



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

**Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Science**

of

JORDAN ALI

BA (Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 2010)

“Mourning me: An interpretive description of grief and identity loss in older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI)”

Department of Psychology

Friday, September 11, 2015

3:00PM

University Centre Building
Room A207a

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Colette Smart, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Holly Tuokko, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Kelly Stajduhar, School of Nursing, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Joan Martin, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Abstract

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) has long been associated with depression, however, few studies have addressed the presence of (prolonged) intrapersonal grief or its contribution to emotional distress in MCI. This may be a result of both an over-reliance on interpersonal models of grief (i.e. bereavement) and a systematic undervaluing of MCI individuals' perspectives. Thus, this study took a qualitative approach, using interpretive description, to understand the individuals' first-hand experience of persons with MCI, with the intent of 1) determining whether grief occurs for this group and, if so, 2) comparing this experience to well-defined grief constructs. Six themes were identified: Uncertainty and ambiguity, losses of self and role, disenfranchisement and disconnection, primacy of MCI, emotional distress, and coping. A relationship between themes was found, such that uncertainty and ambiguity, losses of self and role, and disenfranchisement and disconnection comprised the core dimensions of the MCI experience, with losses of self and role serving a central and binding role between the other two. These core dimensions then contributed individually and collectively to the primacy of the MCI experience and emotional distress, which in turn exhibited a reciprocal relationship with coping. The overall experience of MCI reflects features of several grief reactions to nonfinite loss, most notably chronic sorrow and disenfranchised grief (general), though anticipatory grief (a subtype of disenfranchised grief) may also apply. Implications for practice and further investigation are discussed.