

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF PROBATION OFFICERS'
PERCEPTION ON BLACK FEMALE EX-OFFENDERS' TRANSITION
AND SUCCESSFUL REENTRY INTO SOCIETY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of probation officers who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. The feminist theory guided this research study, as it shed light on the barriers encountered by female offenders in the United States and expounded how they were specifically unique from the barriers faced by male offenders. The research questions were: what are probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female ex-offenders' successful transition back into the community, what are the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female ex-offenders during the community supervision, and how do coping resources prepare Black female ex-offenders to transition into society. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The sample size consisted of eight participants who supervised Black female ex-offenders and had been probation officers in the Southeast United States. The seven steps of van Kaam's methods, as modified by Moustakas, were followed. Through analyses of the data, three major themes emerged: (a) Community Resources, (b) Social Support Systems, (c) and A Seat at the Table, and provided the foundation for implications for policy and practice, as well as recommendations for future research.

Keywords: reentry, feminist theory, Black female offenders, probation officers

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God for being my saving grace all my life. “Thy word is a lamp unto thy feet and a light unto my pathway” (Psalms 109:105).

To my beautiful daughters, Quionna Bryant Hobbs and Myeshia Yaz’Mean Murray-Bryant, you were my strength when I was weak. You were my voice when I could not speak. You were my eyes when I could not see. You saw the best there was in me. Lifted me up when I could not reach. You gave me faith, because you believed. I’m everything I am because you loved me. Your love for me is nothing short of amazing. You will never know how much your prayers and words of encouragement helped me through setbacks and disappointments. Thank you for always being mommy’s cheerleaders.

To my grandson, Timothy NaQuan Hobbs II., “A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children” (Proverbs 13:22). Leaving a legacy is not a choice. It is a requirement! I pray that what I pass along to you will not have not only an impact on your life, but also on the lives of your children and grandchildren. I love you with all my heart.

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I want to acknowledge my committee, Dr. Richard Green and Dr. Aubrey Statti, for answering the call of mentorship. Dr. Green, you have led by example every step of the way. You have been a mentor, leader, supporter and sounding board. You have taught me how to be an educator with love and kindness. Dr. Statti, thank you for challenging me on this journey with your positive feedback. The shared guidance and encouragement kept me on the path to reach my destination. Thank you both for your prayers and votes of confidence!

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List of Abbreviations

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)

Confinement in Response to Violation Program (CRV)

Division of Community Corrections (DCC)

Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

Feminist Theory (FT)

National Institute of Justice (NIJ)

North Carolina Department of Community Corrections (NCDCC)

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)

Probation Officers (POs)

United States of America (U.S.)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The challenge to effectively transition from incarceration to society was not a new dilemma and had become a serious social issue in the U.S. as prisoners were discharged every day (James, 2015). The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE ,2022) reports every year 600,000 offenders are released from state and federal prisons. Approximately 67.8% of the offenders discharged return to prison within three years and approximately 6.9 million people are on community supervision, or housed in correctional facilities and jails in the United States (APSE, 2022). Female offenders experience a number of complex challenges and needs that make their reentry into society a difficult transition.

Chapter One discussed the following topics: the background of the study, the problem statement, and the purpose of the study. Next, the research questions, theoretical foundation, and the nature of the study were given. The chapter concluded with definitions of terms and the final summary of the study.

Background

Reentry had emerged at the forefront to focus on the difficulties of prisoners reintegrating into society, and progressively as a means for dealing with mass incarceration and diminishing high rates of recidivism (Mears & Cochran, 2015). Reentry programs were not a new concept (Herberman & Bonczar, 2015) and had been a significant part of the criminal justice system (LaFleur & O'Grady, 2016). However, the offender participants taking part in these programs had changed (Visser et al., 2017). Traditionally, reentry programs were designed for male offenders; therefore, most criminality studies utilized men as subjects, with male offenders embodying the standard to benefit from reentry policies and programming (Cadreche, 2014;

Herberman & Bonczar, 2015). Moreover, reentry programs were created by men for men; thus, male researchers assessed these androcentric approaches with little attention directed to meeting the reentry needs of the justice-involved offender (Durose et al., 2014).

Historical and Current Context

The reentry programs traced their origins back to the early 1900s when most states utilized parole boards to oversee and authorize the discharge of all inmates (Clear & Cole, 1997). The growing number of parolees continued to grow into the 1970s, and prisons started developing formal programs and services to equip inmates for reintegration into their neighborhoods (Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

These programs consisted of educational and vocational services, substance abuse treatment programs, other counseling services, long-term residential programs (therapeutic communities), residential treatment programs, job training programs, and work-release offender programs (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). These programs placed a strong focus and emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration and led to the get-tough attitude, including the universal perception of past unsuccessful reentry attempts. This perception shifted the focus from rehabilitative efforts to penalty and discipline. The criticism led to policy changes in sentencing laws and post-release supervision guidelines. These included a recommendation for zero-tolerance sentencing practice for fixed-term prison sentencing in many regions (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). However, due to the present political climate, rise in the prison population, funding, and lack of affordable housing, skepticism remained regarding prison reentry and rehabilitation (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014).

Currently, an increasing number of offenders were participating in community reentry services. Subsequently, attempts were initiated to create highly-structured programs targeting

specific offenders or problems. Reentry had evolved in several ways, including most states revising a sentencing structure, a surge in the number of offenders released, an increasingly diverse population, and a change in community (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014). Until recently, many of these concerns were not a priority. While there were many rehabilitative and community corrections programs, most were not identified as offender reentry programs (Leary, 2011). However, there had been an emerging interest in offender reentry in the past decade. The increasing change in demographic characteristics brought awareness to the needs of female offenders (Cobbina & Bender, 2012).

The increase in women involved in the criminal justice system could have been traced to changes in state and national drug policies that mandated prison terms for even relatively low-level drug offenses, changes in law enforcement practices (particularly those targeting minority neighborhoods), or post-conviction barriers to reentry (Jeffers, 2019). According to Seiter and Kadela (2003), these factors included reform of harsh sentencing from the use of indeterminate release, such as parole, to a special type of probation called determinate release, with a smaller number of former offenders being placed on community supervision. This highlighted the importance of monitoring and observing rather than guiding for individuals under post-release supervision, less autonomy in the community and accessibility to community resources, and a growing number of offenders reentering society. Furthermore, they stated that more probationers had violated a probation condition and reintegrated into society than ever before. Thus, it was vital to identify effective offender reentry programs that led to successful reentry. Offender reentry had evolved significantly in the past decades. After finishing a determinate sentence, most offenders were discharged from prison and required no reporting or monitoring. In general, offenders were serving longer prison sentences, with a limited number accepting the assistance

of rehabilitation or post-release programs. The neighborhoods were disorganized, lacked family support, had broken relationships, and had limited community resources accessible to the former offenders. More disturbing was the significantly large number of former offenders who violated the conditions of probation or reoffended (Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Social Context

One concern was the impact on social unity and the stability of the community by the release of many offenders. Anderson (1990) discovered how the mindset and actions of former offenders were transferred to individuals in the same neighborhood upon post-release. Factors, such as being impoverished and without a job, contributed to vulnerability factors in the community, including criminal behavior, selling and using illicit drugs, broken family systems, and demoralization (Anderson, 1990). In examining the impact of incarceration and the barring of a former offender from a community in Tallahassee, Florida, Clear et al. (2003) reported a surge in crime after an inquiry on crime prevention efforts and the effectiveness of rehabilitation of prisoners. This report also implied that releasing a significant number of offenders upset the ability of the community to maintain control of its members with a minimal chance for assimilation, typically causing seclusion, anonymity, and, eventually, higher rates of criminal activity (Clear et al., 2003).

The NIJ (2015) research suggested that when an offender returned to their neighborhood, there was a robust effect on reoffending and employment outcomes. In the study, an examination of offenders discharged from Michigan State Penitentiaries found that those offenders who returned to a disenfranchised community were most likely to escape, violate a condition of probation or parole, and experience poor employment and wage opportunities. Conversely, returning home to an established community was linked to a decline in rearrest, escape, and

probation violation resulting in another prison sentence. Moreover, offenders returning to affluent communities experienced growth in employment and wage opportunities. However, the question remained of what was considered a risky community. Lastly, the NIJ (2015) noted, "It is essential to note the relationship between neighborhoods and employment outcomes as being gainfully employed substantially reduces the risk of recidivism" (p. 2).

Theoretical Context

In past decades, men were presumed to be the standard and the only group researched or understood, while women were typically regarded as having lived experiences similar to men. For this study, the theoretical orientation was the feminist theory (FT). The FT shed light on females' lived experiences and perspectives (Cole, 2017). The FT examined the roles, problems, and trends ignored and incorrectly interpreted by a male-dominated society. The FT covered a range of issues, including "gender differences, gender equality, and structural oppression" (Cole, 2017, p. 4). Likewise, McPhail et al. (2012) maintained that the specific needs of female offenders went unmet in state and federal prisons and county jails.

