermore, while narrating a story may improve the coherence of other associated stories, disliked stories—*holes in the narrative*—often remain unsaid. Generally, one story contains connections to other stories, which may be hidden, or contain alternative versions of events (Frank, 1995; Shojima, 2006; White, 1995).

Reconstruction of a Bond With the Deceased

Fumiko spoke of the similarities between her son and herself. She felt that he had always had an accurate view of his parents and had supported her. She also said that she wants to be buried next to his grave. These narratives show that she had explored the relationship that she wanted to have with her son after her death. Although she appeared to have a stable sense of identity as a mother, Fumiko stated that she felt she needed help from other people. In particular, she wanted someone to tell her that she was okay. She also mentioned her belief in the afterlife, and the importance of overcoming daily suffering when going through hard times.

F: A fortune-teller said to me, "Your son is now not your son anymore." She said, "You were his child in your previous life, and thus he is always watching over you

benevolently like your parent.” I felt I had been saved by the story. I feel it seems real... I don't care whether the story is true or not. I can believe the story.

The fortune-teller had told Fumiko a story about the nature of the relationship between Fumiko and her son. The fortune-teller had asserted that the mother-child relationship had been reversed in a previous life, and thus Fumiko's son now keeps a benevolent parental eye on her. Fumiko stated that she did not care about the truthfulness of the story; instead, she claimed that she had been saved by the story. The story is based on the master narrative of “reincarnation,” which is a common idea in contemporary Japan (Horie, 2014). Historically, the concept of reincarnation is related to the Buddhist notion of suffering, and the release from the cycle of rebirth and suffering is a type of transcendence called *Nirvana*. However, the concept of reincarnation is also associated with the cycle of lives or the seasons in modern Japan (Yamada, 2004).

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of continuing bonds with the deceased and the role of rituals as the bereaved attempt to make sense of their loss (e.g., Klass, 2001; Maple et al., 2012). Fumiko's narrative is partially consistent with a notion described in previous studies, wherein bereaved Japanese individuals choose to maintain the bonds between the living and the deceased through traditional rituals of ancestor worship (e.g., Klass et al., 1996; Yamamoto, Okonogi, Iwasaki, & Yoshimura, 1969). However, Fumiko assigned importance to the narrative of spiritual bonds with the deceased rather than rituals.

Aside from the bonds that she chose to maintain with her son, we were interested in the way that Fumiko's position about her son's death changed over time. For instance, when speaking about her son, she first linked herself to each story through the reconstruction of her identity as a mother. Her narratives contained themes that corresponded to this issue, such as “I could not have protected my son from suffering,” “I was worried about my daughters' marriages first.” However, she mentioned the afterlife with hesitation in the middle of the interview session.

K: Afterlife...?

F: I'm sorry...

K: Oh, no, no, no. I'm very interested in the story. Could I hear that?

F: You aren't interested in the afterlife, are you?

K: I want to hear that story.

F: Okay. I believe in the afterlife...

Following this discourse, Fumiko clearly stated her beliefs about the afterlife. As mentioned, she described how a fortune-teller had told her that the mother-child relationship between herself and her son had been reversed in their previous lives, such that her son now keeps a benevolent parental eye on her. As per Klass et al.

(Klass, 2001; Klass et al., 1996), who considered the relationships between the inner world and the social world, the story of the afterlife represents a scaffold for Fumiko's reconstruction of her self-narrative. In other words, she transformed her position as mother to that of child using the story of the afterlife.

