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Exploring Research on the Coping Strategies of Black Survivors of Homicide Victims: A Scoping Review Protocol

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3 **Exploring Research on the Coping Strategies of Black Survivors of Homicide Victims: A**
4 **Scoping Review Protocol**
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7 Travonne Edwards¹, Tanya Sharpe¹, Antonia Bonomo¹ & Notisha Massaquoi¹
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10 Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, ON, Canada¹
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15

16 **Corresponding Author:**

17 Travonne Edwards

18 Social Work PhD Student

19 Address: 246 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 1V4

20 Phone Number: 416-561-3709

21 Fax: N/A

22 Travonne.edwards@mail.utoronto.ca

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Abstract

Introduction: Black people throughout the global African Diaspora are disproportionately impacted by homicide. However, despite this overrepresentation, relevant research is limited as to how Black surviving family members and friends of victims cope with the chronic traumatic devastation of homicide. This scoping review will provide an amalgamation of the current literature regarding the coping strategies of Black survivors of homicide victims to support future health and social work practice as well as patient outcomes.

Methods and analysis: In this scoping review, Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework will be utilized to succinctly gather, synthesize previous literature, and identify discovered gaps on this topic. This method will allow for a focused process of chosen pertinent databases. The seven databases include OVID (MEDLINE & PsycINFO), Proquest (Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, International Bibliography of Social Sciences [IBSS]), EBSCO (Africa Wide, The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAHL]). The seven databases were chosen for their relevance to the topic of coping with homicide in Black communities. All members will screen the abstracts and full texts of the literature that fit the inclusion criteria. The findings will be charted and synthesized utilizing a qualitative thematic analysis.

Ethics and dissemination: The articles chosen for this review will be gathered from peer reviewed journals and scholarly search engines. Due to this research project's nature, ethics approval is not warranted. The results of this scoping review will inform culturally responsive research, policy, and work of first responders (e.g., law enforcement, EMTs) and service providers (e.g., mental health clinicians, physicians, and faith-based communities) with Black survivors of homicide victims in order to improve patient outcomes. The results will be shared through journal article publications, academic and community conferences, and professional training opportunities for practitioners who support Black communities.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

- This study comprehensively synthesizes evidence across a range of study designs that examine the scholarship relevant to the coping strategies of Black survivors of homicide victims.
- This scoping review will contribute to the gap in research pertaining to Black families methods of coping and will in the recommendations for policy and intervention, design an area of focus which is grounded in scholarly research.
- This scoping review protocol was developed in consultation with the University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work librarian
- We will identify key concepts, theories, sources of evidence and gaps in the research in an effort to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity in order to make evidence-based recommendations for health and social work policy and intervention.
- This research study is limited articles published in English.

Introduction

Research conducted by the *World Health Organization (WHO) Violence Information* revealed that an estimated 470,000 people were victims of homicide globally in 2015.(1) Additionally, the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC)* report which examined the global regional prevalence of homicide in tandem with population data, found that there were 6.1 murder victims per 100,000 people worldwide, resulting in 464,000 deaths throughout 2017.(2) When divided by geographical region, the Americas (North & South) had the highest rate of homicide at 17.2 victims per 100,000 people, translating to 173,000 deaths in 2017.(2) Africa had the second highest homicide rates with 13 victims per 100,000 population, or 163,000 deaths.(2) Sub-regions including the Caribbean, South and Central America as well as countries within Southern Africa experienced the highest rates of homicide .(2) Specifically, data collected from the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC)* displayed that, “Central America and South America had homicide rates at 25.9 and 24.2 per 100,000 population whereas the Caribbean had rates at 15.1 per 100,000 population and South Africa had a rate of 36 per 100,000 population”.(2 p.11, 25)

Descendants of the global African diaspora (hereafter referred to as Black people) suffer disproportionately from acts of and exposure to homicide.(3–6) In 2018, Jamaica had 47 intentional homicides per 100,000 people, an estimated 1,287 victims annually.(7) Comparatively, South Africa’s murder rate during the period of 2018/2019, which was 36.4 murders per 100,000 people, resulted in 21,492 deaths.(8) In the North American context, with a focus primarily on the United States and Canada, Black people continue to experience systemic influences that marginalize and place communities at risk for exposure to homicide.(9,10) In the United States, Black people comprise of approximately 13% of the population, yet account for 50% of all