This problem existed because women were treated with programs created and intended for men, without consideration for their specific needs (Durose et al., 2014). In addition, research using only male subjects was not generalizable to female subjects, due to the dissimilarities in their biological, psychological, cultural, and social gender-specific needs (Bartlett et al., 2015; Van Voorhis & Brushett, 2013). At the same time, men and women encountered the same existential issues in life. However, there were some essential differences, such as death, loneliness, stress response, leisure pursuits, and risk factors associated with disorders (Harrison et al., 2015; Hyde, 2014), in addition to the abuse experienced before committing a crime (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Lynch et al., 2012; Stephenson et al., 2014; Winstok & Straus, 2014).

According to The Sentencing Project (2018), nearly 60% of imprisoned women were mothers of underage children. Additionally, almost 90% of men in prison stated that their children resided with their mother during their prison sentence; however, grandparents typically became the caretakers for children when their mothers were incarcerated (Roxburgh & Fitch, 2014). At least one-third of underage children resided with their father when their biological mother was imprisoned. However, not all fathers remained in a primary caretaker role upon release of the mother (Mapson, 2013). Mothers, more than fathers, must multitask between working and learning new skills. Upon reentry, women lacked education and experienced lower earnings than men (Mapson, 2013). Additionally, a large percentage of female offenders versus male offenders reported interpersonal violence (Lynch et al., 2012).

Female offenders were more likely to report intimate partner violence crimes (Sexana et al., 2014). For that reason, female offenders may have been more cautious about getting involved in romantic relationships compared to their male counterparts. The factors that enhanced the success of a man's reentry efforts were different from factors that enhanced the success of reentry efforts for a woman (Doherty et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2016). Most recent research and theories were based on basic assumptions concerning gender disparity, joined with the notion that maleness embodied the norm (Miller et al., 2015). Social, medical, and criminal profiling were also gender differences for females and males (Bartlett et al., 2015). The FT could shed light on the barriers encountered by female offenders and expound how they were specifically unique from the barriers faced by male offenders. The FT could also illuminate the objective and advantage of gender-specific methods to treat female offenders (Cole, 2017).

Situation to Self

I was a former employee who had worked for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) and the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) systems. I had held numerous positions that allowed me to provide direct services for both male and female offenders. During that time, I observed high recidivism rates for both populations. Since I was working with female offenders in the criminal justice system, I wanted to know why Black female offenders were the highest recidivists and what programs helped them not recidivate—utilizing an axiological constructivist approach. In addition, I tried to understand probation officers' (POs) lived experiences and perspectives, what roles reentry programs played in the success of Black female ex-offenders in the Southeast U.S., and how reentry programs met the offender's specific needs.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was that there was limited research on POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to the successful reentry of Black female offenders into society. Black females were a unique population because they experienced discrimination and oppression being both Black and female, which put them in a disadvantaged position (Link & Oser, 2018). In this disadvantaged position, Black female offenders were identified as highly vulnerable and overrepresented among male and other female offenders in the criminal legal system because of different pathways to criminal behavior and the various barriers they encountered (Greiner et al., 2014; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013).

Link and Oser (2018) contended that "a result of African American women being considered disadvantaged and the lack of research on the African American women population" (para.15) existed. Their research addressed POs' views on reentry services that had contributed

to this disadvantaged population's specific needs in their successful reentry. These factors could have made for a smoother transition and more available programs for Black female offenders. Additionally, male offenders and other female populations have reentered society successfully, given that it described ways to successfully reenter a disadvantaged prison population (Link & Oser, 2018).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. At this point in the research, post-release supervision was defined as a "form of supervision in the community after completing a prison sentence" (North Carolina Department of Community Corrections [NCDCC], 2021, p.1), and reintegration was defined as the process of releasing incarcerated individuals back to their communities under community supervision (Burgess-Proctor, 2012; Hlavka et al., 2015; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; Zajac et al., 2014). The theory guiding this study was the FT, developed by Friedan (1963) and Wollstonecraft (1792), which stated that the FT was not limited to gender bias, gender imbalance, and gender disparity, but also includes structural oppression (Cole, 2017). The FT was used to illuminate the significance of identifying and accommodating gender inequality in women and their insignificant societal position.

The research design was qualitative and determined by the phenomenon of supervising Black female offenders, with POs drawing on their own experiences to explain the reentry programs and coping mechanisms that had satisfactorily addressed the distinctive needs of Black female offenders on probation. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to learn if the reintegration programs provided while on supervision were sufficient to meet the

specific needs of Black female offenders. This research was an effort to reveal whether there was a specific need for gender-specific reintegration services for Black female offenders that was different from male offenders during supervision and to recognize the concerns from the perspective of POs.

According to Goodman et al. (2006), a transition was "any event or non-event that resulted in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33). Some offenders may have found it more challenging than others to transition into society (Willging et al., 2016). There were numerous studies on the transition experiences of ex-offenders returning to society. However, the studies frequently excluded former female offenders from the sample population. Due to these limitations, Olson et al. (2016) and Vigessaa et al. (2016) argued that further studies were necessary on the transition experiences of former female offenders. The theory guiding this study was the FT.

Significance of the Study

There was limited research on POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to the successful reentry of Black female offenders into society. The findings in the study added to the limited literature, provided an understanding of how reentry programs reduced recidivism and promoted successful reentry, improved current reentry programs, and provided recommendations for best practices to address the unique needs of formerly incarcerated Black females. Black female offenders were imprisoned in the criminal justice system at a rate of 5.1 in state prisons per year. (Nellis, 2016). The female incarceration rates rose by 475% from 26,326 in 1990 to 152, 854 in 2020 (The Sentencing Project, 2017). The surge in the female offender population was traced to the changes in drug-mandatory sentencing guidelines for low-level drug offenses on the state and national levels, including policing policies and practices, specifically

those aimed at minority neighborhoods and post-release hindrances to reentry that distinctively impacted women (Carson, 2015). The changes in these policies had a disparate effect by race and ethnicity (Wright et al., 2012).

Research on POs' perceptions of successful reentry was essential, due to the number of women reentering their communities after being discharged from prison. Black women's recidivism rates were as disturbing as Black men's (Nellis, 2016). An estimated 25% of female offenders discharged from prison recidivated within six months (Alper & Durose, 2018). One-third recidivated in the same year, and two-thirds of these offenders recidivated within five years from the release from prison (Alper & Durose, 2018). In addition, studies revealed that female and male offenders had different risk factors (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014). Specifically, female offenders described higher incidences of mental health problems, substance dependence, and past physical and sexual abuse (Jenkins et al., 2017).

Criminal justice professionals encountered certain barriers in creating programming and treatment for female offenders (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Skardhamar & Telle, 2012). Hence, efficient, gender-specific treatment must be a part of reentry programs to produce positive results in correctional settings for female offenders' reentry success (Cadreche, 2014; Gehring & Van Voorhis, 2014; Kras, 2013). Most research regarding offender reentry tended to focus on risk and protective factors (Gould et al., 2011). However, few researchers had taken on phenomenological explorations of POs' perceptions and lived experiences of how reentry programs contributed to the successful reintegration of this disadvantaged population (Doherty et al., 2014). Thus, the perceptions of POs in this research study regarding their lived experiences in supervising Black female offenders who had successfully reintegrated into society were relevant because they

provided direct observation with the population of interest, which gave them unique insight and perspective on their experiences (Doherty et al., 2014).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community?

RQ2: What are the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision?

RQ3: How do coping resources prepare Black female offenders to transition into society?

RQ1. What are probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female offenders' successful reentry into the community?

Men committed more criminal offenses than women in the U.S. (Choy et al., 2017). Most of the research involving offenders had been conducted with men. This was most likely due to the small population of women in the correctional system. Furthermore, Brennan et al. (2012) asserted that men and women reached confinement differently. Englander (2012) maintained that when conducting a phenomenological investigation, the research questions permitted the researcher to comprehend the importance of a phenomenon from the POs' perspective. This research question directed the exploration of POs' views on how reentry programs contributed to the transition and successful reentry of Black female offenders. The researcher addressed RQ1 through the theoretical lens of the FT and Intersectionality.

RQ2. What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision?

