



Office of Research Administration
Akron, OH 44325-2102

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

Date: January 16, 2018
To: Michelle Bowes
School of Counseling
From: Sharon McWhorter **SM**
IRB Number: 20171203
Title: Psychological adjustment, relationship satisfaction, and communication in bereaved parents using the Bowen Family System Theory (BFST)

Approval Date: January 16, 2018

Thank you for submitting your Request for Exemption to the IRB for review. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and qualifies for exemption from the federal regulations under the category below:

- Exemption 1** – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.
- Exemption 2** – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.
- Exemption 3** - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.
- Exemption 4** – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.
- Exemption 5** – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.
- Exemption 6** – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact the IRB to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Approved consent form/s enclosed

APPENDIX

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Michelle Bowes, a doctoral candidate in the School of Counseling at The University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationship between grief-related communication, grief reactions related to parental adaptation, guilt reactions related to parental adaptation, and relationship satisfaction after the death of a child. It will also examine whether parental gender and time elapsed since death have implications for those relationships. The Bowen Family System Theory (BFST) will be the theoretical framework for this study. Intact couples (meaning no divorced or separated couples) who are over the age of 18, who have experienced child deaths are requested for participation in this study. Child deaths for participant couples can range from fetal death (death prior to delivery, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy) up to adult children age 55.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to give general information that describes you, your grief related communication, grief reaction, guilt, and relationship satisfaction via four online assessment tools. Please discuss your and your partner's participation in this study as you will be asked to provide your partner's name in the demographic section. You will be asked for your partner's name so that resulting assessment data can be correlated and analyzed for each couple, based on their individual assessment results. Providing your partner's name without their consent could potentially violate the privacy of your partner, who might not necessarily have consented to participate in this study. You should understand that providing partner names, as is being requested, can also violate your anonymity by connecting your provided data to your partner's name. After participants provide requested information, a company called Qualtrics

will then make it available only to the researcher, and the assessment data will not otherwise reveal any identifying information. That is why it is critical that participants provide requested partner name information, so that partner results can be matched and analyzed. Please note that the researcher will be the only person to have access to the raw data that includes partner names. The data will also be masked (no identifiable data) when any other members of the dissertation committee review study results. Confidentiality will be maintained using a number code system that will be assigned to online responses. Additionally, once the researcher has linked the surveys, the names will be removed, so that the data will be anonymized as soon as possible.

The assessment data will be stored on a solid-state jump drive, which will be password protected and will remain locked when not in use. However, with any type of internet communication system, there may be risks related to the transfer of information from one party to another. Your completion of the online survey will serve as your acceptance of the information provided in this informed consent document and your consent to participating in this study.

The first assessment has 20 questions and measures communication. The second assessment has 22 questions and measures bereavement reaction. The third assessment has five questions and measures guilt. The fourth assessment has 150 questions and measures relationship satisfaction. Your participation may add to the body of knowledge and understanding regarding relationship grief-related communication, parental adaptation (bereavement reaction and guilt), and relationship satisfaction after the death of a child. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, with no negative consequences.

Due to the topic of this research (the death of a child) it may cause participants some level of distress, including undesired changes in thought processes and emotion. For participants who maintain connection with existing support groups, please consider seeking support if required. Also, if you become triggered or suicidal, please make contact as appropriate through one of the following resources: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255, NAMI Helpline at 800-950-NAMI (800-950-6264) or www.nami.org, National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service at 800-662-HELP (800-662- 4357), SAFE (Self-Abuse Finally Ends) at 1-800-DONT-CUT (1-800-366-8288) or www.selfinjury.com, Domestic Violence at 800-799-7233, <http://www.crisischat.org>, or 211.org.

This study has been approved by The University of Akron's Institutional Review Board (#20171203). For additional questions regarding the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB at (330) 972-7666. If you have any questions about this study, please contact study principal Michelle Bowes via email, at mjb79@zips.uakron.edu, or by telephone (234) 206-1221. You may also contact Dr. Karin Jordan, Ph.D., Dissertation Chair and Professor, at the University of Akron, in Akron, Ohio at kj25@uakron.edu or by telephoning her at (330) 972-5515.