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Chapter Twenty-Three

Homicide Investigations and Survivors of Homicide

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Abstract: This chapter will explore the often forgotten survivors of homicide who are having to endure a criminal investigation, whilst managing the ‘traumatic grief’ that follows such a devastating event and what is often intense media coverage. We will explore how, despite having the same end goal as the survivor, those investigating homicide have many different priorities and approaches in trying to reach that goal. It will be shown that the actions of investigators have a direct role to play in influencing the grief processes of those closest to the victim. We will see that how they are notified about the homicide, how the victim’s lifestyle is examined and how, in England and Wales, the Family Liaison Officer works with the family all have a significant impact on the victim’s grief and their perceptions of homicide investigators.

Keywords: Co-victims, survivors of homicide, homicide investigation, grief.

As we set out in the introduction to this handbook, consideration of the victim is a relatively recent concern as, historically, more attention has been directed at the offender. These concerns have been levelled at the criminal justice system where the victim could be described as having been on the sidelines of its processes, with Schafer (1960, p. 8) referring to them as the “Cinderella of the criminal law” in recognition of this lack of attention and often poor treatment. The implementation of the Victims Charter in 1990 was one of the first steps that was taken in England and Wales to improve the experiences for victims going through the criminal justice process. It stipulated how the criminal justice system should respond to victims of crime and, in terms of the police, set out that they should be “expected to respond to complaints of victims with all due care and attention” (Mawby, 2007, p. 211). However, despite the measures that have been put in place, and the Victims Charter is just one example, surveys analysing the experiences of victims going through the criminal justice system suggest that they are often dissatisfied with the process. To demonstrate, the Victim and Witness Satisfaction Survey revealed that victims were

often unaware of the outcome of their case and that victims of sensitive offences were more likely to report having been treated poorly (Wood *et al.*, 2015). The picture in England and Wales is reflected elsewhere and in terms of homicide specifically (see, for example, Pastia and Palys, 2016; Scottish Government, 2018). In terms of the police, Myhill and Bradford (2012) found that a victim's interactions with them was more important than a positive outcome at influencing victim satisfaction. The relationship between the police and victims of crime in particular is important as they will be the agency that has the most, and usually first, contact with them (Mawby, 2007).

In the case of homicide, consideration of the victim demands a broader perspective for the 'primary' victim is not the one who will become involved with the homicide investigation and other subsequent stages of the criminal justice system. It is the family and friends of those who have been murdered that will find themselves thrown into an unfamiliar environment, facing the criminal justice system and the many challenges that it brings. However, they are so often neglected. As Gekoski, Adler and Gray (2013, p. 1) write:

undocumented in literature and history, unrecorded in the crime statistics, inadequately researched by social scientists, and denied the legal rights of other victims of crime, those bereaved by homicide have, until recently, been a group largely invisible and forgotten.

This brings to the fore the intentions of this chapter, which are to explore the experiences of survivors of homicide who are having to endure the criminal justice system and, pertinently for this handbook, a homicide investigation. The term 'survivors' will be used in this chapter interchangeably with, for example, terms such as 'co-victims' and 'those bereaved by homicide'. In their writing Connolly and Gordon (2014, p. 1) draw on the work of MacVane, Miranda and Molina (2003) to explain that:

Co-victims, also known as survivors of homicide, are individuals who have familial connections with the victim and are thus directly victimised, firstly by losing a loved one and afterward, by the conditions attendant to the murder.

We begin by considering the impact that crime, and specifically homicide, has on those who are involved so that we may begin to appreciate the challenges that they face during the subsequent criminal investigation.

The Impact of Homicide

The impact of any crime can be devastating, both for those directly affected by the crime and for those around them. It can also be pervasive, impacting them physically, emotionally and financially. Added to this, the nature of the impact of crime is not uniform and will likely be dependent on a number of factors including the crime itself and the very individual responses of different individuals. Despite such complexity, research in this area has been able to discern some of the ways in which crime can affect victims. Campbell (2002), for example, found that victims of domestic violence suffered increased problems with their physical health including chronic pain and gastrointestinal problems. Research for Victim Support, a charity based in England and Wales that supports victims of crime, found that a person's physical health might also be affected as a consequence of the emotional impact of crime. A participant in their study who had suffered harassment discussed this:

I wasn't really sleeping, neither was my husband. We would jump at every loud bang we would hear...checking on CCTV...I wasn't really eating much, so consequently I was losing weight, probably because of the stress and worry about it all (Dinisman and Moroz, 2017, p. 19).