Limited studies had centered on POs' interactions with female offenders about specific issues and the POs' experiences regarding the female offenders' essential needs during reentry supervision (Morash et al., 2015). Due to limited research, studies were systemically opposed by theoretical frameworks created and designed in the male-dominated field of criminology (Gobeil et al., 2016; Kajstura, 2017). Most recidivism into prison occurred by Black men and women. While there were several general studies on the reentry population, limited literature existed specifically on Black females (Sharp, 2014). This research question directed the exploration of POs' views on how reentry programs contributed to the transition and successful reentry of Black female offenders. The researcher addressed RQ2 through the theoretical lens of the FT and Intersectionality.

RQ3. How do coping resources prepare Black female offenders to transition into society?

According to the BJS (2014), almost two-thirds of women discharged from prison returned. Not all reentry services prepared women with the skills needed to reenter society after incarceration, and many offenders did not participate in reentry programs (Bentley, 2017). Women experienced risks and needs during the reentry process that were different from men; thus, understanding resources that assisted women in successful reentry into society were necessary. Female offenders transitioning back to the community from prison after years of imprisonment did not get the support they needed in terms of housing, employment, transportation, and family support, and these were significant factors in helping offenders from returning to prison (Bentley, 2017). Furthermore, many female offenders were uneducated and unskilled (Visser & Travis, 2011). Therefore, the researcher addressed RQ3 through the theoretical lens of Feminist Theory and Intersectionality.

Definitions

This section included definitions of terms used in this study.

1. *Offender* - An “individual who has completed her prison or jail sentence after being remanded into custody by a court of law” (NCDCC, 2021, p.1).
2. *Post Release of Community Correction Supervision* - A “form of supervision in the community after completing a prison or jail sentence” (NCDCC, 2021, p.1).
3. *Probation* - A “period of court-ordered community supervision imposed as an alternative to imprisonment” (NCDCC, 2021, p.1).
4. *Probation Officer* - An individual who “is responsible for supervising a caseload consisting of high and low-risk offenders” (NCDCC, 2021, p.1).
5. *Reentry or Reintegration* - The process of releasing incarcerated individuals back to their communities under community supervision (Burgess-Proctor, 2012; Hlavka et al., 2015; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; Zajac et al., 2014). Ex-offenders used programs to reintegrate into the community following release from prison (Wheeler & Patterson, 2008).
6. *Successful Reentry* - The “lack of reoffending, which further initiates community safety” (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013, p.150).

Summary

The perception of POs on reentry programs that contributed to the success of Black female offenders added to the limited literature by expanding the insight regarding changes within a reentry program. The implication of findings on these issues was significant and was not overstated (Starks, 2018). Understanding and addressing reentry played a pivotal role in assisting policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels to successfully develop and

implement best practices to address reentry-related challenges. The findings were beneficial in establishing action-research partnerships. This study addressed the lack of qualitative studies involving POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community. The study included findings describing POs' perceptions of how Black female offenders' transition and successfully reentry into society.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. At this point in the research, post-release supervision was defined as a "form of supervision in the community after completing a prison sentence" (NCDPS, 2021, p.1), and reintegration was defined as the process of releasing incarcerated individuals back to their communities under community supervision (Burgess-Proctor, 2012; Hlavka et al., 2015; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 201e; Zajac et al., 2014). The theory that guided this study was the FT, developed by Friedan (1963) and Wollstonecraft (1792), which stated that the FT was not limited to gender bias, gender imbalance, and gender disparity, but also includes structural oppression (Cole, 2017). The FT was used to illuminate the significance of identifying and accommodating gender inequality in women and their insignificant societal position.

Black females were a unique population because they experienced discrimination and oppression being Black and female, and, therefore, putting them in a disadvantaged position (Ocen, 2012). In this disadvantaged position, Black female offenders were identified as highly vulnerable and overrepresented among male and other female offenders in the criminal legal system because of their different pathways to criminal behavior and the various barriers they encountered (Greiner et al., 2014; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013). Likewise, Link and Oser (2018) noted differences "as a result of African American women being considered disadvantaged and the lack of research on the African American women population" (para.15).

Chapter Two reviewed the current literature, detailing a description of the theoretical framework, a review of the literature providing the relevance of the problem, and related literature on the study. The review of the literature included previous research that addressed reintegration barriers Black female offenders faced upon reentry into society.

Theoretical Framework

The FT encompassed a broad scope of viewpoints and themes distinctive to women, which was why it was selected as the main theoretical framework for this study. Belknap (2015) stated that gender-responsive and feminist scholars had denounced various criminological theories as androcentric and insufficient in elucidating the nature of female offending. Time and again, such theories were created from male subjects without integrating the factors that exclusively contributed to female offending (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013). The FT was not limited to gender bias, gender imbalance, and gender disparity, but also included structural oppression (Cole, 2017). The FT was used to illuminate the significance of identifying and accommodating gender inequality in Black female offenders and their insignificant position in society. In 1792, author Mary Wollstonecraft published her revolutionary book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Wollstonecraft & Ward, 1996). This seminal work established the foundation for women to acquire education rights; education would lead to empowerment, knowledge, and experience in society. Wollstonecraft and Ward (1996) defended that women possessed the same reasoning ability and must be allowed equal opportunities as men.

The origin of feminism could have been traced to the late 1800s; however, the women's movement of the 1960s established the groundwork for the evolution of feminist theory. Feminist activists and other writers played a critical role in the women's movement; their collective efforts contributed to a body of work that became the foundation for several feminist

theories (Corey, 2009). Feminist Betty Friedan (1963) penned her ground-breaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which explained the pervasive discontent among women in mainstream American culture at the end of World War II. Friedan was most widely known for her public stance of female independence, which was a significant step forward for women's rights. Friedan confronted the assumption that a woman's identity was found only in her children, spousal relationships, house chores, and sexual passivity, demanding that women were seen as distinctive individuals. Instead of being a spectator in a man-dominated culture and being sexually passive, Friedan (1963) proposed women must have been seen as sexual beings in touch with their sexuality.

While the focus of the current study was on the POs' perspective of Black female offenders' transition and successful reentry into society, the FT included much more than gender differences and gender-specific responsive needs. The core notion of the modern FT was that in a male-controlled culture, the specific needs of women were disregarded (Conlin, 2017; Ferguson, 2017). Although the core notion of the modern FT was accurate, it was not considered a dualistic concept. The core principle of the FT was to attain equality, justice, and fundamental freedom for all people, no matter their gender, ethnicity, or social status (Conlin, 2017; Ferguson, 2017).

The FT acknowledged gender-responsive needs and developed interventions that demonstrated this use rather than strategies created for men and altered for women. The FT had been used in supervision, social work research, politics, criminality, education, and the practice of psychotherapy (Conlin, 2017; Eyal-Lubling & Krumer-Nevo, 2016). The integrative nature of feminist principles must have been viewed in the intersection of several aspects of life. Intersectionality was what permitted the FT to be extendable to other domains. Intersectionality recognized that the world operated in a nonlinear format and could not have been lessened to a

singular cause and effect result (Ferguson, 2017). This continual approach to change provided the ability to explore the interrelatedness of lived experiences, systematic racism, self-identity, and other variables based on age, religion, gender, disability, race, or language (May, 2015).

Considering the interaction of these aspects, a person or a societal existence gave way for analysis and change in the systemic system of gender disparity and gender imbalance (May, 2015). Feminist criminologists had debated that male-centered gender-neutral theories of crime were inadequate in rationalizing offenses committed by females, which resulted in more empirical work related to this population (Adler, 1975; Berger, 1989; Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; De Li & MacKenzie, 2003; Heimer, 1996; Heimer & De Coster, 1999; LaGrange & Silverman, 1999; Klein, 1973; Leonard, 1982; Makarios, 2007; Messerschmidt, 1993; Naffine & Gale, 1989; Smart, 1977).

As reported by Klein (1973) and Leonard (1982), gender inequality of wage earnings, dependence, attitude, and power of the population were merely known within the female offenders' perspectives and lived experiences. Understanding these complexities led some researchers to introduce the notion of gender into theories of deviance and crime that could have better addressed the experiences of females (Klein, 1973; Leonard, 1982). Scott et al. (2014) offered support for gender-neutral and gender-specific factors in projecting recidivism among female offenders.

Over the past 30 years, theories of gender-specific and gender-neutral had advanced and progressed (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016). The gender-specific approach argued that female offenders' pathways to offending differed from male offenders, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Bloom, 2015; DeHart, 2008; Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016; Schlager, 2018).

Because of that advancement, scholars advocating for gender-responsive programming for females considered women's distinct risk factors concerning assessment risk tools, supervision level, and programs (Greiner et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2013; Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; Wright et al., 2012).

Gender-neutral theorists contended that the theories suggested that male and female predictors of criminality were similar (Greiner et al., 2014; Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016). As a result, current research supported the gender-neutral theory because more studies were appropriate for gender-neutral factors and recidivation versus gender-specific factors (Jenkins et al., 2017; Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016). In addition, despite the continued heated arguments among scholars concerning unique factors, it was apparent that female offenders experienced more mental health, physical, and sexual abuse than male offenders (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016).

