

My Brother's Life Mattered: A Scholarly
Personal Narrative of Grief from an
African Nova Scotian Woman's
Perspective

by

Chelsa Jasmine States

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of
Science

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
March 2024

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the
ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

© Copyright by Chelsa Jasmine States
2024

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this to my brothers.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF FIGURES	7
ABSTRACT	8
ABBREVIATIONS USED.....	9
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	10
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND.....	1
<i>African Nova Scotians as a Distinct Group</i>	1
<i>Grief and Grief Models</i>	1
<i>Grief in Black Communities</i>	2
KNOWLEDGE GAPS	3
RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTION	3
THESIS NAVIGATION.....	3
RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE	4
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND	5
PERSONAL LOCATION.....	5
PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE	6
DEFINITIONS OF GRIEF, MOURNING AND BEREAVEMENT	7
THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT FRAMEWORKS.....	7
<i>Psychoanalytic Perspectives of Grief and Bereavement</i>	7
<i>The Stage Model of Grief and Bereavement</i>	8
<i>Attachment Theories of Grief and Bereavement: Bowlby and Parkes</i>	9
<i>Task-Based Models</i>	10
<i>Dual Process Model</i>	11
<i>Social Constructivist Model</i>	11
GRIEF LITERATURE AND AFRICAN CANADIANS	12
<i>Disenfranchised Grief</i>	12
<i>End of Life Care in African Nova Scotian Communities</i>	13
<i>Community Discussions on Grief in ANS Communities</i>	14
SUMMARY OF BACKGROUND CHAPTER	15
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS	16
BLACK FEMINISM AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN	16
BLACK FEMINISM AND BLACK CANADIAN WOMEN.....	17
BLACK FEMINIST THEORY	20
EPISTEMOLOGY OF BLACK FEMINIST THEORY “KNOWN AND KNOWERS”	22
THEORETICAL CHOICE AND JUSTIFICATION	24
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	25
STUDY DESIGN AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION	25
<i>Axiom 1: The Nature of Reality (Ontology)</i>	27
<i>Axiom 2: The Relationship of Knower to the Known (Epistemology)</i>	27
<i>Axiom 3: The Possibility of Generalizations</i>	28
<i>Axiom 4: The Possibility of Causal Linkages</i>	28
<i>Axiom 5: The Role of Values (Axiology)</i>	29
THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS	29

SCHOLARLY PERSONAL NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY.....	30
TEN TENTATIVE GUIDELINES FOR WRITING SPNs.....	31
<i>Guideline 1: Establish Clear Constructs, Hooks, and Questions</i>	32
<i>Guideline 2: Move from the Particular to the General and Back Again ... Often</i>	32
<i>Guideline 3: Try to Draw Larger Implications from Your Personal Stories</i>	32
<i>Guideline 4: Draw from Your Vast Store of Formal Background Knowledge</i>	32
<i>Guideline 5: Always Try to Tell a Good Story</i>	33
<i>Guideline 6: Show Some Passion</i>	33
<i>Guideline 7: Tell Your Story in an Open-Ended Way</i>	33
<i>Guideline 8: Remember That Writing is Both a Craft and an Art</i>	34
<i>Guideline 9: Use Citations Whenever Appropriate</i>	34
<i>Guideline 10: Love and Respect Eloquent (i.e., Clear) Language</i>	34
PRE-SEARCH, ME-SEARCH, RE-SEARCH AND WE-SEARCH	35
<i>Pre-Search</i>	35
<i>Me-Search</i>	36
<i>Re-Search</i>	37
<i>We-Search</i>	37
DATA COLLECTION	38
<i>Perspectives</i>	39
<i>Additional Information Gathered</i>	40
DATA ANALYSIS	41
<i>Data Storage</i>	41
<i>Thematic analysis and Black Feminist Theory to Universalizables</i>	41
TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	43
<i>Credibility</i>	43
<i>Dependability</i>	44
<i>Confirmability</i>	45
<i>Transferability</i>	45
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	46
<i>Dalhousie Research Ethics Board</i>	47
<i>Creating The SPN Code of Ethics</i>	47
<i>Right to Privacy</i>	48
<i>Treat Humans as Autonomous Beings</i>	49
<i>Privacy is Conditional and Not Absolute</i>	50
CHAPTER 5: MY NARRATIVE.....	53
SUMMER	53
<i>June 21st, 2017</i>	53
<i>June 22, 2017</i>	55
<i>The Next Day: Cousin A Recounts</i>	62
<i>The Strange Man</i>	65
<i>Us vs Smith/The System</i>	66
<i>The Driver</i>	69
<i>Clinical Practicum</i>	74
<i>Before the Funeral</i>	78
<i>Othered</i>	80
<i>The Cemetery</i>	83
<i>Before the Protest</i>	84
<i>The Protest</i>	86
<i>Moving Away from God</i>	88
<i>The Wake</i>	89
<i>The Funeral</i>	89
THE FALL.....	90

<i>What about Nursing</i>	94
<i>The Apartment</i>	94
<i>Close Connection</i>	95
WINTER 2017.....	96
SPRING 2018.....	97
<i>Journal entry April 22, 2018</i>	97
<i>Journal entry April 25, 2018</i>	98
SUMMER 2018.....	98
<i>June</i>	98
<i>June 12, 2018</i>	98
THROUGH THE YEARS.....	99
<i>Keeping Him Close</i>	100
CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS	102
THEME #1: GRIEVING WHEN YOU AREN'T THE IDEAL VICTIMS.....	103
THEME #2: GRIEF AT THE INTERSECTION OF RACE, GENDER, PLACE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS.	107
<i>Reminded of our unwanted presence as ANS people,</i>	108
THEME #3: BUT HE WAS MY LITTLE BROTHER.....	110
THEME #4: CREATING A REASON TO CONTINUE.....	112
INTERPRETATIONS.....	114
SUMMARY.....	116
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION	117
RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS.....	117
SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS.....	117
FINDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE.....	117
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS.....	121
<i>Significance to the Nursing Profession</i>	121
<i>Significance for the Rural ANS communities</i>	122
IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS.....	122
<i>Implications for Nursing Education</i>	122
<i>Implications for Nursing Research</i>	124
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	125
CONCLUSION.....	126
REFERENCES	128
APPENDICES	137

List of Tables

Table 1	<i>Five Axioms of Naturalistic Paradigm</i>	26
Table 2	<i>Ten Tentative Guidelines for Writing SPNS</i>	31
Table 3	<i>Phases of Thematic Analysis</i>	42
Table 4	<i>Lincoln and Guba's Trustworthiness Criterion</i>	46
Table 5	<i>Three General Rule to Create a Personal Code of Ethics</i>	48

List of Figures
Figure 1 *Thematic Analysis 'Map'*

103

Abstract

This qualitative study used Black feminist theory (BFT) and Scholarly personal narrative (SPN) methodology to explore grief from the perspective of an African Nova Scotian woman. Using my personal narrative of the unexpected passing of my brother Dashonn Jondell States on June 22, 2017. According to my experience I created four overarching themes that shaped and influenced my grief.

The four themes; *grieving when you aren't the ideal victims, grief at the intersection of race, gender, place and socio-cultural norms, but he was my little brother and creating a reason to continue* provide insight into how anti-Black racism and other socio-contextual factors influence the perception of the deceased and bereaved while grieving. Additionally, findings provide knowledge into how ANS's attempt to discover meaning from their loss as a means of coping and maintaining contact with the deceased. Finally, the study contributes necessary insight of the unique ANS grieving experience.

Abbreviations Used

AA	African Americans
ANS	African Nova Scotians
BFT	Black Feminist Theory
NI	Naturalistic Inquiry
SPN	Scholarly Personal Narrative
TA	Thematic Analysis

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging that this work would have been possible without the ongoing love and support of those around me. I offer my sincerest gratitude to each of you for supporting me through this journey of turning my pain and trauma into purpose.

Thank-you to my co-supervisors Dr. Ruth Martin-Misener and Dr. Ingrid Waldron. Your consistent encouragement, empathy and kindness supported the development of this manuscript. Both of you brought varying perspectives that challenged me and my worldviews in ways I could never have imagined. However, those challenges became lessons that strengthened both this study and my personal growth. You are both inspirations to me and I will be forever grateful that you took this journey with me.

To my committee members Dr. Terrence Lewis, Dr. Marilyn Macdonald, Damilola Iduye and Dr. Keisha Jefferies thank-you. Thank-you for your compassion, constructive feedback and the energy that each of you put into ensuring this project was my best work. I am thankful for our committee meetings, discussions of gratitude and the ways each of you made me feel safe during our meetings.

To my mentor Dr. Keisha Jefferies, thank-you for taking me under your wing and being a shoulder to lean on. You have consistently reminded me that I deserve a spot at the table. I value your grounded personality as well as your acceptance. I am incredibly proud of you for all that you have accomplished and am honored to have met you on this journey called life.

To my partner and best friend, thank-you for encouraging me throughout the development of this work. You provided solace for me in the darkness and motivated me

when I felt like giving up. Thank-you for showing me that it is okay to take breaks and that I am capable of being in places and doing things I never imagined. You always believed I was enough. I love you Mr. Jolly.

Thank-you to my family who have navigated this crazy ride with me. Thank-you to my parents for believing in me and supporting my decisions. Thank-you to my little brother who brings me so much joy. I am honored to be your sister. I love watching you grow into your own person and the phenomenal human being you are. Sissy is always here for you. Thank-you to the additional siblings I have gained. You have taught me that there is more than enough love to go around.

To my soul-mate, Molly. Thank-you for being the sister I never had, the voice of reason and my ride or die. I love our relationship and am grateful to have you to support and cheer me on as I navigate this unknown territory called “graduate studies”. Thank-you to my fur-babies Rainy, Bubbles, Duckiee, Munch, and Mary. I love my girls so much and could not have done this without your cuddles. You always knew when I needed comfort.

Finally, I want to thank my brother who is the inspiration behind this work. Losing you is the most difficult thing I have experienced. I miss you and wish you were here to make me laugh and build new memories with us. I want you to know that your death was not in vain and that you and your life mattered. You were taken too soon but you are forever loved and remembered. I hope you and T.J are having fun riding and mudding wherever you are. We love you unconditionally.

R.I.P Bubby. #Forever 22

June 12 1995-June 22, 2017.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter will provide a brief overview of the study and its formatting. The following qualitative study explored an individual experience of grief from an African Nova Scotian (ANS) perspective. The study implemented scholarly personal narrative methodology to collect and analyze data to answer the research question: What is the grieving experience of an African Nova Scotian woman? Subsequent sections in this chapter provide insight into the background of the study, knowledge gaps, the research purpose, questions and rationale for the study.

Background

African Nova Scotians as a Distinct Group

African Nova Scotians (ANS) represent a distinct group of people that have resided in 52 land-based communities across Mi'kma'ki, known now as the province of Nova Scotia, for over 400 years (African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council, 2018). ANS are direct descendants of the Jamaican maroons, Black loyalists, Black refugees and free and enslaved Black planters that were “settled” in the province from the 1600’s onwards (African Nova Scotian Strategy Advisory Council, 2018). This diverse group has historically and continues to experience pervasive institutional, systemic and structural racism contributing to health inequities, such as chronic illnesses like diabetes, cardiovascular disease (Kisely et al., 2008), and increased rates of COVID-19 diagnosis during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2022). However, ANS communities maintain a strength and resilience that has enabled them to resist acts of racism, shaping and supporting their diverse communities and promoting solidarity (Sehatzadeh, 2008).

Grief and Grief Models

Grief is viewed as a common human phenomenon that many experience through the death of someone close to them (Lawson, 2014). The normality of the grieving

process is assessed based on individual symptoms and behaviors of commonly known grief frameworks (Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008; Neimeyer et al., 2014) such as the stage model of grief and bereavement by Kubler-Ross (1969) and psychoanalytic or Freudian grief models (Granek, 2010; Lindemann, 1944). Although the listed examples differ, they are founded in a universal lens of grief as an individual process of negative physiologic symptoms and “letting go” of the deceased as necessary for healing (Neimeyer et al., 2014).

Scholars have expressed concern of traditional universal understandings of grief as they are rooted in western and Eurocentric values denying the influence of contextual factors on grief expression and experiences (Granek & Peleg- Sagy, 2015). Some go further insisting grief is socially constructed; contextually bound (Caitlin, 1993; Eisenbruch, 1984; Granek & Peleg- Sagy, 2015; Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008) and mediated by factors such as race, socioeconomic status, culture, and gender (Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008; Lawson, 2014), making grief a uniquely shaped experience.

Grief in Black Communities

Current literature indicates people of African descent in Canada and the United States experience higher rates of morbidity and mortality than White citizens (Kisely et al., 2008; Jenkins et al., 2014; Kisely et al., 2008), but their grieving experiences have largely been excluded from the production of grief literature (Jenkins et al., 2014). A 2015 systematic review assessed race and ethnicity representation in grief literature and found that ongoing exclusion of African Americans in grief literature has created an inability to understand the implications of grief in those communities (Granek & Peleg- Sagy, 2015).

Knowledge Gaps

There is limited literature about the unique experiences of grief within the African Nova Scotian population and although the volume of grief literature has grown, gaps remain. Current grief literature highlights grief from the perspective of ANS caregivers and their experiences with end of life care (Maddalena et al., 2010); accessing palliative care resources (Maddalena et al., 2013), and the role of spirituality in those processes (Thomas-Bernard et al., 2014). This groundbreaking work is valuable but depicts anticipatory grief and does not describe grief associated with sudden or unexpected experiences of loss. Additionally, the participants in the listed studies are an older population and their perspectives may not accurately capture grief experienced by the young adults in ANS communities. Furthermore, existing knowledge of grief in ANS communities is largely representative of the Black population in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), which does not capture the experience of ANS in rural communities. The current study attempts to bridge this gap by contributing foundational knowledge in this area.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the grieving experience from a single African Nova Scotian woman's perspective using scholarly personal narrative methodology (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash & Viray, 2013; Nash, 2019). To do this I explored my grieving experience from the unexpected passing of my brother in 2017. The study was guided by the research question:

- 1) What is the grieving experience of an African Nova Scotian woman?

Thesis Navigation

To assist readers with the navigation of this thesis I have summarized the upcoming chapters. This thesis begins with a background chapter (chapter 2) with

discussion of my personal location as the lead investigator (States). To situate the reader, this is followed by a discussion of current grief frameworks and grief literature in African American, African Canadian and African Nova Scotian communities. The third chapter, Theoretical Underpinnings, outlines the development of Black Feminist Theory (BFT) from a historical and onto-epistemological stance and its relevance in the study. The next chapter, Methodology and Methods (chapter 4), describes the incorporation of scholarly personal narrative methodology and how trustworthiness and ethical considerations were mitigated in the study. The subsequent chapter, entitled My Narrative (chapter 5), is my personal narrative which was used to explore my grief as an ANS woman from the unexpected passing of my brother. The narrative is followed by the findings chapter (chapter 6) where the results of the study are discussed as universalizables (themes). The thesis ends with the Discussion chapter (chapter 7) which discusses the findings in relation to existing research, the strengths and limitations of the study and the implications for research, recommendations and a conclusion summarizing the entirety of the study.

Research Significance

This thesis holds value through its contribution to the nursing profession and the ANS community. In addition, it validates the necessity of ANS perspectives to guide healthcare policy, education, and practice to appropriately address and dismantle existing racist structural and institutional systems. Moreover, it provides value to nurses and other healthcare professionals to support and guide culturally relevant grief education and practice from an ANS lens. Finally, for other ANS grappling with the unexpected loss of a loved one, it offers first-hand experiences that may be relatable for personal or professional use or be used for future study development.

Chapter 2: Background

Personal location

It is imperative as a student conducting qualitative research that I express both my personal and professional location to allow insight into how my values and experiences shaped the research process.

I identify as a mixed race (Black/White) ANS woman and I grew up in Hants County, Nova Scotia. Within Hants County is the Five Mile Plains community which is one of the 52 historic land-based ANS communities across Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia). During my childhood and early adolescent years I grew up in a two-parent household with my younger brother, Dashonn. There was a 2.5-year age difference between us which meant that we spent a lot of time together and faced many trials and tribulations together—like our parents' divorce. In my hometown there are two streets mainly populated by ANS and they are Green Street and Panuke Road. Parent A was from Green Street and Parent B from Panuke Road, which meant I was familiar with both, but spent the majority of my time on Green Street with Parent A's family members. My family and I resided in low-income housing on a road where we were the only non-White people but was a two-minute drive from Green Street.

I was the first in my immediate family to graduate high-school and attended community college. Additionally, I was the first in my family to pursue and obtain post-secondary education at a university and the first to pursue a graduate degree. During my upbringing I had never seen anyone “Black” in a “professional” occupation aside from the minister of the church where we attended Sunday School. I had not encountered an educator or healthcare professional that was Black during my time in Hants County. My first experience with a Black educator occurred when I left home and attended high

school in the Halifax area.

I have been a registered nurse since 2020 and have worked within the practical and educational realm of the profession since. I worked as a community health nurse with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia and have been a member of various committees within the school of nursing; worked as both a research and teaching assistant; guest lectured and a clinical instructor. Additionally, I am co-president of the Black Nurses Association of Nova Scotia (BNANS) and a board director for the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC).

Personal Significance

After my parents divorced, they remarried and our family expanded to include three brothers—Dashonn, my step-brother and my youngest brother. Of my siblings I am the oldest and only female. My siblings with which I was/am close to are Dashonn and my youngest brother. In 2017, I experienced the unexpected death of my brother Dashonn, and my world changed. I chose to study the area of grief to honor my brother's memory, support my healing process and begin this vital research. Using my narrative enables me as a Black woman to empower myself, my people, and our communities through traditional Black knowledge (Amoah, 1997). The death of my brother is an experience that has and continues to shape me as a multidimensional African Nova Scotian woman. His life and legacy matter and, in sharing my story, I share the interwovenness of African Nova Scotian people. I know that using my narrative will exemplify an ANS experience of grief from the perspective of a woman; oldest sibling and sudden loss. This research is needed due to the dearth of knowledge of ANS as a distinct people and their grieving experiences.

Definitions of Grief, Mourning and Bereavement

The remainder of this background chapter will further elaborate on the necessity of this research by providing contextual background knowledge of existing grief frameworks and literature on grief in African Canadian communities. While grief, mourning and bereavement are often used interchangeably, their meanings differ. For the purpose of this study, *Grief* will refer to the personal and individual response to a loss; *Mourning* will describe the outward expressions of grief, while *bereavement* refers to the period after the loss occurs and represents when grief and mourning occur simultaneously (Buglass, 2010).

The Development of Grief and Bereavement Frameworks

Psychoanalytic Perspectives of Grief and Bereavement

Traditional and contemporary Western frameworks of grief and bereavement are founded in psychoanalytic Freudian perspectives of “pathological grief” and the concept of “grief work” (Granek, 2010; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Stroebe & Schut, 1999). During his time in America, Freud described grief as a symptomatic illness that was evaluated through normal and abnormal expressions. Expanding more, Freud insisted grief was an active-cognitive process that was complete when the griever relinquished emotional bonds toward the deceased (Granek, 2010; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). Thus grief became known as an unwanted illness “pathological kind” that occurred in solitude (Buglass, 2010), and was resolved through ones completion of “grief work”.

Lindemann (1944), extended Freud’s foundation of grief work (Strobe & Schut, 1999) furthering grief as pathological with symptoms such as shortness of breath, exhaustion, appetite, feelings of guilt, irritability and anger as normal symptoms that subsided when grief work was complete. What is more, Lindemann felt successful grief work was completed in collaboration with psychiatric professionals (Granek, 2010;

Lindemann, 1944) and traditional supports sought, such as ministers, were insufficient and lacking necessary support skills (Lindemann, 1944). According to Lindemann ministers and other non-psychiatric support should encourage the bereaved to seek psychiatric assistance with the grief and if their grief was normal, it would resolve within four to six weeks and eight to 10 interviews (Granek, 2010; Lindemann, 1944).

Researchers contend Freud was misunderstood and that he viewed grief on a continuum that was contextually bound and never resolved (Granek, 2010). Nonetheless, grief theory progressed based on Freud's psychoanalytic foundation of grief as an illness that was resolved through grief work and professional support (Granek, 2010).

The Stage Model of Grief and Bereavement

Perhaps the most well-known grief framework is the stage model of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. In her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross concluded grief ensued in a linear set of the following stages: denial, bargaining, anger, despair and acceptance (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The model begins with *Denial*, as the initial temporary reaction to receiving shocking news was thought to ensue until the second stage began (Kubler-Ross, 1969). *Anger*, the second stage of the model was when the individual became resentful toward their environments and those around them (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The third stage, *Bargaining*, relates to the individual's attempt to prolong the inevitable by making private bargains between themselves and spiritual or religious entities (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

The fourth stage, *Depression/Despair*, is a period of sadness when realizing there is nothing to be done to prevent or stop the inevitable (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Kubler-Ross (1969) included two forms of depression referring to them as reactive depression and preparatory depression.

Reactive depression illustrates the emotions associated with the way life was before hearing the “news” whereas preparatory depression communicates thoughts of additional losses that will occur after their death (Kubler-Ross, 1969). The fifth and final stage, *acceptance*, insinuates that when given time to process, individuals may unearth a place of peace of the inevitable (Kubler-Ross, 1969).

The stage model has received ongoing criticism due to its linear sequence and lack of additional development (Granek, 2010; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). Moreover there have been concerns around the participants in the study being patients anticipating death rather than those actively mourning (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). In contrast, others argue that the interpretation of stages being linear is inaccurate insisting they are meant to overlap and repeat as necessary (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Steeves, 2002). However, the stage model continues to be presented as linear garnering ongoing criticism.

Attachment Theories of Grief and Bereavement: Bowlby and Parkes

Bowlby, who agreed with the notion of grief work felt there was an element which psychoanalysts had missed (Holmes, 2014). Based on his previous work on attachment styles in infants, Bowlby viewed loss as a form of separation anxiety that was predetermined based on developed childhood attachment style (Holmes, 2014).

Attachment theory consisted of four phases: 1) Shock, 2) Yearning and Protest, 3) Despair and 4) Recovery. These were believed to create the foundation of how individuals formed, maintained and released relationships as adults (Holmes, 2014; Strobe, 2002). Bowlby felt children who had security developed adaptive coping strategies and were able to express emotions whereas children deprived of security engaged in maladaptive coping strategies (Strobe, 2002).

Parkes recognized that bereavement challenged personal assumptions and resulted

in positive or negative health outcomes that were necessary for professionals to understand (Parkes, 1985). Based on previous psychoanalytic work and attachment theory (Holmes, 2014), Parkes described grief responses as acute and chronic. Acute episodes were periods where thoughts of the loss evoked signs of anger and restlessness, resembling behaviors of children separated from their parents (Parkes, 1985). Chronic episodes were the long-term disturbances of grief such as social withdrawal, loss of purpose and appetite or sleep disturbances (Parkes, 1985). Parkes (1985) felt that grief expression was influenced by socio-cultural norms and that current western frameworks negated their value and the necessity of social support.

Attachment theory has received criticism from scholars labelling it as an evaluation of childhood development rather than evaluating grief (Granek, 2010). Conversely, Strobe (2002) commented that although Bowlby focused on childhood attachment styles, Parkes focused on understanding bereavement from the perspective of the bereaved population adding value to his findings.

Task-Based Models

In 1982, Worden introduced the task-based model of bereavement and the Four Tasks of Mourning (Yousuf-Abramson, 2021). Worden preferred tasks over phases because tasks were fluid and could be repeated as necessary (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). The four tasks listed by Worden were to; accept the reality of the loss; process the pain of the grief; adjust to a world without the deceased; and find a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Yousuf-Abramson, 2021).

Buglass (2010) notes that some task-based models are similar to stage models because they too attempt to predict patterns in grief behaviours dismissing the

individuality of grief and prioritization of western norms.