The findings presented above echoed those of Maguire (1980) following a study that explored the impact of burglary. Common responses to the burglary were typically those of anger or annoyance, as well as shock and upset, with female respondents more likely to report feelings of "shock, fear or upset" (Maguire, 1980, p. 263). Maguire (1980) notes that even within these categories there were differences in responses, with one person who reported being shocked and commenting on the need for a drink, and another describing how they shook for days. Crimes involving fraud have also been found to have a profound and lasting impact on its victims, showing that it is not just crimes of an interpersonal nature that can be so devastating. Cross *et al.* (2016, p. 4) found that the fraud had a substantial emotional impact with some reporting it as having been "devastating" and others reporting that it had led to a "nervous

breakdown”. Furthermore, research by Buchanan and Whitty (2012) explored online dating scams, finding that victims had experienced significant emotional distress, as well as experiencing the financial impact. However, even when there was not a financial impact, substantial emotional distress was reported, and women were more typically affected in this way (Buchanan and Whitty, 2012).

As we have seen, the impact of crime is devastating and wide reaching. Although it may seem to go without saying, this too is the case when it comes to homicide and its impact on co-victims. As Miller (2008, p. 367) puts it: “the murder of a family member rakes survivors over the jagged existential terrain of fairness, justice, faith, and the very meaning of life”. The impact of homicide on the family members of those who have been killed is also apparent in the work of Englebrecht *et al.* (2016) and their US based study. Through focus groups involving 18 participants they found that families had been affected in many different ways, explaining how it had changed their personalities and affected both their employment and relationships with friends (Englebrecht *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, Connolly and Gordon (2014) conducted a content analysis of 40 articles exploring the impact of homicide on co-victims; they identified common themes including the psychological effect of homicide and the negative impact on education and occupation.

One of the ways in which we might understand the impact of homicide is by understanding the grief which it generates. Victim Support highlights that ‘traumatic grief’, which is the specific type of grief that follows a homicide, is different to other forms of grief (Paterson *et al.*, 2006). Expanding on this research in a subsequent paper, Malone (2007, p. 384) explains that traumatic grief is a consequence both of the nature of the death, but also because the victim’s loved ones are required to “suppress grief reactions in order to deal with complex practical, legal and financial matters during the months after the death”. Financial difficulties that arose when the victim of the homicide was the primary wage earner, as well as issues regarding childcare, were reported to be of particular concern (Malone, 2007). As a consequence of this traumatic grief, close family members of the victim are said to be at a heightened risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This was also noted by Connolly and Gordon (2014) who write that this regularly manifested in dreams about the homicide and that, in particular, PTSD was found to hinder the development of

children and young people. The former Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, Louise Casey, conducted a review of the needs of families who had been bereaved through homicide and identified a number of similar findings to those presented here. The survey of more than 400 families found that 100% of the respondents had said that their health had been impacted in some way, one in five had become addicted to alcohol and that, more broadly, the numerous ways in which they had been impacted persisted for many years (Casey, 2011).

Following a homicide there is also something of a ripple effect. It is not just the loved ones of a homicide victim that will be impacted by the crime, although the impact on them will undoubtedly be more significant. Homicides can also affect communities as Innes (2014) notes some can be seen as 'signal crimes'. These are defined as followed:

A signal is a sign that has an effect. Signals are present when, in moving information from a transmitter to a receiver, some change is induced in the state by the latter. Conceptualised in this way, the notion that some crimes act as signals focuses upon how they communicate information about the prevalence and distribution of risks and threats across social space. They conduct and channel processes of social reaction towards some issues, and away from others (Innes, 2014, p. 1).

Some homicides will therefore resonate more than others within communities. This can depend on a number of factors including proximity to the murder, victim type, circumstances and nature of the murder. Innes (2004, p. 351) considers how the media plays a significant role in certain homicides achieving this status, describing how the coverage of the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, as well as others:

signalled the presence of the potential risks that circulate in contemporary society, thereby helping people to articulate and give form to the rather more inchoate, existential and pervasive anxiety that seems to be characteristic of late-modernity.

Consequently, it is not solely the family and the friends of the victim who will be affected, but the wider community where the homicide takes place as this can lead to elevated levels of fear of crime amongst members of the community (Stelfox, 2015). This can also, in turn, become "vehicles for popular demands for the introduction of more control and more order" (Innes, 2001, no pagination).

