

THE PREVALENCE OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMATIC GRIEF—A COMPARISON OF VIOLENT/SUDDEN AND EXPECTED LOSS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of childhood traumatic grief (CTG) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in parentally bereaved children and compare scores between those who had lost a parent to a sudden/violent death and those who had lost a parent to an expected death. A sample of 158 parentally bereaved children ages 7–16 completed the Extended Grief Inventory (EGI); 127 of those also completed the UCLA PTSD Index. A large number of children were experiencing CTG symptoms at moderate and severe levels. There was no significant difference in EGI or UCLA PTSD Index scores between the two types of losses. Findings are discussed in relation to trauma theory, research on parentally bereaved children and implications for practice.

According to government records, close to two million children in the United States receive social security death benefits due to the death of a parent (Social Security Administration (SSA), 2007). Children also experience deaths of other loved ones such as grandparents or siblings resulting in a significant number of