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3 homicide victims annually.(11) In Canada, Black people make up about 3.5% of the population,
4 yet encompass 44% of homicide victims.(12,13) In condensed cities, such as Toronto,
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6 neighbourhoods with a larger proportion of Black populations that are economically
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8 disadvantaged, were more likely to experience higher rates of homicide.(14) These examples
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10 reflect the disproportionate prevalence of homicide for Black people throughout our global
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12 community.
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17 Despite this global phenomenon, there is a lack of awareness and acknowledgement
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19 relevant to the impact that homicide has on Black family members and friends left behind
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21 struggling to survive their tragic deaths.(15) It is estimated that each homicide victim leaves behind
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23 7–10 family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors who must survive their violent death.(16) While
24
25 we contextualize Black families whose members often include chosen persons not related by
26
27 blood, the number of Black family members faced with surviving the murder of their loved one
28
29 may be far greater than what is predicted.(17) When a loved one is murdered, survivors often find
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31 themselves entangled in a complex labyrinth of emotions and reactions.(18) Experiencing the
32
33 murder of a loved one interferes with daily functioning, disrupts the ability of survivors to make
34
35 meaning of the world around them, and has profound consequences on their overall wellbeing,
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37 productivity, and quality of life.(19–22) Upon being informed about the murder of their loved
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39 one(s), survivors of homicide victims often experience feelings of shock, rage, guilt, helplessness,
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41 grief, isolation, and dissociation.(16,18,23–25) Scholars have demonstrated that due to the
42
43 unanticipated nature of murder, experiencing the homicide of a loved one places surviving family
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45 members at greater risk for depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and chronic and/or
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47 complicated grief.(17,19,24,26,27) Homicide survivors are also more likely to experience PTSD
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49 throughout the life course, in comparison to others who have experienced violent trauma.(28)
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3 Some explanations for these occurrences are thought to stem from both the nature of and
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5 suddenness of the death.(29)
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8 Herman suggests that trauma interferes with everyday functioning due to the intensity and
9
10 unpredictability of feelings that manifest: “*Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of*
11
12 *care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning*”.(26 p.33) The psychological,
13
14 social, and physical effects of traumatic loss are articulated through the practice of grief.(31) How
15
16 individuals grieve depends on many factors including their coping skills and strategies, support
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18 systems (e.g., family members, friends, mental health services), the circumstances of the death,
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20 the response by family members, friends and the criminal justice system, the nature of the
21
22 relationship with the deceased, as well as religious and/or cultural beliefs and customs.(25,32–39)
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24 These strategies and support systems may be constrained due to social and structural inequities,
25
26 such as racism, experienced by Black communities in everyday life.(38) In addition, survivors
27
28 often experience disappointment, anger and frustration with social institutions (e.g., police, the
29
30 criminal justice system) that families hope would protect their loved ones from harm.(19) These
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32 feelings may be exacerbated due to established racial disparities in criminal justice.(37)
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38 Survivors often feel isolated because friends, relatives and neighbors around them distance
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40 themselves in an attempt to rebut their own vulnerability and evade the topic of the murder.(19,33)
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42 When a homicide occurs, survivors are therefore faced with the challenge of managing their own
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44 grief and that of their family members, increasing the risk of experiencing ongoing trauma
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46 symptoms as well as exacerbating and often “complicating” the grieving process.(16,17,25,40,41)
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48 Complicated grief occurs when prolonged grief symptoms result in significant functional
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50 impairment of individuals who are experiencing loss.(29,42,43) It interferes with normal
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52 functioning, extends grieving, and induces a sense of meaninglessness surrounding the
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3 death.(29,43,44) A study exploring complicated grief for Black Americans who experience the
4 homicide of a loved one, found that Blacks were 2.5 times more likely to demonstrate symptoms
5 of complicated grief than their White bereaved counterparts.(17,45) Untreated complicated grief
6 can cause or exacerbate chronic disease and place family members of homicide victims at
7 additional risk for Major Depression Disorder (MDD), substance use and PTSD.(46–48)
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15 Connolly and Gordon's (2015) systematic review explored the possible implications
16 associated with an occurrence of homicide for surviving members as well as the effectiveness of
17 treatment; the results found that instances of homicide profoundly implicate the lives of surviving
18 loved ones in the United States and the U.K.(49) Within these national contexts, the occurrence of
19 a homicide was found to be a catalyst for negative experiences amongst the lives of loved ones by
20 impacting academic, social adjustment, methods of coping as well as complicating symptoms of
21 grief from exposure to trauma.(49) This included implications such as a diminished ability to focus
22 on academia, obtaining lower grades, feelings of alienation as well as becoming more anxious or
23 experiencing PTSD symptoms.(49) Forms of coping consisted of psychological interventions,
24 group therapy as well as religious or spiritual beliefs.(49) While Connolly and Gordon's systemic
25 review captured the negative implications that a homicide can have on a family as well as the
26 influence of psychological interventions, it did not provide insight into the development of
27 complicated grief as well as differential racial responses to a murder.(49) These limitations to the
28 aforementioned systemic review are crucial to observe because culturally diverse populations are
29 at a higher risk for developing adverse mental health symptoms.(50)
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50 While experiences of grief or bereavement may be universal reactions in the wake of a
51 homicide, processes and outcomes associated with grieving are culturally and contextually
52 bound.(51) Developing a culturally responsive model for Black survivors of homicide involves
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3 interventions that address possible symptoms of complicated grief. Although, psychological
4 interventions designed to address symptoms of complicated grief is understudied. However, Alves-
5 conducted a systematic review exploring how the event of a homicide can negatively impact
6 healthy psychological functioning leading to an increased probability of developing post-traumatic
7 stress disorder (PTSD) or complicated grief (CG).(52) The findings found that forms of coping
8 consisted of psychological interventions, including *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy* (CBT),
9 *Reflective Repatterning Hypnotherapy* (RR) and *Eye Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing*
10 (EMDR), group therapy in the form of family or community support as well as the use of religious
11 or spiritual beliefs.(52) While each of these psychological interventions were displayed to
12 positively correlate with coping with complicated grief symptoms amongst survivors of homicide
13 in the systemic review, there was a lack of attention paid to the culturally diverse methods of
14 healing outside of the psychological realm.(52) Comparatively, the systematic review conducted
15 by Heeke et al., (2017) examined the likelihood that occurrences of violent loss have on individuals
16 developing Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD).(53) As indicated by Heeke et al., (2017) PGD is
17 defined as, “a persistent separation distress and is combined with cognitive, emotional and
18 behavioural symptoms resulting in functional impairment for at least six months following the
19 incident”.(52 p.2) In the systemic review, it was found that variables associated with gender,
20 biological factors and individual coping styles influenced the likelihood of developing PGD and
21 that certain interventions may not be helpful.(53) For example, while there was a high
22 representation of women in the systematic review, research displayed that women were at a greater
23 risk of developing PGD since they have a higher risk of developing adverse mental health
24 outcomes and are societally more encouraged to express their emotions than men.(53)
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Despite the contributions of the systemic reviews in helping to understand the traumatic impact of homicide and promising approaches to help survivors cope with the manifestation of grief and bereavement that follows, gaps in the post-homicide literature remain. A focus on the diversity of experience based on race is absent. Research displays that forms of spiritual/ religious belief and communal networks serve as beneficial methods of coping with the homicide of a loved one amongst Black communities.(54–56) This overlooked factor reinforces the inability to adapt culturally responsive interventions and strategies designed to help Black survivors cope with the murder of a loved one. Additionally, each of the articles referenced in the three reviews, which totaled to 82 different academic articles between each systemic review, involved primarily White research participants. (49,52,53) The lack of primarily Black- participant research studies on this topic neglects the disproportionate experiences of Black survivors of homicide victims, as well as fails to illustrate culturally responsive interventions and strategies designed to help Black survivors to cope with the homicide of a loved one. The lack of Black participant prevalence amongst the articles reflected in the three scoping reviews prevented an ability to evaluate ethnic differences identified among Black samples.(49,52,53) This illustrates an incomplete narrative relevant to the diverse socio-cultural experiences and coping strategies of survivors throughout the Black/African diaspora.(57)