The Impact of the Homicide Investigation on Homicide Survivors

From the discussion that has been presented so far, it is apparent that the impact felt by a homicide is wide reaching. What will become clear in the following section is that finding themselves in the midst of a homicide investigation, sometimes at the centre of intense media coverage, and facing long and traumatic trial proceedings can serve to compound the traumatic grief that is already being experienced by survivors of homicide.

A homicide investigation is a huge undertaking for the police force and the detectives leading it, as the Murder Investigation Manual¹ (2006, p. 22) highlighted:

The investigation of homicide presents unique challenges to investigators. Some of these challenges arise because homicide is a serious crime, and bringing offenders to justice is a priority for both the public and the police.

As the many and varied chapters elsewhere in this handbook illustrate, homicide investigations are complex with long lasting and detailed work needed at many different stages, from identifying witnesses, managing communication with the media, interviewing suspects and preparing for the trial. What is clear from the wider work that has been carried out in this area, is that having to become involved in an investigation and endure the criminal justice system's processes does have a substantial impact on grief, with research indicating that it can "inhibit and hamper grief reactions and exacerbate feelings of rage and powerlessness" (Paterson *et al.*, 2006, p. 9). What the available research also reveals is that the loved ones of victims of homicide face a range of trauma from the very start and this presents implications for detectives and others involved in the criminal justice process. Rock (1998) highlights how co-victims consider their interactions with the criminal justice system to be akin to secondary victimisation. Similarly, Baliko and Tuck (2008) noted how they are often left angry due to the criminal justice process.

¹ The Murder Investigation Manual was amended in 2021 and is now referred to as the Major Crime Investigation Manual (MCIM). This quote from the earlier edition, however, remains relevant to this discussion.

Informing Loved Ones

Miller (2008, p. 369) describes how the “process of aiding grieving family members begins from the moment they get the news of their loved one’s murder”. This is therefore demonstrative of the clear need for those involved in giving death notifications to do so in a way that is mindful of the ramifications for those who are about to receive this news. Research by Reed *et al.* (2020, p. 546), however, suggests that in some cases professionals are not always fully aware of the significance of the death notification in the “recovery of the co-victims”. The importance of a *prompt* death notification is exacerbated by the prevalence of social media, for there is now the risk that loved ones may hear about a homicide through these channels as opposed to through police officers (Pike, 2018). Should it be the former, the implications for the recovery of co-victims are significant in light of the comments of Miller (2008) and Reed *et al.* (2020). Research conducted in England and Wales has indicated that there are question marks over the way in which loved one’s are notified of a homicide here also. Gekoski, Adler and Gray (2013) write of one participant who was not notified of her daughter’s homicide by the police, she found out through another family member, and did not have contact with the police until some weeks later. The authors recommend that in order to reduce secondary victimisation, improved communications and promoting understanding between victims and professionals in the criminal justice system is required (Gekoski, Adler and Gray, 2013).

The trauma at being notified of a loved one’s homicide was further compounded by family members having to identify the victim soon after. This was also found to be a consequence of being unable to touch their loved one, which is often due to the risk of contamination (Paterson *et al.*, 2006, p. 16). Herein lies the possible source of many of the challenges faced by those who have lost a loved one to homicide, as it highlights how although co-victims and detectives will find themselves “abruptly thrust together for what is a predictably prolonged and emotionally challenging association”, they occupy different spaces within this environment (Reed *et al.*, 2020, p. 543). Specifically, for the homicide detective, and others involved in the investigation, the body is considered, primarily, to be evidence and the primary goal is to preserve evidence that is required to progress the homicide investigation. For those whose

loved ones' bodies were badly damaged as a result of the homicide, not being able to see them at all also "tended to add to their distress because of the persistent and exaggerated imaginings which often troubled them" (Paterson *et al.*, 2006, p. 16). This is also discussed by Brown (2008, p. 36) who refers to the "'scientific blaming' of the murder inquiry" and how the "transformation of the murdered person into a forensic surface" can be detrimental to the co-victim. Moreover, delays to funerals that are a consequence of sometimes numerous post-mortems have also been found to hinder the grieving process of family members (Brown, 2008; Paterson *et al.*, 2006).