We were curious about the best way to interpret Fumiko's narratives. In her story, she changed her position from mother to that of her son's child, contrasting with her identity reconstruction as mother. However, the shift from the mother position to the child position does not seem to have been linear because she also mentioned her feeling of responsibility for her son's death at the end of the interview. More specifically, her position was not stable but continuously changed during the last half of the interview. In other words, she transitioned from mother to child in some ways but simultaneously narrated herself as wrapping her child. Yamada (2004) discriminated the linear and progressive model of development associated with Western culture from the cyclic and transitional model of development depicted in Japanese folk images. The concept of transition includes the idea that "everything—every function, energy, and power—appears and disappears, one after another, and that the universe is not constant but continuously moving" (Yamada, 2004, p. 108). Fumiko's narrative contained an ongoing transition between two positions: a mother wrapping her child and a child wrapped by her son. Furthermore, she did not change her position intentionally but rather floated between the positions. This floating perspective living between two positions, expressed as *aida* (or *das Zwischen*, betweenness; Kimura, 1988) may characterize the Japanese grieving process (Figure 1). The model does not show the choice between two positions or conflicts of ambivalent emotions but rather represents the phenomena of floating between the positions. Bin Kimura noted that "the Japanese [understand] interpersonal social existence, the being between, life in the *Aida* of itself and of others, as the essential trait of an individual human. The interpersonal *Aida* is in some sense the quintessence of known individuality" (translated by Cutting, 2001, p. 337). More precisely, the concept of *aida* "crystallizes the Japanese concept of the person as an intersubjective self–other relation that exists in the lived space and/ or time 'in between' all persons and events in the transpersonal locus of *aida*" (Odin, 1996, p. 72).

Discussion

Our interview with Fumiko revealed that the following beliefs reduced her pain: (a) death is not the eternal split and (b) the connection between the living and deceased will continue after death. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies, which noted the importance of continuing bonds between the bereaved and the deceased (Klass et al., 1996; Wood, Byram, Gosling, & Stokes, 2012). Furthermore, our participant made sense of her life in terms of her relationships with other people, including her son and her other children.

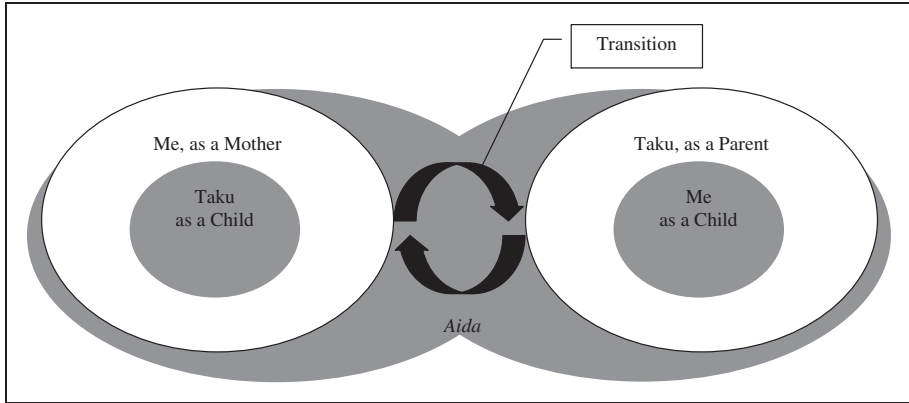


Figure 1. Transitional and wrapping model of grieving.

As Sands suggests, in a study about the meaning-making process and the relationship with the deceased, the narratives of multiple relationships rely on the scaffolds built through the meaning reconstruction process (Sands, 2009; Sands et al., 2011).

We have previously noted that maintaining bonds with the deceased reduces the pain of the bereaved. However, strong bonds can sometimes cause distress, such as complicated grief, when people are unable to make sense of their loss (Neimeyer, Baldwin, & Gillies, 2006). Our participant stated that the position of “responsible mother” involved pain and also said that she would feel pain for the rest of her life. However, it may be difficult to confront this pain and responsibility without any scaffolds. In fact, our participant reconstructed her meaning of her relationships with the deceased by appropriating Japanese folk images of *tsutsumu* and spiritual or Buddhist narratives of reincarnation. The images of *tsutsumu* were incorporated into her narratives of interpersonal relationships with her deceased son, her other adult daughters, her son’s friends, and even children who were not close to her. Her narratives revealed that the self-image of the wrapping mother afforded her not only pain but also the strength to live.

The meaning ascribed to loss can contain negative and positive tones after violent death, including suicide (e.g., Lehman et al., 1987; Murphy et al., 2003). In this study, Fumiko clearly stated her beliefs about the afterlife, based on the master narrative of reincarnation. These narratives of reincarnation may have helped our participant find a safe place to externalize her experiences. In sum, sociocultural narratives, such as reincarnation, may lead people to confront their suffering by working as scaffolds for making sense of loss experiences (Kawashima, 2014).