Dual Process Model

Strobe and Schut (1999) and Strobe (2002) believed if bereavement models were to effectively measure coping strategies there had to be clarification on how adaptive and maladaptive coping skills were evaluated (Strobe & Schut, 1999; Strobe, 2002). This led to the development of the dual process model (Strobe & Schut, 1999; Strobe, 2002). The dual process model is a stressor specific model that suggests that while coping with loss the bereaved consistently fluctuate between loss and restoration orientations. Loss orientation refers to the grief work found in traditional models and is the active process of the bereaved reflecting on the deceased and experiencing an array of emotions (Strobe & Schut, 1999). The bereaved actively process the loss and focus on their time, relationship and events surrounding the death of the deceased (Strobe & Schut, 1999). On the other hand, restoration orientation involves additional consequences of loss such as identity and life changes (Strobe & Schut, 1999). Although described separately loss and restoration orientation function in an on-going *oscillation* allowing the bereaved times of avoidance and times of accepting their loss (Strobe & Schut, 1999). While agreeing with traditional ideas of grief work, the model promotes times of separation and denial as necessary for adaptive coping in contrast to traditional grief theory and models (Strobe & Schut, 1999; Strobe, 2002). The dual process model has received criticism for over emphasizing a person's ability to cope and a lack of acknowledgement of relational factors shaping coping strategies (Buglass, 2010).

Social Constructivist Model

Contemporary grief theorists have deviated from traditional views of grief as an individual biologic process based on universal assumptions resulting in negative

symptoms and of “relinquishing” ties to the deceased instead, proposing grief as an active process of meaning reconstruction (Neimeyer, 1999; Neimeyer 2001; Neimeyer et al., 2014). Human beings possess the inherent need of attachment and meaning attribution of experiences (Neimeyer, et al., 2002; Neimeyer et al., 2014; Neimeyer, 2019), grief is no exception to this. Thus, the social constructivist model insists grief, mourning and their meaning construction are interpreted and communicated equally through “narrative processes” by those grieving, their personal and family networks and external social contextual factors from social systems such as community, culture, religion and spirituality among others (Neimeyer et al., 2014), when personal worldviews and assumptions have been challenged (Neimeyer, 2019).

The need to construct meaning from loss and external social factors validating that meaning to individuals (Neimeyer, 2001; Neimeyer, et al., 2002; Neimeyer et al., 2014). Recent evidence suggests that one’s ability or inability to make sense of loss is the most significant indicator to aid with symptoms the bereaved experience (Neimeyer, 2019).

Grief Literature and African Canadians

Grief literature and knowledge within the African Canadian population exists in scholarly literature on disenfranchised grief, end of life care (EOL), access and use of palliative care services, the role of spirituality and through community discussions.

Existing knowledge and wisdom will be discussed below.

Disenfranchised Grief

Commonly, deaths that are traumatic, unexpected or involve gun-violence lead to questioning the character of the deceased and those around them (Lawson, 2014). Black bodies are devalued and stigmatized causing negative implications on their health. Social

constructs and systemic implications place Black populations at increased risk of negative experiences when grieving (Lawson, 2014; Piazza- Bonin et al., 2015). Grief is renounced for families within these communities as their loved ones are viewed as disposable and deserving of death due to racial stereotypes within Canadian society (Lawson, 2014; Sharpe, 2008).

Disenfranchised grief occurs when losses are not socially acknowledged or validated (Lawson, 2014). African Canadian communities experience this at alarming rates through police scrutinization; media representation and their daily lives (Lawson, 2014). Lawson (2014) suggests that police scrutinization leads to victim blaming and police intrusion and brutality. It has been noted that in low-income communities, police are more likely to impose brutality on the family and friends of the deceased (Lawson, 2014). Police mistreatment shatters the perspective of social structures that are supposed to offer support and safety, leaving families to feel isolated and alone (Sharpe, 2008). Negative media portrayal of the deceased listing them as “known to police”, increase stereotypes of Black criminality and reduces the validity of their grieving loved ones’ experience (Lawson, 2014; Sharpe, 2008). Finally, those close to the deceased are often told to “get over” the loss of their loved one and denied of their right to grieve (Lawson, 2014). This further isolates these communities as they cope with grief on their own (Lawson, 2014). It is important to acknowledge that for African Canadians, not only are they expected to work through their loss without support, they are under public scrutiny while grieving (Lawson, 2014).

End of Life Care in African Nova Scotian Communities

Developed grief literature within the ANS population has explored the population’s knowledge of palliative care services (Maddalena et al., 2013), meanings of

caregiver experiences with palliative care (Maddalena et al., 2010), and the role of spirituality in end-of-life care (Thomas-Bernard et al., 2014).

Maddalena et al., (2013) and Maddalena et al., (2010), explored caregivers' knowledge, perspectives, and use of available palliative care services within the ANS population. These studies found that ANS communities had limited knowledge of and thus little use of palliative care resources. Additionally, they found communities viewed caregiving as a family task and intentionally avoided bringing outsiders into the homes of their loved ones (Maddalena et al., 2010).

Spirituality was found to be a prominent source of strength used to mitigate racism and ascribe comfort and meaning to family members and caregivers at end of life (Thomas-Bernard et al., 2014). Similar to the African American population, African Canadians have long been dependent on spiritual strength-making churches that are centralized institutions in communities and ministers' trustworthy support systems (Thomas-Bernard., 2014). Participants in the study with a strong spiritual foundation and who attended church regularly received more support than community members who did not attend church or identify as a spiritual person (Thomas-Bernard., 2014).

Community Discussions on Grief in ANS Communities

Exploring the complexities of grief and loss was an episode within the “*Our Stories, Our Experiences*” series that occurred through a partnership between Halifax public libraries and ANS social worker, Rajean Willis, facilitated community conversations through ANS narratives. The mentioned episode was a community conversation that explored community narratives of grief and loss (Willis, 2021). ANS members within the episode described grief and loss as collective experiences that promoted support and connection between and within ANS communities due to the

historical situatedness of the communities (Willis, 2021). Although experiences differed, there were common themes of depression, hiding emotions, spirituality, finding meaning in the pain and breaking the stigma of “strength” at the cost of personal health (Willis, 2021). Sharing their stories, guests shared their vulnerabilities and the new meaning they found in life after their loss through finding inner peace, becoming community activists and being an example for the younger generation (Willis, 2021).

Summary of Background Chapter

The chapter began with my personal location and situating the personal significance of the study to myself. Subsequent sections summarized the development of relevant grief and bereavement frameworks and models to the study. Following that I provided knowledge on what is known about grief within the African Canadian population and more specially the African Nova Scotian population. This background chapter displays the limited literature and knowledge of grief within African Nova Scotian communities.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

This chapter outlines the importance of Black Feminist Theory (BFT) as the theoretical foundation of the study. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the historical creation and development of BFT within the American and Canadian context. The subsequent section outlines the necessity of BFT as a theoretical framework from an ontological and epistemological standpoint. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the relevance of BFT within this study.

Black Feminism and African American Women

Black Feminism is a political activist movement rooted within African American women and their struggles of survival and liberation against multiple oppressions (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1979). Although Black women contributed and were active within feminist and Black liberation movements of the 60's and 70's their contributions to those movements were marginalized and their concerns dismissed (Collins, 2000). The feminist movement sought gender equality through equal pay and employment outside of the home challenging gender roles (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1979). Black and other women of color were involved in the feminist movement but their positions were concealed due to racist and classist ideologies within the movement (Combahee River Collective, 1979). For example, Black women saw the necessity of the feminist movement to address gender and economic oppression but also noted racial, classist and sexual oppressions imposed on Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1979). Furthermore, the economic gains sought by White women such as employment outside of the home were not relevant to Black women because they did not have the financial privileges afforded to White women due to racism experienced by Black men and thus Black women were already employed outside of the home

(Combahee River Collective, 1979). White feminists refused to address issues of racism and classism within the movement excluding the voices of Black women. During the Black liberation movements of the 60's and 70's in America, authority and leadership of the movements were granted to Black men who conformed to the subordination of Black women and the exclusion of sexual and gender oppressions focusing solely on race (Combahee River Collective, 1979).

Black women had long argued that their lives were influenced by the oppressions of being both Black and women and the need for a political stance that was anti-sexist and anti-racist prioritizing the value of Black (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1979). Contemporary Black feminism is the outgrowth of generations of struggle toward a political stance for Black women situated within the multiple oppressions imposed on Black and other women of color namely racism, sexism, classism, and heteronormative assumptions at the intersection of how those oppressions shape the Black female experience (Combahee River Collective, 1979). Moreover, Black feminists believe in the inherent value of Black women and take a socio-political stance to deconstruct systems of power through collective activism that is anti-racist and anti-sexist in solidarity with Black men to liberate all (Combahee River Collective, 1979).

Black Feminism and Black Canadian Women

Black feminist scholars in Canada have celebrated the work of African American intellectuals but have articulated the necessity of a Black Feminist framework within the Canadian context. Massaquoi and Wane (2007) argue that although Black women within Canadian and American settler societies have experienced similar forms of oppression, i.e. racism, sexism and classism, there are differences related to the complexity of what constitutes as “Blackness” within Canadian identity.

Prior to embarking on the discussion of Black feminism of Canadian Black women it is necessary to provide a brief history of Canadian identity. Unlike the notorious anti-Black history and slave holding society of America, Canada has continued to promote a national identity of safety, acceptance and diversity (Massaquoi & Wane, 2007; Thompson, 2022). Nationally, the historic Canadian identity as a land of freedom for enslaved Black peoples fleeing American soil in search of freedom is widely known and promoted shown through televised advertisements of the 90's (Massaquoi & Wane, 2007; Thompson, 2022). "Heritage minutes" were the short, televised videos of Canadian history that aired daily on Canadian cable televisions. One advertisement that originally aired in 1991, depicted the horror of a brother and sister who had sought freedom in Canada fleeing America through the underground railroad and are awaiting the arrival of their father. The video focuses on the brother and sister and their distress while a White woman attempts to comfort them until their father is seen climbing out of a church pew that was transported by a wagon. The video is titled "Underground Railroad" but depicts it inaccurately with no mention of female trailblazer, Harriett Tubman, an American Black woman who led many Black people through the underground railroad. Instead, the video presents Canada as a safe country and White Canadians saving Black people fleeing from the horrors of American slavery (Historica Canada, 2016).

Thompson (2022) asserts the notion of a safe Canadian multicultural state is inaccurate and that Canadian identity is built on comparisons to the United States and what it (Canada) is not rather than what it is. Similar to America, Canada is a colonial White settler society built on the attempted genocide, assimilation and theft of Indigenous peoples' land and culture and the active displacement and enslavement of people of

African descent (Thompson, 2022). Differences between Canada and America are that America has a well-known documented history of policies, laws and inhumane treatment of Black people and Canada does not (Thompson, 2022). Although Canada participated in the enslavement and segregation of Black people, it often did so without formal documentation thereby enabling intentional erasure of true Canadian history (Thompson, 2022). Due to Canada's ongoing façade of a multicultural state growing up as a mixed race ANS woman has presented me with a unique experience. As an ANS woman I do not know how my ancestors ended up in NS. There are multiple groups of historical people of African descent coming to NS but it is unknown to me which group my ancestors belonged to. Some ANS's can better trace their lineage but there is no traditional language to learn or cultural knowledge to unfold.

African Americans are a well-known group of Black people and seen as direct descendants of those enslaved within America. Although Canadian identity is built on being the promised land for freedom seeking Black people, Black female identity in Canada is shaped by historical and political views of Black people as other (Massaquoi & Wane, 2007; Thompson, 2022). Canadian Black women encompass a diverse group of women with varying languages, cultures, beliefs, communities, and locations (Massaquoi & Wane, 2007). Some Black women represent historic Black groups that have resided in Canada over multiple generations, such as African Nova Scotians, while others have immigrated over time and from various locations, for example, Africa and the Caribbean (Massaquoi & Wane, 2007).

Growing up in a rural community my "Blackness" was known to me at a young age. Although I am very light-skinned everyone in my community growing up (White

and Black) would refer to me as Black. I was never referred to as mixed race although I have known I was a combination of both since my childhood. The rural community however had decided that I couldn't be mixed and instead had to be White or Black and based on my last name and how they viewed my outward appearance I was certainly not White. Massaquoi and Wane (2007) have noted what constitutes Blackness to be the major difference between Black people in Canada and Black people in America. Within the Black community in Hants County, I never felt any less Black than other members of the community who had more melanin than I did. We participated in community events and if people disliked me, it wasn't due to my light complexion but rather some family events between members of one family and another. All in all, through my upbringing in rural NS I grew up identifying as a Black African Nova Scotian woman. I do remember that other people of African descent that had immigrated were seen and viewed as outsiders to us because although they were Black, they were different. Not in a derogatory way it just seemed that we had more in common with the White people around us than we did with our minister who had moved from continental Africa to NS. For example, the minister and his family spoke with an accent and had different mannerisms than us.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist Theory (BFT) is an extension of Black feminism that challenges dominant essentialist theories, knowledge validation, interpretation and credibility (Collins, 1989; Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1979; ; De Sousa & Varcoe, 2022; Massaquoi & Wane, 2007; Smart Brown Girl Book Club, 2020). The development and credibility of theories are based on the perspectives of White cisgendered heterosexual men and women while excluding and suppressing the knowledge of Black

women (Combahee River Collective, 1979; Smart Brown Girl Book Club, 2020) which Collins (2000), argues was an intentional act to uphold social inequities imposed on Black and other women of color.

Although Black women were denied access to positions of power and influence, Black women continued to build a collective knowledge with consistent themes of society, community and self that provided the analytical groundwork of BFT (Collins, 2000). Black feminist intellectuals maintain their knowledge is an extension of known and unknown Black women who came before them (Collins, 2000; Smart Brown Girl Book Club, 2020).

Collins (1989; 2000), describes BFT as the process of creating and interpreting the knowledge possessed by Black women from their ongoing resistance to multiple oppressions and power imbalances and sharing that information amongst other Black women to encourage additional ways of knowing.

Ontology of Black Feminist Theory

Ontology is the study of reality and is often separated into the categories of realism and relativism (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ontological beliefs of BFT recognize that reality is shaped by the interwoven relationship of lived experiences and structural power imbalances (De Sousa & Varcoe, 2022). Thus, the experiential knowledge of Black women is centralized within BFT (Collins, 2000; Collins, 1989; De Sousa & Varcoe, 2020). The knowledge foundation of Black feminist theory centralizes the lived experiences of Black women, power imbalances and their intersectional identities (De Sousa & Varcoe, 2022).

BFT is grounded in foundational everyday acts of resistance by Black women

(Collins, 1989). This shared resistance represents a distinct understanding by Black women of the oppressions they experience and actionable forms of resistance (Collins, 1989). Collins (1989) refers to this shared understanding as a “standpoint” which has been a self-defined reality and ascribed by Black women to the oppressions they face through their political – economic status and their consciousness. Standpoints are a “bottom-up” approach that encourage reflection individually and within community experiences that create a theory and inform behaviour (Smart Brown Girl Podcast, 2020).

The reality of Black women has been shaped by political and economic status through their employment (paid and unpaid), communities they reside in and their relationships with others (Collins, 1989). In turn these experiences construct a Black feminist consciousness that is shaped and interpreted based on that reality (Collins, 1989).

Although, Black women have a collective standpoint, the acceptance, validation and credibility of that knowledge is discredited largely due to power imbalances and exclusion of Black women in positions of power within Western society (Collins, 1989). This has led to the development of alternative ways of knowing and credibility criteria specific to Black women (Collins, 1989). Further, standpoints and BFT represent two ways of knowing. Standpoints are the taken for granted everyday knowledge shared within a group whereas BFT is an extension of the sharing of that knowledge and urging of Black women to create additional ways to validate their subjective experiences as valuable knowledge (Collins, 1989).

Epistemology of Black Feminist Theory “Known and Knowers”

Black Feminist epistemology is one of collective experiences and the wisdom constructed from those experiences within Black women’s history in the U.S (Collins,

2000). The wisdom from those experiences is passed from generation to generation leading to a collective knowing, called a standpoint (Collins, 2000). During an interview in 2020, Dr. Patricia Hill Collins described a standpoint as a “bottom-up” approach that results from reflecting on experiences and attributing meaning to them. The collective meanings are passed on and inform actions, behaviors and validations of theoretical ways of knowing (Smart Brown Girl Book Club, 2020).

The criterion of theories and the standards used to validate knowledge claims are reflective of those that created them (Collins, 2000). Epistemology underlies the validation of our belief processes such as, who and what we believe to be true (Collins, 2000). Western institutions are constructed according to dominant discourses of cis-gendered, heterosexual White men and thus, knowledge processes and what constitutes knowledge has been determined by that group and excludes knowledge outside of these perspectives (Collins, 2000).

Historical exclusion of Black women from institutions has led to ways of knowing located in the experiences of Black women (Collins, 2000). Black feminist theory represents the ideologies and themes of Black female experience(s) and are interpreted based on their multiple intersecting identities (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) describes the epistemologies of Black Feminist theory as shared collective experiences rooted in the historical location of African American women that are shared between generations as truths. Knowledge validation of Black women does not coincide with Western notions of truth criteria and are instead rooted in beliefs of what Black women consider credible (Collins, 2000). The methodological standards used to assess credibility using Black Feminist theory are lived experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogues in

assessing knowledge claims, ethics of caring and the ethics of personal accountability (Collins, 2000).

Theoretical Choice and Justification

I chose Black feminist theory because it embodies the way I live and experience life in this province and country. BFT, prioritizes the innate knowledge held by Black women from their lived experiences and acts of resistance against sexist, racist and gendered oppressions imposed on them (Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1979). Due to my upbringing as a Black woman from a rural community the treatment of my brother and our family during his passing was rooted in the racist structures of Canadian society. Additionally, the role and expectations placed on me by myself, family and others during my grief are a direct reflection of not only the sexist roles of women but the cultural expectations placed on Black women in their communities.

As a mixed race ANS woman from a rural community I believe sharing my experience of grief provides insight into an area of research understudied not only in Black Canadians but the ANS population. Furthermore, using BFT empowers and celebrates the voices of ANS and promotes insight into the standpoints that vary within the ANS population and has value as a theoretical foundation in nursing research and practice.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods used to explore the grieving experience from an African Nova Scotian perspective. The chapter begins by outlining the study design, philosophical tenets and theoretical underpinnings. Additionally, descriptions of the chosen methodology and ethical considerations used within the study will be presented along with data collection and analysis. Finally, trustworthiness of the study will be displayed using an interwoven approach through Lincoln and Guba's four criterion: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability along with the truth criteria of SPN.

Study design and Philosophical Foundation

This study implemented a qualitative research design to explore and gain an understanding of grief and was guided by the philosophical tenets of the naturalistic paradigm. Philosophical foundations provide insight into the reality and understanding of human experience (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). Often, researchers refer to two traditional ways of knowing that differ based on their ontological and epistemological stances such as positivist and post-positivist (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Positivist traditions encompass multiple designs that believe there is one single reality that can be objectively observed and deductively understood (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In contrast, post-positivist or naturalist traditions, believe knowledge exists in multiple truths that are understood through reality and context in which they occurred (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Our personal philosophies influence how we not only interpret and experience life but how we choose, lead and interact with research, thus, it becomes imperative that we reflect on our philosophical beliefs (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). Through self-reflective

practices I realized my values align with the traditions of post-positivism (Naturalists). Naturalists contend “truth” is not something that one can prove but rather something that is accepted based on beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The purpose of naturalistic designs is to describe, interpret or understand human experiences in the context in which they occurred (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Considered a constructivist approach, naturalistic designs centralize the plurality of knowing and knowledge (Armstrong, 2010; DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, people experiencing the same event will have varying interpretations or meanings behind it that are complex, true, subjective and are based on their worldviews (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline five axioms representing the foundational beliefs of naturalistic inquiry (NI) which are summarized in Table 1 and described in more detail below.

Table 1

Five Axioms of Naturalistic Paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Axiom	Naturalistic Paradigm
Axiom 1: The Nature of Reality (Ontology)	Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic.
Axiom 2: The Relationship of Knower to the Known (Epistemology)	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
Axiom 3: The Possibility of Generalizations	Only time- and- context- bound working hypothesis (idiographic statements are possible).
Axiom 4: The Possibility of Causal Linkages	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
Axiom 5: The Role of Values (Axiology)	Inquiry is value-bound.

Axiom 1: The Nature of Reality (Ontology)

The ontological standpoint of NI is that realities and truths are multiple and contextually bound to and constructed by individual worldviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on this first axiom, researchers seek for the perspectives of those with personal experience referred to as “knowers” (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Aligning with BFT, wisdom and knowledge characterize two distinct ways of knowing (Collins, 2000). Wisdom symbolizes a highly credible form of knowledge based on lived experience, while knowledge is knowing without having experience (Collins, 2000). Both forms of knowledge are essential but lived experience holds higher credibility to knowledge claims. Prioritizing wisdom from “knowers” in this study I explored my personal experience grieving the unexpected passing of my brother in 2017 and the factors surrounding his death.

Axiom 2: The Relationship of Knower to the Known (Epistemology)

Knowledge gained is contextually bound and inseparable from factors inherent to the knowers. Although maintaining an objective stance is valued in quantitative research designs it is not desired within NI. Naturalists believe realities are constructed based on socio-cultural-environmental factors and that they exist in an ongoing dynamic shaping our experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, researcher involvement within the study similarly shapes and is shaped by the observations made influencing the perspectives of knowers of the experience under study (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The relationship between both is best described as interactive through a continuous, mutual shaping and changing process that is inseparable (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the sole participant (knower) and lead investigator in the study it was my wisdom that was sought to explore grief from the perspective of an

ANS woman. All findings are based on my experience and shaped by my role as participant and researcher.

Axiom 3: The Possibility of Generalizations

As previously mentioned, naturalistic inquiry aims to understand realities that are contextually bound. Knowledge found is unable to be generalized because informants are individual and inseparable from the contextual factors of their lives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and DePoy and Gitlin (2020) maintain implementing a bottom-up approach to naturalistic inquiry that begins with a particular experience of interest and building on that concept to build “thick description” and gain knowledge that may be transferable to other studies or samples. Using this approach enables researchers to compare and apply findings to similar contexts thereby enabling more insight into the phenomena and/or theoretical implications (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). The primary data within this study is my written narrative which detailed my personal grieving experience and my perspective of loss and the events that transpired after my brother’s passing. I have written openly and made connections between my experience and the findings so that others may review and determine the transferability of findings within their studies.

Axiom 4: The Possibility of Causal Linkages

It is impossible to determine cause and effect of the phenomena of interest because of the ongoing “mutual shaping” within the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Referring to the second axiom, mutual shaping, involves the continuous intersections between “knower and known” that both shape and are shaped by each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ongoing dynamic move as one and make it impossible to simply separate components and evaluate cause and effect (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Axiom 5: The Role of Values (Axiology)

All research inquiries are bound to the values of the individuals conducting the inquiry (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study's area of focus; philosophical foundations, theoretical underpinnings; and methodological frameworks used to collect, analyze and interpret data are all determined based on the value of the investigator (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Knowing that I was unable to separate my biases from the study, I chose to instead lean into them through reflexive practices that are discussed in the trustworthiness section at the end of this chapter.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are Black feminist theory (BFT). Black feminist theory is a critical social theory that reflects the knowledge held by Black women, gained from their resistance and opposition to multiple oppressions such as, race, gender, class and power imbalances (Collins, 2000). The purpose of BFT is to embrace the interpretation and knowledge Black women use to situate their social location in society and their experiences (Collins, 2000). Within this study BFT informed the findings through ongoing analysis and reflection of multiple oppressions and power imbalances that situated my grieving experience as a Black woman (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, using a Black feminist lens enabled me to understand the principle elements of the theory and their influences on the findings which can be seen from that coded data and established themes.

During the past seven years since losing my brother, I have experienced a range of emotions and stereotypes such as the need to hide my pain, take care of others and be strong for the well-being of my loved ones. BFT has provided me with a way of knowing that validates my grief in the shared narrative of this manuscript as well as navigating my personal and private grief. BFT will afford me solace and guidance as I continue to process and learn about components of my grief that I am not prepared to share at this time.