The Family Liaison Officer and Victimology

The introduction of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) in the UK followed the Macpherson report, which highlighted among other matters how badly the parents of Stephen Lawrence were treated during the investigation into his murder in 1993. The role of the FLO is twofold: one is to be a conduit between the investigating team and the family, making sure the family are kept up to date about the progress of an investigation, and the other is as an investigator looking to elicit information from the family about the murder and the victim. As McGarry and Smith (2011, p. 2) note family includes "partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians and others who have had a direct and close relationship with the victim". Through talking to those closest to the victim information can be gleaned about the victim that may be pertinent to the investigation. Equally, it is necessary to ensure that families are aware of the focus of the investigation, particularly to forewarn them of the media involvement in the case. Connolly and Gordon (2014, p. 7) suggest that it can be particularly hard for families to read what can be "sensational" reports about their loved one's death, and which may contain information that they were not previously aware of. As well as being victims of the homicide themselves, family members are also sources of information about the victim which detectives will need to harness. In most other crimes the victim themselves can generally tell investigators what has happened, but for homicide detectives' this information must instead come from those closest to the victim. Victimology, in the UK policing context, is the process of unravelling the victim's life to understand who within the victim's life and lifestyle might be responsible for their death. It is based on the premise that most homicide victims are killed by someone who they have had some previous contact with. In the UK homicides committed by total

strangers are extremely rare. A victimology strategy therefore involves finding out about the victim's routines, relationships, finances, geography, any behavioural changes prior to the murder, and antecedent events that might be important to the investigation (McGarry and Smith, 2011, p. 61).

An investigation into the murder of Janet Marshall in 1991 highlighted in McGarry and Smith (2011, p. 67) illustrates how this works in practice, in particular how understanding unusual precursor events might help to identify a suspect. Janet was murdered in her own home. There appeared to be no forced entry to the house and Janet's husband was considered a suspect. He was acquitted at trial and during a second investigation detectives learned that prior to the murder the Marshall family had been receiving poison pen letters. The culprit was not identified at the time. Mr Marshall also told detectives of a former pupil at his driving school, Rene Sampat, who had become obsessed with him. When he stopped giving her driving lessons, she joined the church where Mr Marshall worshipped and had joined others from the congregation at his home. Seemingly innocuous, a set of house keys had also gone missing and, when they subsequently turned up, it was felt that they had just been misplaced. These events become pertinent after Rene Sampat and her son Roy Aziz were convicted of Janet Marshall's murder. It transpired that Sampat had taken the keys during one of her visits to the Marshall's home, copied them and returned them during another visit. Believing that with Janet dead she would be able to have a relationship with her husband, she had given the keys to her son, and he had used them to enter the property and kill Mrs Marshall in her bed. The poison pen letters had also been sent by Sampat. They were found to have her fingerprints and DNA on them (adapted from McGarry and Smith, 2011, p. 67).

Understanding the victimology is an important investigative strategy in a homicide investigation but it can be problematic. Although the role of the FLO is, at least in part, to keep the family informed about the investigation's progress and act as that conduit between the family and those investigating the case, there is research that indicates dissatisfaction on the part of the family about their experiences of working with a FLO. Half of the respondents in Gekoski, Gray and Adler's (2013, p. 8) study felt this way and used terms such as "rude", "defensive" and "inexperienced" when describing the FLO. Echoing the findings of Miller (2008) outlined earlier in this chapter, the authors

highlight that FLOs have a significant impact on the grief of the co-victim (Gekoski, Adler and Gray, 2008, p. 9) and so the need to ensure they are responding appropriately to family members during this time is clear. According to Reed *et al.* (2020, p. 554) survivors of homicide often expressed dissatisfaction with the seeming lack of understanding of the victim's life by homicide detectives and the "attribution of negative lifestyles to the deceased victim by the police". Linked to this, that the "quality and quantity of information given by the police on the progress of the case [could] vary considerably" was another source of distress that was reported by the participants in research by Victim Support (Paterson *et al.*, 2006, p. 18). The consequences of such issues with information, as the authors highlight, is one of building resentment, as the following comment shows:

The police kept asking me questions during that time. At one point I remember saying to them 'my husband's dying in there and you keep asking me questions. I want to be with him and you're pulling me away from him' (Paterson *et al.*, 2006, p. 18).