Researchers had applied the FT in a few qualitative studies of female ex-offenders after discharge from prison. For example, Garcia and Lane (2012) utilized the FT in their research to link girls' delinquency to the contributing issues believed to have caused their criminal behavior. Additionally, Stone et al. (2017) used the FT to demonstrate the oppression of imprisoned mothers as a population. Furthermore, Olson et al.'s (2016) quantitative research study aimed to prove if men and women had different risk factors for returning to prison, utilizing a quantitative survey called the Level of Service Inventory-Revised. Their goal was to demonstrate how gender bias affected recidivism and apply their results to create the urgent need for a paradigm shift in the service delivery of treatment needs and reentry programs for females (Olson et al., 2016).

Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2013) evaluated the difference between gender-specific programs and gender-neutral programs. Applying the FT as their foundation, they concluded that

a gender-responsive program was more effective at reducing recidivism. The focus was on POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to the successful transition of Black female offenders. Results highlighted how certain issues impacted Black female offenders. For example, limited or no access to childcare, medical care, or affordable housing, as well as lack of education and employment opportunities were ostensibly insurmountable reintegration obstacles for women (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013).

The current study aligned with the principles of the FT that addressed gender inequality power and the significance of recognizing rather than disregarding the unique challenges specific to females. In this study, the FT was applied to guide the exploration of how reentry programs contributed to Black female offenders' successful transition and how reentry programs best served the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision.

Related Literature

Women offenders had specific needs compared to their male counterparts, explicitly concerning their own unique set of psychological and emotional needs (Holmstrom et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the experiences of women offenders were misconstrued when related to reentry services. Although the correctional systems had reentry plans in place, several deficiencies of the correctional system affected female offenders (Brown, 2018). Additional research was needed to improve understanding of the female offenders' needs and how existing reentry services failed to address these needs (Vigesaa et al., 2016).

Reentry services played a vital role in preventing reoffending and preparing offenders' transition into society (Routh & Hamilton, 2015). The distinctive needs of female ex-offenders must be studied further to understand the population thoroughly. Estrada et al. (2019) contended that it was normal for researchers to ignore or label female offenders. Nevertheless, females

breaking the law increased early in the 1970s, and little by little, research specifically on female offenders had increased over time (Estrada et al., 2019; Mahmood et al., 2013). Due to the alarming increase in the number of females entering the criminal justice system, the requirements of incarcerated women were crucial to discuss (Mahmood et al., 2013). However, this research was methodologically difficult due to low sample sizes and low base rates of recidivism for women, making it too challenging to identify treatment results (Gobeil et al., 2016; Kajstura, 2017). Addressing the diverse needs of female offenders, such as medical services, employment training services, employment opportunities, education, and social services programs, may have helped reduce recidivism amongst the female offender population (Kaeble et al., 2016). The transitional period itself played a role in their unsuccessful reentrance into society (Kaeble et al., 2016). The most significant factors impacting community reentry were social support programs, education, substance abuse, mental health treatment, and medical services.

Critical Needs to Women's Reentry

Barriers were hindrances that impeded the offender from returning home after discharge from prison (Angell et al., 2014; Bahr et al., 2010; O'Brien, 2001; Schlager, 2018). Once discharged, there were several obstacles female offenders released from prison had to overcome to become productive citizens in society. Upon release, several barriers that persons released from prison were instantly confronted with were finding suitable housing, transportation, and finances. Other obstacles that had been pinpointed as challenging to overcome when returning home were poor mental health and physical health concerns, substance abuse problems, and need for social support (Angell et al., 2014; Bahr et al., 2010; O'Brien, 2001; Schlager, 2018).

Besides the primary barriers encountered by individuals reentering society, ex-offenders were also usually reentering neighborhoods that suffered from disadvantaged schools, fragile

economies, and poor healthcare alternatives (Visser & Travis, 2011). Visser and Travis (2011) suggested that more than two out of three ex-offenders re-offended, and one out of two of these re-offenders recidivated within three years after being freed from custody. The identifiable barriers discussed in these sections were intersectionality, the Second Chance Act, substance abuse, mental health, medical issues, children, housing, transportation, employment/finances, education, and social support (Visser & Travis, 2011).

Criminal Rates

The disproportionate representation of Black Americans in the U.S. prison system was well-documented, irrefutable evidence (Prosecution and Racial Justice Program, 2014). Implicit racial bias and harsher prison sentences contributed to higher incarceration rates and probation for people of color—specifically, Black people (Police Executive Research Forum, 2016). Although Black men made up approximately 40% of the prison population, they only comprised 13% of the total U.S. population. "One in three Black men will be jailed in his lifetime, the same for one of every six Latino men, as opposed to a mere one in 17 Caucasian men" (Mauer, 2011, para. 10). Compared to Caucasians, Blacks were confined at an alarming rate of 5.1 in state prisons (Nellis, 2016). Likewise, Black women were equally affected. One in 18 was expected to be imprisoned in her lifetime. Latina women expected to be jailed at a rate of one in 45 in their lifetimes. Caucasian women were jailed the least. Only one and 111 incarcerated in her lifetime. Black woman made up 44% of the prison population, but only 13% of the total U.S. female population. The basic premise of disproportionate representation was the long-standing U.S. history of discriminatory practices and policies (Nellis, 2017).

Men tended to carry out more criminal offenses than women in the U.S. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Women only accounted for a minuscule proportion of the overall

criminal violations occurring in the U.S.; crime rates increased significantly for women (Stephenson et al., 2014; Tripodi & Pettus-Davis, 2012) between 1980 and 2020 (The Sentencing Project, 2017). Likewise, Glaze and Kaebler (2014) reported that the female offender population had been vastly growing compared to male offenders. The Sentencing Project (2017) stated that between 2016 and 2017, the total number of female offenders under the authority of the U.S. Correctional System was 918,275. Since the 1980s, the surge in incarcerated females rose by 750% from 26,378 to 225,060, according to The Sentencing Project (2017).

Additionally, the criminal offenses committed by females were likely to be different from those committed by men. Men tended to commit violent crimes more than women, while women often committed nonviolent crimes, such as property or drug offenses (Carson & Anderson, 2016). Women were more likely than men to be arrested for prostitution-related offenses (Synder, 2012). While women account for a minuscule proportion of the overall criminal violations; female imprisonment continues to be on the rise in the United States (Stephenson et al., 2014; Tripodi & Pettus & Davis, 2012). For years, practitioners in every field took research conducted primarily with male subjects and applied the findings to women (Vigesaa et al., 2016). However, females had gender-specific roles that needed considered both during incarceration and reentry into society (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013; Wright et al., 2012).

Utilizing a male-is-norm system was substantively damaging for women (Van Voorhis, 2012). Additionally, the necessities of females during reentry were underrepresented in the research (Olson et al., 2016; Vigessaa et al., 2016). Brennan et al. (2012) asserted that men and women reached confinement differently. Women encountered higher rates of trauma than men before being remanded to prison (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Kerig, 2014). These traumas included childhood neglect; emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; or intimate partner violence by a former

partner or spouse. More than not, women experienced many types of cruel or unjust treatment before their criminal behavior landed them in prison (DeHart & Moran, 2015). Thus, a woman's pathway into prison was unlike that of a man's due to the unique challenges women faced. Women had a greater need for treatment related to the prevalence and severity of conditions; unlike with male offenders, the correctional prison was limited in its resources and abilities to address these issues for women.

Characteristics of Female Offenders

Worldwide, the U.S. had the highest prison population of any developed nation, with 1,500,000 offenders housed in prisons (Kang-Brown et al., 2021). Carson and Mulako-Wangota (2019) contended that high imprisonment rates in the U.S. had led to 108,088 women being imprisoned in state or federal prison, with an additional 110,700 women in the local jails. The growth was disproportionate for Black females, and equally troublesome, because Blacks accounted for a mere 13% of all U.S. citizens, yet were twice as likely to be jailed than Caucasian women for the same criminal offense (Carson, 2015). The New York Department of Corrections and Supervision stated that Black women comprised 43% of the prison population (Cobbina et al., 2014). When compared to Caucasians, Blacks faced systemic obstacles due in part to the residual part that race played in the role of reintegration (Cobbina et al., 2014). Nationwide, female parolees comprised 12% of the overall adult parolee population (Holmstrom et al., 2017). Most recidivism into prison were Blacks; however, while there were several general studies on the reentry population, limited literature existed on Black women (Sharp, 2014).