Scholarly Personal Narrative Methodology

The chosen methodological framework that guided the study was scholarly personal narrative (SPN). This section will begin by outlining the methodological framework used within the study. Additionally, to provide a more robust understanding of the chosen framework I have outlined the ten tentative guidelines for writing SPNs and the four phases of scholarly personal narrative writing: Pre-Search, Me-Search, Re-Search and We-Search that are used within this methodology (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Created by Robert Nash in the 90's, SPN methodology is a form of narrative inquiry affirming life consists of numerous experiences that have the ability to impart wisdom personally and socially if one is willing to dig within and share openly (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash, 2019).

Intended to be personal, social, and reflective; SPN intentionally examines the writers personal narrative and through the incorporation of scholarship interprets larger implications called

“universalizables” to the professional (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Hyater-Adams, 2012; Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash & Viray, 2013). *Universalizables* represent the success of the SPN as they use the “me” and extend to the “we” supporting the transferability of findings (Nash & Bradley, 2011). The aforementioned *universalizables* can be shown through found themes within narratives; lead to additional research questions and/or make suggestions for others in professional disciplines (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Table 2

Ten Tentative Guidelines for Writing SPNS (Nash, 2019; Nash & Viray, 2013)

Guideline Number	Guideline Description
Guideline 1	Establish Clear Constructs, Hooks, and Questions
Guideline 2	Move from the Particular to the General and Back Again... Often
Guideline 3	Try to Draw Larger Implications from Your Personal Stories
Guideline 4	Draw from Your Vast Store of Formal Background Knowledge
Guideline 5	Always Try to Tell a Good Story
Guideline 6	Show Some Passion
Guideline 7	Tell Your Story in an Open-Ended Way
Guideline 8	Remember That Writing is Both a Craft and an Art
Guideline 9	Use Citations Whenever Appropriate
Guideline 10	Love and Respect Eloquent (i.e., Clear) Language

Ten Tentative Guidelines for Writing SPNs

Nash (2019) shares ten tentative guidelines with writers that are meant to provide loose direction to writers and are listed in table 2. The creation of the guidelines extends from Nash’s professional experiences of teaching and learning about narrative writing and can function to fulfil the expectations of both academy and writer (Nash, 2019). Using the guidelines Nash encourages readers to maintain their authentic voice and center their perspectives to create larger implications (Nash, 2019). The ten guidelines and their incorporation within the study are discussed below.

Guideline 1: Establish Clear Constructs, Hooks, and Questions

The first guideline is concerned with the flow of written narrative. SPN's writing should be clear and directed toward our intended audiences (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Writing must use hooks to capture the attention of our audiences that encourage them to follow and resonate with the theme and purpose of our narrative (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Guideline 2: Move from the Particular to the General and Back Again... Often

The second guideline is a reminder that SPN begins with the *me* —with the goal of *we* writing (Nash, 2019). Described by Nash (2019), this methodology uses an inside out approach meaning we must first write about ourselves, then about others and alternate between the two to gain knowledge and lessons others can identify with (Nash & Viray, 2013). Through my written narrative and the support of committee members, I have used this approach alternating from the “me” to the “we “and back again.

Guideline 3: Try to Draw Larger Implications from Your Personal Stories

The third guidelines builds on the previous and reminds writers to use their narrative to explore larger life implications outside of themselves (Nash, 2019). Although we are sharing narratives that are deeply personal we must use them to question societal issues and constructs that create injustices in other domains outside of ourselves i.e., culture, education and social norms (Nash, 2019). When our intended audiences read our writing, we want them to also question things outside of themselves and challenge them (Nash, 2019).

Guideline 4: Draw from Your Vast Store of Formal Background Knowledge

The fourth guideline encourages the use and incorporation of various forms of background knowledge. SPN researchers maintain knowledge is built from personal and professional experiences across disciplines and it is necessary to incorporate multi-

disciplinary knowledge into our writing (Nash, 2019). Being an African Nova Scotian and a registered nurse, I incorporate my knowledge from those areas into this work to deepen the understanding and relevance of it within the healthcare professions.

Furthermore, existing literature was incorporated from other professions, largely psychology.

Guideline 5: Always Try to Tell a Good Story

The fifth guideline prompts the need for narratives to be engaging and include: a plot; suspense; characters and lessons (Nash, 2019). Narratives are tools that humans have used for years to learn about ourselves, communicate lessons to others and problem solve (Nash, 2019). “When done well, it conveys both personal and intellectual meanings to readers” (Nash & Viray, 2013, p. 11). I have shared my narrative in an open way using a storyline approach in addition to poetry and journal entries to communicate my experience.

Guideline 6: Show Some Passion

The sixth guideline outlines the necessity of passion in scholarly writing (Nash, 2019). Nash (2019), urges writers to avoid traditional ideas of objectivity and to welcome subjectivity so narratives may offer insight into our belief systems through our authentic voice. However, we must not impose our own beliefs onto our readers (Nash, 2019). As the audience reads my narrative they are able to recognize my values and through discussion with committee members I aimed to simply share my story without attempting to impose my ideals on readers (Nash & Viray, 2013).

Guideline 7: Tell Your Story in an Open-Ended Way

The seventh guideline urges writers to tell their story openly without expectations. Writers should avoid sharing stories and findings with the expectation of our audience

accepting the perspectives as their own (Nash, 2019). Instead, we must write honestly and gently with the hope that our audience learns from or appreciates our perspective (Nash, 2019). I shared my narrative with committee members who supported me in the development of the final narrative which was written to describe my experience.

Guideline 8: Remember That Writing is Both a Craft and an Art

The eighth guideline discusses the need for writers to commit to their writing goals. Writing can easily be pushed out of focus for other responsibilities or various forms of procrastination (Nash, 2019). I myself am a procrastinator and perfectionist. Therefore, my writing process has been both tedious and transforming. I have forced myself to sit and write what I believe to be an engaging narrative with the help of my committee (Nash, 2019). I enjoy the ability to include the personal in my writing as it has been excluded from my other academic work. I have used this work to reflect on the value and necessity of including the personal in nursing education and profession for Black and other nurses of color (Nash & Viray, 2013).

Guideline 9: Use Citations Whenever Appropriate

The ninth guideline suggests writers incorporate citations as needed to strengthen or clarify the narrative without overcrowding or muting our voice (Nash, 2019). It is suggested that SPN writers find the balance between citation use and the flow of our narrative (Nash, 2019). Citations have been incorporated throughout the entirety of the manuscript to promote the organic flow of their inclusion.

Guideline 10: Love and Respect Eloquent (i.e., Clear) Language

Finally, the tenth guideline focuses on the structure of writing (Nash, 2019). I have said this before, but we must know who our audience(s) are and what our purpose is (Nash, 2019). Our writing is directed at our audiences but we must commit to continually learning our writing style and using that for our readers (Nash, 2019). The audiences for

my narrative are the nursing profession and other African Nova Scotians. SPN writing offers a way of teaching that is different from other research approaches because it not only informs but has the ability to transform the lives of its readers (Nash & Viray, 2013). Moreover, it “grants” permission for other readers to begin incorporating the personal into their writing (Nash & Viray, 2013).

Throughout the entirety of this study, I have referred back to ten tentative guidelines for writing SPNs and evaluated their use in my work through the me to the we (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011). Furthermore, members of my committee have supported the process of moving from me to we through insightful feedback and recommendations. In addition to these ten tentative guidelines, I incorporated the following interconnected phases coined by Dr. Robert Nash (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Pre-Search, Me-Search, Re-Search and We-Search

The four phases are specific to SPN and act as a map to provide writers a way to monitor their progress (Nash & Bradley, 2011). The phases are often repeated, overlapping and co-occurring alongside others. Below I have outlined my approach to using them within the study.

Pre-Search

“Pre-Search”, is a deeply reflective time for the researcher and begins with our need to explore and answer a question (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Nash and Bradley (2011) suggest we ask ourselves where our drive comes from and use that as motivation to begin our SPN. Choosing my area of focus was easy as I felt the need to explore why my grief seemed so different from the grief of others. The unexpected death of my brother brought with it many barriers. When someone dies you expect to be supported but that was not

my experience. I began wondering why institutions devalued mine and my brother's life. I felt isolated and ruminated in my mind the differences between our grief and others I could compare it with. I compared socio-economic status, environmental differences and many others but, the only difference that re occurred was "race". We are from a rural African Nova Scotian community and identify as Black. It seemed the fact we were Black separated us from others. I didn't understand how our grief had anything to do with our being Black so, I began looking at the literature and questioning whether other African Nova Scotians had similar experiences.

Me-Search

The SPN methodology like others under the naturalistic paradigm, uphold the value of humans as primary instruments in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Humans possess tacit knowledge that is, knowledge gained from our lived experiences which determines how we interpret the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Nash and Bradley (2011, p. 83-84), go further to say "*SPN researchers are active and attached participants in writing their personal narratives rather than detached observers and reporters of the lives of others.*"

The primary source of data collected are the perspectives of the writer and additional existing literature (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash & Viray, 2013). Scholarly personal narratives have a sample size that begins and ends with one participant, the writer (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Thus, my story is the foundation of this study and through self-interrogation, introspective questioning and existing literature, I aim to generate larger themes that further understanding of grief from the perspective of an ANS woman (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Re-Search

That which distinguishes scholarly personal narratives from other forms of narratives like memoirs is the goal of providing universalizables and the inclusion of scholarship within the narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Scholarship in SPN seems daunting to many, myself included. I regularly questioned how the inclusion of scholarship would fit within my narrative. Nash and Bradley (2011), suggest SPN researchers explore existing literature and scholarship on their theme or area of focus and incorporate it within their narrative “organically” rather than having a separate literature review chapter (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Furthermore, Nash and Bradley (2011), suggest included literature should allow scholarship that does and doesn’t align with your narrative to ensure universalizability and transferability of findings. Our narratives are the theme used to explore what is currently known, what we experienced, and the larger themes discovered (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Although, I was initially terrified of this approach, I embraced it and appreciate the way literature is embedded within my narrative.

We-Search

The true success of scholarly personal narratives is our ability to use the personal and move outward to transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011). This outward goal is what separates SPN writing from other forms of narrative writing (Nash & Bradley, 2011). When writing an SPN our stories become the phenomena and enable us to interpret larger implications or themes called universalizables (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Universalizables illuminate the relationship between personal narratives, scholarship, community and our professional practices

(Nash & Bradley, 2011, p. 106).

Universalizables are not generalizations and that is not the intention of discovering universal themes (Nash & Bradley, 2011). We must remember who our audience is and write in ways that they understand and are able to make their own universal connections (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Furthermore, universalizability can lead to the development of additional questions and suggestions for future areas of research found within the narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Aligning with SPN methodology, the established universalizables of this research are discussed in the findings, discussion and conclusion section of my thesis.

Similar to other methodologies within naturalistic inquiry, scholarly personal narrative researchers do not aim for universal descriptions nor depictions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Instead, the succession of universalizables is shown through their connection, lessons and transferability between the writer and their audiences/readers (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011). Transferability is shown through the audience/readers having those “aha” or “me too” moments when reading the research (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011).

When we as researchers and healthcare professionals, value personal interpretations and meaning of experiences, we increase appreciation of the multitude of perspectives shaping the same experience (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020).

Data Collection

Using myself as the instrument to collect data I utilized two approaches referred to as perspectives and additional information.

Centered around the philosophical foundation of NI, I acted as the instrument used to collect data within the study (Creswell, 2014; DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). Lincoln

and Guba (1985), argue that human instrumentation is just as trustworthy as instruments used within traditional positivist approaches to research. Furthermore, qualitative researchers argue the inability to separate the personal from our research and encourage investigators to embrace this through the development of reflexive practices (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash, 2019). Reflexivity is the active process of reflecting and acknowledging the influence of the researcher's role, beliefs and experiences in shaping the research development and its interpretations (Creswell, 2014). Reflexivity was implemented throughout this study and is described in multiple sections including the trustworthiness section of this chapter. Below, discussion continues on the two approaches used to collect data for this study.

Perspectives

The primary data collection technique used within the study were my perspectives of grief as an ANS. Perspectives, are first-hand knowledge expressed by those with lived experience of the phenomena of interest and are often the initial form of data collected within qualitative studies (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Nash & Bradley, 2011). SPN, like other qualitative methods, asserts that life is not passively experienced but is constructed and given meaning based on our personal experiences (Creswell, 2014; Nash & Bradley, 2011). SPN compels writers to use their narratives as phenomena of interest to discover meaning that is personal and perhaps relatable to others (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Within this study, I share my perspectives through my narrative, journal entries and field notes to enable insight into my grief.

My narrative represents a bulk of this study and can be found in chapter four of the manuscript. Humans possess a unique form of knowledge known as tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge gained from experience that we directly and indirectly use

to build our understanding of ourselves and the world around us (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Narratives are powerful tools that reveal meaning behind experience and have been used for many years (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash & Viray, 2013). Narratives have been used as active forms of resilience and knowledge production for people of African descent and other marginalized groups for years (Amoah, 1997; Nash & Viray, 2013).

Journals specifically, are an incredibly useful tool for data collection as they provide insight into meaning of experiences for those journaling (Polit & Beck, 2017). Within this study the journal used includes writing from the time of my brother's passing in 2017 to the conclusion of the study. This allows insight into my experience from the time of my brother's death to the present. Journaling consisted of written entries as well as poetry.

Finally, field notes were used as a way to document the process of data collection. Polit and Beck (2017, p. 521), describe field notes to be "both descriptive and reflective". The descriptive notes promote and speak to what is seen and/or shared as objectively as possible, whereas reflective notes allow personal and individual reflection of the data (Polit & Beck, 2017). Using field notes enabled me to document the data collection process and aided in interpretation within data analysis (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Additional Information Gathered

All other forms of data collected are discussed under the umbrella of additional information gathered. Qualitative researchers often employ multiple methods to gather information and compare information to discover themes (Creswell, 2014). The additional data chosen to explore in this study were existing literature, public documents and legal documents that provided insight into grief, death and funerals within Black communities in the United States, Canada and Nova Scotia specifically. Existing

literature included research on the topic of grief in Black communities and was obtained through database searches of CINAHL, PsychINFO, ProQuest and Academic Search Premier. Public documents were also accessed. These include newspaper articles, and laws or private documents like those mentioned above in the section titled Perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Public documents were included because they provided insight into the experiences of death and burial of people of African descent residing in Nova Scotia.

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis are interactive processes that occur simultaneously within naturalistic designs (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). Throughout data collection investigators must continuously alternate documenting similarities and differences between the information collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2017).

Data Storage

All electronic data were stored in an encrypted file on a password protected computer in my home. Additionally, hard copies of data and additional documents related to the study were stored in a locked safe in my home.

Thematic analysis and Black Feminist Theory to Universalizables

The purpose of data analysis in qualitative research is to organize and interpret data to describe the phenomena in a meaningful way (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Polit & Beck, 2017). To support the discovery of universalizables, the study implemented thematic analysis (TA) and was informed by Black feminist theory. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), state “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. Black feminist theory informed the analysis as grief was viewed through the intersecting influences of race, class and gender to understand how they impacted each other and my grieving experience as a rural ANS

woman. Themes are the unique patterns found within data that relate to the research question and provide meaning to the experiences or phenomena under study (Braun & Clark, 2006; DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000). Data was analyzed according to the six phase guidelines suggested by Braun and Clark.

Table 3

Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006. p. 87).

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating Initial Codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for Themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing Themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and Naming Themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the Report:	The final opportunity for analysis.

Throughout the study as data were collected these guidelines were reviewed by the lead investigator multiple times to ensure a thorough understanding (Braun & Clark, 2006; Creswell, 2014; DePoy & Gitlin, 2020). Data was manually coded using an inductive approach of the written narrative and deductively coded based on existing literature (Braun & Clark, 2006). See appendix A to review codes. Codes were placed in categories based on similarities and differences and formed a thematic map. Using this inductive approach allowed the initial categories to continually evolve based on

characteristics, leading to deeper understanding of grief from an African Nova Scotian perspective (Braun & Clark, 2006; DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nash & Bradley, 2011). The thematic map and initial themes were discussed with committee members RMM and KJ in meetings to foster the development of cohesive findings. The final themes represent the universalizables and are described in chapter six.

Trustworthiness

As researchers it is imperative we detail the accuracy of our work and the techniques implemented to promote trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalists often incorporate the trustworthiness framework by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which includes the following four criteria to measure trustworthiness in studies: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Furthermore, scholarly personal narrative prioritizes the relationship between subjective experience and scholarship through the incorporation of additional truth criteria relating to plausibility, honesty, coherence and credibility of the writer (Nash & Bradley, 2011). In the following section, I discuss each criterion established in these two frameworks.

Credibility

Credibility evaluates “truth” through assurance that both collected data and the interpretation of it represent the reality of the study informants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2017). Furthermore, SPN writing uses two additional notions to determine truth titled ethical and narrative truth (Nash, 2019). Ethical truth encompasses the intentional honesty and accuracy describing events and the writer’s motive in sharing their truth. On the other hand, narrative truth argues that truth is not equal to facts (Nash, 2019). Overtime our memories not only change but are re-constructed by our changing personalities and as such our recall is influenced.

Firstly, within this study I was the sole participant thus to promote credibility of findings I wrote my narrative authentically and discussed findings with committee members K.J and R.M.M. Nash and Bradley (2011, p. 85), state, “The truth of self-research or me-search, is whether the researcher’s personal voice comes across to readers as trustworthy, credible, honest and cohesive”. I decided early on I would prioritize my story as a valuable source of data and am transparent about the subjectivity of my work (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash & Viray, 2013). I have been intentional about ensuring my voice is authentic and that my views are easily noted by readers with the incorporation of journal entries and my poetry within my narrative (Nash & Viray, 2013). Additionally, at the time of writing this manuscript, it has been six years since the passing of my brother. The person writing is different than the person who first experienced loss six years ago and I have incorporated reflexive journaling to support the interpretation of my narrative.

Secondly, I have used triangulation of multiple sources as a technique to enhance the credibility of the findings of the study (DePoy & Gitlin, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additional sources used in the study have been other academic literature, newspaper articles, legal documents and media clips on the topic of grief in Black communities. I connected with a library scientist to enhance my search strategy skills when searching for existing literature. Having their support enabled my search to yield more results strengthening the findings of the study.

Dependability

The dependability of a study refers to the consistency and appropriateness of inquiry, methods, findings and changes made within the overall research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To support consistency, I have provided thick description of my narrative of my brother’s passing and the contextual factors that influence my identity. Moreover, I

believe the chosen methodology and data collection methods were appropriate to gain an understanding of an area in which limited knowledge exists. Furthermore, I engaged in scholarly discussion with committee members and reflexive writing for all parts of the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability assesses that research findings and interpretations are based on the data not the researchers bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Aligned with SPN methodology my perspectives as the participant along with additional information are required and there is no clear way to separate myself from the findings as they are rooted in the reality of the participant whom in this case is also the investigator (Nash & Bradley, 2011; Nash, 2019). This strengthens the findings as SPN writers believe that unless we write the personal, we cannot gain true understanding (Nash & Viray, 2013). To ensure congruency of the interpreted findings within the study I was supported through discussion with committee members throughout the study. Raw themes were drafted and submitted to members as a diagram and committee members provided feedback. Additionally, I met with two committee members more frequently to critically reflect on the identification and meaning of emerging findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability describes whether findings have the ability to be applied across populations within similar contexts (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2017). Transferability is not meant to suggest generalization. Instead, it provides the opportunity to compare and determine the relevancy of findings and provide new insights (DePoy & Gitlin, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within this study, using my narrative, I have provided “thick description” of my grieving experience through my

narrative, my positionality and the contextual factors influencing both. My hope is that the findings are relatable and useful for others with similar areas of interest.

Table 4

Lincoln and Guba’s Framework of Trustworthiness Criterion: Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability and Transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2017).

Criterion	Description of Criterion	Strategy Used by Researcher
Credibility	Confidence in truth of the data and interpretations of it.	Authentic voice within shared narrative Triangulation of multiple sources Reflexivity – researcher bias
Dependability	Stability of findings overtime.	Meeting with committee members to discuss Reflexive writing
Confirmability	Congruency between more than one person on the interpretation of data.	Support from committee members through discussion of findings Reflexive writing
Transferability	The likelihood of findings to be related across contexts and populations.	Thick description

Ethical Considerations

It is necessary for researchers regardless of the study design to prioritize ethical considerations including risks and plans to mitigate them within the study. Due to the ongoing and unpredictable nature of qualitative research it can be difficult to predict risks prior to beginning the study as unthought of risks may arise through data collection (Polit & Beck, 2017). Additionally, because narratives are personal and non-fiction, SPN writing is accompanied by unique ethical and moral concerns (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011). With the intention of upholding the merit of the study, I sought ethical guidance from multiple avenues such as Dalhousie’s Research Ethics Board (REB), created my own code of ethics using SPN guidelines and conducted an ongoing risk

assessment through the development of the study.

Dalhousie Research Ethics Board

Scholarly personal narrative is a largely unknown methodology within the School of Nursing and so my committee and I questioned the need for ethical approval. As I began preparing the ethical section of my thesis, it became apparent that there was concern regarding ethical morals of the study displayed through committee members questioning around privacy and confidentiality of those implicated within my narrative. I began reviewing SPN ethical guidelines written by Nash and searching for additional studies using the methodology to observe their approach to mitigate ethical concerns. Furthermore, I began a discussion with my thesis mentor and questioned how she handled ethics within her SPN. While those discussions were significant, my mentor had not sought ethical approval because she found Nash's guidelines sufficient to support her narrative. Conversely, due to the multiple persons that could be implicated within my narrative, I chose to move forward with an application for ethical approval from Dalhousie's REB with the support of my mentor and committee members. After some time and revisions, the study was granted ethical approval REB# 2022-6423 and the strategies used to protect privacy will be discussed below.

Creating The SPN Code of Ethics

Nash and Bradley, (2011. p. 189), share "SPN manuscripts present a very special set of ethical challenges to the writer" and suggest writers create a personal code of ethics based on three general guidelines to support written narrative. The three general rules insist tremendous attention be given to concerns of privacy, truth telling, preventing harm and confidentiality of the researcher and others within the narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Table 1 provides a summarized overview of the three rules.

Table 5

Three General Rules to Create Personal Code of Ethics (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Principle	Description of Principle	Strategy Performed by Researcher
Right to privacy	A person's right to privacy in addition to our own, is nearly inviolable, except when infringing the right may prevent harm to that person or others around them.	Sought ethical approval. Pseudonyms and distorting information were used for except for my brother and I.
Treat humans as autonomous beings	Treat each human being as an autonomous end rather than as a means to their end. Not using others to serve our own narrative purposes.	Reflexive journaling. Discussion with committee members of data that should be included.
Privacy is conditional and not absolute	In spite of the above rules, we do not see privacy as an ethical absolute; but rather as conditional.	Pseudonyms used for others but choosing to include my brother's name and my own within the study.

Right to Privacy

Moral concerns of privacy encompass the privacy of ourselves and others; because sharing our authentic truth within our narratives can cause harm to others (Nash & Bradley, 2011). SPN is personal and collective because our experiences are intrinsically connected to others and as such our sharing them can cause harm (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

In accordance with the feedback provided by Dalhousie's (REB), pseudonyms and other distorting information were utilized to protect the privacy and confidentiality of others from being directly linked within the study (Polit & Beck, 2017). Pseudonyms are commonly used to protect the identity of informants in research studies (Polit & Beck, 2017). Furthermore, to maintain confidentiality pseudonyms will be used when publishing and presenting research findings (Polit & Beck, 2017). The exception to this will be the use of both mine and my brother's identifying information such as our names, dates etc. have intentionally been included within the narrative.