Furthermore, Fumiko transitioned between two positions in her narrative: mother and child. This indicates that her relationships were not static

but floating. The concept of *aida* is a dialogical principle to explain human selfhood, and the concept is different from Western perspectives on interpersonal relationships. The concept of *aida*, or betweenness, crystallizes the selfhood living in between self and other and is different from the Western concept of selfhood crystallized as a dialectic of I and Me, or individuality and sociality (Odin, 1996). The wrapping and transitional model which depicts the state of being between (living in *aida*) may characterize the Japanese grieving process, especially of bereaved mothers.

People who have lost their children to suicide find it difficult to make sense of the loss and their meaning reconstruction varies widely (Maple et al., 2010, 2012; Sugrue et al., 2014). However, previous studies have demonstrated the importance of continuing bonds with the deceased (e.g., Klass, 2001; Maple et al., 2012), and some studies have shown that suicide-bereaved mothers have a tendency to keep their emotions and pain hidden (e.g., Sugrue et al., 2014), which is in accord with the findings of the present study. Thus, the transitional and wrapping model might be transferable to interpret mothers' narratives in Western societies, and the model may explain the meaning reconstruction process of those bereaved by suicide and other traumatic loss.

Clinical Implications

When people tell stories about their loss, they link the meanings to make a coherent narrative. In other words, they may even strive to organize unlinked events "into an imaginative formulation that meets one or more tests of coherence" (Sarbin, 1986, p. 12). In our study, the participant expressed the positive and spiritual meanings of her loss, and the narratives anchored her fragmented meanings to an integrated story. This may connote personal growth after bereavement, such as posttraumatic growth, which is often mentioned in studies of suicide survivors (e.g., Feigelman, Jordan, & Gorman, 2009; Smith, Joseph, & Das Nair, 2011). However, we also observed *holes* in the narratives of our participant that will likely remain for the rest of her life. Although her pain has weakened over time, her sadness remains. As meaning reconstruction is changeable and ongoing, making sense of the loss of a loved one does not require the integration of every life-story into one coherent story. Additionally, while people tell some stories to others, they may choose to keep secrets or leave other stories untold. Every story is multivoiced and has alternative versions, and so the nature of this growth may be multifaceted.

Limitations and Further Directions

In this study, we explored the meaning reconstruction process of one Japanese woman who lost her son to suicide. We found that her story contained features

of grief characteristic of suicide-bereaved individuals in Japan. However, it is difficult to generalize the results of our study to all Japanese people bereaved by suicide. We generated a transitional and wrapping model of grieving through the analysis of a mother's narratives. Other suicide survivors, such as children who have lost their parents to suicide, may narrate different types of stories (e.g., Hung & Rabin, 2009; Wood et al., 2012). However, our model may explain the narratives of a bereaved mother living outside Japan. Further study is needed to determine the further transferability of our findings. Additionally, the concept of *aida* seems to be essential for explaining the Japanese floating perspective on grief, although there is much room for discussion regarding this point. For example, we did not inquire why our participant hesitated to narrate a sacred story during the interview session, and thus, it is difficult to address barriers to our participant's transformation of positioning. Our participant may have felt that it was difficult to talk about the afterlife because of her strong feelings of responsibility as a mother. Alternatively, her hesitation may have been caused by her experiences of secondary wounding associated with negative responses from others (Kawashima et al., 2010). Further studies should address this issue.

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Notes

1. A *suicide survivor* is someone who experiences a high level of self-perceived psychological, physical, or social distress for a considerable length of time after exposure to the suicide of another person (Jordan & McIntosh, 2011, p. 7).
2. The term *Jishi-Izoku* (suicide survivor) has been used in academic and political settings in Japan, and the word usually indicates the bereaved family after suicide. We use the word "bereaved by suicide/suicide bereaved" as an equivalent to "suicide survivor" in this article.

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Author Biographies

Daisuke Kawashima, PhD, is an associate professor in the School of Psychology at Chukyo University. His research focuses on attitudes toward death, bereavement, and suicide prevention.

Kenji Kawano, PhD, is a professor in the College of Comprehensive Psychology at Ritsumeikan University. His research has focused on suicide prevention, community mental health, and aging.