Although mass imprisonment was a prominent concern for all cultures and populations, the persons who made up these numbers must be understood. Of the 105,683 women incarcerated at the end of 2016, 46.4% were Caucasian, 19.3% were African American, 18.3%

were Hispanic, and 16.1% were described as other (Carson, 2018). One disturbing change to emphasize was the fast growth in incarceration concerning African American women. African American women were second to Caucasian women compared to the year-end imprisonment rates for 2016. African American women's arrest rates were nearly two times that of Caucasian women, increasing the number of incarcerated African American women to 97 per 100,000 and the rate of imprisonment for Caucasian women at 49 per 100,000 (Carson, 2018).

Alper et al. (2018) discovered that 86.9% of African American offenders were rearrested within nine years after being discharged from prison, and 46% of these took place within the first year of release. Additionally, 76.8% of women were arrested nine years after leaving prison, while 35.1% of the women rearrested happened within the first-year post-release (Alper et al., 2018). Moreover, research showed that the number of incarcerated had only decreased by 1% since 2015 (Carson, 2018); this showed the lack of considerable improvement about mass imprisonment and revealed a need for significant research and policy reform within the criminal justice system (Kajstura, 2017). While incarceration was considered a deterrent for some violators, the progress of reentry could not be ignored (Carson, 2018). Eventually, except for those with life sentences and death penalties, most offenders were released from prison to their respective communities. The isolation and alienation that offenders experienced during their prison sentence gravely affected their capacity to succeed in transitioning back into their community. Carson (2018) contended that, as a result, reentry should not have been regarded as a simple process. Without proper and necessary reentry processes and support in place, ex-offenders certainly still felt like their prison sentence was ongoing once passed their actual release (Carson, 2018).

Nearly all imprisoned women between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age were single (Barnes & Cunningham-Stringer, 2014) with children (Miller et al., 2014). Incarcerated women were more apt than imprisoned men to be the custodial parent of one or more children. After returning to their community, mothers were often left with the daunting task of juggling work and family (Bachman et al., 2016). Female offenders were more inclined to report a greater incidence of substance abuse, mental illness, and victimization committed against them than male offenders (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Kerig, 2014; McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014).

Women engaged in higher self-harming behaviors and attempted suicide at higher rates than men (Sherman et al., 2013; Stephenson et al., 2014). Women discharged from jail had less education and earned fewer wages than their male counterparts released from prison (Mapson, 2013; Rabuy & Kopf, 2015). Barnes and Cunningham-Stringer (2014) discovered that most women in their study had obtained money from engaging in criminal activity before incarceration. Female ex-offenders discharged from imprisonment were at high risk for homelessness (Asberg & Renk, 2015). Mothers instinctively found ways to survive with limited support and resources, such as engaging in risky behaviors to make money. Likewise, Synder's (2012) study cited the average age amongst women charged with prostitution as between 25-49 years; prostitution had been a catalyst for helping women provide for themselves and their families. While women accounted for only a minuscule proportion of the overall criminal violations, female imprisonment had continued to rise in the U.S. (Stephenson et al., 2014; Tripodi & Pettus-Davis, 2012). Most of the research involving offenders had been conducted with men, due to a small population of women in the correctional system.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality was considered one of the core contributions to the FT (Crenshaw, 1989). In the groundbreaking essay, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to describe the oppression of Black women within not only antidiscrimination law, but also in feminist and antiracist theory, as well as political and legal practices. Gender and race were two essential factors of this research. Exploring how the intersectionality of being Black and a woman affected the success of reentry following incarceration was the essence of this study. The intersectional perspective was initially coined in a study on the effect of race and gender employment experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). The implication was that categorization of cultures was the reflection of power demonstration; the individuals who controlled more power defined the customs and norms in the culture (Risberg & Pilhofer, 2018). For instance, women experienced a reduction in wage over time due to the role they assumed in their family (Calasanti & Giles, 2018). Regarding race, African Americans typically earned lower wages than Caucasians because of the jobs they obtained (Calasanti & Giles, 2018).

Considering Black women overrepresentation in the legal system and their significant and continuing susceptibility, there was no question that race and sex were essential causes of their disproportionate representation (Gross, 2015). In addition, Black female offenders experienced a lack of access to help focused on their medical and mental health issues, resulting from the injustice of race, class, and gender that tended to be further complicated by the incrimination of the legal system. These individual and societal factors considered the

perspective to aid in discovering social determinants of health implications among former incarcerated Black women (Calasanti & Giles, 2018).

Due to the scarcity of resources and the crucial aspect of relationship and faith in the Black community, Black women searched for other medical care resources from family and spiritual leaders. Crenshaw (1991) maintained that at the intersection of race and gender, Black women were the most likely to experience the burden of mass incarceration. Due to the history of systematic racism and discrimination in the U.S., Black women faced double the challenges connected with their gender and race. Gender and race were two essential factors of this research. Exploring how the intersectionality of being Black and women impacted the success of their reentry following incarceration drew on this study.

Women and Reentry

Reentry had emerged at the forefront to focus on the difficulties of prisoners reintegrating into society and progressively as a means for dealing with mass incarceration and diminishing high rates of recidivism (Mears & Cochran, 2015). Reentry programs were not a new concept (Herberman & Bonczar, 2015) and had been a significant part of the criminal justice system (LaFleur & O'Grady, 2016). Even so, the offender participants taking part in these programs had changed (Visser et al., 2017). Traditionally, reentry programs were designed for male offenders; therefore, most criminality studies utilized men as subjects, with male offenders embodying the standard to benefit from reentry policies and programming (Cadreche, 2014; Herberman & Bonczar, 2015). Moreover, reentry programs were created by men for men; therefore, male researchers assessed these androcentric approaches with little attention directed to meeting the reentry needs of the justice-involved offender (Durose et al., 2014).

Facilitating a positive environment and addressing the rehabilitative needs of women reduces recidivism and produces positive outcomes (Bloom,2015) which transitioned offenders into society utilizing community-based reentry programs (James, 2015). Reentry efforts assisted with reducing barriers to employment, education, stable housing, health services, and substance use counseling (Frazier et al., 2015). However, many ex-prisoners continued involvement in criminal offending despite participating in reentry programs (Wikoff et al., 2012). Black women were underrepresented in the interest and debate of reentry issues, including healthcare, mental health, substance use treatment, education, housing, and employment, despite the effects these problems continued to have on their families and communities.

Probation Officers

Probation was an essential short-term program that provided post-release assistance and guidance for former offenders (Kaeble et al., 2016). After post-release, former offenders under community supervision were most typically on parole or probation (Kaeble et al., 2016). POs were a source of help and support, reducing both relapses in criminal behavior and substance use (Holmstrom et al., 2017). Offenders ordered to complete probation after discharge from jail were required to follow specifically prescribed requirements, such as paying probation-related costs, fines, and fees; obtaining safe and approved housing; participating in a drug treatment program; and completing educational and job readiness training (Morash et al., 2015).

Probation programs were utilized to provide former offenders with encouraging standards and conditions. Individuals struggling with drug problems used encouragement from their PO to assist them in their transition to their community. However, most female ex-offenders with drug-related offenses encountered distinctive hindrances to reintegration (Anderson et al., 2018). Morash et al. (2015) carried out a study of 284 female offenders who had remembered receiving

encouraging notes from their PO concerning the importance of avoiding substance use and learned that communication support was typically provided by the POs, while network support seldom occurred.

Wilfong (2018) studied the impact of treatment services on female offenders on community supervision and discovered that former offenders were more successful at abstinence when collaborative efforts were with probation, parole, and substance abuse treatment services.. Furthermore, Morash et al. (2015) found that despite the offenders being at a high, moderate, or low risk for recidivism, treatment-oriented responses to drug-related infractions were unconnected to reimprisonment.

Probation services helped former offenders deal with difficulties, such as substance abuse treatment, to meet the conditions of probation after they were discharged from prison. Probation also helped former offenders develop and build stronger connections and skills to reenter society. The Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole made significant strides when it created a prisoner reentry program to assist offenders in transitioning into their community (Zortman et al., 2016). Zortman et al. (2016) also reported data collected from 261 surveys and 226 interviews from the prisoner reentry program subjects. They showed progress among the former offenders in perspective, attitude toward illegal substance use, and unsociable relations. Many of the participants increased their self-sufficiency by leaving the homes of their loved ones and setting up their own places. The research also revealed that once participants had high regard for program staff, they improved their chances of finishing the program (Zortman et al., 2016). Scott et al. (2014) learned that women who participated in treatment were more apt to successfully abstain from drugs and alcohol than women who did not receive any treatment. Likewise, Hlavka

et al. (2015) contended that successful reentry was a challenging process for many offenders and mentioned that mental health and substance abuse services were essential factors in reintegration.