Treat Humans as Autonomous Beings

Reflexive journaling and discussion with committee members were the two strategies used to protect and respect the autonomy of those within the study. Through personal self-reflective journaling and practices, I consistently reminded myself that although I viewed some people within my narrative in a negative light, it was not the intention of the SPN to deflect my personal biases on others (Nash & Bradley, 2011). SPN writing exposes the writer's core and is not to be used as a form of retaliation (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Additionally, conversations with committee members around language and data used within the study were assessed throughout. Specifically, committee members raised their concerns for my well-being around certain aspects of the study. There was ongoing support from my committee that I only share parts of my narrative that I felt comfortable with and that it was acceptable for me to not share everything because of the personal nature of the study. The concerns for my well-being were mitigated through gathering raw data and removing components I was uncomfortable sharing throughout the entirety of the study.

Privacy is Conditional and Not Absolute

As researchers we are taught that we have an ethical obligation to protect the privacy of the informants of our studies (Creswell, 2014). Scholars such as Nash and Bradley argue that privacy be regarded as conditional rather than absolute when writing our own narratives (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Nash and Bradley (2011) suggest that sharing our experiences authentically almost always implicates others and thus moral absolutes are unrealistic in SPN writing and rather than enforcing ethical absolutes, Nash suggests SPN writers embrace moral discernment. Moral discernment entails using wisdom to determine when it is necessary to make moral compromises to ensure our narratives are honest (Nash & Bradley, 2011). Moreover, Nash imparts ethical advice encouraging writers to write with honesty, empathy, non-judgmental language and to consider the consequences associated with sharing personal stories (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011).

One example of how I practiced moral discernment in the study was to avoid pseudonyms in place of both mine and my brother's identifying information. From the initial stages of the study, I intended to use my brother's name as a form of political activism and honoring his memory.

Although not included in the three general rules to create a personal code of ethics, attention must be given to the well-being of the writer as SPN is emotionally taxing it is advised that researchers have supports in place as they reflect and self-interrogate their narrative (Nash & Bradley, 2011). The plan of support changed throughout the development of the study but included my mentor; self-reflective wellness check-ins; and creating a plan of care/ team of support.

Dr. Keisha Jefferies was originally invited to act as my mentor due to her

expertise with the chosen methodology and our past mentor-mentee relationship.

Throughout my graduate education Dr. Jefferies has been one of my greatest inspirations and strengths. In addition to her knowledge of the methodology we connected over our lineage as first-generation university attending African Nova Scotian women. As time progressed her involvement within the study grew and she was invited to become a member of the committee.

The self-reflective wellness check-ins were done using sacred circles, also known as medicine wheels. Sacred circles have various forms and meanings across Indigenous cultures but foundationally, they represent the circular, interconnected journey between ourselves and all other life (Joseph, 2020). Sacred circles involve being self-reflective and aware from a holistic view of our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual selves (Joseph, 2020). I identify as a spiritual person and after learning about Indigenous lineage in my family, I took an interest in the teachings around the sacred circle and ways to incorporate them into my life. It is crucial for me to be clear that although I have Indigenous lineage, I do not claim Indigenous identity. I was not raised in an Indigenous community and have limited knowledge of traditional teachings or culture. In addition, I have not experienced the direct or indirect intergenerational trauma from the Indian Act; residential “school” and my lineage has not connected me to the trauma due to the historical and continuous attempts of cultural genocide or assimilation of Indigenous people in Canada. To not acknowledge this would be morally wrong in my opinion. Moreover, I maintain a daily yoga practice and exercise regularly to promote mental clarity for myself.

My plan of care and team of support for my well-being consisted of a list of

personal names and numbers of people I could access for support as needed. The list included names of those in my personal life and health supports. All were made aware of my research work and gave permission to be added to the plan of care. My health supports consisted of a therapist, acupuncturist/massage therapist and personal trainer. I attended weekly sessions with my therapist who was made aware of the thesis topic and the level of support needed. In addition, my acupuncturist/massage therapist has been made aware and has supported me with the pain associated with the stressors of writing this research. Finally, although I no longer have a personal trainer, she provided tremendous support through emotional awareness and thought downloads.

In summation this chapter defined the qualitative study design, philosophical foundations of naturalistic inquiry and described the scholarly personal narrative methodology that guided data collection of the study. Data analysis occurred through thematic analysis and as a deeply personal piece of work, trustworthiness and ethical considerations were shared to promote transparency of the study and subsequent chapters. Ethical considerations were continuously assessed throughout the development of the study using the strategies shared above to foster appropriate measures to mitigate risks to myself and others (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Chapter 5: My Narrative

Summer

June 21st, 2017

I had just completed the first day of med-surg clinical and although it was only day one, I knew it would be great. The sun was out, the air warm, I was with my family, and it was evident that summer was here. The clinical day was slow, so we were sent home early, around 1730. Once I arrived at Parent A's house my family was surprised to see me home early as they were expecting me to be out until after 1900. I insisted nothing unexpected happened and that sometimes we ended early but that it was a great first day.

After reassuring them I changed out of my clinical scrub uniform; checked in with everyone including my four-year old brother, and asked where Bubby was. They informed me that he was out with friends, so I decided to sit on the front steps of the house and enjoy the beautiful day. While sitting out there, I came up with the idea to ask Bubby if he wanted to have a fire that night when he came home.

Some time had passed, and a black car pulled into the driveway. I did not recognize the vehicle, or the person driving and wondered who it might be. Quickly the passenger door opened, and my brother emerged from the car with his dog T.J and began walking toward me. During their walk toward me, my brother asked, "can you watch T.J for me?"

Confused, I asked "right now?"

To which he responded "Yes".

"Okay, come on T.J" I said as my brother continued to walk past me and into the house. I did not ask why nor for how long he wanted me to watch T.J. In hindsight I should have but I loved T.J and was happy to spend time with her.

At this time the car is still sitting in the driveway and I notice the driver of the car

is white and has red hair but is unfamiliar to me and I wonder who he is. I notice the rear door to the car opens and my cousin exits the car and walks toward me. My cousin, who is named *Cousin A*, is young and I wonder why they are in the car with them, but I choose not to ask because we grew up spending time together and I just assume they are hanging out with my brother. I greet them with a hug once they reach me and we chat for a bit about how each other is doing and why I am at my parents' house. I intentionally chose to complete my clinical practicum at the community hospital in my hometown because I wanted to be with my family for the summer. I gave notice to the landlord of my unit in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and made plans with my family. My brother Dashonn was incarcerated for most of the year before (2016) and I was happy to have him home. The police had tainted our relationship with their lies, and I was determined to rebuild it. My brother and I had always been close, and we made plans for that summer. We were going to camp, and he offered to teach me to drive a car with a manual transmission which we called "stick" and he was going to teach me how to drive stick. Dashonn and my other family members had been anticipating my coming home and had remodeled the camper to be my space. I love my family, but I appreciate privacy and was grateful that they thought of me. Everyone helped me move some of my stuff into a storage unit and the rest went to my parents' house. Excitement was the emotion we all had.

During our conversation my brother opens the door and leaves the house. I say good-bye to both of them and watch the two of them walk back to the black car and am saddened. As Bubby reaches the car I feel the urge to yell I love you but to avoid embarrassing him I don't. A voice in my head advises me to express it regardless but I ignore it and instead T.J and I sit on the step and watch as they back out of the driveway.

I hold T.J., say goodbye, and we watch the car drive down the road and out of sight. If only I had listened to my gut feeling that day but how was I to know that was the last conversation I would ever have with my brother.

I approached my night routine with disappointment that evening wishing I had shared my bonfire plan with my brother. After my shower I put T.J in my brother's room for the night; said goodnight to my family; sent my goodnight text messages; set my alarm for clinical in the morning and climbed into the camper bed. Lying in bed, I gazed out the window and admired the beauty of a star-filled sky in the country. Shortly after lying there, I remembered I hadn't sent a goodnight message to my brother. As our parents were separated and I lived away from home our goodnight text messages became a regular part of our families' night routine. While climbing out of bed and moving toward my phone I remembered Bubby only had a free texting app which meant he could only send/ receive messages or calls if he had an internet connection. Given that he was out with friends and likely driving around without access to an internet connection I opted to not send him a message but to instead chat with him the next day. Reluctantly, I strolled back to bed and fell asleep watching the stars.

June 22, 2017

"Chelsa, get up," I hear in my sleep. "Chelsa, get up." I roll over in my bed still very much asleep and reply "what?" "Get up." I recognize the voice and immediately jump out of bed and walk toward the camper door. Groggily and rubbing my eyes I manage to open the door and scan the scene. I see my Parent C , a cop, an older white woman I don't know and a police car at the end of the driveway. Rapidly, I fill with anger assuming Bubby has been arrested. My thoughts spin with questions like, what did he do and why did he have to get arrested. These thoughts continue repeatedly until I hear

someone say, “Your brother was killed in a car accident”.

“What?” I utter, as my thoughts begin to slow down and I attempt to locate the owner of the voice. The older White woman reiterates stating, “Your brother, Dashonn, was killed in a car accident”. The words stun me and silently I look toward my crying family member and embrace them. During this embrace, and as they are sobbing, my mind goes to my Parent A and I ask, “where’s Parent A?” I do not wait for a response but begin moving quickly toward the house. My mind is spinning but somehow my body knows what to do. It opens the door and walks into the kitchen seeing Parent A we make eye contact and softly they state, “He’s gone.” I wrap my arms around him, and we silently stand there. We had just gotten him back.

I am uncertain of the amount of time that passed or how we moved but the next thing I know is that we ended up in the living room with the older White woman, the cops, and my family. Both Parent A and I are sitting on the sofa in silence with our bodies leaning forward. To my immediate left, my Parent A has their head down and hands on their knees and Parent C is sitting on a pink chair crying hysterically while a cop and the older White woman stand around them. I have no idea what the officer or older White woman are saying to Parent C but it seems they are consoling them. The older White woman is facing Parent C head on with her back to my Parent A and I. The officer is standing against the wall with all of us in sight but is staring at Parent C. At no point do the officer or the woman attempt to speak or comfort my Parent A and I.

Facing forward again I hear parent C howling in disbelief and commenting on my brothers age and him being too young to be gone. Hearing everything, I reach for Parent A’s hand for comfort. My mind is spiraling, and I begin to doubt that my brother is

“gone” because just ten days earlier we had celebrated his 22nd birthday. I bought him a tiny wrench and a gift-card to Princess Auto. His girlfriend was there and there were presents, cake and a water fight. Furthermore, my brother is an excellent driver and him having an accident seemed unlikely. At that time, we knew nothing other than my brother was in a car accident. We were not informed or aware that anyone else was in the car or involved. Whilst sitting beside Parent A those thoughts repeated in my mind until a new thought enters. What about Little C?

Little C is our youngest brother and at the time was only four years old. I know he is sleeping but begin to panic so I stand up. My legs are tingling and feel weak, but I gather my strength and walk to where little C is sleeping. Upon entering the room, I see him fast asleep and I lay beside him. Careful not to wake him, I begin to play with his hair; kiss his head and stare at him. I am simply grateful to be near him and know he is safe. He is not yet aware of the nightmare occurring and I am glad of that. As I watch little C I notice how closely he resembles Bubby and that pains me.

After some time, I begin to feel nauseous. I attempt to stand up but am unable to feel my legs. It is obvious to me that they are there but the feeling and sensation of them is gone. Struggling to enable communication with my legs, I take great effort to stand and make my way toward the washroom. Once in the washroom I manage to turn the light on and I feel weak, lightheaded and like I may vomit. Without my control I fall to my knees and hover over the toilet. My skin is sweating and tingling but I do not vomit. Instead, I begin speaking aloud “why, “why Bubby?” demanding but knowing I will get no response.

The nausea and weakness begin to subside and when able I begin to walk toward

the living room and anger flushes through my body. I decide to look into the back yard and see the blue car my brother sometimes uses for off roading, and relief takes over because it isn't his fault. Entering the living room, I am made aware that Parent A has not changed their position, but I see a tear rolling down their face. I take my seat beside them. As time passes, I learn the older White woman is the chaplain and that both she and the cop are discussing the accident with my Parent A and Parent C. The cop affirms my brother was a passenger and that the vehicle was driven by someone named Larry. Larry's last name was not disclosed but it was assumed Larry was the person driving the vehicle parked in the driveway the evening before. The cop mentioned that Cousin A and another person were in the car as well and that they were "fine." I assume he meant physically because it was clear no one was emotionally or mentally fine after that night.

During the conversation I check the time and realize it is after 0500. Struggling to articulate enough to convey my reason but not divulging too much, I vaguely send a text message to the clinical instructor noting my absence that day. The instructor was kind and replied insisting I not worry about clinical at that time. I was relieved she asked no questions and left it at that.

Sometime later after both the chaplain and officer have left, Parent A informs me that I must call and deliver the news to Parent B. Dumbfounded by this request I express that as being the responsibility of the officers and should not be placed on me. Due to past experiences with the town police, they are aware that my parents are separated thus the need to ensure Parent B is notified. Furthermore, I express resistance that it be placed on me to inform Parent B of my brother's tragic passing. Parent A agrees but insists I call Parent B because the cop hadn't. Angrily, I oblige for two reasons; the first being to

protect Parent A from further pain; the second, being that I am often placed in uncomfortable positions to ensure the well-being of others at my own expense (Etowa et al., 2017). Historically, I have been the individual called upon to find solutions, assist with problems or acquire information beyond my reach.

Reluctantly, I reach for my phone and walk toward an empty bedroom; close the door and dial Parent B's number. "*Ring, ring, ring, ring,*" no answer. I call again and relief begins to flow through my body when once again no one answers. The feelings of relief are short and immediately transform to guilt and worry. Lost in my thoughts my feelings fluctuate between anger and fear— anger once again around the expectation of me to call Parent B without concern or comfort for me and, fear of their response.

My brain is overwhelmed, and I begin to cry while internalizing questions such as *Where is my brother? Why is this happening? I need to talk to someone!* Picking up my phone I call my partner but naturally he doesn't answer as it is still early in the morning. I decide it is best to send him and my friend a text message. The message is vague and brief. Hitting send I begin to cry.

"Little Brother I should have protected you. I should have told you I loved you and asked you to stay. But, I didn't little brother and now you're gone and I imagine your return each day. I kiss a box to feel your love; I drive your car to feel your energy; I have your girl to feel your warmth. I'm sorry little brother. I am sorry I couldn't protect you the day you left me".

Parent A walks by the room and inquires whether I contacted Parent B. I explain that I have called twice with no answer but that I would try again. This time I dial my Parent D's phone: they answer and pass the phone to Parent B. Parent B says "hello" and I begin to speak in a childlike tone telling them what has happened. A sound that is ingrained in my mind took over the phone call at that point. Silently crying, I remain on

the phone and listen to the screaming agony of my heart-broken Parent B. Parent B is screaming repeatedly, “My son is gone,” “Oh my god my son is gone.” I remain silent and after some time they tearfully spoke. Wanting to ease them I informed them that he was not at fault. I knew this would not change anything but was adamant they know that. Parent B had questions but I knew too little to answer many of them at that point and Parent B informs me they are on their way to the house. I state that I love them.

“I love you too,” they respond, and the conversation is over.

Promptly I advise Parent A and Parent C that Parent B is on their way when my phone begins to ring. Quickly, I scan who is calling and see my partner’s contact appear on the phone screen. I answer the phone and my partner offers his deepest condolences, informs me that he loves me and is on his way to the house. I conveyed that it was not necessary for him to come but he insisted. Our relationship was just beginning as we had only started dating a month prior. We met in our nursing program and unexpectedly began dating. Knowing he is on his way brings me comfort and I anticipate his arrival.

Approximately an hour later my Parent B and Parent D arrive. Parent B is a blunt stoic person, and they came into the house presenting as that. Immediately we hug and next my parents are in deep discussion. Parent B discloses they phoned the police station on their drive down and was informed that my brother’s body was being held at the community hospital. Hearing this they decided to stop at the hospital prior to coming to the house. Upon their arrival they were astonished that the officer provided false information as the hospital staff were adamant that Bubby was not there and instead, he was taken straight from the scene to a coroner in Burnside. Parent B confirms prior information we received from the police that 1) Larry, the person driving the black car

from the day prior is responsible for my brother's death, and 2) that there were four passengers in the vehicle: Larry, Bubby, Cousin A, and another passenger. Additionally, Parent B shares that the four of them were in a car driving down an old country road with a one-way bridge. Larry, hit the side of the bridge and the car rolled ejecting my brother from the car. The driver fled the scene when the crash happened leaving Bubby and the others alone on an old back road and that the police were searching for the driver who they believed to be hiding. Motionless, I listen to my parents' discussion.

Based on that discussion my parents decided to travel to the scene of the crash. I am unable to remember who watched Little C but a family member came to the house and babysat him. My family drove in two separate vehicles. Parent B and Parent D travelled in their vehicle and I travelled with Parent A and Parent C in their car. Silently sitting in the backseat and attempting to block out the discussion occurring between my parents, I check my cell-phone. There were missed calls and messages from classmates, friends, family, and people I hadn't spoken to in years. I responded to some messages and continued to sit silently staring out the window.

The drive to the site on Bogg Road seemed to last an eternity. Bogg Road is an old, long road covered in pot holes and multiple bends. Peering out the back window I began to wonder how my brother must have felt going down this road 9 hours earlier. As the drive continues, the bridge becomes visible and is closed off to traffic. Parking the car, we begin to walk toward the bridge and Parent B as they arrived before us. Unaware of what I may see, I walk with my head down, and in my peripheral, I see Shasta daisies which relaxes my body a bit. From that day on I have associated the sight of Shasta daisies with my brother and am grateful for their presence.

As we near the bridge Parent B informs us that 1) The cops are still searching for the driver, 2) The black car was towed as evidence and 3) My brother's belongings have also been taken as evidence. Infuriated but unable to do anything we head home. Pulling into the driveway, I realize my partner is sitting on the front steps. When the car is parked, I walk toward him, and he embraces me. He knows there is nothing he can do to change things but his being there was enough. We had only been together a little over a month at that point. He had met my brother, my family and had celebrated Bubby's 22nd birthday ten days prior. It was a hard way to begin a relationship. The person he entered the relationship with would soon cease to exist.

Later that morning I received a call from my best friend and soul mate, Cousin X. Offering their deepest condolences, they inform me that they are booking a plane ticket to come down from Toronto. I gratuitously accept their condolences and knowing they are coming gives me strength. We say our goodbyes and I hang up the phone. Cousin X would end up staying with me for the entirety of that Summer and both they and my partner made it their priority to support and provide a shoulder for me to lean on.

The continuity of the day after this morning is a blur of conversations that would lead us on our search for truth. From that day forward, T.J became my dog and I made it my mission to ensure she had the best life I could give her and my brother's car became my car. T.J stayed with me until she passed away in November 2021 and was reunited with my brother.

The Next Day: Cousin A Recounts

My parents had been discussing the events with other family members and learned of Cousin A's recount of the events. Cousin A insisted everyone including my brother was drinking but no one was drunk. Cousin A witnessed the driver using cocaine

in the bathroom but only they and the driver were aware of this. The driver had wanted to visit a woman he was interested in and planned to drive to her place. My brother offered to drive but the driver insisted he wasn't drunk and that he was able to drive.

During the drive, the driver was pulled over by an officer because of his erratic driving. Cousin A stated the car smelled of alcohol and that they had open alcohol in the vehicle. The officer asked everyone to evacuate the vehicle; took their identifying information and asked the driver to "walk the line." Next, the officer informed the four of them that they call someone to pick them up because they wouldn't be driving anywhere. However, for some reason, in the end the officer decided against this and allowed them to continue on with Larry driving the vehicle.

Throughout the drive Larry was speeding and refused to slow down when asked to. Cousin A, shared video footage of the driver laughing and drinking a beer as they yelled for him to slow down. He ignored their requests and drove faster. Larry chose to exit the highway at exit 8A travelling down Ben Jackson Road to evade a second encounter with the cops. Eventually turning onto Bog Road Larry begins speeding again, ignoring their requests to slow down. They near the turn before the bridge with speed and my brother states, "*You're gonna hit the bridge.*" Abruptly the driver tried to stop the car, but it is too late. Going at too rapid of a speed, the vehicle hit the bridge with such impact that the car started to roll. Neither the driver nor my brother were wearing their seat belt and thus were being thrown around inside the vehicle as it rolled. The others were buckled up in the back and eventually the car stops rolling and the three of them get out. Cousin A and the other passenger see my brother under the car and scream. The driver becomes aware of the scene and threatens them not to say anything and runs off.

Cousin A and the other passenger begin to try and pull Bubby from under the car but are unable and begin screaming for help. They run to a house up the hill beside the bridge. Emergency Health Services come; Bubby is pronounced dead at the scene and the others are assessed by the paramedics. It is important to note that only my brother and Cousin A were Black. Both others in the car were White.

Upon my arrival at Cousin A's house the next day I embrace them, express my condolences; thank them; and remind them that I love and am here if they need support from me or from professionals. Sadly, Cousin A never accepted the offer although I consistently reminded them of my being there from that day on whenever I saw them. Cousin A loved my brother deeply and I was determined to build a connection with them after his death. I felt that I owed them for trying to save his life. After learning of their recount, I knew multiple lives changed that night and I cried wondering how terrified my brother and Cousin A must have been. What is more, I was worried for their well-being. Cousin A was 17 years old when they experienced this trauma, and it haunted them for the rest of their life.

In February 2021 at the age of 21 Cousin A died due to an accidental overdose and due to COVID precautions I was unable to attend their funeral. At that time there were travel restrictions due to increased COVID cases within the Halifax Regional Municipality where I lived, and the funeral home requested that those from Halifax not attend. I attempted to convince them otherwise due to the circumstances, but they were unwilling to budge. However, they shared that the funeral would be live streamed on their website. Hurting and unable to attend, I watched the live stream in disbelief that their life had ended. Feeling disconnected, I wrote them the poem below and smudged, asking my

brother to take care of them.

Cousin A

*Your life was short to me, but too long to you,
You climbed mountains and crawled through dark caves,
You found light in a quick place, a place you thought was safe.
What did the quick place give you?
What pain did it ease?
What darkness did it fade away?
What you didn't know was the quick place didn't love you,
It just wanted to keep and control you,
The quick place thought it had won because it stole you in the night.
But, the quick place was wrong because,
It cannot contain love or light,
You see, you shine too bright and are loved by so many that,
The quick place realizes it lost the fight,
Because,
It had to set you free.
Our love for you burns too bright and you are light, so shine bright,
Shine bright and be free*

The Strange Man

A couple of days after the crash my family was out, and I was at the house alone.

Needing some fresh air to clear my mind I stepped outside on the front step and was surprised to see a strange car in the driveway. Surveying the front yard and not seeing anyone, I was alarmed when I saw what appeared to be a man coming from behind the house. The man was White, wearing casual clothing and I assumed he must be a reporter. Startled by my presence, the man seemed shocked that I was there and introduced himself as detective James Smith, while handing me his card. Continuing, he revealed he wanted to speak with my family and had been “looking” for them. I informed him that they were not home but that I would pass the message.

Seemingly content with my response, he shared his condolences, said goodbye, and left. Afterward, I went back into the house and thought it strange he hadn't knocked on the door but instead was walking around scanning the property. Later that day I

notified my parents of his behavior, and they were not pleased to hear he had been at their home. They reminded me that they had a history with detective James Smith, whom they referred to as simply Smith, and that they did not trust him. With this reminder I remembered a comment he had made earlier when he introduced himself. Smith commented on his wanting my parents to know that he intended to do his job well regardless of his past experiences with my family. If his intention was to mend bridges, it sure hadn't come off that way.

Us vs Smith/The System

I don't know when my parents decided to lay both criminal and civil charges against the driver. It could have been immediately with the initial news or later, but I have never really known when that decision was made. I do however know that in the days and weeks following the death of my brother, things took a strange turn.