Notably absent from each of the systematic reviews is the inclusion of community based psychoeducational and sociocultural strategies that have been proven to be beneficial to helping racialized survivors cope with the homicide of a loved one.(58) While there is a breadth of research regarding the experiences of violence within Black communities, there is a scarcity of literature that aims to systematically understand the impact of homicide on family members and friends of murdered victims coping with such tragedy.(59) Race-based homicide and victimization data are

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3 not systematically collected across many countries, nor are they readily available and publicly
4 accessible. This scarcity in data ultimately affects one's ability to fully understand the collective
5 trauma disproportionately experienced by Black communities across the global diaspora.
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10 Despite knowledge pertaining to the disproportionate impact of homicide within Black
11 communities throughout the global diaspora, there is a limited amount of research on the chronic
12 and traumatic impact of murder on surviving family members and friends as well as strategies used
13 to cope with the grief that ensues.(60,61) The lack of research on this area prevents the ability to
14 develop and create interventions that would be best formulated to support Black people in coping
15 with grief after the homicide of a loved one.(62) The scarcity of research on the diverse experiences
16 of Black survivors of homicide victims leaves social workers, medical professionals and
17 practitioners with minimal data to develop culturally responsive evidence-based interventions that
18 support survivors as they bereave and grieve the murder of their loved one(s).(58)
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31 The absence of race-based homicide and victimization data presents a void of
32 understanding relevant to when, where and how to prevent or respond to the needs of this
33 overrepresented population in a culturally responsive manner. Moreover, limited education,
34 training resources and data collected directly from Black participants and communities prevents
35 an ability to create modules designed to assist racially diverse groups. Service provider networks,
36 social workers and medical professional, that survivors rely on to cope with traumatic devastation
37 of homicide, find themselves working in silos of discomfort, ill prepared to receive culturally
38 responsive services. In order to address these gaps in research, regarding the coping strategies of
39 Black survivors of homicide victims, this scoping review will aim to systematically organize the
40 literature pertaining to this phenomenon. This study will be guided by the following 3 research
41 questions: 1) What is the impact of experiencing the homicide of a loved one for Black
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3 communities?; 2) How do Black communities cope with experiencing the homicide of a loved
4 one; and 3) What culturally responsive interventions can best support service providers (e.g.,
5 clinicians, health professionals) in caring for Black communities coping with homicide? This
6 methodological approach will provide a succinct systemic synthesis of the literature, providing a
7 valuable resource to health practitioners, social workers, researchers, advocates and communities
8 to globally in order to improve patient outcomes.
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16 **Methods and Analysis**

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19 This scoping review aims to identify and synthesize the current literature on coping with
20 the homicide of a loved one for Black survivors of homicide victims. Due to minimal research
21 available in this area, a scoping review is an effective methodological approach in generating
22 knowledge in a manner that systematically maps out study findings as they relate to; the impact of
23 experiencing the homicide of a loved one, strategies used to cope with the experience, and
24 interventions used to support Black survivors of homicide victims. Results will derive from
25 multiple fields of study as this topic is connected to a variety of interdisciplinary fields (e.g., Black
26 studies, social work, psychology, sociology, criminology, public health).
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39 Across the research the constructed group “Black” is not utilized consistently; some
40 scholars use a variety of terminologies and some participants identify with different ethnic
41 groups.⁽⁶³⁾ This scoping review will also use an array of search terms such as Black, African-
42 American, African, Caribbean, and Afro (e.g., Caribbean, Brazilian, etc.) to capture the nuances
43 of the diversity of Blackness within the various vocabulary indexes across the included databases.
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45 This research will not include studies where participants have not experienced the homicide of a
46 family member or friend, where Black survivors of homicide victims are not included in study
47 samples, and studies are not in English. This scoping review protocol utilizes Arksey and
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O'Malley's (2005) five-phase scoping review framework includes: (1) indicating the core research questions; (2) highlight related research; (3) organize the research that meets the determined inclusion criteria; (4) outline the findings (5) analyze and disseminate the final results.

