



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

STEPHANIE SLATER

BSc (Hons) (University of Victoria, 2012)

**“Subjective Distress Among Homicidally Bereaved Siblings as
Measured by the Impact of Event Scale (IES-R): Are Event and Loss
Related Distress Distinguishable Among Siblings Bereaved by
Homicide?”**

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Tuesday, September 13, 2016

9:30 a.m.

MacLaurin Building

Room A326

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Susan Tasker, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, University of
Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Todd Milford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Michael Hayes, Department of Geography, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Sarah Macoun, Department of Psychology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Trauma and grief often co-occur, however the degree to which these two constructs overlap or are distinguishable is still poorly understood. Homicidally bereaved individuals are exposed to both trauma and loss-related stressors. Previously collected data were used to explore the relationship between trauma and grief components in homicide bereavement distress, and whether homicide bereavement distress was distinguishable from that of other adverse life events. The overarching research question for this study was: Are event and loss related distress distinguishable among siblings bereaved by homicide,¹ as measured on the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R)? Data from 67 individuals who lost a sibling to murder while growing up (Murder Group) were compared to data from 80 comparison individuals who grew up with a sibling (Comparison Group), but who had no experience of homicide bereavement. A crosssectional, iterative survey design using group comparisons was used. Participants in the Murder Group reported significantly higher levels of current subjective distress compared with the Comparison Group. Among the siblings bereaved by the homicide loss of a sibling, event- and loss-related subjective distresses were highly and significantly correlated. In addition, both decreased significantly over time (years), and at similar rates. Preliminary findings from exploratory analyses of the IES-R provide insight into the avoidance, intrusion, and hyperarousal components of subjective distress following homicide loss. Findings will inform understanding of the overlap, and distinguishing features, of concurrent trauma and grief. Implications for theory and empirical research are noted, and recommendations for future research and counselling practice are discussed.

1 By definition, homicide includes first-degree murder, second-degree murder, (nonnegligent) manslaughter, and infanticide. Murder is defined by the Canadian Criminal Code as the deliberate killing of a person (Government of Canada, 2015a), and by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the “willful killing of one human being by another” (FBI, 2013). The terms homicide and murder are used interchangeably in this document. For the purposes of this thesis, homicide refers strictly to culpable homicide. Culpable homicide is murder (Government of Canada, 2015b).