Smith became the lead of the criminal investigation and it was difficult to work with him because we did not trust him and he seemed to care little about the task at hand. The driver was never charged with impaired driving because Smith refused to have his blood alcohol levels tested. The reasons given for this were that the driver was on the run for "more than twelve hours" and his blood alcohol levels would not be "accurate." I agreed that the driver's blood alcohol levels would have decreased but there was video evidence of the driver drinking while driving. When questioned, Smith seemed surprised and requested we ask Cousin A to "send him" the videos in question. I was taken aback by this request because he was aware the video footage existed, and I wondered why he hadn't solicited it as evidence. Furthermore, I probed why he felt it appropriate to have my family contact Cousin A and not himself. All involved knew a criminal investigation was occurring and he had the names and contact information of all each person. Why,

would he ask us to ask a seventeen-year old to send him video evidence that would re-traumatize all of us?

Moreover, it was unsettling they had not taken Cousin A's phone as evidence but had seized my brother's and continually denied our requests for his phone. His phone did not contain incriminating information or evidence but his was the only phone they were concerned about having in their custody. It appeared they were not searching for evidence to support our claims but instead were hoping to find something that would incriminate my brother. Throughout the duration of that period my family made numerous pleas for my brother's phone. We wanted that piece of him with us and our ask was consistently denied until a later date when it was reluctantly given to us.

When we were given the phone, it was obvious they had hoped to find something because they had taken it apart and placed it in a plastic sandwich bag. It was our understanding that detective Smith assumed we would see the state of the phone and leave it in pieces. However, we had the phone put back together again and were able to access some of my brother's photos and videos.

During our ongoing time with detective Smith, I became stressed because he was providing different information to each of us and there were too many gaps unanswered. Determined, my partner and I requested a private meeting with Smith and although I had numerous questions, I decided to focus on the two most distressing: the substance detection of the driver and the negligence of the officer on the night of the crash.

When questioned, Smith avoided direct answers, stumbled on his words and attempted to change the focus of conversation. Infuriated, I maintained my stance and argued, providing statistics to support my claims to which Smith claimed he did not test

the driver's blood alcohol level because it was like "going down a rabbit hole." That statement was an insult that I took personally. I was aware that there were numerous "what ifs" but there was hard evidence of the driver drinking and driving. Additionally, from past experiences with the police I witnessed them look for any small piece of evidence to support their claims against my brother. For example, my brother had been incarcerated at the provincial institution a year earlier with no evidence aside from the judgement of an officer. Specifically, the judge claimed that as the officer had "20 plus years of identifying people" he believed that the officer's ability to identify my brother based on hearsay was evidence enough. It is necessary to share that the officer identified my brother as being "dark skinned" and having an "afro" at the time of the claims. Both descriptors are inaccurate because both my brother and I are very light skinned and he had dreadlocks, not an afro. However, my brother was charged and spent time in the provincial carceral institution based on that "evidence." Conversely, now that it was his life they needed to fight for, they were unwilling to investigate multiple avenues. Through the numerous encounters I have watched my brother and family have with the "justice" system, I have learned that police ignore the rules and are granted permission to do this with the system as their support (Thompson, 2022).

Secondly, I questioned the repercussions for the negligence of the officer that pulled the driver over hours before the crash. If the officer deemed the driver unfit to operate a vehicle, why had he decided to let them go, and had that officer been made aware of what his negligence allowed. If not, he should be, and his actions followed up. My parents used their faith to describe this encounter by the officer as a sign from god to prevent the accident and the officers' negligence allowed it to occur. Unsurprisingly,

detective Smith avoided responding to my questions and dismissed accusations of negligence by the officer in question. Our private meeting ended and we left feeling unsupported, silenced, and frustrated.

My family and I continued our own investigation and discovered detective Smith had no desire to have the blood alcohol level of the driver tested but that he requested the coroner assess my brother's blood alcohol level and additional drug substances.

Wondering if it was protocol during an autopsy to test for all substances, a family member contacted the coroner. The coroner communicated that testing for all substances was in fact not protocol and that they assessed based on data requested based on the requisition. In this case the requisition was completed by detective Smith and thus he requested additional drug testing during my brother's autopsy. We received the autopsy report and the only drug found in my brother's system was alcohol. Enraged we wondered why my brother's blood levels were tested and not the driver's. If his blood alcohol levels had been positive for additional substances was the intention to use that against my brother and label him as the antagonist or the one at fault. Uncovering this betrayal solidified our prior beliefs that we could not trust detective Smith and that he was not on our side.

The Driver

Early on I displayed empathy for the driver. I imagined that he experienced immense guilt and horror around his behavior and responsibility for his friend's death. On the other hand, my parents immediately hated him, and I knew they had a right to their own feelings because he was responsible for the death of my brother, their son. Nonetheless, I couldn't help feeling empathetic toward him. The compassion I carried caused ongoing distressing inner dialogue that questioned my loyalty to my brother and

filled me with guilt. How is it that I could care for someone who took Bubby away. I am cognizant that my parents wouldn't have cared if the driver had died and that I was both enraged and resentful, but I did not want him dead. I had no intention to wish our loss and pain on anyone and although I did not know him, I would not have wished him nor his family harm. Unable to share my inner turmoil with my parents for fear of their anger and judgement against me I kept my thoughts to myself until they became too much to bear. Over time they became a form of self-loathing and eventually I informed my partner of my thoughts and emotions. During our conversations my partner insisted that I not punish myself for my thoughts or emotions because they were simply part of my personality and that I had a right to experience my own thoughts and feelings. Through the discussion I realized my empathy did not imply that I was forgiving the driver but that it simply meant I did not wish him dead. As time progressed and events unfolded my empathy for the driver began to change and my anger toward him intensified.

During a discussion with detective Smith, we were informed that during his interrogation of the driver, the driver was placing blame of the crash on my brother. Smith provided little details but insisted that we "did not want to know" the things the driver was saying to save himself and I wondered what Smith's intention was sharing this news with us. Smith informed us of this devastating information that only caused more trauma, pain, and anger. Devastated by this information, my heart broke for my brother, and I was saddened that he had trusted this person—a person, who in his absence and death, completely betrayed him. Upon hearing this information, I discovered where the driver resided; grabbed my brother's baseball bats; blasted his favorite song at the time and drove off in search of him. I drove in circles that day looking for but never finding

him and so I continued that man hunt regularly keeping the baseball bat in the car to ensure I was prepared.

Court

When we arrived at the courthouse, we sat in the entrance area and unknown to me was that the driver's family was sitting in the room with us. After being seated for some time, my parents stood up and walked outside. Assuming they were restless I followed them to get some fresh air. Once outside my family began talking and informed me that three of the other people seated in the waiting room were family members of the driver. Confused, I asked why this information was not shared with us given the charges and situation. Although I was angry, I was not surprised that our well-being was not of concern to our lawyer or the judge. We had sat in that small, outdated courtroom full of White people multiple times prior to that day. Most people believe courtrooms function as places of justice, but they are in fact the opposite. Courtrooms are intimidating places with ancient mannerisms that silence you (Shakur, 1987). In the eyes of this courtroom there was no value to my brother's life and I questioned if the roles were reversed would the safety and well-being of the driver's family have been prioritized. Eventually, angrily we went back inside and sat down.

At some point we were informed that the crown prosecutor would act as our legal counsel. This news was unsettling as we knew the crown prosecutor and had witnessed him degrade and encourage the incarceration of my brother in the past. During the entire court process the crown prosecutor treated us as though we were a box to be ticked off on his lists of tasks. His conversations with us were rushed, cold and only occurred in the hallway of the courthouse because he never invited us into his office to discuss matters. Furthermore, at no time did he acknowledge his past experiences with us, attempt to build

better rapport or offer his condolences to our family. When providing court updates, he approached it not as a conversation for open dialogue but as one where he spoke at or around us and we were to remain silent. I wondered if due to professional policies he was unable to offer condolences, but this did not ease his cold treatment toward us, and our hope rested in the fact we knew he thought the driver was guilty and would fight to prove that. Personally, to prevent the poor treatment from the crown prosecutor, I consistently reminded myself that the “justice” system was not built to provide support Black or Indigenous victims.

After our “meeting” with the crown prosecutor we continued to wait until we were invited into the courtroom, and I saw a familiar face. The face was that of my brother’s legal aid lawyer that had represented Bubby on numerous occasions in that same courtroom. Both her and I made eye contact and as she walked by, she smiled in our direction. Aware of the fact that she could be representing any one or multiple persons in the courtroom that day I did not find it surprising to see her and we continued to enter the courtroom and find a seat.

Shortly after the judge entered and we were seated, the driver was escorted into the room by the sheriff. The layout of the courtroom is that unless you are on the stand, the accused is seated facing the judge and not those seated in the “audience”. This meant I could only observe him from behind. During my observation I noticed what appeared to be scratches or lesions and that his legal representation was my brother’s past lawyer. I experienced a range of emotions in silence, but betrayal was the strongest of all. Attempting to rationalize the situation I thought perhaps she was simply standing in because court was called on such short notice. Yes, that had to be it because would this

not be a conflict of interest. As court progressed that day, my family and I were invisible in the courtroom. Within this room were people representing the “justice” system and each were aware that my brother’s life was taken but it didn’t seem to matter. Horrified, I began questioning why the crown prosecutor had not prepared us for what we would encounter in the courtroom. The entirety of the scene seemed immoral. Weren’t their moral considerations in legal practice? Do lawyers have the right to refuse and do conflicts of interest exist within legal practices? Sitting in that courtroom I felt vulnerable as I watched my brother’s lawyer defend the actions of the man that killed him and three things became clear: 1) my brother was dead, 2) no one cared and, 3) the driver pled not-guilty.

*Anger
Anger is all I feel,
I see a stranger’s face and am full of anger,
Where is the justice?
“Our” system let us down. It abused my brother.
Why is it so hard to just be Black?
The system didn’t fight for him,
Even though we needed them to,
Instead, it allowed us to be ridiculed.
Where is the justice?*

Our attendance in court continued and the situation remained the same: the crown prosecutor seldom spoke to or informed us of things and my brother’s lawyer remained the accused’s lawyer. The crown who was usually quick to argue the troubles of the accused consistently stated facts of the event incorrectly and seemed to be arguing poorly. During court my family would often look toward one another as the crown shared incorrect information and we would shake our heads because the crown was receiving information from detective Smith as he was the lead detective on the case. However, the

information Smith shared with us was not the same information that the crown was listing in court. We would anxiously anticipate recess and run to correct the crown prosecutor on the comments he made.

The crown reacted as though the information we provided was not what Smith had shared with him and we contacted Smith to discuss this. Smith was adamant that he shared the evidence with the crown but there was always incongruity between the two of them and what was stated in court. During one court session it seemed the crown was losing the fight against the accused's lawyer and at recess we intervened sharing proof of information we had. The proof we provided proved a direct contradiction in the story the accused was saying and only at that time did we see some progress because the lawyer dropped the accused as a client based on the evidence we shared, and the crown was able to use it in court. We knew our fight for justice was dependent on us and that we had to continue the fight ourselves.

Clinical Practicum

In addition to the courtroom appearances, I also needed to establish how to move forward with my nursing education. Both the clinical instructor and course professor had been communicating about my circumstance and the options available to me. I received a phone call from the course professor which began with her condolences and ended with my need to make a decision regarding the future of my nursing education. Specifically, the decision requested was whether I planned to return to and complete my clinical or take time off of my studies. This call occurred within a week or so after my brother passing, thus I leaned toward taking a break from my studies. Lost in thought, the professor continued explaining that if I opted to take a break from my studies I would be

required to “restart” my nursing degree because the program was drastically changing. I questioned why this would be necessary because I had completed two years of the four-year program and after this clinical practicum would enter the third year. The professor maintained that the program curriculum was changing and that taking a year off would make it impossible for me to continue in the program based on current curriculum. Attempting to find an alternative solution I asked whether I could complete my clinical practicum at a later date and follow my preceptor to complete the necessary hours. My suggestions were both denied and the professor suggested I think about my options and notify her of my decision at a later date. I agreed and hung up the phone. During the conversations there was a complete lack of support or recognition of my needs and it felt like I was a task that needed to be solved and not a person in need of and receiving support (Neimeyer et al., 2008).

Overwhelmed by the conversation and my limited options, I went to Cousin X, my partner and my family for guidance. Understandably, I was upset that the last two years of my undergraduate degree seemed to have little value in the eyes of my professor, and I didn't feel mentally fit to return to clinical at that time. Both Cousin X and my partner validated my emotions and felt I was not receiving fair support from my professor. Furthermore, they questioned why I was told I had two options, when in reality there was one. I either suck it up and complete my clinical practice or I release the two years I had already put into my degree and start over. My parents on the other hand offered little support about the choice between my options. Both were worried about me but wanted me to continue and complete my post-secondary education. Wanting to alleviate some of their pain I felt obligated to continue with my degree and not take time

off. I contacted the professor and after informing her of my decision we planned the continuity of my clinical practicum.

Knowing my clinical peers had been informed of my loss added an additional layer of stress upon my returning to practicum. On the day I returned I prepared myself to the best of my ability by attempting to suppress thoughts of my brother and putting on a “poker face” Masking my emotions was something I had grown accustomed to based on my role I had within my family dynamics. Thus, I knew I had to ignore my needs at that time to ensure the well-being of my family. When I arrived at clinical my skill of masking my emotions was more difficult than usual. Prior to the loss of my brother, I was easily capable of hiding my emotions until I was alone but now the task seemed impossible. As the day progressed, I became more irritable and anxious and by noon I was fighting off tears and not knowing what else to do I informed the clinical instructor that I intended to leave. It took some time but after a rather difficult conversation she agreed, and I left the hospital.

During my drive home I became disappointed in myself. I had always prided myself on the ability to do what needed to be done regardless of the way I felt and being incapable of it made me feel weak. Confounded by what was to come I thought about the shame my parents would feel with my leaving and wondered if the professor would call and inform me I was out of the program. Preparing myself for what was to come I thought of my brother and drove his car back home.

At some point the clinical instructor must have informed the professor because I received a phone call from her with what she called “good news”. Unbeknownst to me, some peers in our cohort were unsuccessful in their clinical practicum and because of this

an additional clinical rotation was being offered in August. Initially I was shocked those accommodations were being made for other students but that they were unwilling to offer an additional preceptor option for me. In the end, I reluctantly accepted the August offer knowing there would be no additional offer to support me. Once I accepted the professor seemed pleased with herself for finding a solution that she deemed appropriate. Feeling uncomfortable I thanked her, and she shared an additional condition regarding the upcoming rotation. All students including myself had to pay the clinical fee which was approximately \$1200.00 in full before the first day of clinical.

When the call ended, I stressed about how I was going to come up with \$1200.00 in the next month as it was already July. My tuition costs were being covered through student loan and so were my clinicals. Prior to this any outstanding clinical amount was paid in full when my student loan began again in the fall. It was not a requirement to pay clinical practicum in full normally and many students were covering the additional cost of clinical through their loans also. Prior I had casual employment as a continuing care assistant at Oakwood Terrace and had been offered a full-time job through Northwood during the summer. Initially I accepted the position but after my brother passed, I informed them I was no longer capable of stepping into the role at that time due to circumstances. I had no resources to pull on to cover the cost of the clinical practicum. What's more the clinical practicum was in Halifax which would mean driving from my parent's house to Halifax twice a day; five days a week. The car I was using, which was my brother's, was not a reliable form of transportation and so I had to find a place to stay in Halifax also.

I had no choice but to push my grief aside once again because it was crucial I find

a way to cover the cost of clinical and living expenses to attend clinical. I chose to remind myself that if I did this my parents would have something to be happy about.

Before the Funeral

Throughout our court appearances and dealing with all other things the family was planning Bubby's funeral. Once Cousin X arrived, she stayed with me, my three cats and T.J in the camper. Prior to the funeral there was a constant rotation of people at Parent A's house. Mainly family members and others in the community that came with food, well wishes, condolences, hugs and spent a lot of time with my parents. If people were unable to attend in person because they lived out of province, they called and sent text messages to connect. I received many well wishes and during these moments of embrace was often told to take care of my parents. To which I responded that I would. Although the request seemed to bother me, I was happy to know that my parents were receiving support from others.

For me having the support of my partner, Cousin X and other family and community members was important. Specifically, the support through conversations with Cousin X and my partner were the most beneficial. My relationship with them was one of acceptance and unconditional love. They enabled me to freely express my grief whether that was through tears, anger, silence, or laughter and for that I am grateful to them. Informal support networks are known to be highly valued and sought over formal supports within Black communities (Neighbors & Jackson, 1984). Other friends, family and community members were compassionate and kind toward me, but they had expectations of me, and they were that I would ensure the well-being of my parents. Although the expectations were from a place of love, I knew my grief was to be

suppressed and hidden from family. Additionally, I did not feel it appropriate to express my pain with my parents. They had just lost their son and did not need another person to be worried about (Williams et al., 2023). This is why my relationship with Cousin X and my partner was vital because they saw the pain that no one else did and that prevented me from feeling alone at that time.

In the beginning the planned funeral was to be open casket and was confirmed with the funeral director. With this confirmation all other pieces of the funeral were built around the promise of an open-casket. Open caskets are normalized and although there was a crash no one including detective Smith had ever raised concern regarding the physical state of my brother. While planning we received a call from the funeral director, and he retracted his prior agreement to an open casket. The director was apologetic and commented he should not have approved an open casket until he had seen my brother. Stunned by this information, my family insisted that we drive to the funeral home and determine what was going on.

Arriving in multiple vehicles Cousin X and my partner drove with me in the Teg while my family drove their own vehicles and took Little C to his grandmothers. While entering the funeral home the director asserted only immediate family could view my brother. This meant Cousin X and my partner stayed within the main area of the funeral home. The funeral director, tried to discourage me also but was unsuccessful. He reluctantly guided us toward the basement door and down the stairs.

Nothing would prepare us for what we would see as we reached the middle of the basement stairs. There was my brother with only his face and chest exposed on a table. Tears filled and fell from my eyes. I will not detail the state of my brother, but it is a

scarring memory. I was terrified of my brother as I watched my family cry and kiss his cheek. My family offered to walk beside him with me and I kissed his cold cheek. I sobbed and kissed him again.

I placed my hand on his hair without thinking and kissed his cheek again. I told him how much I loved him and how sorry I was. When I pulled my hand away it was wet, and I realized his blood was on my hand. I cried looked around the room at my parents and heard their cries. After standing there and wiping my hand hatred and anger took over my body. I stormed out of the basement exit door and ran to the car. I turned the car on and sped out of the parking lot and down the street. I know I was speeding but I didn't care. I didn't care about anything at that point. I just kept thinking of Bubby. I drove to a rural area pulled off onto a dirt road sat there and cried.

After that day we knew Bubby would be cremated, asked the funeral director to take his fingerprint for us and we all took on various tasks for the funeral service. Parent A offered to build my brother a wooden urn and a cross for his plot. I wonder what that must have been like for him building that urn. Parent A and Parent B collaborated on building a large wooden cross for the cemetery where my brother would be buried. Parent B purchased the wood and stain, while Parent A designed and stained the cross. I wrote the obituary.

Othered

As the community of Hants County became more aware of the criminal charges we laid against the driver, people became angry with us and expressed their anger via social media. Social media is known for the pros and cons it offers. If used well it can enable us to maintain connections with one another. However, it can also be a place of profound bullying where there is limited consequence for one's actions. I did not have an

active social media account at the time but my family was in regular contact to ensure we all received the same information, so I was aware of what was being said through social media. Apparently, people on social media discussed our being wrong in pressing charges against the driver and the memorial cross we placed near the bridge was destroyed.

Along with the comments and conversations occurring openly for all to see some members of my family received private messages that were vile and wicked. Two specific messages taunted us celebrating my brother's death and counting the number of days he had been buried. I was bewildered as to why people were angry with us and why they showed no value toward the life of my brother that was gone. Growing up in a rural area I was aware of multiple people losing their lives in motor vehicle accidents (MVA's) but their families received tremendous support and their loved ones celebrated. This widespread hate we received vilified my family and my brother. His person and innocence were being used against him as though this was his fault. During my reflection of past deaths in the community the victims were not blamed, and their humanness was not questioned although some were outwardly racist. The single difference between Bubby and the others was that he was a Black man and had been involved with the criminal justice system.

Our ability to grieve was dismissed and people began to blame my brother for his own death. Lawson (2014) shares deaths that are traumatic, unexpected or involve gun-violence lead to questioning the character of the deceased and those around them (Lawson, 2014). Black bodies are devalued and stigmatized causing negative implications on their health. Social constructs and systemic implications place Black populations at increased risk of negative experiences when grieving (Lawson, 2014;

Piazza- Bonin et al., 2015). It seemed like the police involvement made people question my brother, but again, historically others have pressed charges too. I ruminated on the differences between my brother and the other lives lost in MVA's. The single difference is that my brother is Black.

The reality of being Black began to set in when only one of my family's neighbors offered us condolences. Aside from two or three households, every family on the road had resided there for the majority of my life. Most watched us grow from toddlers to adults and some had children we befriended in our childhood or teenage years. The one neighbor who came by was an older woman and both her and her husband had lived in close proximity for close to twenty years.

Initially, I blamed myself for having had horrible teenage years and broken friendships, but how could they completely disregard my brother's life, my parents' pain. They would smile if they saw us but never acknowledged the days were different than they used to be. I was angry at them for disrespecting my family in that way.

I should not have been surprised because the neighbors have always othered our family. We are the only Black family on the road and live in low-income housing. When we were kids and teenagers my brother and I befriended the neighborhood kids in our age groups. Those friendships had their ups and downs, but the adults always avoided our family. My parents commented on this multiple times as we were growing up. The neighbors always skipped our house on Halloween but went to both houses on either side. They complained and called the police when my brother drove his truck, tractor or ATV on the roads or in the yard but said nothing about other neighbors doing the same things.

In truth, if our dogs did their business on their lawns they would barge into my

parents' house and complain but would say nothing if other neighbors' dogs did their business in their yard. While reflecting on this othering throughout our fight for justice, I wrote this poem.

People

People can be so rude and hateful,
Things I used to look past, but because of my pain I now cannot.
You are hurting, I cannot imagine your pain,
But, people say mean things to you.
You shouldn't have to fight for his rights, nor yours,
I want to punch anyone who hurts you,
I am full of anger.
Why can't we grieve?
Why can't they leave us alone?
Do they not realize he is gone and never coming back, do they not see our tears.
Why does everyone say racism doesn't exist when it is clear it does.
I wish I could erase it all

The Cemetery

A week before my brother's death he messaged Parent B and told them he wanted to be buried with our Nanny. Nanny is what we called Parent B's mother. She passed away in 2012 but her and my brother were very close.

The cemetery my brother was referring to was a small cemetery in Hants County called the St. Croix cemetery. This cemetery is close to our childhood home and one we spent a lot of time at as children. Parent B is very artistic and creative. During the warmer months they would go to the cemetery and ensure the family headstones and plots were clean and decorated. Parent B would often take us with them while they cleaned the plots and I have always thought the cemetery was beautiful. It is tucked nicely on a little road surrounded by trees.

I knew Parent A's family members were not buried in that cemetery, but I never questioned why. I assumed it was by choice. Parent A's side of the family had largely been buried in the Windsor cemetery and in a cemetery in Mount Denson. Due to this I assumed that was why everyone chose to be buried in Windsor, because they wanted to be close to their loved ones.

It was not until June 2017 I learned my brother was the first Black person to be legally buried in the St. Croix cemetery. Parent A began telling me the story of a little African Nova Scotian girl who had been adopted by a White family in the 60's. The little girl was ill and passed away and the family wanted her buried in the St. Croix cemetery (Corfu, 2017). The cemetery refused her burial there because bylaws stated Black people were not allowed to be buried there (Corfu, 2017; Nova Scotia Cemetery Companies Act, 1900). This bylaw prevented the burial of Black and Indigenous people in the St. Croix cemetery (Nova Scotia Cemetery Companies Act, 1900). The family that adopted her protested against this racist law and their protest gained national attention. After reviewing the newspapers, I learned this little girl would have been my cousin. They said the bylaws changed and that discriminatory policy was removed in the 60's due to public outcry (Corfu, 2017) but, it had been forty-nine years, and my brother was the first to be buried there. A cemetery I had always been so fond of didn't want people like us there. This added another layer of injustice to my grief. I could not comprehend how in 2017 he was the first and how I never knew.