This scoping review will adhere to the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews guidelines (PRISMA-ScR). Research findings can assist researchers, policy makers and practitioners in their efforts to respond to the needs of Black survivors of homicide victims in a culturally responsive manner.

Stage 1: Outline the Research Question

This research interest emerged from an understanding that despite the disproportionate impact of homicide on Black communities throughout the global diaspora, post-homicide research is often devoid of their experiences. Moreover, research that does exist relevant to the impact, coping strategies and approaches designed to assist Black survivors of homicide victims has not been systematically collected and analyzed. The following research questions were developed by the main (TE) and second author (TS); 1) What is the impact of experiencing the homicide of a loved one for Black communities?; 2) How do Black communities cope with experiencing the homicide of a loved one; and 3) What culturally responsive interventions can best support service providers (e.g., clinicians, health professionals) in caring for Black communities coping with homicide?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

This scoping review strategy was developed collaboratively amongst the authors and reviewed in partnership with the University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Librarian. We engaged in a peer review process to assess the fit of potential databases. The following online databases were chosen due their applicability and transdisciplinary perspectives

in relation to Black homicide victims and their family members and friends surviving their murder. The selected databases consist of: **OVID** (MEDLINE & PsycINFO), **Proquest** (*Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, International Bibliography of Social Sciences [IBSS]*), **EBSCO** (*Africa Wide, The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAHL]*). To support the development of the search string terms, the authors visited and considered each database's vocabulary index to assure the search terms were fitting based on the journal's search criteria. The chosen literature will be imported into Covidence software which will aid in the peer review analysis process helping to ensure the quality and rigour of the scoping review. All chosen articles for this study will follow the inclusion criteria, and will be assessed by a peer review screening of key words, title, and abstract.

During the title and abstract screening process, literature that articulates; the impact of experiencing the murder of a loved one for Black survivors of homicide victims, strategies utilized by Black survivors to cope with the homicide of a loved one, interventions or approaches used to support Black people who have experienced the homicide of a family member or friend will be selected for the full abstract screening. Despite gaps in research, studies relevant to homicide, gun-violence, state sanctioned police violence and Anti-Black racism have increased significantly over the last few decades, therefore this scoping review will only incorporate scholarly articles published throughout years 2000 to 2020.(64,65)

Table 1

Sociological Abstract and Social Services Abstract

Searches

1).[STRICT]((MAINSUBJECT.EXACT(Blacks OR "Black Americans")) OR TIAB(Black* OR "African American*" OR Afro* OR "African Cultural Group*" OR African*) OR IF(Black* OR "African American*" OR Afro* OR "African Cultural Group*" OR African*)) AND

2.((MAINSUBJECT.EXACT(Violence OR "Family Violence" OR "Political Violence" OR Homicide OR Victims) OR MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE(Crime)) OR TIAB((Homic* OR Crime* OR Violen* OR

murder*) NEAR/2 (victim* OR survivor*)) OR IF((Homic* OR Crime* OR Violen* OR murder*) NEAR/2 (victim* OR survivor*)) AND

3. ((MAINSUBJECT.EXACT(Grief OR Suffering OR "Depression (Psychology)" OR "Well Being" OR Morale OR "Mental Health" OR "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" OR Anxiety OR Fear OR "Psychological Stress" OR Trauma OR "Psychological Distress" OR "Psychological Factors" OR "Social Support") OR (MAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE(Resilience OR Coping)) OR TIAB(Copi* OR "social support*" OR Resilien* or Bereave* or Mourn* or Grief* or "Mental Health" or Trauma* or "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" or PTSD) OR IF(Copi* or "social support" OR Resilien* or Bereave* or Mourn* or Grief* or "Mental Health" or Trauma* or "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" or PTSD)))

Results: 664

Stage 3: Selecting studies that meet the inclusion criteria

The screening of the articles will involve a peer review process. Covidence will be used to support efficient screening, article review and charting during this process. Each article will be required to be reviewed and approved by two screeners in order to meet the inclusion criteria of this study. The two first authors will be responsible for resolving all conflicting decisions that may emerge within the review. In order to establish and assess the quality and agreeance rates of our screening we will use the first 100 articles using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. For this sample, we will utilize the Kappa score to measure the inter-agreement rate. This project will achieve a total of 90% prior to resuming the screening process. If this inter-agreement rate is not achieved within the first 100 articles, we will reconvene as a team to clarify the purpose of the study and the criterias of this study. We will then repeat the process of screening another 100 articles in order to achieve a 90% inter-agreement score; this process will repeat until the score of 90% is obtained.