Of course, the need to gain information during a homicide investigation is critical in order to move the investigation forward and ultimately lead to the identification and conviction of those responsible for the homicide. However, any resentment from family members who are often so critical to that progress may hinder the progression of the investigation if they feel unable, or indeed unwilling because of the way that they feel they have been treated, to provide the information that is required. Undoubtedly there exists a tension between the demands of the homicide investigation and the needs of the family of the victim. It is relevant to note at this juncture that investigators also develop a view of the survivors during an investigation, and it is also indicative of the tension that might be experienced in these situations, and of the differing means in which they are each working towards the same end. Reed *et al.* (2020, p. 550), for example, found that the homicide investigators sometimes found loved ones to be "disruptive" when they were collecting evidence and did not always understand why the victim would need to be left 'in situ' while the crime scene was processed. As the authors summarise:

While the interviews revealed key points of overlap (e.g., shared goal of collecting physical evidence and identifying witnesses), the study data demonstrate that homicide detectives and co-victims generally exhibit different

priorities and approaches while present at the scene of the crime; detectives generally sought to control the scene and subject it to orderly evaluation while co-victims seemed to be more preoccupied with emotion as they confronted the fact that their loved one is dead. (Reed *et al.*, 2020, p. 551)

The role of information becomes pertinent in terms of cold cases also. Specifically, a lack of information from investigators has been identified as an issue for family members of those whose loved one's cases have stalled, or 'gone cold'. Stretesky *et al.* (2010, p. 882) found that the majority of co-victims who participated in their research voiced that they were unhappy with the communication that they were receiving from those investigating the case. They expressed that information had decreased over time and they considered this to indicate that their loved ones were not important. In the UK it is not routine for families to be notified every time a cold case murder is reviewed, (Allsop, 2018). That having been said, in one cold case murder review relating to the murder of a 17-year-old girl in 1984, the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) in charge of the review met with the victim's mother and invited her to the Major Incident Room, actively involving her in the investigation. The victim's mother stated that it had been the first time any detectives had spoken to her about the investigation, as previously detectives had always just spoken to the victim's father. The SIO would regularly meet with her to keep her abreast of the investigation and continues to do so even now that the trial has ended. When exploring family member perceptions of and relationships with law enforcement in cold case homicide investigations in America, Wellman and Meitl (2020) found that if family members felt listened to, valued and were communicated with properly they trusted detectives with the case and trusted that the case was being handled correctly. Similarly, Stretesky *et al.* (2010) found through interviewing 37 indirect victims of unsolved homicide investigations in America, that better communication between police, prosecutors and families is needed to help them to make sense of what had happened and to achieve justice. Brown (2008, p. 40) discusses the increasing tendency of the police to gather information and materials on a 'just in case' basis due to the possibility that scientific breakthroughs may transpire and assist a cold case. Brown (2008, p. 40) raises the question of what benefits this might bring to co-victims so many years later, particularly since "all grieving processes differ". Brown (2008) also links this to the media coverage that such cases might generate and how far this accords the victim, and their families,

dignity. Brown (2008, p. 40) illustrates this as follows with reference to data collected during the research regarding the 1964 murder of a thirteen-year-old girl:

With the review, all the original details and even more intimate information regarding the sexual assault, were released via the press, TV Crimewatch, and the Internet. The victim will never rest. She is virtualised, aged thirteen, a smiling schoolgirl, alongside digitised photographs...To date no charges have yet been laid, five years after the case was reopened. The case details may be read on internet murder sites for voyeurs...The victim would be nearly 60. She cannot speak, but her enduring presence is not dignified.

Media Coverage of the Homicide

Malone (2007) points out that the grief processes following a homicide can be exacerbated by the fact that the period immediately following a homicide is also the time that there is likely to be heightened media interest in the case. Media interest in crime is not a new occurrence, but it is undoubtedly enduring. Examinations of the media's interest in crime has shown that representations often revolve around violent and sexual offences (Greer, 2013; Moore, 2014) and that the risk of becoming a victim of crime is often overstated (Greer, 2013). What such research has also revealed is that there is often a focus on offenders, with some becoming particularly 'well-known', whilst the names of their victims are soon forgotten. The impact of victims of crime themselves reading the media's coverage of crime has also been explored. Maercker and Mehr (2006) examined the impact that viewing media coverage had on victims of trauma, finding that when the coverage contained inaccuracies it was more likely to lead to negative reactions from the victims. More generally, they found that most victims expressed negative reactions on seeing the coverage and demonstrated evidence of retraumatisation (Maercker and Mehr, 2006).