Before the Protest

During multiple family discussions it was obvious that my brother and family were being unjustly treated by the criminal justice system. We were being harassed at

court and due to numerous conflicts of interest and testing my brother's blood for substances, we decided to contact a community activist in Halifax for support.

Additionally, some of my family members suggested we protest.

We connected with the activist via social media and arranged a meeting because we felt that the treatment we were receiving was because my brother was a Black man that was "known" to police. Myself and another family member met with the activist and shared our experiences thus far. We detailed the conflicts of interest, our treatment, the blood testing, the detective and everything relevant. The activist listened to our concerns intently and agreed that our treatment was unjust and due to our being Black.

Furthermore, we detailed our considering protests and asked if she would consider attending. The activist agreed to protest with us and informed us she would connect with some of her colleagues and invite them.

To avoid complications my family members informed detective Smith that we intended to protest on the next court date. Smith said there was a form to complete if we intended to protest outside of the courthouse, and that the form was located at an office close by. Myself, Cousin X and another family member went to retrieve the protest form. From the time we walked into the office, the receptionist was rude. She was a White woman, but I could not guess her age. We articulated the form we wanted but it was clear she did not want to give it to us. Instead, she began asking questions about the intentions and reasons for our protest.

Initially, I was quiet when entered the office and family members were interacting with the receptionist. During their dialogue I began pacing as she was becoming increasingly rude and condescending. Knowing, we were not required to answer her

questions, I abruptly told her it was none of her business and that we did not have to answer her questions. She just looked at me and unexpectedly someone else appeared from the around the corner. It was a Black cop, he had been listening to the conversation. He informed the receptionist that we were not obligated to answer the questions and that she had to give us the form. Reluctantly, she passed us the form and we left.

From that day on we were focused on the protest. We recruited family and friends, made posters, and built awareness around our intention. Our posters were each unique and spoke to our relationship and unique message we wanted to make. The poster I made read, “My brother is my knight in armor. His life mattered”. Additional posters read “Dashonn’s life mattered” and “Black Lives Matter”.

The Protest

On the morning of the protest the scene was that out of a murder trial. As we drove toward the courthouse, we saw a surplus of police officers and the media was there too. Upon arrival we were notified that entering the courthouse was granted only to those who were cleared by the metal detector and a judge we didn’t know would be overseeing the court that day. These measures were not added for our protection but because they assumed that a group of Black people protesting Black lives warranted higher security (Shakur, 1987).

This tiny courthouse in rural Nova Scotia with a primarily White community was making a spectacle out of us. They had heightened security and brought negative attention to our protest meant to demonstrate the value of my brother’s life. My family and I became aware of this because people we did and didn’t know were actively asking us not to protest and that there was no need to involve race in the situation. Lawson (2014) suggests that police scrutinization leads to victim blaming, police intrusion and

brutality. It has been noted that in low-income communities police are more likely to impose brutality on the family and friends of the deceased (Lawson, 2014). Police mistreatment shatters the perspective of social structures that are supposed to offer support and safety, leaving families to feel isolated and alone (Sharpe, 2008). How utterly wrong were they because being Black influences everything, your entire being, in all situations.

We gathered in our small group with the community activist and chanted some of the following: “The system isn’t broken it was built this way”, “No justice, no peace”, “Dashonn’s life mattered” and “Black lives matter”.

After some time of chanting, I had to go to the washroom and completely forgot about the metal detectors. Likely, because they had never had metal detectors before. As I entered the courthouse door I am in a line of people when a female officer approaches me and reminds me that I need to be cleared before entering. I do not respond but I stay in the line, and she repeats herself. “I heard you,” I say with an abrupt tone. The female officer stands there and gives me a look of pure loathing.

I decide to wait, and I walk back to the group of protestors chanting. As we chant, I notice three cops standing on the front steps of the courthouse smirking at us. One of the cops is the female officer from inside. I use my anger to continue chanting while handing my friend the megaphone to lead us.

While chanting we see a Black woman we don’t know enter the courthouse. We question who she is and learn that she will be the judge overseeing the court that day. The crown and others insisted she had just been appointed and that is why she arrived that day but we knew better. She was intentionally assigned to our case on the day of the protest

because we were protesting the injustices of a Black man (Shakur, 1987). Events like this happen often when Black people are in courtrooms because it eludes justice (Shakur, 1987).

Baffled, when we were told to enter the courthouse, I asked my friend and Cousin X to continue leading the protest. They agreed because as much as I wanted them in the courtroom, we needed the protest to continue.

Moving Away from God

As time continued my family leaned into their spirituality for strength and it gave them comfort to believe my brother was with “god” (Este & Thomas- Bernard, 2019; Thomas-Bernard., 2014). I however, began questioning the belief of a supposed god that would allow something this horrible to happen. I had been brought up to believe in god and although my parents were not committed church-goers they instilled those spiritual beliefs into our upbringing. We were made to attend Sunday school weekly as kids and had to participate in camps and events put on by the church. I was baptized at the age of 17 and had strong beliefs in a god that I felt supported me through my tumultuous teenage years, but this current god didn’t align with my understanding of him. I was open with my family about my changing beliefs and although they felt it was a stage inflicted by brother’s death pain, I was adamant it wasn’t. My parents assumed that overtime my anger would dissipate and I would come back to a life with god but I instead pulled further away relinquishing all religious beliefs but instead clung to the memory of my brother. Burke et al., (2014), suggest that unexpected and violent losses challenge individual worldviews and beliefs leading some to develop a spiritual crisis. Spiritual crises also known as complicated spiritual grief (CSG) reflects the bereaved and their disconnection, resentment toward god and others in the spiritual community (Burke &

Niemeyer, 2014; Burke et al., 2014).

The Wake

I received permission from the funeral home director to bring T.J to the wake. We arrived early and I took T.J up to the Bubby's urn. She stood there and sniffed the urn repeatedly before walking away. My family had chosen photos to place in frames around the room and memory tree for people to write and share their memories. Everyone that attended the wake was happy to see T.J. Those close to Bubby knew he didn't go many places without her and how important she was to him. She was friendly, loved people and it was like having my brother with us. It was imperative she be in attendance at the wake. Rosenblatt and Wallace (2005), refer to this attempt to remain connected to the deceased as continued contact that can be experienced in a variety of ways.

The Funeral

Funeral practices are intrinsically connected to culture, cultural symbolism and geographical location (Bordere, 2008). Having experienced numerous deaths in my upbringing, I have been to many funerals over the years and personally I do not care for them, but they are important to my family and my presence is expected whether I want to attend or not. Funeral practices and celebrations of life are important in Black culture and attendance is depicted as showing respect for the deceased and their families (Bordere, 2008).

Personally, I feel funerals have more to do with meeting the needs of loved ones left behind rather than those who have left us. The service was long, hot and the room was packed. I sat there with Little C on my lap listening to the music sung by the church choir and played via the sound system.

When the service ended my family and I carried the urn toward the front door. We

opened the doors and there was a big red Ford truck. My family member rented the truck because Bubby loved Ford trucks, so we climbed in and drove away.

We drove toward his favorite lake and when we hit the dirt road we climbed into the back of the truck. One family member drove and the rest of us began crying and releasing his ashes. In that moment I realized I would never see or hug him again. I had grown accustomed to forcing my brother to hug me with both of his arms and now that was an argument I no longer had the privilege of having. As we reached the lake, we walked out onto to the dock in silence we released more of his ashes and some Budweiser in his honor.

The Fall

I returned to school that fall and entered my third year in the nursing program. I was unprepared and nervous because prior to my brother's death my post-secondary experience was difficult. I was trying to balance school, work and fighting the racial injustices my family was experiencing with the criminal justice system on a regular basis. I had often missed class to attend court, visit my brother in jail and would be called in the middle of the night by family regarding interactions with the police. I would quickly get dressed and travel to my hometown to support them.

Prior to classes starting I had expected to have regular check-ins with the professor to discuss necessary resources to support my success in the nursing program. Those thoughts were not assumptions but rather based on the professor informing me that she would move forward as my academic advisor throughout the duration of my nursing degree. I presumed this was initiated in my best interest because she was aware of my loss and this would prevent me from retelling my experience if concerns arose. This was not the case because I never heard from her. There has been ongoing attention to the

complexity of grief among university and college students and the lack of support offered within institutions (Balk, 2001; Cupit et al., 2022). As a matter of fact, I attempted to contact her via email at one point and she coldly informed me that I should connect with the regular academic advisor. I became aware in that moment that I was expected to perform at the same level as my peers and that my brother's passing meant nothing to my professors. Cupit et al., (2022), suggest that bereaved college students receive regular check-ins and support from faculty to support students through their grief. I felt alone and questioned why my professors would act in that way toward me and giving them the benefit of the doubt I assumed that they were not aware of my loss because I was one person in a large class. My assumption provided comfort because not knowing correlated with their lack of concern for me. Unfortunately, the comfort quickly faded when I learned they were aware of my experience. There was a reoccurring comment made by professors when I was alone with them. Each would state they had "heard about me".

There were of course some exclusions with some professors and instructors being supportive of my requesting assignment extensions due to my having to attend court or on those days when I couldn't get myself out of bed. I provided minimal information when making requests trying only to ask for them when absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, the majority of the professors and instructors were cold and informed me that I "had to" "get over it" if I was to "succeed" in my nursing education. One instructor went further and explicitly stated they didn't "understand" the reason why "my people" meaning (Black people) challenged the system but she did understand why Indigenous people would. Infuriated by that comment and additional racist remarks, I brought it to the attention of a faculty member higher up within the school of nursing.

That faculty member insisted I was misinterpreting things and that if there were racial comments it was my responsibility to address them. I challenged that notion of it being my responsibility considering I was on the receiving end and the faculty member reluctantly agreed to “look into it”. The room was tense and she concluded the conversation by stating that she was unable to follow-up with me regarding my concerns because of policies that prevented her from doing so. Which I understood to mean nothing was going to change. I left the meeting that day more defeated than when I arrived.

During the fall it became apparent that many peers in my cohort had learned of my loss. When our paths would cross, they would approach me, offer condolences and inform me that they “couldn’t do it if they were me” meaning they wouldn’t be continuing their studies and would have taken time off. I am aware that their comments were meant to be compliments but I did not receive them as such. I am a private person and didn’t want to divulge that I had attempted to take time off but was unable to and was there only by necessity. Instead, I would nod my head and give a light smile which seemed to put them at ease.

That fall of 2017 was a dark period of time and although I was surrounded by people every day, I felt alone and began separating myself from others. I slowly distanced myself from friendships opting to be alone whenever possible. Funk et al., (2018), suggest that sibling grief is often accompanied by avoidance from others for fear that others will say something to trigger emotions. I maintained friendly conversations with people and was able to smile and participate as needed but while others were celebrating, I felt like I was dying inside. The compartmentalization of appearing fine in public but

fighting battles internally was a skill I had mastered throughout my life (Williams et al., 2023). To those on the outside by all accounts I appeared to be fine, and this was something people told me often (Williams et al., 2023). Not knowing how to articulate my emotions or my pain I began to drink and use edibles to numb my mind. Prior to the death of my brother as an adult I rarely drank and never used illicit drugs. My family members and my partner were increasingly worried about me using drugs as frequently as I had been and asked/told me to stop. I did not explicitly use anything around my parents because I did not want them to worry about me, but they did notice an increase in my alcohol consumption and its weight in my life. The person who had always held herself and everyone else together was changing.

I feel so sad, alone, empty
I smile to make others happy,
Its lonely in this place, and,
The only way out is scary.
I cannot take it anymore, but,
They need me.

Moreover, my mood was consistently low. I had experienced periods of depression from my adolescence into adulthood and my suicidal ideations were increasing and guilt consumed me. My brother was full of life and planned on having a family whereas my inner thoughts were always negative— and which differed from what people saw on the outside. I had grown accustomed to putting on a happy face and ensuring the well-being of others, which for the most part I maintained with family, but no one knew the guilt I felt. I wanted to switch places with my brother. I was the eldest and felt it should have been me. Guilt of the eldest sibling has been found to be a reoccurring experience (Funk et al., 2018) and is common within the brother system sibling relationship (Williams et al., 2023). If I had sent the message or asked him to stay

home that evening, he would still be alive. It was my job to protect him. Anger became the only emotion I could express and I knew it was irrational but I couldn't make it stop. I knew anger was secondary but could not articulate the emotion behind the anger.

Wanting to connect with my brother I decided to try journaling. My journal entries were written to him, and it felt like we were able to have a conversation. There were emotions I didn't feel I could speak about, but I could write and express them to him as raw words (Cupit et al., 2022). When I was able to write it provided me with peace of mind because in that moment, I said exactly what I wanted to say (Cupit et al., 2022).

What about Nursing

I began questioning my future as a nurse and what my purpose in life was. I had always planned to travel with doctors without borders, but this was no longer an option. Many things became triggers for me such as the ambulance sirens, police cars and people dying. Furthermore, I couldn't leave the province because my family needed me. I was two years into my degree and in debt and felt I had to complete the program. I searched for something within the courses that was of interest to me but found nothing. My peers had decided they wanted to work in pediatrics; labor and delivery; mental health but I didn't know what I wanted to do. I decided to just move with the motions and survive the third year of my program which meant doing the bare minimum to get through. I know that my surviving would not have been possible had my partner not been in the program with me. We attended class together; studied together and he was incredibly supportive of me emotionally.

The Apartment

In preparation of returning to classes that fall I knew I had to find an apartment

within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) because I became an anxious driver and drove an unreliable car. I searched for units online and calculated what my living expenses would be. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that I would have to work while in school because the options were not within my price range and student loans would not be enough to cover the cost of living. After viewing a couple of units, I submitted an application to the more affordable unit. Sometime after my application submission I received a call from the unit owner who informed me that she was a cop and questioned if I was still interested in the unit. Confused, I confirmed I was, and she made a comment about her ensuring due to my brother's history with the police. Caught off guard by this comment and not knowing how to respond I verified I wanted the unit and the call ended. After the call I attempted to process what had just happened. How had the owner who was a cop made a connection between my brother and I? Had she searched my information in a data base at her place of work? She worked within the HRM which was separate from the police working in my hometown. I remained uneasy, questioning the breach of confidentiality but that was the only unit I could afford on my own and I had to take it.

Close Connection

During family conversations we had discussed tattoos that we wanted to get that represented my brother. While reading an old letter my brother had written me while incarcerated, I found the inspiration for my tattoo. I wanted the exact phrase my brother wrote in his exact penmanship. I spoke with a tattoo artist who had done tattoos for myself, my brother and other members of my family in the past about the possibility and he agreed. I wanted the tattoo to be in a place that was clearly visible to me while driving so I chose my left forearm. My tattoo reads "I love you sis keep your head up Bubby got

this”. A phrase he had written to reassure when I was worried about him and his life choices. Memorial tattoos function as therapeutic tools for the bereaved and maintain a positive connection between the deceased and bereaved (Swann-Thomas et al., 2022).

Winter 2017

Christmas is my favorite time of year. I listen to Christmas music earlier than most and love decorating. Our family has always been excessive with Christmas decorations inside and outside of the house. My parents are incredibly artistic. When we were kids, we would get in the car in the evening and drive around admiring other people’s Christmas lights and decorations. There was one house that was in close proximity to ours and it was our favorite. Each year that house was decorated with lights; a carousel and Santa Claus and eight reindeer appearing as though they were about to take off being led by Rudolph. However, as Christmas approached, I didn’t feel like celebrating or decorating my unit.

But then I remembered that we had to make Christmas special for Little C. He had just turned five and although grief was everywhere I needed to be there for him. I hid my sadness from my parents and attempted to prepare for Christmas for Little C’s sake. We watched Christmas movies, decorated and went Christmas shopping. While decorating my Christmas tree I recalled that my family had given each other orange toques in November in honor of Bubby because he always wore one. Like a momentum. I decided that I would put that orange toque on top of my Christmas tree as the tree topper instead of my traditional angel. I placed it on the top of the tree and took a photo that I shared with my family commenting that this was my new tradition. This made it feel like a piece of Bubby was there for Christmas (Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005).

I have always been a difficult person to buy gifts for because my wants are

minimal. I avoid having too many material things in my space and don't like people spending money unnecessarily on me. Thus, when my family started asking what I wanted for Christmas I gave the same response I always gave "nothing but to be with my family". But, Christmas 2017 was different because that year I did want something but knew it wasn't something I could openly ask for or say. I wanted what the rest of my family wanted - to have my brother back. I knew the thought was childlike and ridiculous, but it was the only gift I could imagine. So, as my friends and loved ones persisted with Christmas gift ideas I came up with an idea. I told them that as usual there was nothing I wanted for Christmas but that if they insisted on getting me a gift they could make a donation or help someone in need in Bubby's honor. When they questioned how that was a gift for me, I continued that once they made a decision of the way they wanted to honor him they were to write me a letter sharing what they did and why and that I would read the letters on Christmas morning. Although hesitant they agreed to the idea, and I shared the idea with my partner because doing acts of kindness in my brother's honor was the best alternative gift I could get for Christmas.

Spring 2018

Journal entry April 22, 2018

Ten months

Ten months ago the world changed. It became a dark place because you left. I didn't/don't know where you went just that you weren't here. Today marks ten months of this tragedy. I avoid your pictures and name because it is painful. Sometimes, my mind lets those thoughts in and I become overwhelmed, angry, weak, hopeless and alone. Life just doesn't seem to have purpose things just happen. I don't know who I am or where I am going. I need you Bubby. Life isn't the same without you. I know everything

would be okay if you were here. I wish you could come back. Please, come back. I miss you. I need you. I love you.

Journal entry April 25, 2018

Brother

She likes to talk about you. She builds things, posts on social media (yes you have your own memorial group) and has many clothes and things with photos of you on them. She misses you so dearly and I see her pain but she still talks about you because she likes to. He has been rebuilding your car for me; built furniture and also talks about you often. He cleaned your room and goes down to chat with you often. He is more silent than her but he still talks about you. They talk about the good memories and less about the negative things.

But me, your sister, I do not like to talk about you. It is not because I don't love you or care because I do. I just don't like thinking of you not being here. I have to kiss a wooden box every night to say goodnight and it just seems wrong. I want to talk to you and hear your voice. However, I can't and I don't like to discuss that.

Summer 2018

June

Many love June because it is a month of warm weather. I wish this is what June was to me. June is a sad, angry, confusing and dark month for me.

June 12th is his birthday. The day when I am supposed to sing "Happy Birthday" to you and fight for a hug. But, now June 12 is a day filled with tears and alcohol. Then ten days later a day of more sadness, anger and alcohol. A day when I realize you aren't coming back. A day when I can only remember what June was.

June 12, 2018

Bubby,

Today is June 12th and you know what that means. It's your birthday. Today you would be 23 and I would kiss you, hug you and force you to hug me with both arms. You would then say "are you done yet" to which I would reply. "No". I would make you hug me until I was content and say how crazy it is that you were 23.

As your gift I would probably get you a tool and think it was so cool and then you would tell me it was a plumbing tool and that you could not use it. You would laugh. I would feel stupid and laugh also. Although the tool was useless you would keep it anyway and I would see it a year later in the box in your room and smile.

You would probably ask me to take you to Tim Hortons and the whole car ride tell me all the horrible sounds you heard from my car and tell me it needed this, this and this. To which I would say "can you fix it"? and you would say "yeah". You would bump "Squad or Nah" and tell me all the fucked up shit you had done recently to which I would laugh and say, "only you". You would then do your silly laugh.

I would give anything to experience this again today. I love and miss you much more than I could ever say. You always believed in me. I love you Bubby. Happy 23rd birthday. P.S (I'm still older than you).

Through the Years

At one point in our relationship my partner confronted me about my anger because we had been arguing a lot. My partner was kind and knew I had a right to be angry but that it wasn't fair to take it out on him. Moreover, he expressed concern about my drug use behaviours and the changes in my personality. He wanted our relationship to work but demanded respect as well. Initially, my response was defensive but I took time to reflect on what he was saying and knew he was right, my anger was taking a toll on all areas of my life. I wasn't ready or interested in counselling but I wanted to shift my anger

toward something I cared about.

It took time and numerous failed attempts, but I was determined to trust and learn my own voice personally and professionally. I began speaking up in classes, discussing the injustices experienced by Black people within the criminal justice system and began to question how I could best use my nursing degree to practice in areas that ignited that fire in me. Stepping out of my comfort zone I joined committees; wrote poetry when needing to express my anger and committed to the idea of creating something meaningful from the death of my brother through activism. The attempt to find meaning is commonly described in African American grief literature and is described as an active cognitive-emotional-narrative process that those in bereavement use to make sense of their loss, the world and their identity (Al'Uqdah & Adomako, 2018; Bailey et al., 2013; Johnson, 2010; Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005). The process helps to form an individualistic narrative of re-evaluation and restructuring of self, the world that promotes healing, resilience and mediates grief (Al'Uqdah & Adomako, 2018; Bailey et al., 2013; Johnson, 2010; Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005).

During the start of my search for meaning I decided to pursue grief activism and pursue graduate studies upon the completion of my undergraduate degree. Grief inspired activism or social justice activism, is common within Black communities especially with Black women (Al'Uqdah & Adomako, 2018). I was determined to use my knowledge in some fashion to contribute to an understanding of grief in African Nova Scotian communities.

Keeping Him Close

As a non-religious but spiritual person I prioritized maintaining a connection with my brother. Although other family members believe in god, I don't and therefore found it

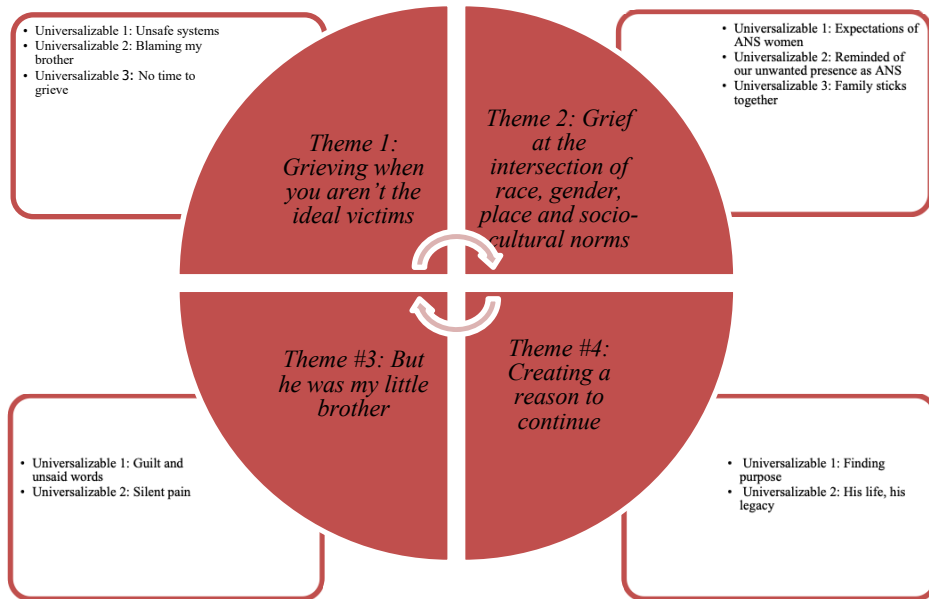
hard to believe my brother was in a “better” place. Therefore, I created ways to keep him close through my journaling, celebrations and doing things he enjoyed and doing things in his honor. This continued contact is common and can occur through additional ways such as, cemetery visits, conversations, prayer and clothing all of which promote connection with our loved ones (Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005). Myself and other family members have clothing with photos of my brother on them that we wear on a number of celebratory and memorial occasions (Bordere, 2008).

