



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

PROGRAMME

The Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
(Department of a Psychology)

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2006	University of Victoria	MSc
2004	University of Toronto	Honours BSc

The Role of Health Risk Behaviours in the Link Between
Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Physical Health Among
Women with Histories of Interpersonal Trauma

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

1:00 p.m.

David Turpin Bldg, Room A144

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Marsha Runtz, Department of Psychology, UVic (Supervisor)

Dr. Julie Spencer Rodgers, Department of Psychology, UVic
(Member)

Dr. Marion Ehrenberg, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)

Dr. Laurene Sheilds, School of Nursing, UVic (Outside Member)

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Dr. Patricia Petretic, Department of Psychology, University of
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Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Gregory Andrachuk,
Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies, UVic

Abstract

Women with histories of interpersonal trauma (physical, sexual, or psychological abuse experienced during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) are more likely to experience posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) and to develop physical health problems than women without trauma histories. In fact, PTSS and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been established in the literature as mediators of the relation between interpersonal trauma and physical health outcomes (e.g., Resnick et al., 1997; Schnurr & Green, 2004). What remains to be determined is a clear understanding of the various mechanisms explaining why individuals with trauma histories, and subsequently PTS symptoms, go on to develop physical health problems. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of health risk behaviours, specifically sexual risk taking and substance use, as possible mechanisms through which interpersonal trauma and PTSS might influence physical health. These relations were examined, through structural equation modelling, in a sample of 475 women currently attending university. Models were tested separately for sexual traumas (childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault experienced during adolescence and adulthood) and nonsexual interpersonal traumas (physical and psychological maltreatment by parents in childhood, witnessing violence between parents, and intimate partner violence in their own relationships). Results indicated that PTSS severity partially mediated pathways from both types of interpersonal trauma, sexual and nonsexual, to adverse health outcomes, contributing to the existing theory that one's psychological response to a trauma may be more important in determining physical health outcomes than the trauma itself. Furthermore, a significant indirect pathway was found to link nonsexual trauma to risky sexual behaviours through PTSS severity. In addition, PTSS severity fully mediated the relation between nonsexual trauma and substance use behaviours. These latter findings suggest that the likelihood of engaging in substance use and/or risky sexual behaviours may be greater in trauma survivors who are suffering from posttraumatic stress symptoms. Contrary to hypotheses, no significant pathways were found from risky sexual behaviours or substance use to physical health outcomes in the context of trauma variables and PTSS severity. Consequently, these health risk behaviours were not found to operate as mechanisms explaining the link from PTSS severity to physical health outcomes. Limitations and alternative hypotheses are

presented. Implications for clinical interventions and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships

2012	Sara Spencer Foundation Research Award
2008/10	Doctoral Award - SSHRC
2008/10	President's Research Scholarship - UVic
2009	BC Psychological Association Certificate Award
2007	Certificate of Academic Excellence: Outstanding Thesis Award – CPA
2007	Pre-Doctoral Fellowship – BC Medical Services Foundation
2006	Grant for Women Graduate Students – Soroptimist Foundation of Canada
2005/06	Canada Graduate Scholarship – SSHRC
2005/06	president's Research Scholarship - UVic

Presentations

1. **Eadie, E. M.**, Runtz, M. G. & Rosen, L. (2012, Nov). The role of self-disturbance in the link between interpersonal trauma and physical health outcomes. Symposium presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California.
2. Briere, J., & **Eadie, E.M.** (2012, Nov). Complex trauma and recent suicide attempts: Results from the TSI-2 standardization study. Symposium presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California
3. **Eadie, E.M.**, & Runtz, M.G. (2010, Nov). A review of behavioural and psychological mechanisms linking posttraumatic stress disorder and physical health among female survivors of interpersonal trauma. Paper presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada.

4. **Eadie, E. M.**, Runtz, M. G., & Briere, J. (2013, Aug). Posttraumatic stress symptoms and risky sexual behaviors in the context of interpersonal trauma. Poster presented at the 121st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, Hawaii.
5. **Eadie, E. M.**, Hager, A., Runtz, M. G., & Godbout, N., (2009, Aug). Psychological distress and sexual functioning in survivors of sexual victimization. Poster presented at the 117th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, ON.
6. **Eadie, E. M.**, Runtz, M. G., & Godbout, N., (2008, Aug). Impact of meaning making on reproductive health following sexual trauma: Poster presented at the 116th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Boston, MA.
7. **Eadie, E. M.**, & Runtz, M. G. (2007, Jun). Development of a measure of women's reproductive and sexual health: The Reproductive Health Scale. Poster presented at the 68th Annual Convention of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), Ottawa, Canada.
8. **Eadie, E. M.**, & Runtz, M. G. (2006, Nov). Investigation of posttraumatic stress disorder and physical health status in sexual assault victims. Poster presented at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) Annual Meeting, Hollywood, California.

Publications

1. **Eadie, E. M.**, Runtz, M. G., & Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2008). Posttraumatic stress symptoms as a mediator between sexual assault and adverse health outcomes in undergraduate women. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 21, 540-547.