The screeners will be diligent in ensuring the chosen literature has been published within the last 2 decades, concentrating on the impact of experiencing homicide, strategies used to cope with the loss, and interventions or approaches developed to support Black survivors of homicide victims. Relevant material can include literature or systematic reviews, conceptual or theoretical

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3 papers, and empirical research. Grey literature (newspapers, governmental documents, non-peer
4
5 reviewed articles) will be excluded from this study.
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8 **Stage 4: Chart data key results**

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10 Article themes will be charted to present their content as it relates to the research questions.
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12 Content will be reviewed and charted under the following headings: authors, year of publication,
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14 country where article was published, and/or country the research focuses on, name of journal,
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16 study method (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods), sample participants (e.g.,
17
18 percentage, gender, race/ethnicity), research question categories (impact of homicide, coping
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20 strategies, intervention/approaches), recommendations for research, policy and practice.
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24 The extraction of the literature will be facilitated by the first and second and author. Any
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26 discrepancies that may occur throughout the extraction process will be resolved collaboratively by
27
28 the authors; if any conflicts remain, we will consult with the University of Toronto, Factor-
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30 Inwentash Faculty of Social Work librarian for feedback.
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33 **Stage 5: Synthesis and report findings**

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35 Findings will be organized and synthesized based on the methodological approach of the
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37 study. Quantitative data descriptive statistics, frequencies and variance throughout the data will be
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39 reported. Qualitative data will be thematically analyzed while the mixed methods data will follow
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41 a blend of both approaches as appropriate. The results of this scoping review will be disseminated
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43 as published scholarly material, as well as through poster format at relevant peer reviewed
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45 conferences. It is anticipated that findings will identify and outline the importance of advancing
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47 culturally responsive research, policy and practice as pertains to overrepresented populations of
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49 Black survivors of homicide victims throughout our global community.
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ETHICS AND DISSEMINATION

The scoping review study aims to chart out and synthesize the contemporary research on Black survivors and victims of homicide and their coping mechanism. The research utilized in this scoping review was chosen from popular journals databases and scholarly search engines (e.g. Proquest, OVID, SAGE, Springer). As this research uses non-primary data sources, ethics approval was not required. The findings of this scoping review will be disseminated through academic journals, academic and community conferences. Findings will also be shared with key stakeholders in Black communities most impacted by homicide to ensure that the evidence produced is grounded, relevant, accessible and useful.

Contributors: The research questions were created in collaboration with all the authors, TE and AB reviewed the vocabulary indexes of all the journal databases in consultation with TS. TE lead the consultation with the UofT librarian and the development of the search strategy and protocol, and edited the protocol in consultation with the Health Sciences Writing Centre at the University of Toronto. Revisions and improvements to the search strategy were completed in collaboration with the co-authors for the formal submission for journal review.

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Exploring Research on the Coping Strategies of Black Survivors of Homicide Victims: A Scoping Review Protocol

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Exploring Research on the Coping Strategies of Black Survivors of Homicide Victims: A
Scoping Review Protocol

Authorship: Edwards T*, Sharpe TL, Bonomo A, & Massaquoi N

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

1Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

*This protocol is a planned study and will initiate in October 2020.

Corresponding Author*

Travonne Edwards*

MA CYC, 2nd year PhD Student

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, Ontario

Canada, M5S 1V4

Travonne.edwards@mail.utoronto.ca

Tayna Sharpe, MSW, PhD

Associate Professor

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, Ontario

Canada, M5S 1V4

Antonia Bonomo, MSW Student

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, Ontario

Canada, M5S 1V4

Notisha Massoquoi, MSW, PhD

Assistant Professor

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, Ontario

Canada, M5S 1V4

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Abstract

Introduction: Black people are disproportionately impacted by homicide. However, despite this overrepresentation, research is limited relevant to how Black individuals, families, and communities cope with the chronic traumatic devastation of homicide. This scoping review will provide an amalgamation of the current literature regarding the coping strategies of Black survivors of homicide victims to inform future health and social work practice.

Methods and analysis: In this scoping review, Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework will be utilized to succinctly gather and synthesize previous literature and identify gaps in research relevant to Black survivors of homicide victims. This method will allow for a focused process of chosen pertinent databases. The seven databases include OVID (MEDLINE & PsycINFO), ProQuest (Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, International Bibliography of Social Sciences [IBSS]), EBSCO (Africa Wide, The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAHL]). The seven databases were chosen for their relevance to the topic of coping with homicide for Black individuals, families, and communities. All members of the research team will screen the abstracts and full texts of the literature based on the inclusion criteria. The findings will be charted and synthesized utilizing a qualitative thematic analysis.