Chapter 6: Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore grief from an individual African Nova Scotian woman's perspective. The study was guided by the question: What is the grieving experience of an African Nova Scotian woman? The theoretical foundations that guided the study were Black Feminist Theory and its key principles of lived experience as a criterion of meaning and the unique standpoint of Black women. Data collection was completed through the writing and analysis of my personal narrative and additional information such as existing literature; newspaper articles; public documents and legal documents. The aforementioned data were analyzed through thematic analysis leading to the creation of universalizables aligning with the SPN methodology.

The chapter begins with a general overview of the study findings that have been categorized into four overarching themes according to my experience. The first theme *grieving when you aren't the ideal victims*, contains three universalizables; unsafe systems; blaming my brother; no time to grieve. The second theme *grief at the intersection of gender, race, place and socio-cultural norms*, presents three universalizables; expectations of ANS women; reminded of our unwanted presence as ANS; and family sticks together. The third theme, *but he was my little brother*, represents two universalizables guilt and unsaid words and silent pain. Finally, the fourth and final theme *creating a reason to continue*, includes two universalizables finding purpose, and his life, his legacy.

Figure 1: Thematic Map Overview of Study Findings



Themes and Universalizables

Theme #1: Grieving when you aren't the ideal victims.

Grieving when you aren't the ideal victims illustrates anti-Black racism through the perception of Black lives as non-valuable, criminal and undeserving of grief (Lawson, 2014). “Anti-Black racism is a system of inequities in power, resources, and opportunities that discriminates against people of African descent” (Abdillah and Shaw, 2020, p. 20). Throughout my narrative it is apparent that anti-Black racism is not only relevant in the lives of living Black Canadians but also death and grief.

The first universalizable, unsafe systems, displays the inequitable treatment imposed upon my family and I as we attempted to receive “justice” and support from systems while grieving. Embedded in the narrative are concerns of the legal counsel assigned to my brother’s case and the lack of concern for our well-being in those processes.

“At some point we were informed that the crown prosecutor would act as our legal counsel. This news was unsettling as we knew the crown prosecutor and had witnessed him degrade and encourage the incarceration of my brother in the past. During the entire court process the crown prosecutor treated us as though we were a box to be ticked off on his lists of tasks. His conversations with us were rushed, cold and only occurred in the hallway of the courthouse because he never invited us into his office to discuss matters. Furthermore, at no time did he acknowledge his past experiences with us, attempt to build better rapport or offer his condolences to our family. When providing court updates, he approached it not as a conversation for open dialogue but as one where he spoke at or around us and we were to remain silent”.

It was particularly harmful to watch my brother’s past lawyer defend the person who took his life.

“Sitting in that courtroom I felt vulnerable as I watched my brother’s lawyer defend the actions of the man that killed him and three things became clear: 1) my brother was dead, 2) no one cared and, 3) the driver pled not-guilty”.

Furthermore, the treatment and lack of support I experienced from the school of nursing created additional stress. Leading to feeling more like a problem that had to be solved and not someone in need of support.

“I received a phone call from the course professor which began with her condolences and ended with my need to make a decision regarding the future of my nursing education. Specifically, the decision requested was whether I planned to return to and complete my clinical or take time off of my studies. This call occurred within a week or so after my brother passing, thus I leaned toward taking a break from my studies. Lost in thought, the professor continued explaining that if I opted to take a break from my studies I would be required to “restart” my nursing degree because the program was drastically changing. I questioned why this would be necessary because I had completed two years of the four-year program and after this clinical practicum would enter the third year. The professor maintained that the program curriculum was changing and that taking a year off would make it

impossible for me to continue in the program based on current curriculum”.

Some nursing faculty staff were incredibly kind and thoughtful but some made cold and racial comments regarding my grief and how they felt it hindered my success in the program.

“There were of course some exclusions with some professors and instructors being supportive of my requesting assignment extensions due to my having to attend court or on those days when I couldn’t get myself out of bed. I provided minimal information when making requests trying only to ask for them when absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, the majority of the professors and instructors were cold and informed me that I “had to” “get over it” if I was to “succeed” in my nursing education. One instructor went further and explicitly stated they didn’t “understand” the reason why “my people” meaning (Black people) challenged the system but she did understand why Indigenous people would”.

The second universalizable, blaming my brother, displays the scrutinization around the innocence of Black victims who are known to police (Lawson, 2014). Within my narrative I note my brother’s history with the police and how the detective’s actions consistently investigated my brother and questioned his innocence rather than the accused.

“Moreover, it was unsettling they had not taken Cousin A’s phone as evidence but had seized my brother’s and continually denied our requests for his phone. His phone did not contain incriminating information or evidence but his was the only phone they were concerned about having in their custody. It appeared they were not searching for evidence to support our claims but instead were hoping to find something that would incriminate my brother”.

The detective’s attempts to investigate my brother continued when he requested the coroner evaluate his blood levels for alcohol and other substances.

“My family and I continued our own investigation and discovered detective Smith had no desire to have the blood alcohol level of the driver tested but that he requested the coroner assess my brother’s blood alcohol level and additional drug substances. Wondering if it was protocol during an autopsy to test for all substances, a family member contacted the coroner. The coroner communicated that testing for all substances was in fact not protocol and that they assessed based on data requested based on the requisition. In this case the requisition was completed by detective Smith and thus he requested additional drug testing during my brother’s autopsy. We received the autopsy report and the only drug found in my brother’s system was alcohol. Enraged we wondered why my brothers blood levels were tested and not the driver’s. If his blood alcohol levels had been positive for additional substances was the intention to use that against my brother and label him as the antagonist or the one at fault.”.

The third universalizable, no time to grieve, describes our inability to grieve as a family as we had to fight for justice both inside and outside of the court proceedings. During court proceedings it became apparent that the crown and detective were not communicating effectively about the case because the evidence between the two did not align.

“During court my family would often look toward one another as the crown shared incorrect information and we would shake our heads because the crown was receiving information from detective Smith as he was the lead detective on the case. However, the information Smith shared with us was not the same information that the crown was listing in court. We would anxiously anticipate recess and run to correct the crown prosecutor on the comments he made”.

“The crown reacted as though the information we provided was not what Smith had shared with him and we contacted Smith to discuss this. Smith was adamant that he shared the evidence with the crown but there was always incongruency between the two of them and what was stated in court”.

Additionally, outside of the court a lot of anger and hate was targeted at my family and

my brother by White members of the community.

“Apparently, people on social media discussed our being wrong in pressing charges against the driver and the memorial cross we placed near the bridge was destroyed”.

Theme #2: Grief at the intersection of race, gender, place and socio-cultural norms.

Grief at the intersection of race, gender, place and socio-cultural norms explores the intersecting factors of grieving as a bi-racial ANS woman from a rural community. The first universalizable, expectations of ANS women, captures the cultural familial and self-imposed expectations of Black women to be strong and carry the burden during difficult times. Within the narrative I described situations in which tasks others found difficult were made my responsibility,

such as informing family members of my brother’s passing shortly after finding out myself.

Additionally, in the narrative if I was hesitant or refused to perform tasks, I encountered resistance and pressure from those family members with little concern or thought of my capabilities or grief.

“ Parent A informs me that I must call and deliver the news to my Parent B. Dumbfounded by this request I express that as being the responsibility of the officers and should not be placed on me. Due to past experiences with the town police, they are aware that my parents are separated thus the need to ensure Parent B is notified. Furthermore, I express resistance that it be placed on me to inform Parent B of my brother’s tragic passing. Parent A agrees but insists I call Parent B because the cop hadn’t”.

I also expressed self-imposed actions of hiding my emotions and ensuring the well-being of others at the expense of my own grief.

“Additionally, I did not feel it appropriate to express my pain with my parents. They had just lost their son and did not need another person to be worried about”.

Furthermore, this universalizable exemplifies the connection between grief and BFT as my grief was not only influenced due to my ANS identity but also gender and cultural expectations placed on me as a Black woman.

“Other friends, family and community members were compassionate and kind toward me, but they had expectations of me, and they were that I would ensure the well-being of my parents. Although the expectations were from a place of love, I knew my grief was to be suppressed and hidden from family”.

Reminded of our unwanted presence as ANS people, the second universalizable captures the experience of ANS learning of ongoing acts of racism in a province that promoted segregation and systemic racism in life and death of ANS people (Corfu, 2017). The shared narrative details the horror of finding hidden racist policies when learning my brother was the first person of African descent to be legally buried in our community cemetery.

“It was not until June 2017 I learned my brother was the first Black person to be legally buried in the St. Croix cemetery. Parent A began telling me the story of a little African Nova Scotian girl who had been adopted by a White family in the 60’s. The little girl was ill and passed away and the family wanted her buried in the St. Croix cemetery (Corfu, 2017). The cemetery refused her burial there because bylaws stated Black people were not allowed to be buried there (Corfu, 2017; Nova Scotia Cemetery Companies Act, 1900”.

Learning of and uncovering laws and policies that directly denied the presence and burial of people based on race adds an additional feeling of loss when already grieving.

“They said the bylaws changed and that discriminatory policy was removed in the 60’s due to public outcry (Corfu, 2017) but, it had been forty-nine years, and my brother was the first to be buried there.”

Furthermore, the harmful behaviours displayed by White members in the community further emphasized this theme evidenced by hateful messaging invalidating the value of my brother’s life and our grief.

“Two specific messages taunted us celebrating my brother’s death and counting the number of days he had been buried. I was bewildered as to why people were angry with us and why they showed no value toward the life of my brother that was gone. Growing up in a rural area I was aware of multiple people losing their lives in motor vehicle accidents (MVA’s) but their families received tremendous support and their loved ones celebrated. This widespread hate we received vilified my family and my brother. His person and innocence were being used against him as though this was his fault. During my reflection of past deaths in the community the victims were not blamed, and their humanness was not questioned although some were outwardly racist. The single difference between Bubby and the others was that he was a Black man and had been involved with the criminal justice system”.

The final universalizable, family sticks together, illustrates the strength of family bonds and personal connections when experiencing grief in an ANS family and family extends past the nuclear family. The narrative consistently portrays my family and friends coming together and supporting each other in solitude through our grief. The injustices experienced were met with strength and resilience of the family as a unit and not as individuals. Furthermore, community members offered support through visits, providing food and phone calls.

“Prior to the funeral there was a constant rotation of people at Parent A’s house. Mainly family members and others in the community that came with food, well wishes, condolences, hugs and spent a lot of time with my parents. If people were unable to attend in person because

they lived out of province, they called and sent text messages to connect”.

Additionally, although I did not share my grief with my parents, I received ongoing support from my partner and cousin.

“My relationship with them was one of acceptance and unconditional love. They enabled me to freely express my grief whether that was through tears, anger, silence, or laughter and for that I am grateful to them”.

Both my cousin and partner offered additional support as I encountered obstacles from my grief such as validating treatment from others

“Both Cousin X and my partner validated my emotions and felt I was not receiving fair support from my professor”.

And commenting on concerns for my well-being and my relationships with them and others.

“At one point in our relationship my partner confronted me about my anger because we had been arguing a lot. My partner was kind and knew I had a right to be angry but that it wasn’t fair to take it out on him. Moreover, he expressed concern about my drug use behaviours and the changes in my personality. He wanted our relationship to work but demanded respect as well”.

Theme #3: But he was my little brother.

But he was my little brother expands on the overlooked experience of sibling grief (Williams et al., 2023). Siblings have unique bonds with one another and when grieving, siblings are often dismissed as parental grief becomes the priority area of focus (Funk et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2023). The first universalizable, guilt and unsaid words. describes the unseen and invalidated pain and guilt of the grieving siblings. I shared feelings of guilt and my inability as the eldest to protect my younger brother which are

illustrated in the poem *Little Brother*. Moreover, the narrative displays guilt and sadness of words left unsaid and experiences left undone between my brother and I because initial plans of rebuilding relationships and enjoying the summer together never happened.

The poem titled “Little brother” shares my feelings and guilt:

“Little Brother I should have protected you. I should have told you I loved you and asked you to stay. But, I didn’t little brother and now you’re gone and I imagine your return each day. I kiss a box to feel your love; I drive your car to feel your energy; I have your girl to feel your warmth. I’m sorry little brother. I am sorry I couldn’t protect you the day you left me”.

The second universalizable, silent pain, builds on guilt and unsaid words enabling an exploration of the coping strategies employed to navigate the sibling grieving experience. It was imperative that I mask and internalize my emotions to ensure they were hidden from others, particularly my parents (Funk et al., 2018). Public presentation as composed and strong was a skill I utilized well and continued to serve me when interacting with others. However, the narrative displays the struggle of dual identity of the person before and the person after the death of her brother. The narrative shares the need for external composition while experiencing inner turmoil:

“I maintained friendly conversations with people and was able to smile and participate as needed but while others were celebrating, I felt like I was dying inside. The compartmentalization of appearing fine in public but fighting battles internally was a skill I had mastered throughout my life”.

The poem below provides additional insight into the depressive and suicidal thoughts:

*“I feel so sad, alone, empty
I smile to make others happy,
Its lonely in this place, and,
The only way out is scary.*

*I cannot take it anymore, but,
They need me”.*

Committed to remaining composed in public, the narrative details the silent pain experienced leading to depressive symptoms, isolation, spiritual loss, irrational anger and increased alcohol consumption to cope and numb the pain.

“Not knowing how to articulate my emotions or my pain I began to drink and use edibles to numb my mind. Prior to the death of my brother as an adult I rarely drank and never used illicit drugs. My family members and my partner were increasingly worried about me using drugs as frequently as I had been and asked/told me to stop”.

Theme #4: Creating a reason to continue.

Creating a reason to continue, the fourth and final theme, describes my personal search for purpose in a world that no longer made sense. The first universalizable finding purpose is described in the narrative as I searched for meaning outside of religious beliefs and creating something positive out of the horrendous death. The narrative captures my reflection on personal values and search for spiritual alternatives that resonated.

“As a non-religious but spiritual person I prioritized maintaining a connection with my brother. Although other family members believe in god, I don’t and therefore found it hard to believe my brother was in a “better” place. Therefore, I created ways to keep him close through my journaling, celebrations and doing things he enjoyed and doing things in his honor”.

Furthermore, I detail how I used my painful experience of grief to guide my nursing education and practice.

“It took time and numerous failed attempts but I was determined to trust and learn my own voice personally and professionally. I began speaking up in classes, discussing the injustices experienced by Black people within the criminal justice system and began to question how I could best use my nursing degree to practice in areas that ignited that

fire in me. Stepping out of my comfort zone I joined committees; wrote poetry when needing to express my anger and committed to the idea of creating something meaningful from the death of my brother through activism”.

Ultimately deciding to conduct research on grief in ANS communities.

“During the start of my search for meaning I decided to pursue grief activism and pursue graduate studies upon the completion of my undergraduate degree”.

The second universalizable, his life, his legacy, illustrates the necessity and approaches I used to continue to connect with my brother after his passing. Throughout the narrative I describe additional ways I connected with my brother such as taking care of his dog, TJ, personal tattoos, creating new traditions, writing poetry, journaling as a direct conversation to him and sharing wealth within the ANS community through memorial scholarships.

The quote below describes maintaining connection through a personal tattoo:

“During family conversations we had discussed tattoos that we wanted to get that represented my brother. While reading an old letter my brother had written me while incarcerated, I found the inspiration for my tattoo. I wanted the exact phrase my brother wrote in his exact penmanship”.

My tattoo reads “I love you sis keep your head up Bubby got this”.

Journaling became a means of communication with him:

“Wanting to connect with my brother I decided to try journaling. My journal entries were written to him, and it felt like we were able to have a conversation”.

Maintaining connection during the holidays:

“While decorating my Christmas tree I recalled that my family had given each other orange toques in November in honor of Bubby because he always wore one. Like a momentum. I decided that I would

put that orange toque on top of my Christmas tree as the tree topper instead of my traditional angel”.

Finally, I embraced the carefree and self-acceptance attitude of my brother and spent time building a relationship with myself and incorporating elements of that into my life.

Interpretations

This Scholarly Personal Narrative qualitative study provides an initial understanding into the complexities of grief from an ANS woman’s perspective. The study findings were situated into four themes that illustrate the unique ANS identity and the necessity of including contextual factors that shape grieving processes such as anti-Black racism, involvement of the criminal justice system, race, gender and the relationship to the deceased.

The findings suggest that grieving experiences of ANS’s are shaped by anti-Black racial structures that are perpetuated in Canadian society, such as the criminal justice system, police scrutiny and post-secondary education structures. Involvement of the criminal justice system in the lives of bereaved Black families influences how the bereaved and deceased are socially viewed and treated (Lawson, 2014). Police treatment and media representation of the deceased contribute to how the deceased are perceived and determines whether or not they are a true victim worthy of grieving (Lawson, 2014). Subsequently, due to what Lawson (2014) refers to as “the liberal racial state that is Canada,” Black Canadians reside at the periphery of Canadian society and experience inequitable treatment that promotes social exclusion, through anti-Black racism. Based on this, Black bodies are viewed as less than and not deserving of grief, thus grieving in Black communities is often disenfranchised and their grieving processes are interrupted (Lawson, 2014). What is more, findings suggest that when death is unexpected and the deceased is known to police, their character is questioned and families begin a fight for

“justice” thus preventing and influencing their grieving processes.

Secondly, the findings suggest that during times of grief, additional burdens are placed on Black women by themselves and others based on cultural norms such as the *Strong Black Woman* (SBW) construct. The SBW is an idea that depicts Black women as strong, caring, independent individuals capable of prioritizing the needs of others over their own with endless capacity (Etowa et al., 2017). This in turn can lead to unintentional additional stressors and harm imposed on Black women further impacting their grief.

Thirdly, findings align with recent acknowledgement of Nova Scotia as a province that permitted racial segregation, which determined the location, treatment and views of where African Nova Scotian communities could bury their deceased loved ones (Corfu, 2017). Moreover, findings note that current knowledge of ANS as tightly knit communities that have continually fought against racial injustices and discriminatory treatment within the province through resilience in family units (Maddalena et al., 2010, Maddalena et al., 2013) may also be used to cope with grief and that family extends past the often-described normal family units.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that ANS sibling grief is in fact unique and often minimized (Brown, 2020; Funk et al., 2018) and overlooked compared to parental grief (Williams et al., 2023). What is more, siblings often experience grief in isolation (Funk et al., 2018) as they hide their pain to cope without formal support (Funk et al., 2018; Sharpe, 2007) and to prevent additional burden on their parents (Williams et al., 2023).

Finally, findings suggest the necessity of meaning reconstruction (Neimeyer,

2019), spirituality (Thomas-Bernard et al., 2014), benefit-finding (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006) and maintaining connections with the deceased (Bordere, 2009; Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005). Moreover, findings suggest universal grief frameworks do not enable a full representation of the unique contextual factors shaping the grief experiences of ANS (Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005).

Summary

This chapter outlined moving from the “me” to the “we” of SPN through shared findings in the study. The findings were situated and described through four overarching themes and their respective sub- universalizables. Furthermore, elements from my personal narrative were used to illuminate the meaning and experience of the described sub-universalizables.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This discussion chapter provides additional space for researchers to situate findings in the context of existing literature in the area of study as well as sharing the significance of the findings. Within this chapter I will resituate readers beginning with restating the study purpose, guiding questions and situating the findings in the context of existing literature and knowledge. Additionally, the significance of the findings will be shared followed by limitations and ending with a conclusion of the study.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this qualitative SPN research study was to explore and gain an understanding of an individual perspective of grief from an ANS woman. The study was guided by theoretical underpinnings of Black Feminist Theory and the question, What is the grieving experience of an African Nova Scotian Woman?

Summary of the Findings

This study provides an initial understanding of the complexities and contextual factors of grief from an African Nova Scotian woman's perspective. The findings were described through four overarching themes that illustrated the intersecting factors that shaped the individual narrative. The four themes of the study were:

- 1) Grieving when you aren't the ideal victims,
- 2) Grief at the intersection of race, gender, place, and socio-cultural norms
- 3) But he was my little brother,
- 4) Creating a reason to continue.

Findings in the Context of Existing Knowledge

The findings of the study align with existing bodies of literature on grief in African Canadian as well as African American populations. A 2014 study on gun-related deaths in Toronto, Ontario details the interruption of grieving processes in African

Canadians when grief is disenfranchised (Lawson, 2014). Disenfranchised grief occurs when a loss is not socially validated or acknowledged and occurs through questioning the character of the deceased and the community to which they and the bereaved belong (Lawson, 2014). Disenfranchised grief occurs based on racial inequities within Canadian structures imposed on African Canadians and is common when deaths are violent or unexpected (Lawson, 2014). The findings from this qualitative study align with existing evidence on disenfranchised grief through the theme grieving when you aren't the ideal victims. This theme describes the ways grief is denied and interrupted based on police involvement, police approaches and how treatment of the bereaved and deceased shapes how they are perceived socially (Lawson, 2014). For example, Black men that are "known to police" are viewed as criminal (Lawson, 2014) and therefore their lives are valued less and surrounded by stigma (Bailey et al., 2013; Lawson, 2014) and police investigations are unequal compared to White victims (Bailey et al., 2013). Furthermore, the findings of this study align with literature suggesting that African Canadians are denied opportunities for socially expressing their grief and are expected to simply "move on" or "get over their loss" (Lawson, 2014).

Although Lawson's work was based on Black people of Caribbean descent in Toronto (Lawson, 2014) and grieving African American mothers (Bailey et al., 2013) rather than ANS, the studies provide insight into grieving processes of the bereaved when the criminal justice system is involved. Therefore, the findings of this study begin to address this gap in the literature within the ANS population.

The findings of this study also align with work from (Etowa et al., 2017) and the impact of the strong Black woman ideal and how it shapes the health of ANS women.

Although Etowa's study does not focus on grief but rather on overall health within ANS women, it is intrinsically associated with the findings of this study. The SBW construct presents Black women as strong, caring, independent individuals capable of prioritizing the needs of others over their own with endless capacity (Etowa et al., 2017). The SBW construct was demonstrated in the findings through cultural expectations of others and those self-imposed. Moreover, findings from the study align with BFT highlighting the influence of racism and sexism and how those oppressing factors influence grief for ANS women (Collins, 2000).

Additionally, the study findings align with foundational grief work led by Maddalena et al., (2010) and Maddalena et al., (2013) on the importance of family and informal support during the grieving process. While the work of (Maddalena et al., 2010) and (Maddalena et al., 2013), focuses on end-of-life care and not sudden loss, it confirms the importance of family and additional informal supports for bereaved ANS.

The study findings align with existing literature on sibling and familial loss in African American communities. It is common for siblings to experience feelings of guilt in their inability to protect their younger siblings (Brown, 2020; Williams et al., 2023) in addition to hiding (Sharpe, 2007), masking or internalizing (Brown, 2020) their emotions as a coping mechanism and/or to protect their parents (Brown, 2020). Additionally, findings align with Williams et al., (2023) and the limited support for grieving siblings and the need for Black people to present themselves as strong and resilient regardless of their pain. Although the evidence presented above to support the findings of this study are based on African American siblings and families coping with loss from homicide, they provide insight into the emotions associated with unexpected sibling loss.

Furthermore, my findings align with existing literature that identifies the need to move away from traditional universal grief models that are symptom-based, such as the psychoanalytic models of Freud (Granek, 2010) and Lindmann (1944), as they do not capture the contextual and cultural experiences of grief. According to my experience, although there were physiological elements experienced, they did not encompass my grieving experience nor did the intention or thought of releasing connections to my brother support my grief (Granek, 2010; Lindemann, 1944).

Additionally, neither the stage model of Kubler-Ross (1965); attachment model (Holmes; 2014; Parkes, 1985) or Worden's task-based model (Rothaupt & Becker, 2007; Yousef-Abramson, 2021) represented my experience. I was unable to experience denial or process my grief based on my need to fight injustice and my need to care for others (Johnson, 2022). Johnson (2022) wrote a reflective piece on the stage model and its relevance within grief in the African American population. Johnson evaluates the appropriateness of the 5-stage framework and its lack of relevance in Black grief. Black people are not permitted the opportunity to deny their loss or be depressed because lives such as community and family are dependent on us.