Existing offenders released to community supervision relied on the PO to assist in their reentry into society (Holmstrom et al., 2017). POs were a crucial asset in the support they provided during the reentry process to help transition with positive reintegration and prevention strategies for female offenders under their supervision. POs evaluated the offenders' necessities at the beginning of their supervision by utilizing the community resources available for a successful transition back into society (Holmstrom et al., 2017). POs assisted according to the female offenders' needs through face-to-face conversation or by using community resources available for issues related to substance abuse, mental disabilities, health issues, and education disparities (Holmstrom et al., 2017). Female offenders under community supervision acknowledged their POs as intricate social support at their release (Bui & Morash, 2010; Holmstrom et al., 2017). Consistent with previous research, Holmstrom et al. (2017) maintained that POs tended to be a valued resource for the female offender upon post-release. Antonio and Klunk (2014) proposed this population and appreciated the rapport they had formed with their PO, thus building a trusting relationship.

POs meet regularly with female offenders, which provided positive support to offenders during their transition into the community following confinement (Luallen et al., 2013). The perceptions of the POs were imperative, because they had direct knowledge of the needs, accomplishments, and impediments of the female offenders during community supervision (Hsieh et al., 2015). However, few studies focused on the POs' communication with female offenders concerning distinctive necessities and the POs' understanding regarding the female offenders' unique needs during post-release supervision (Morash et al., 2015). Hence, further

exploration of the study expanded the understanding of the POs' perceptions of factors influencing their role to assist the offender in successful reentry and whether the sex and race of the probation PO influenced successful reentry outcomes.

Victimization

Many imprisoned adult women described experiences with childhood victimization and intimate partner violence in adulthood (Lynch et al., 2012). Women offenders experienced higher rates of intimate partner violence and sexual and physical abuse than their male counterparts (Lynch et al., 2012). Most women in the criminal justice system had been subjected to adverse childhood experiences, physical abuse, and sexual abuse (Burgess-Proctor, 2012; DeHart & Moran, 2015; Kerig, 2014; Pritchard et al., 2014). While men had a history of interpersonal violence before entering prison, rates of women were higher (DeHart & Moran, 2015).

Women experienced multiple types of victimization compared to men (DeHart & Moran, 2015). This experience was called polyvictimization. For example, a study conducted by Lynch et al. (2012) discovered that in a sample of 102 female offenders, 23.5% had experienced four types of abusive behaviors (sexual coercion, forced molestation, physical violence with a weapon, and physical aggression without a weapon) in their past (Tripodi & Pettus-Davis, 2012). Another 32% reported three different types of victimization, and 25.5% suffered two types of victimization. By contrast, 8% stated they had never been victimized. Once abused, women were typically at risk for additional forms of abuse. For example, studies reported that 90% of women were victims of intimate partner violence before imprisonment. Furthermore, women were more prone to develop drug use and mental health concerns after victimization (Tripodi & Pettus-Davis, 2012).

Reoffending Factors

There was a plethora of research on risk assessment. Still, most literature examining factors related to reoffending was conducted utilizing male participants (Barrick et al., 2014; Olson et al., 2016). Women were exclusively nonexistent from studies entailing post-release (Olson et al., 2016; Vigessaa et al., 2016). Olson et al. (2016) utilized the FT as a framework to quantitatively study the distinction amongst males and females in their recidivism risk factors. The results showed that previous self-injurious behavior, childhood trauma, and a history of mental health did not correlate to reoffending. Olson et al. (2016) proposed that these risk factors were linked with criminal behavior instead of recidivism.

Nevertheless, these findings could have been the results of unreliable participants' responses to the experiences of being subjected to different types of treatment. Results showed that single men were more likely to recidivate, unlike women. Previous arrests for selling drugs were prevalent for violent offenders for women, but not for their male counterparts.

Mental Health

Reintegration into society presented a high risk to offenders' wellbeing and safety (Angell et al., 2011). However, the research discovered that approximately 73% of female offenders and 55% of male offenders were diagnosed with a mental illness (Arditi & Few, 2008). Somers et al. (2015) argued that 99% of offenders serving the most days in jail or the longest time on community supervision were diagnosed with a mental illness, with approximately 100% being treated with a substance abuse disorder and mental health illness, compared to 41% of the offender population who did not have a mental illness (Somers et al., 2015).

Although several mental and physical health programs and services were available to community members, former homeless offenders may not have accessed these programs (Bunn,

2018). Bunn (2018) explained this as facilitating the offenders' pathways back into the criminal justice system by disregarding their specific needs. Once health needs became a problem for individuals, healthcare costs became a costly expense regardless of criminal behavior.

Additionally, after an offender was released from jail, they were released with little to no finances, and obtaining employment was another barrier to receiving adequate physical and mental care (Bunn, 2018).

Substance Abuse

Drug use had been recognized as one of the leading causes for ex-offenders during reentry. Nearly 60% of state offenders were assessed for dependence and substance use concerns between 2007 and 2009 (Bronson et al., 2019). Furthermore, Bahr et al. (2010) insinuated that this was important in determining if ex-offenders recidivated back to prison, no matter if their first offense was a drug crime. Understanding how relapse hindered successful reentry was essential and could have averted substance abuse at the beginning of the reentry process.

Likewise, Luther et al. (2011) conducted a survey and learned that several individuals showed signs of drug relapse into substance use instantly after being released from prison; several described how their primary drug of choice upon discharge was crack cocaine, even after being in drug treatment programs within a prison facility. This demonstrated an obvious problem with successful reintegration among offenders' while being imprisoned. An approximated two-thirds of the prison population had a substance use disorder (Luther et al., 2011).

Prior research had presented several contrasting recommendations for lessening the occurrence of substance use amongst ex-offenders. Sung et al. (2006) learned that discipline and treatment worked better together, and criminals were more effective at ceasing from committing a crime when they partook in both. In another study, it was learned that being unable to find and

secure housing upon release into the community increased the probability of ex-criminals resuming drug use or drinking after a period of abstinence, even though treatment during their incarceration sentence was successful (Ahmed et al., 2016). Female offenders described adequate housing as safe and supported (Ahmed et al., 2016). Thus, the possibility of relapse risk decreased when safe and secure housing was obtained (Ahmed et al., 2016.).

The Second Chance Act

Congress approved the Second Chance Act, which authorized grants to critical support programs and services intended to reduce barriers to the reintegration process (Miller & Miller, 2017). The Second Chance Act funded and administered grants to states and other entities developing and implementing reentry programs to better communities and reduce recidivism (Belknap, 2015; Bloom, 2015). Recidivism referred to the act of engaging in repeated behavior once released from prison that resulted in a new crime and sentence (NIJ, 2015). Reentry services were programs and resources available to ex-offenders by the government, nonprofit organizations, and organizations designed to facilitate ex-offenders' reentry into their community (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). These rigorous programs lasted up to six months; programs could have begun before they left prison but finished in their natural environments (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). Competent and relevant programs that addressed the needs of offenders could have aided them in making a smooth transition back into society (Burden, 2019). Effective prison programs helped reduce an ex-offender's likelihood of returning to prison (Hopkins, 2017). It was imperative to design effective reentry programs because these programs assisted offenders in acquiring skills to rejoin society and reduced the outcomes of their return to prison. Once effective programs were designed for offenders, criminal behaviors were redirected to positive change (Hopkins, 2017).

Recidivism

Reentry was the transition process of releasing incarcerated individuals who were returning to their communities under community supervision (Burgess-Proctor, 2012; Hlavka et al., 2015; Zajac et al., 2014). Existing offenders released to community supervision relied on the PO to assist in their reentry into society. POs were a crucial asset in the support they provided during the reentry process to assist with positive reintegration and prevention strategies for female offenders under their supervision. POs evaluated the offenders' necessities at the beginning of their supervision by utilizing the community resources available for a successful transition back into society (Holmstrom et al., 2017). POs aided according to the female offenders' needs through face-to-face conversation or by using community resources available for issues related to substance abuse, mental disabilities, health issues, and education disparities (Holmstrom et al., 2017).

Furthermore, researchers had discovered that female offenders under community supervision acknowledged their PO as intricate social support at the time of their release (Bui & Morash, 2010; Holmstrom et al., 2017). As a result, reentry had emerged at the forefront to focus on the difficulties of prisoners reintegrating into society and, progressively, as a means for dealing with mass incarceration and diminishing high rates of recidivism. Reentry programs were not a new concept (Herberman & Bonczar, 2015), and had been a significant part of the criminal justice system (LaFleur & O'Grady, 2016). Even so, the offender participants taking part in these programs had changed (Visser et al., 2017). Traditionally, reentry programs were designed for male offenders; therefore, most criminality studies utilized men as subjects, with male offenders embodying the standard to benefit from reentry policies and programming (Cadreche, 2014; Herberman & Bonczar, 2015).