Ethics and dissemination: The articles chosen for this review will be gathered from peer reviewed journals and scholarly search engines. Due to this research project's nature, ethics approval is not warranted. The results of this scoping review will inform culturally responsive approaches to research, policy, and practice for first responders (e.g., law enforcement, EMTs) and providers (e.g., mental health clinicians, physicians, and faith-based communities) who frequently render services to Black survivors of homicide victims. The results will be shared through journal article publications, academic and community conferences, as well as professional training opportunities for practitioners who support Black individuals, families, and communities.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

- This study comprehensively synthesizes evidence across a range of study designs and methods for the purpose of examining scholarship relevant to the coping strategies of Black survivors of homicide victims.
- This scoping review will contribute to the gap in research pertaining to Black individuals, families and/or communities methods of coping and make recommendations for future research.
- This scoping review protocol was developed in consultation with the University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work librarian
- This research study is limited to empirical studies published in English within the last 20 years, and will exclude book reviews, dissertations, full books, and grey literature

Introduction

Black people suffer disproportionately from direct and indirect exposure to homicide.(1–4) For the purpose of this scoping review protocol, the term “homicide” will be defined as the killing of one person by another. Homicide is a more expansive and common term that refers to non-criminal and criminal acts of murder.(5) In the United States, Black people comprise approximately 13% of the population, and yet account for 50% of all homicide victims annually.(6) In Canada, Black people represent 3.5% of the population, yet encompass 44% of homicide victims.(7,8) Despite the disproportionate prevalence of homicide for Black communities in North America, there is limited research exploring their coping strategies following with the loss of a loved one.(9,10) It is estimated that each homicide victim leaves behind 7–10 family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors who must survive their violent death.(11) However, in addition to biological family members, Black communities often include chosen persons not related by blood, suggesting that the number of Black family members faced with the challenge of coping with the homicide of a loved one may be far greater than what is predicted.(12)

When a loved one is murdered, survivors often find themselves entangled in a complex labyrinth of emotions and reactions.(13) Experiencing the murder of a loved one interferes with daily functioning, disrupts the ability of survivors to make meaning of the world around them, and has profound consequences on their overall wellbeing, productivity, and quality of life.(14–17) Upon being informed about the murder, survivors of homicide victims often experience feelings of shock, rage, guilt, helplessness, grief, isolation, and dissociation.(11,13,18–20) Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that due to the unanticipated nature of homicide,

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3 survivors are at greater risk for depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as
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5 chronic and/or complicated grief.(12,14,19,21,22)
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8 The psychological, social, and physical effects of traumatic loss are articulated through
9
10 the practice of grief.(23) How individuals grieve depends on many factors including; the
11
12 circumstances of the homicide, access and utilization of medical and mental health services, use
13
14 and availability of informal support systems (e.g., family members and friends), the involvement
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16 of the criminal justice system, the nature of the relationship with the deceased, religious and/or
17
18 cultural beliefs.(20,24–31) Moreover, Sharpe(32) found that Black survivors of homicide victims
19
20 coping strategies and support systems are influenced by race-based social and structural
21
22 inequities. Black survivors of homicide victims who experience the traumatic murder of a loved
23
24 one does not simply call for an appraisal of the “threat” to determine what types of coping
25
26 strategies are available for use to ensure one’s wellbeing. Rather, Black people racially appraise
27
28 the impact of experiencing homicide through structurally racist systems that place value on the
29
30 experience, and brings about feelings of stigma, shame, blame, and lack of justice.
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35 Connolly and Gordon(10) conducted a systematic review which explored the effects of
36
37 homicide on surviving family members. Results indicated that exposure to the homicide of a
38
39 loved one profoundly impacted the lives of surviving victims psychologically, academically,
40
41 socially, occupationally, as well as disrupted routine family dynamics.(10) Additionally, findings
42
43 indicated that the grieving process was also disrupted and postponed when interacting with the
44
45 criminal justice system due to a lack of transparency of institutional processes, lack of sympathy
46
47 and lengthy investigations.(10) Lastly, survivors found that fostering supportive networks and
48
49 spirituality were meaningful coping strategies for managing their grief and building resiliency.
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53 Relatedly, Alves-Costa and colleagues(33) conducted a systematic review that investigated
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3 psychological interventions available and their effectiveness to address survivors of homicide
4 victims mental health symptoms. Findings indicated that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT),
5
6 Restorative Retelling, Eye Movement Desensitization, and Reprocessing Group therapy were
7
8 effective in reducing symptoms of PTSD, complicated grief, and depression for survivors of
9
10 homicide victims.
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15 While these systematic reviews provide insight to understanding the traumatic impact of
16
17 homicide on survivors and highlight interventions designed to help them cope with their grief,
18
19 gaps in the post-homicide literature remain. Despite the disproportionate experiences of
20
21 homicide for Black individuals, families, and communities, they are seldomly represented in
22
23 post-homicide research. Granek and Paleg-Sagy(34) conducted a systematic review to
24
25 investigate the representation of African Americans in the grief literature. Findings indicated that
26
27 several studies were missing demographic details (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, education,
28
29 socioeconomic status). The absence of sociodemographic data impedes upon the
30
31 contextualization of grief and validity of findings. In addition, findings revealed that White
32
33 populations were often used as the normative standard that Black populations are compared to.
34
35 The lack of Black participants in research on coping with homicide, neglects the disproportionate
36
37 reality of their experiences as well as fails to identify culturally responsive interventions and
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39 strategies designed to support Black individuals, families, and communities in coping with
40
41 homicide. Moreover, this void in post-homicide research illustrates an incomplete narrative
42
43 relevant to the diverse socio-cultural experiences and coping strategies of Black survivors of
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45 homicide victims.(35)
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51 The scarcity of research on Black survivors of homicide victims, leaves social workers,
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53 medical professionals, and practitioners with minimal data to develop culturally responsive
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3 evidence-based interventions that support survivors as they grieve the murder of their loved
4 one(s).(9) In order to address these gaps in research this scoping review will aim to
5
6 systematically organize the literature pertaining to the coping strategies of Black survivors of
7
8 homicide victims.
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12 This study will be guided by the following three research questions: 1) What is the
13 impact of experiencing the homicide of a loved one for Black individuals, families and
14 communities?; 2) How do Black individuals, families and communities cope with experiencing
15 the homicide of a loved one; and 3) What strategies and/or interventions have been designed to
16 support Black individuals, families, and communities coping with homicide? This
17 methodological approach will provide a succinct systematic synthesis of the literature, providing
18 a valuable resource to health practitioners, social workers, researchers, advocates, and Black
19 survivors of homicide victims.
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30 31 **Methods and Analysis**