The dual process model of Strobe and Schut (1999) and Strobe (2002) represents elements of the need to "oscillate" between emotions but does not consider the socio-contextual factors that shaped my experience. The findings in my narrative align with elements of existing literature around the importance of meaning-making through finding purpose and maintaining contact with the deceased. Finding meaning when experiencing violent or unexpected loss is displayed through various ways, such as finding purpose (Bailey et al., 2013), and using spiritual practices (Thomas-Bernard, 2014). Engaging in

activism to promote social justice (Al'Uqdah & Adomako, 2018; Bailey et al., 2013) promotes empowerment, healing (Al'Uqdah & Adomako, 2018) and resilience (Bailey et al., 2013). What is more, my findings align with existing literature on the need to maintain connection to the deceased (Bordere, 2009; Brown, 2020; Funk et al., 2018; Laurie & Neimeyer, 2008; Rosenblatt & Wallace, 2005; Sharpe, 2008).

In summary, situating the findings of this study within existing literature I have found three components that differ between my experience and existing knowledge of grieving experiences. Based on my experience the use of informal supports, spirituality and family dynamics differ my experience as an ANS woman and grieving in the larger context of knowledge production. In future studies I will be interested to see if these three elements appear for grieving experiences of other grieving ANS women.

Finally, the aforementioned models have shortcomings and did not reflect my individual grieving experience in totality. Based on my narrative elements and components from multiple models occurred within my grieving experience; the most prominent are that of the social constructivist model and meaning making. However, no one model was representative of my experience indicating a need to better understand grief from an ANS perspective. These findings are relevant to my individual experience and are not meant to be representative of other ANS within the province. Rather, that findings from this study may be transferrable to other ANS to further develop research needed to understand the complexity of grief within the ANS population.

Significance of the Findings

Significance to the Nursing Profession

The study and its findings are valuable to the nursing profession as it relates to education, research, advocacy, social justice, and population health. Nursing education

and research largely focuses on grief from a palliative care lens and do not acknowledge grief in circumstances of sudden death leaving many nurses unprepared to support the bereaved. Furthermore, without direct conversation and acknowledgement of anti-Black racism and grief nurses unknowingly perpetuate harm through educational programs and clinical practice that is racist. The findings in this study compel nursing faculty, students, and practitioners to reflect on their approach to grief care and the frameworks that guide them. Finally, this study may be used as a case study within nursing education to provoke discussion around grief from an anti-racist and socio-historical and culturally relevant intersectoral lens.

Significance for the Rural ANS communities

The findings of this study hold immense value for the ANS community. ANS voices and knowledge are often overlooked and dismissed in research. Furthermore, existing research often highlights ANS populations within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) leading to the exclusion of rural ANS perspectives. This study gives voice to rural ANSs and further extends the diversity within the province. The study prioritizes the ANS perspective and contributes to the development of a body of literature on grief within the ANS population.

Finally, adding the rural voice the study has the opportunity to promote family discussion around grief and actively dismantle cultural expectations to hide grief (Johnson, 2022) that are held in ANS communities based on survival (Williams et al., 2023) and call for ANS voices to evaluate and critique existing grief frameworks and create frameworks that represent our experiences (Johnson, 2022).

Implications of Study Findings

Implications for Nursing Education

As nurses we have a responsibility to ensure we provide care, support and

guidance that is culturally relevant and appropriate to the population. Implications for nursing will be examined through incorporating an intersectoral framework, culturally relevant lens and building policies and awareness around grief literacy. A framework that should be thoroughly embedded in nursing education is intersectionality. As described by Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 11), “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor”. Having reflective discussion and curriculum on grief considered through an intersectional lens, and providing nurses with grief literacy skills are essential. Grief literacy refers to the shift in how grief is viewed within social contexts and promotes equitable bereavement care for all (Breen et al., 2022). Early exposure to grief and intersectionality benefits nursing practice, as nurses enter practice possessing primary understandings of grief literacy, cultural awareness and humility which can be applied within their practice and promote support for the bereaved from an intersectoral lens.

Building grief literacy must be founded in a culturally relevant lens. This involves educating students on cultural differences that may exist within the ANS population such as highlighting the emphasis of family and communal living in ANS communities versus the western notion of family units, as well as the impact of anti-Black racism on the lives of the deceased and the bereaved. Additionally, informal support systems and spirituality contribute to promoting coping within the population. Furthermore, spirituality should not be focused on religion but on the individual spiritual beliefs that the bereaved hold. Finally, it is important to consider various coping mechanisms such as meaning making in grieving Black communities.

In summation, nursing educators must seek out and incorporate literature on grief into curriculum to build grief literacy and examine grief from an intersectoral lens to support culturally relevant understanding for the ANS population.

Implications for Nursing Research

The findings of the study offer foundational knowledge for nurses to further their expertise and understanding of grief from an anti-racist, intersectoral lens. Nursing research on grief has primarily focused on palliative and end of life grief and although this focus has its place, anticipatory grief differs from grief that is sudden, violent or traumatic. Furthermore, the bulk of grief research has been conducted by psychologists and social workers in the United States and although they provide valuable insight, Canadian nurses must be involved in the development of grief literature that describe the contextual factors that influence grief leading to better understandings of grief within the Canadian context and more specifically, ANS experiences.

Nursing research on grief must consider anti-Black racism and its role in grieving ANS, while promoting social justice. What is more, nursing research must prioritize the socio-contextual factors that shape grief such as race and move away from solely symptomatic grief work.

Future studies must try to understand grief experiences of other rural ANS's and the elements that influence grief for those individuals. With such limited knowledge it is vital that future initiatives use qualitative methodologies to continue to build understanding. Some suggested approaches are qualitative descriptive studies which would involve building relationships within rural ANS communities through community organizations, churches and interview community members experiences of grief. For example, my personal next steps are to understand grief beyond my own experience

through my doctoral studies. I plan to focus on those whose grief has been disenfranchised through involvement of the criminal justice system and siblings.

With the development of additional literature, knowledge can be incorporated into nursing education that would not be possible in the continual absence of literature. With more literature, future scholars can use grounded theory to develop grief theories that better represent ANS experiences of grief.

Nursing research and education must avoid presenting ANS as a monolithic group and prioritize ANS knowledge within methodologies. ANS are a diverse group with varying experiences; perspectives and ways of knowing. Therefore, it is imperative in nursing education as well as scholarly work to honour differing ways of knowing by being cognizant of who and how we describe knowledge. For example, within this study I share my experience as a mixed-race ANS woman, but do not intend for others to generalize findings as “the ANS experience”. My story is one of many that can be used to better understand and incorporate other ways of knowing to the future development of grief literature and grief models.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are discussed in relation to transferability and methodological concerns. It is imperative to remind readers that findings from this SPN study or from qualitative studies using other designs are not subject to generalizability criteria but rather transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability is promoted through “thick description” within the study so that others may review the study and its findings to determine if findings are applicable in other contexts, populations and or lead to the development of new insights (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2017). Additionally, SPN describes transferability as the moments readers connect with the

shared narrative and the larger implications described (Nash, 2019; Nash & Bradley, 2011).

Methodological limitations relate to the sample size and the personal nature of the study. The study consisted of one participant (the researcher) and a single narrative was self-interrogated to find meaning. Additionally, the personal nature of the study cannot go unnoticed. Although numerous reflexive practices were instituted to promote the trustworthiness and transferability of the findings, the study itself is personal, and findings should be reviewed with that in mind. Thus, all findings are specific to my personal experience of loss.

Conclusion

This study focused on the unexpected passing of my brother Dashonn Jondell States on June 22, 2017, a life changing experience that left me feeling isolated and searching for meaning. Using my personal experience, this study offers foundational knowledge into an ANS's experience of unexpected grief. Conducting this study informed by BFT and using a SPN design enabled me to centralize and interrogate grief from the lived experience of an ANS woman. The findings presented in four themes further understanding of how grieving is eluded for ANS due to the embeddedness of anti-Black racism within Canadian structures in Black communities consistently invalidating, disrupting and shaping the grieving processes of the bereaved. Additionally, it provides insight into historical and current socio-contextual factors such as how interactions with the criminal justice system influence how the deceased and bereaved are perceived personally and professionally by White Nova Scotians. Furthermore, although coping with loss was expressed through finding meaning in the loss by myself, current grief frameworks do not represent grief from an ANS perspective of unexpected loss.

ANS experiences of unexpected loss are missing from grief and bereavement literature. If nursing is to work from a culturally relevant lens to meet the needs of the ANS population, nurses must continue to integrate knowledge of grief outside of traditional grief frameworks and instead use an intersectoral lens of contextual factors of those grieving. Furthermore, sibling grief from an ANS perspective is largely non-existent leaving that population vulnerable and misunderstood by healthcare professionals. This study provides initial knowledge of the role contextual factors rooted in historic and ongoing anti-Black racism play within grieving ANS populations.

References

- Al'Uqdah, S., & Adomako, F. (2018). From Mourning to Action: African American Women's Grief, Pain, and Activism. *Journal of Loss & Trauma, 23*(2), 91–98.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2017.1393373>
- Amoah, J. (1997). Narrative: The Road to Black Feminist Theory. *Berkeley Women's Law Journal, 12*(1), 84-102. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/berkwolj12&i=88>
- Bailey, A., Hannays-King, C., Clarke, J., Lester, E., & Velasco, D. (2013). Black Mothers' Cognitive Process of Finding Meaning and Building Resilience after Loss of a Child to Gun Violence. *The British Journal of Social Work, 43*(2), 336–354.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct027>
- Balk, D. E. (2001). College Student Bereavement, Scholarship, and the University: A Call for University Engagement. *Death Studies, 25*(1), 67–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180126146>
- Bernard, W. T., Maddalena, V., Njiwaji, M., & Darrell, D. M. (2014). The Role of Spirituality at End of Life in Nova Scotia's Black Community. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work, 33*(3–4), 353–376. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2014.930622>
- Bordere, T. C. (2008). “To Look at Death Another Way”: Black Teenage Males' Perspectives on Second-Lines and Regular Funerals in New Orleans. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying, 58*(3), 213–232. <https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.58.3.d>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Breen, L. J., Kawashima, D., Joy, K., Cadell, S., Roth, D., Chow, A., & Macdonald, M. E. (2022). Grief literacy: A call to action for compassionate communities. *Death*

- Studies*, 46(2), 425–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1739780>
- Brown, T.N. (2020). *African American Sibling Survivors of Homicide Victims: A Phenomenological Study* (Publication No. 28090678) [Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Buglass, E. (2010). Grief and bereavement theories. *Nursing Standard*, 24(41), 44–47. <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns2010.06.24.41.44.c7834>
- Burke, L. A., Neimeyer, R. A., Young, A. J., Bonin, E. P., & Davis, N. L. (2014). Complicated Spiritual Grief II: A Deductive Inquiry Following the Loss of a Loved One. *Death Studies*, 38(4), 268–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2013.829373>
- Burke, L. A., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2014). Complicated Spiritual Grief I: Relation to Complicated Grief Symptomatology Following Violent Death Bereavement. *Death Studies*, 38(4), 259–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2013.829372>
- Caitlin, G. (1993). The Role of Culture in Grief. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 133(2), 173-184, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1993.9712135>
- Collins, P. H. (1989). The social construction of Black feminist thought. *Signs*, 14, 745 -773.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Combahee River Collective (1978). A Black feminist statement. Retrieved from: <https://we.riseup.net/assets/43875/combahee%20river.pdf>
- Corfu, N. (2017, February 8). *Segregation 'even after death' for African Nova Scotians, researcher says*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/segregated-cemeteries-camp-hill-african-nova-scotians-black-communities-1.3971054>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

- approaches (4th ed., international student edition.). SAGE Publications.
- Cupit, I. N., Wilson-Doenges, G., Barnaby, L., & Kowalski, D. Z. (2022). When college students grieve: New insights into the effects of loss during emerging adulthood. *Death Studies, 46*(9), 2123–2133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2021.1894510>
- Dalhousie University. (2021). *African Nova Scotian Strategy*.
<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/african-nova-scotian-connection/african-nova-scotian-strategy.html>
- DeSantis, L., & Ugarriza, D. N. (2000). The Concept of Theme as Used in Qualitative Nursing Research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 22*(3), 351-372. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/019394590002200308>
- DePoy, E., & Gitlin, L. N. (2020). *Introduction to Research: Understanding and Applying Multiple Strategies* (Sixth ed.). St. Louis, MO: Elsevier.
- De Sousa, I., & Varcoe, C. (2022). Centering Black feminist thought in nursing praxis. *Nursing Inquiry, 29*(1), e12473-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nin.12473>
- Eisenbruch, M. (1984). Cross-cultural aspects of bereavement. I: A conceptual framework for comparative analysis. *Cult Med Psych 8*, 283–309. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00055172>
- Este, D., & Bernard, W. T. (2019). Spirituality Among African Nova Scotians. *Critical Social Work, 7*(1). <https://doi.org/10.22329/csw.v7i1.5768>
- Etowa, J. B., Beagan, B. L., Eghan, F., & Bernard, W. T. (2017). “You feel you have to be made of steel”: The strong Black woman, health, and well-being in Nova Scotia. *Health Care for Women International, 38*(4), 379–393.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2017.1290099>
- Funk, A. M., Jenkins, S., Astroth, K. S., Braswell, G., & Kerber, C. (2018). A Narrative Analysis

- of Sibling Grief. *Journal of Loss & Trauma*, 23(1), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2017.1396281>
- Granek, L. (2010). Grief as pathology: The evolution of grief theory in psychology from Freud to the present. *History of Psychology*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016991>
- Granek, & Peleg-Sagy, T. (2015). Representations of African Americans in the Grief and Mourning Literature from 1998 to 2014: A Systematic Review. *Death Studies*, 39(10), 605–632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2015.1047059>
- Halifax Public Libraries. (2021, December 13). *Rajean Willis: Exploring the complexities of Grief and Loss*.
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JcV7URauocw&list=PLQi9gYfJNi9uQtSqwXoNqyQr683OpNk-Z&index=2&pp=iAQB>
- Hill, C. P., & Bilge, S. (2016). *Intersectionality*. Polity Press.
- Historica Canada. (2016, March). *Heritage Minutes: Underground Railroad* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZStWWVqkh0&ab_channel=HistoricaCanada
- Hyater-Adams, Y. (2012). How to get going with personal narrative in scholarly writing. *Practicing Social Change*, 5, 38-41. <http://www.professorsapp.com/summer-ted-506/spn.pdf>
- Holmes, J. (2014). *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory*. Taylor and Francis.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315879772> (Book)
- Jenkins, E., Wang, E., & Turner, L. (2014). Beyond Community Violence: Loss and Traumatic Grief in African American Elementary School Children. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 7(1), 27-36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-014-0001-4>
- Johnson, C. M. (2010). African-American Teen Girls Grieve the Loss of Friends to Homicide:

- Meaning Making and Resilience. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 61(2), 121–143.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.61.2.c>
- Johnson, K. A. (2022). A Mother's Tears: Contemplating Black Grief. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 20(4), 381–382. <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2822>
- Joseph, B. (2020, May 24). *What is an Indigenous Medicine Wheel?*. Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-is-an-indigenous-medicine-wheel>
- Kisely, S., Terashima, M., & Langille, D. (2008). A population-based analysis of the health experience of African Nova Scotians. *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*, 179(7), 653–658. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.071279>
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On Death and Dying*. : Macmillan.
- Laurie, A., & Neimeyer, R. (2008). African Americans in Bereavement: Grief as a Function of Ethnicity. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 57(2), 173–193.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.57.2.d>
- Lawson, E. (2014). Disenfranchised grief and social inequality: Bereaved African Canadians and oppositional narratives about the violent deaths of friends and family members. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(11), 2092–2109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.800569>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Lindemann, E. (1994). Symptomatology and management of acute grief. 1944 [classical article]. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 151(6), 155–160.
<https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.151.6.155>
- Maddalena, V., Bernard, W. T., Etowa, J. B., Davis-Murdoch, S., Smith, D., & Marsh-Jarvis, P. (2010). Cancer care experiences and the use of complementary and

- alternative medicine at end of life in Nova Scotia's Black communities. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 21, 114–122.
- Maddalena, V., Bernard, W. T., Davis-Murdoch, S., & Smith, D. (2013). Awareness of Palliative Care and End-of-Life Options Among African Canadians in Nova Scotia. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 24(2), 144–152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659612472190>
- Massaquoi, N., & Wane, N. N. (2007). *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Black Feminist Thought*. : Inanna Publications and Education Inc.
- Nash, R. J., & Bradley, D. L. (2011). *Me-Search AND Re-Search: A Guide for Writing Scholarly Personal Narrative Manuscripts*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Company.
- Nash, R.J., & Viray, S. (2013). *Our Stories Matter: Liberating the Voice of Marginalized Students Through Scholarly Personal Narrative Writing*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Nash, R. J. (2019). *Liberating Scholarly Writing : The Power of Personal Narrative*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Company.
- Neighbors, H. W., & Jackson, J. S. (1984). The use of informal and formal help: Four patterns of illness behavior in the black community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 12(6), 629–644. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00922616>
- Neimeyer, R. A. (1999). NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN GRIEF THERAPY. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/107205399266226>
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2001). Reauthoring life narratives: Grief therapy as meaning reconstruction. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 38(3/4), 171-183
- Neimeyer, R. A., Prigerson, H. G., & Davies, B. (2002). Mourning and Meaning. *The American Behavioral Scientist* (Beverly Hills), 46(2), 235–251.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/000276402236676>

- Neimeyer, R. A., Laurie, A., Mehta, T., Hardison, H., & Currier, J. M. (2008). Lessons of loss: Meaning-making in bereaved college students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2008(121), 27–39. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.264>
- Neimeyer, R. A., Klass, D., & Dennis, M. R. (2014). A Social Constructionist Account of Grief: Loss and the Narration of Meaning. *Death Studies*, 38(8), 485–498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2014.913454>
- Neimeyer, R. A. (2019). Meaning reconstruction in bereavement: Development of a research program. *Death Studies*, 43(2), 79–91. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/10.1080/07481187.2018.1456620>
- Parkes, C. M. (1985). Bereavement. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 146(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.146.1.11>
- Piazza-Bonin, E., Neimeyer, R. A., Burke, L. A., McDevitt-Murphy, M. E., & Young, A. (2015). Disenfranchised Grief Following African American Homicide Loss: An Inductive Case Study. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 70(4), 404–427. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222815573727>
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). *Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Nursing Practice* (Tenth ed.). N.p.: Wolters Kluwer
- Rosenblatt, P. C., & Wallace, B. R. (2005). Narratives of grieving African-Americans About Racism in the Lives of the Deceased Family Members. *Death Studies*, 29(3), 217–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180590916353>
- Rothaupt, J. W., & Becker, K. (2007). A literature review of western bereavement theory: From deathtaking to continuing bonds. *The Family Journal*, 15(1), 6–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480706294031>

Sehatzadeh, A. (2008). A Retrospective on the Strengths of African Nova Scotian Communities:

Closing Ranks to Survive. *Journal of Black Studies*, 38(3), 407-412.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934707306574>

Shakur, A. (1987). *Assata An Autobiography*. : Lawrence Hill Books.

Sharpe, T.L (2007). *Coping with Family Member Homicide: The African American Experience*.

(UMI Number: 3301806) [Doctoral Dissertation, Boston College]. ProQuest

Dissertations and Thesis Global.

Sharpe, T. L. (2008) Sources of Support for African-American Family Members of Homicide

Victims, *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 17(2), 197-

216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313200801947231>

Smart Brown Girl Book Club. (2020, July 22). *Author Chat w/Dr. Patricia Hill Collins, Black*

Feminist Thought. [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6lS1PxIwd4&ab_channel=SBGBookClub

Statistics Canada. (2022). COVID-19 mortality among racialized populations in Canada and its

association with income. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm)

[0001/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2022001/article/00010-eng.htm) (Gupta & Aitken, 2022).

Steeves, R. H. (2002). The Rhythms of Bereavement. *Family & Community*

Health, 25(1), 1–10. [https://doi.org/10.1097/00003727-200204000-](https://doi.org/10.1097/00003727-200204000-00004)

[00004](https://doi.org/10.1097/00003727-200204000-00004)

Stroebe, M., & Schut, H. (1999). The dual process model of coping with bereavement: Rationale

and description. *Death Studies*, 23(3), 197–224.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/074811899201046>

- Stroebe, M. S. (2002). Paving the way: From early attachment theory to contemporary bereavement research. *Mortality* (Abingdon, England), 7(2), 127–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13576270220136267>
- Swann-Thomas, B., Fleming, S., & Buckley, E. (2022). Etched in the skin: grief on a living canvas memorial tattoos as expressions of grief. *Mortality* (Abingdon, England), 27(3), 351–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2020.1865893>
- The Revised Statutes of Nova Scotia. The Commissioner of Public Works And Mines, Queen's Printer. (1900).
- Thompson, D. (2022). *The Long Road Home On Blackness and Belonging*. : Scribner Canada.
- Williams, G., Cobb, T., & Robinson, T. (2023). “Oh, What a Way to Grieve the One You Love”: Black Families, Grief, and the Limits of Resilience Rhetoric for Positive Mental Health Outcomes. *Journal of Family Communication*, 23(3–4), 205–211.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2023.2240781>
- Yousuf-Abramson, S. (2021). Worden's tasks of mourning through a social work lens. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 35(4), 367–379.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2020.1843146>

Appendices

Appendix A: Codes used for Thematic Analysis(Braun & Clark, 2006).

Coding Number	Coded Data
C1	Importance of family
C2	Being with family
C3	Unsaid words
C4	Signs
C5	Frozen and Paralyzed
C6	Differing grief expressions
C7	Silent and strong grief
C8	Supporting grief expressed by others
C9	Ignoring us
C10	We just got him back
C11	Caring for family
C12	Questioning – trying to understand and searching
C13	My role
C14	Protecting family
C15	My pain not considered
C16	Family support and support of loved ones
C17	Distrust of the police (lies, misinformation and sneaky behaviour)
C18	Search for truth in the lies
C19	Connection – daisies
C20	Blaming my brother
C21	Investigating my brother and not defending him
C22	Caring for Tj
C23	Police negligence
C24	Supporting others
C25	Grief and COVID
C26	Need to connect
C27	Influence of criminal justice system
C28	Criminal justice system and conflicts of interest
C29	Criminal justice system and placing tasks on us
C30	Searching his phone
C31	Having to ensure justice rather than grieve
C32	Testing his blood
C33	Guilt
C34	Seeking informal support
C35	Disregarding us
C36	Racism and criminal justice system
C37	History with criminal justice system
C38	My brother as “known to police”
C39	Cold treatment of my family and I
C40	No grief when trying to comprehend conflicts of interest
C41	Limited options from university

C42	Limited support from university
C43	Doing what is necessary to make parents happy
C44	Hiding pain and emotions
C45	My ability to maintain the façade diminishing
C46	No grief and having to look for solutions
C47	Support of partner and cousin
C48	Reminded of my need to care for my parents
C49	Not showing pain
C50	Only show emotions when in a safe space (alone or with partner or Cousin X)
C51	Devaluing my brothers life
C52	Destroying the memorial
C53	My brother not seen as a valid victim in the White community
C54	Treatment from neighbours
C55	Racism and the cemetery
C56	First Black person to be legally buried
C57	Taking justice into our hands through protest
C58	No safe place for us
C59	Police mocking us
C60	Bringing in a Black judge
C61	Police officer and my privacy
C62	Funerals and my family
C63	My separation from god
C64	Cop attempt to prevent step-brother from attending funeral
C65	Step-brother attending funeral in shackles
C66	School façade
C67	Depression and alcohol
C68	Questioning my life purpose
C69	No grief and finishing school
C70	Loss of identity
C71	Dark place
C72	Tattoos
C73	Scholarships
C74	Finding purpose