Moreover, reentry programs were created by men for men; therefore, male researchers assessed these androcentric approaches with little attention directed to meeting the reentry needs of the justice-involved women offender (Durose et al., 2014). Brennan et al. (2012) contended that research indicated that men and women had different life situations after being released from prison. The increasing changes in the demographic characteristics brought awareness to the needs of the female offender (Cobbina & Bender, 2012).

Bronson and Carson (2019) contended that while males were confined more than females, the insurgence of female incarceration was twice as high, citing 1.3 million females under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. The barriers with the justice system regarding female offenders' transition into society and reoffending stemmed from the use of criminality research with male subjects as the benchmark for predicting criminal behavior (Cadreche, 2014; Herberman & Bonczar, 2015). The Sentencing Project (2017) reported that between the periods of 1990-2020, female incarcerations increased from 26,326 to 152, 854 in state prisons.

Antonio and Klunk (2014) proposed that this population appreciated the rapport they had formed with their PO, thus building a trusting relationship. POs conducted regular meetings with female ex-offenders, which provided social support to ex-offenders during their reentry into society following imprisonment (Luallen et al., 2013). The views of the POs were important, as they were the authority who observed the offender's needs, achievements, and setbacks throughout supervision (Hsieh et al., 2015). Nevertheless, limited research centered on regarding a PO's interaction with women offenders about specific issues and the PO's experiences regarding the women offenders' basic needs during reentry supervision (Morash et al., 2015).

Consistent with previous research, Bloom et al. (2003) also learned that female offenders on community supervision were more apt to discuss their basic needs with their PO.

Hence, further exploration of the study expanded the understanding of the PO's perceptions of factors influencing their role to assist the Black female offender in successful reentry. Additionally, the research added to the body of literature on the successful reentry of Black female offenders as productive members of society. African American women were underrepresented in the interest and debate of reentry issues, including healthcare, mental health, substance use treatment, education, housing, and employment. However, these problems continued to have effects on their families and communities.

Education

Education was the most essential component for transformation for former prisoners and was necessary to attain gainful employment (South et al., 2017). At the same time, if ex-prisoners acquired specialized training and trade, they were more likely to gain employment. South et al. (2017) asserted that ex-prisoners taking part in educational courses and training boosted their ability to land a job. Likewise, Hall (2015) studied the correlation between rehabilitative programming, such as correctional education programs, and reoffending and determined that educational involvement lessened recidivism rates and relationship to gainful employment. Furthermore, Hall (2015) contended that educational involvement was an integral part of the correctional process. Former offenders who improved their skills through education and job skills reduced their probability of returning to prison. After female offenders reentered their communities, many lacked the education or skills necessary to find employment. Work readiness and educational preparedness were crucial for former offenders to become productive community members (Burden, 2019). Snodgrass et al. (2017) discovered that people entangled in

criminal offenses did not possess the basic skills or education required to benefit from employment possibilities. Lutman et al. (2015) reported that approximately 70% of former offenders dropped out of high school. Similarly, Alos et al. (2015) found that ex-prisoners with higher education had more skilled trades and were high-performing employees.

Employment

A crucial factor of reentry and community transition was employment (Bahr et al., 2010; Souza et al., 2013). Unlike male parolees, female parolees struggled with finding employment and became reliant on state or federal assistance (Souza et al., 2013). Employment prospects were not as accessible in neighborhoods to which Blacks returned compared to Whites (Bellair & Kowalaski, 2011); as a result, it was challenging for Black females transitioning from prison to obtain and secure work. This further compounded the challenges to obtaining sustenance support for themselves and their children, an unprejudiced reunification into and approval by society, and admittance to reentry assistance programs that echoed good alternatives and behaviors to avert recrimination (Hlavka et al., 2015).

Harding et al. (2011) discovered that ex-offenders faced significant vulnerability due to lack of stable income or inability to maintain an adequate standard of living, which were direct results of the barriers encountered in obtaining employment. The population studies centered recently on post-release across the U.S. revealed that 58% of formerly imprisoned women were arrested again, 38% were convicted of a higher criminal offense, and 30% went back to prison within a three-year period from their release (Harding et al., 2011). This made it difficult because Black females returning to society had significant employment deficits that significantly increased financial problems (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Upon release, an initial parole

requirement of women offenders was to obtain employment in order to not to have their parole revoked (Souza et al., 2013).

Housing

Safe and secure housing was critical for women to assure their physical and emotional well-being upon discharge. Unfortunately, female offenders faced unique barriers when accessing safe and stable housing (Keene et al., 2018). Upon release into the community, female offenders faced the ongoing stigma associated with a history of criminal behavior, creating barriers when trying to access stable and safe housing, especially when seeking to rent from homeowners. In addition, the stigma negatively impacted offenders from qualifying for federal housing programs that provided housing vouchers, due to restrictions of policies that prevented offenders with felonies from qualifying (Keene et al., 2018).

Chintakrindi et al. (2015) maintained that housing stability improved health outcomes for persons discharged from jail. They also found a direct link between affordable housing and labor market participation; this suggested that stable housing was crucial in securing a job. The relationship between stable housing and employment suggested that ex-offenders who lacked secure housing increased the turnstile of recidivism due to lack of financial stability (Ahmed et al., 2016). Additionally, housing issues adversely affected offenders' health upon returning to the community; conversely, secure housing improved health (Ahmed et al., 2016).

There were times offenders had to reside with family or friends, in boarding rooms or transitional housing, or were homeless. Luther et al. (2011) discovered several factors among participants regarding housing; a few ex-offenders made housing plans before being discharged that were unsuccessful. In some cases, offenders did not have the social support and resources needed to secure housing after reentry. In addition, it was common for friends and family who

had agreed to house the offender to change their minds before their release, and others did not secure housing as a condition of their release (Luther et al., 2011). Consequently, failing to acquire a safe place to occupy increased the probability of women reverting to sex work or depending on unhealthy relationships to meet basic human needs (Luther et al., 2011).

Social Support

Social support was essential to the encouragement and care people received to help them in their daily doings (Harding et al., 2011). Visitation for loved ones and friends in prisons showed that female offenders had maintained positive family ties, thus enhancing their social support network before release. In addition, scholars consistently found that offenders who maintained social ties to family were less likely to recidivate (Males & Buchen, 2013).

To increase female offenders' success during probation supervision, there had to have been encouragement and assistance in forming healthy relationships with their families and children (Snyder et al., 2014). Du et al. (2013) conducted a study on 1,444 gender-different offenders. Findings showed that female offenders experienced more problems with family relationships than male offenders, which impacted the samples' post-incarceration outcomes.

Bonta et al. (2013) found a correlation between family issues and general recidivism. In comparison, Jacoby and Kozie-Peak (1997) conducted a three-year longitudinal study of 27 female offenders regarding whether having stronger social support led to a better reentry experience. Although social support was associated with a higher quality of life post-incarceration, the researchers found no direct effect on recidivism (Jacoby & Kozie-Peak, 1997).

According to Gendreau et al. (1996), a background of family criminality was a strong predictor of recidivism. Likewise, Reisig et al. (2002) examined self-reported support measures from 402 female offenders and found that those female offenders with less education had smaller

networks and less support. Social support was particularly salient to women because female offenders were more likely to return to their same intimate partner after incarceration (Richardson & Flowers, 2014).

However, female offenders usually reported separation or divorce while incarcerated (Ball et al., 2013). The social support of an intimate partner upon release was more likely to be absent for female offenders leaving prison (Carter, 2017; Richardson & Flowers, 2014). Social support was an essential component for female offenders to desist from crime. The provision of social support might have been informal or formal through government assistance programs, such as counseling (Macklin, 2013). Duwe and Clark (2012) noted that social support and social bonds were common elements in many criminological theories as a key mechanism to desist from crime and crime prevention.

Additionally, life course theorists viewed the release from prison and reunification with family as a turning point in the offender's life, providing the opportunity and incentive to cease criminal activity (Ball et al., 2013; Duwe & Clark, 2012; Schlager, 2018). Research indicated that female offenders were protected from returning to a life of crime when they had friendships and family relationships (Schlager, 2018). Female offenders had a higher need than their male counterparts for strong family ties to deal with barriers, such as victimization and abuse, and, thus lessening recidivism (Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Sarteschi, 2013).