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33 This scoping review aims to identify and synthesize the current literature on coping with
34 the homicide of a loved one for Black survivors of homicide victims. A scoping review is a
35 useful method to understand the scope of the literature on a particular area and to provide clarity
36 regarding what research currently exists, identify gaps, and to clarify concepts.(36) Moreover,
37 scoping reviews can support in understanding how research has been conducted in each
38 discipline or on a topic.(36) Scoping reviews are helpful for investigations when developing
39 research remains ambiguous and more precise questions can be posed. Whereas systematic
40 reviews are generally understood as a research method of synthesis that is utilized by
41 investigators who seek to identify and extract evidence relevant to a particular topic, and to
42 evaluate the quality of the findings to better inform policy, practice, and future research.(36,37)
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3 A systematic approach employs explicit methods to reduce bias, which supports the production
4
5 of reliable results that can appropriately inform decision making processes.(36)
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8 Due to the limited research on Black experiences of coping with homicide, a scoping
9
10 review is an effective methodological approach in generating knowledge in a manner that
11
12 systematically maps out study findings as they relate to the impact of experiencing the homicide
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14 of a loved one, strategies used to cope with the experience, and interventions used to support
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16 Black survivors of homicide victims. As such, the investigators of this study decided to conduct
17
18 a scoping review to map the existing research pertaining to the coping strategies of Black
19
20 survivors of homicide victims.
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23
24 This scoping review protocol utilizes Arksey and O'Malley's(38) five-phase scoping
25
26 review framework that includes: (1) indicating the core research questions; (2) highlighting
27
28 related research; (3) organizing the research that meets the determined inclusion criteria; (4)
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30 outlining the findings as well as; (5) analyzing and disseminating the final results. Moreover, this
31
32 study will adhere to the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews guidelines (PRISMA-ScR).
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35 **Stage 1: Outline the Research Question**

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38 As articulated in our literature review, this research interest emerged from an
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40 understanding that despite the disproportionate impact of homicide on Black individuals,
41
42 families and communities, post-homicide research is often devoid of their experiences.
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44 Moreover, research that does exist relevant to the impact, coping strategies and approaches
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46 designed to assist Black survivors of homicide victims has not been systematically collected and
47
48 analyzed. Across the research, the constructed group "Black" is not utilized consistently (34);
49
50 some scholars use a variety of terminologies and some participants identify with different ethnic
51
52 groups.(39) This scoping review will also use an array of search terms such as Black, African-
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American, African, Caribbean, and Afro (e.g., Caribbean, Brazilian, etc.) to capture the nuances of the diversity of Blackness within the various vocabulary indexes across the included databases.

The following research questions were developed by the lead (TE) and second author (TS); 1) What is the impact of experiencing the homicide of a loved one for Black individuals, families and communities?; 2) How do Black individuals, families and communities cope with experiencing the homicide of a loved one; and 3) What strategies and/or interventions have been designed to support Black individuals, families, and communities coping with homicide?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

This scoping review strategy was developed collaboratively amongst the authors and reviewed in partnership with the University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Librarian. We engaged in a peer review process to assess the fit of potential databases. The following online databases were chosen due their applicability and transdisciplinary perspectives in relation to Black homicide victims and their family members and friends surviving their murder. The selected databases consist of: **OVID** (MEDLINE & PsycINFO), **Proquest** (Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, International Bibliography of Social Sciences [IBSS]), **EBSCO** (Africa Wide, The Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAHL]). To support the development of the search string terms, the authors visited and considered each database's vocabulary index to assure the search terms were fitting based on the journal's search criteria. The chosen literature will be imported into Covidence software which will aid in the peer review analysis process helping to ensure the quality and rigor of the scoping review. All chosen articles for this study will follow the inclusion criteria and will be assessed by a peer review screening of key words, title, and abstract.

During the title and abstract screening process, literature that articulates; the impact of experiencing the murder of a loved one for Black survivors of homicide victims, strategies utilized by Black survivors to cope with the homicide of a loved one, interventions or approaches used to support Black people who have experienced the homicide of a family member or friend will be selected for the full abstract screening. Despite the historical and disproportionate impact of homicide on Black communities, the past 2 decades have exposed the pervasive nature of homicide requiring an examination of ways to support Black individuals, families, and communities cope with such tragedy. Therefore, this scoping review will only include scholarly articles published throughout the years 2000 to 2020 to focus on contemporary research designed to understand the coping strategies of Black survivors of homicide victims.