The impact of the media's coverage of crime on survivors of homicide specifically has also been explored and it is apparent that the findings align with the points made by Malone (2007): that grief processes can be impacted upon by intense media coverage in the days and weeks following the crime. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the impact of media coverage of homicides that are particularly high-profile can lead to the "heightened vulnerability" of survivors with them becoming wary of who they can trust (Stiles, 2021, p. 61). As has been established, violent crime features heavily in media representations of crime and the true crime genre is a central part of popular

culture. This evidently has an impact on family members and others close to the victim. Dawson and Riches (1998) write that as a consequence of the media's extensive coverage of crime in its various forms, families and friends of victims of homicide can struggle to watch television because it can be hard to find something to watch that does not feature crime in some way. They also experience a sense of a loss of control, and this too can also be traced back to the fact that homicide is of particular interest to the media and the public. The survivor does not have any control over what is reported and how. They can, as Rock (1998, p. 194) puts it, become "alienated from their own experiences or their own loss" and it is no longer their own. Conversely, research conducted by Yardley *et al.* (2017) has suggested that newer forms of media, such as online forums, are now providing co-victims of crime with a medium through which they have an opportunity to regain some control over what information is presented to the public about the crime and about their loved one. Wellman (2016) also highlights how media professionals both add to the trauma, especially when the victim is portrayed inaccurately, but are also required to help to keep the case in the public eye and advocate for change.

The Impact of Homicide Survivors

The ways in which homicide can affect the loved ones of those who have died are varied and traumatic, as we have outlined. As Vincent, McCormack and Johnson (2015, p. 62) also summarise:

The needs of survivors of homicide victims are many and significant. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, protracted complicated grief, secondary victimisation through the court system, stigma, and social isolation make surviving the homicide of a loved one a devastating life event.

The ways in which they respond and cope in the aftermath of such a traumatic event are also varied, as is the way in which different case outcomes affect them as has been explored by Baguley *et al.* (2020). According to the research by Englebrecht *et al.* (2016) while some participants found support in religion or their faith, others felt a need to move away from where they had lived, whereas others turned to drugs or alcohol as a means of coping. Some participants in this study found it helpful to speak in public about their loss (Englebrecht *et al.*, 2016). One woman started a victim

advocacy organisation, and another had successfully campaigned to change legislation following the death of her daughter: “After [my daughter] was murdered that was my quest, to change that whole process. It took five years but [the law] passed last year” (Englebrecht *et al.*, 2016, p. 364). This has been reflected in other work, with Wellman (2016) and Stretesky *et al.* (2010) also suggesting that many families advocate for change following the loss of a loved one. In the UK we have seen this with the introduction of what has been termed ‘Helen’s Law’. This is the requirement for the parole board to consider the fact that the offender has not revealed where the body is when deciding whether to release them, as this perpetuates the trauma and impact on families in cases where the victim’s body has not been found. This change came as a result of campaigning by Marie McCourt after her daughter Helen was murdered in 1988. Ian Simms was convicted of Helens murder but he has never revealed where Helen’s body is (Mccourt and Duffy, 2021). We therefore see how the survivors of homicide themselves have an impact on how homicides are responded to, be it through advocating for changes to homicide investigation or legislation.

Conclusion

We noted at the start of this chapter that the victim of crime has so often been sidelined by the criminal justice system, becoming the “Cinderella of the criminal law” (Schafer, 1960, p. 8). What we have gone on to show is that the family members and loved ones of those who have been lost as a result of a homicide have also been somewhat neglected by a criminal justice system and a homicide investigation. Ultimately, whilst having the same end goal as the co-victim, those investigating have competing priorities and approaches in trying to reach that goal. Drawing on the existing literature in this area, we have set out that the loved ones of homicide victims face numerous challenges as they try to navigate a new and traumatic environment. We have also shown that the actions of those tasked with investigating that homicide have a direct role to play in influencing the grief processes of those closest to the victim. We have seen that how they are notified about the homicide, how the victim’s lifestyle is examined and how the FLO works with the family all have a significant impact on the victim's grief and their perceptions of homicide investigators. It is evident that good communication between the investigating team and the families, in both live and cold case homicide investigations, are crucial to ensuring families trust that the

investigation is being managed properly and in reducing the risk of secondary victimisation taking place. It is also evident that this is an area that should remain subject to further attention and exploration.

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