Search Strategy Ovid (Pyschinfo)
1.(Black* or "African American*" or Afro* or "African Cultural Group*" or African*).tw.
2. Blacks/
3. african cultural groups/
4. or/1-3
5. ((Homic* or Murder* or Crime* or Violen*) adj2 (Victim* or Survivor*).tw.
6. crime victims/
7. victimization/
8. exp homicide/
9. survivors/
10. or/5-9
11. (Copi* or "Social Support*" or Resilien* or Bereave* or Mourn* or Grief* or "Mental Health" or Trauma* or "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" or PTSD).tw.
12. coping behavior/
13. exp posttraumatic stress disorder/
14. exp bereavement
15. trauma/ or emotional trauma/ or moral injury/ or post-traumatic stress/ or posttraumatic growth/ or traumatic loss/
16. social support/
17. "Resilience (Psychological)"/
18. mental health/
19. or/11-18
20. 4 and 10 and 19

Stage 3: Selecting studies that meet the inclusion criteria

This scoping review will include empirical studies that utilize a diverse a ray of methods quantitative (e.g., administered, and self-report survey) and qualitative (e.g., individual and focus

group interviews) to examine the coping strategies of Black individuals, families, and/or communities. There are no geographical or methodological limitations within this review. Manuscripts must meet the following inclusion criteria: (1) include the word Black or African (e.g., African-American and Afro Caribbean) in the title and abstract; (2) include the word homicide or one of the following terms used synonymously with this construct in the title or abstract (e.g., murder, death, killing, fatality); (3) include the word coping or one of the following synonymous terms in the title and abstract (e.g., manage, survive, healing, resilience); and (4) have an explicit focus on Black survivors of homicide and how they cope with this form of tragic death. Strategies and interventions must have a majority sample of Black participants to be included in this scoping review. This study will exclude: book reviews, dissertations, full books, studies where Black survivors of homicide victims are not included in study sample, conceptual articles, non-English articles, and grey literature (newspapers, governmental documents, and non-peer reviewed articles).

The screening of the articles will involve a peer review process. Covidence will be used to support efficient screening, article review and charting during this process. Each article will be required to be reviewed and approved by two screeners in order to meet the inclusion criteria of this study. The two first authors will be responsible for resolving all conflicting decisions that may emerge within the review.

In order to establish and assess the quality and agreement rates of our screening process, we will use the first 100 articles using the inclusion and exclusion criteria identified. For this scoping review protocol, the Kappa score will be utilized to measure the inter-agreement rate. This project will achieve a 90% inter-agreement prior to independently screening. If this inter-agreement rate is not achieved from the first 100 articles, we will reconvene to clarify the

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2
3 purpose and criteria of the present study. This process will then be repeated with another 100
4
5 articles to achieve a 90% inter-agreement score.
6

7 8 **Stage 4: Chart data key results** 9

10 Article themes will be charted to present their content as it relates to the research questions.
11
12 Content will be reviewed and charted under the following headings: authors, year of publication,
13
14 country where article was published, and/or country the research focuses on, name of journal,
15
16 study method (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods), sample participants (e.g., gender,
17
18 race/ethnicity, age), research question categories (impact of homicide, coping strategies,
19
20 intervention/approaches), recommendations for research, policy, and practice.
21
22

23
24 The extraction of the literature will be facilitated by the first and second and author. Any
25
26 discrepancies that may occur throughout the extraction process will be resolved collaboratively by
27
28 the authors; if any conflicts remain, we will consult with the University of Toronto, Factor-
29
30 Inwentash Faculty of Social Work librarian for feedback.
31
32

33 **Stage 5: Synthesis and report findings** 34

35 Findings will be organized and synthesized based on the methodological approach of the
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37 study. Quantitative data descriptive statistics, frequencies and variance throughout the data will be
38
39 reported. Qualitative data will be thematically analyzed while the mixed methods data will follow
40
41 a blend of both approaches as appropriate. The results of this scoping review will be disseminated
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43 as published scholarly material, as well as through poster format at relevant peer reviewed
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45 conferences. It is anticipated that findings will identify and outline the importance of advancing
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47 culturally responsive research, policy and practice as pertains to overrepresented populations of
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49 Black survivors of homicide victims.
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ETHICS AND DISSEMINATION

The scoping review study aims to chart out and synthesize the contemporary research on coping with homicide for Black individual, families, and communities. The studies utilized in this scoping review were chosen from popular journals databases and scholarly search engines (e.g. ProQuest, OVID, SAGE, Springer). As this research uses non-primary data sources, ethics approval was not required. The findings of this scoping review will be disseminated through academic journals, academic and community conferences. Findings will also be shared with key stakeholders in Black communities most impacted by homicide to ensure that the evidence produced is grounded, relevant, accessible and useful.

Contributors: All the authors made tremendous intellectual contributions to the production of this scoping review protocol. The research questions were created by TE and TS. TE and AB reviewed the vocabulary indexes of all the journal databases in consultation with TS. TE lead the consultation with the UofT librarian and the development of the search strategy and protocol, as well as edited the protocol in consultation with NM and the Health Sciences Writing Centre at the University of Toronto. Revisions and improvements to the search strategy were completed in collaboration with the co-authors (TE, TS, AB and NM) for the formal submission for journal review.

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Patient consent for publication: N/A

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