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships were an intricate part of the reintegration process (Davis et al., 2012). Typically, offenders' involvement with friends and family who engaged in deviant behaviors compromised their ability to abstain from substance abuse and criminal offending upon discharge from prison (Davis et al., 2012). Therefore, avoiding these types of situations

after release increased the probability of abstaining from patterns of criminal behavior (Davis et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Doherty et al. (2014) suggested that even with maintaining your distance, it was still possible for deviant friends and family to reach out to the offender upon release. Women were in a unique position because they were tasked with maintaining a decent relationship with family members who were caretakers for their children. Broken relationships tended to impact the collaborative communication between the offender and family members regarding childcare issues. Even if relationships were healthy, more facilities accommodated males than females, resulting in longer travel distances and limited visitation (Hagan & Foster, 2012).

Transportation

Initially, access to transportation seemed like a small issue in the success of reentry; however, transportation issues presented serious challenges to meeting conditions of probation release, obtaining gainful employment, managing mental and health concerns, and traveling to other important destinations (Luther et al., 2011). A significant keystone for success on post-release supervision, access to affordable and reliable transportation tended to be more of a disadvantage to women than men (Luther et al., 2011). Luther et al. (2011) maintained that disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods that typically provided housing options to former offenders often had far more limited access to dependable transportation. According to Garland et al. (2011), former offenders identified limited-transportation barriers, such as missed work, fear of losing their job, and violation of probation conditions.

Trauma

Women in the penal system experienced higher rates of trauma exposure, placing them at a higher risk for romantic involvement with partners with antisocial behaviors, and, thus,

increasing their risk for repeated intimate violence and revictimization (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Kerig & Ford, 2014). Breaking the cycle of abuse was challenging. Trauma exposure caused disruption and impaired emotion regulation and cognitive control. Trauma exposure led to unhealthy communication, lack of problem-solving skills, mistrust, and inability to self-regulate emotions (Kerig & Ford, 2014). Guilt was more significant for women than men after a traumatic event; however, research findings were mixed (Pugh et al., 2015).

Brennan et al. (2012) asserted that men and women reached confinement differently. Women encountered higher rates of trauma than men before being remanded to prison (DeHart & Moran, 2015; Kerig, 2014). These traumas included childhood neglect, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or intimate partner violence by a former partner or spouse (Aakvaag et al., 2016; Fuentes, 2014). More often than not, women experienced many types of cruel or unjust treatment before their criminal behavior landed them in prison (DeHart & Moran, 2015). A woman's pathway into prison was unlike that of a man's due to women's unique challenges. At the end of 2016, approximately 1,506,800 individuals were incarcerated in state and federal prisons, and nearly 626,000 offenders were discharged from prison in the same year (Carson, 2018).

Girls had more self-control than boys when dealing with family problems, including sexual abuse at the family's hands (Garcia & Lane, 2012). Also, girls placed greater emphasis on relations and their responses to unhealthy relationships (Garcia & Lane, 2012). Furthermore, males and females typically responded differently to traumatic experiences. The rate of females developing post-traumatic stress disorder was twice as high compared to males (Christiansen & Hansen, 2015). The impact of early trauma in women caused personality disorders at later stages in life (Bartlett et al., 2015).

Women exposed to trauma and abuse faced other risk factors, such as using illicit drugs, selling drugs, or working as a prostitute to buy drugs (Koski & Costanza, 2015). Women with prolonged exposure to victimization and trauma had a history of prostitution (Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2013). Black women reporting severe degrees of emotional abuse, emotional neglect, or physical neglect were more likely to engage in prostitution than Hispanic or White women with similar levels of trauma (Medrano et al., 2003).

It was imperative that professionals who worked with women who had prostituted in the past be cognizant that they were still recovering from physical and psychological trauma (Perdue et al., 2012). Likewise, Matheson (2012) suggested that physical and sexual abuse were different types of victimization that produced a response to trauma that commonly antedated adolescents engaging in risky behaviors, adult lawbreakers, and mental health and substance abuse concerns (Golder et al., 2014). Addictive behavior was a maladaptive coping mechanism utilized by persons who had suffered trauma and inability to solve problems (Kerig & Ford, 2014).

Transition Factors

This chapter further examined the phenomenon of reentry transition by examining different issues that supported a successful transition. Several issues examined in previous studies included planning, education, and past work experience (Carson & Anderson, 2016; Davis et al., 2012; Janssen et al., 2017; Skinner-Osei & Stepteau-Watson, 2018). Since the goal of this investigation was to address the gap in the literature by examining the lived experiences of POs who had supervised Black female offenders that transitioned and reentered back into the community, it was crucial to investigate such causes as examined in prior research, among other factors of the female offender population.

Preparation Planning

Efficient reentry planning was a critical component to a successful reentry transition. For too long, the past practice had been to release offenders and let them take care of themselves with limited assistance or direction (Polaschek et al., 2018). Polaschek et al. (2018) stressed that effective planning was necessary to prevent barriers to transitioning from prison back into the community that relied upon the individual's attitude about the situation. Individuals may have gone through a mix of emotions when faced with an unexpected change. Walker and Davidson (2018) stated that when offenders were adequately equipped to be released from prison, they set realistic goals while reducing anxiety, fear, and disappointment about reentering into their community. An initial step in planning was to plot a structured plan for the offender to follow by monitoring who they frequently communicated with within prison and upon release. This process was a role for prison officials before releasing from prison. The inherent inconsistencies, poor transitioning planning, and limited access to significant "social, financial and educational resources and opportunities," such as housing affordability, gainful employment, medical care, and community treatment programs for substance use, were grave issues that ex-prisoners encountered (Frazier et al., 2015).

Summary

Visher and Travis (2011) stated that more offenders returned home because more individuals were ordered to prison. With mass imprisonment being so widespread, everyday discharge was unavoidable (Polaschek et al., 2018). As a result, unsuccessful offender reentry continued to rise and be a problem for society and the penal system. Therefore, it became imperative to evaluate what prepared for an offender's reentry success and what opposed the offender's successful reentry (Hlavka et al., 2015). This understanding was crucial because if

there was no understanding of successful reentry, imprisoned offenders were more apt to be entangled in a vicious and endless cycle of criminal activity.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Chapter Three extended the discussion of the research presented in Chapter One. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. This chapter presented the phenomenological approach to further the understanding of the need for research, explicit to the unique characteristics and necessities of Black female offenders, that could help guide gender-specific rehabilitative techniques (Van Voorhis & Brushett, 2013). An examination of the academic research revealed a gap in the methodology and design method based on relatively little empirical research, resulting in methodologically opposed findings (Gobeil et al., 2016; Kajstura, 2017). The phenomenological qualitative design led to a deep understanding of working with Black female offenders. Therefore, a phenomenological qualitative study was applicable to comprehend the complexities and hindrances to the reintegration success of returning Black female offenders into society from the perspectives of POs who supervised this population.

Chapter Three provided a detailed narrative of the research method. Next, the research design, rationale, and methodology utilized were presented. Finally, the target population, sample, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness were provided. This chapter ended with a summary.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative design. According to Creswell (2014), “a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 57). A phenomenological approach was a descriptive method that sought to

shed light on the meaning and understanding of the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Qualitative researchers interacted in the natural environment of the participants under study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). After deciding the research design for this study, the researcher explored transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology approaches and elected to use transcendental phenomenology. Husserl (1931), known as the father of phenomenology, founded transcendental phenomenology, which is a descriptive approach. Husserl (1931) introduced the life-world experiences or life experiences; encouraged the use of epoch, the Greek word for bracketing; and contended that all prejudiced biases, judgments, and ideas of the individual must have been ignored to understand the fullness of the participants' lived experiences. Moustakas (1994) referred to the technique called "bracketing" (p. 85), explaining that, "epoche gives us an original vantage point, a clearing of the mind, space, and time" (p. 86). Van Manen's (1990) forward-thinking progressed passed the idea of bracketing the individual experience and understanding from the phenomenon.

In the past, the researcher had worked professionally with POs and provided educational and life skills services to the Black female offenders assigned to the Confinement in Response to Violation (CRV) center within a correctional facility. Due to a previous work relationship with POs, the researcher had to put aside any preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies in order to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21).

A phenomenological design was appropriate because this study sought to "determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and can provide a comprehensive description of it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). The phenomenological study

investigated lived experiences by looking for meanings at a deeper level of the lived experience (Latham, 2014; Roberts, 2013). Therefore, this study sought to capture POs' accounts of their experience supervising Black female offenders on post-release supervision. Yilmaz (2013) described the differences between quantitative and qualitative by emphasizing how quantitative centered on unique numerical data points achieved from "measuring and analyzing relationships between variables" (para. 3). Patton (2015) suggested that using qualitative research allowed the researcher to expand and deepen their understanding and meaning to the specific phenomenon. Furthermore, Hurt and McLaughlin (2012) stated that qualitative research approaches did more than poll participants for survey responses and experimental observations, but rather focused on describing through in-depth responses to the research questions regarding the problem under investigation.

A qualitative study allowed for the phenomenological probe of participant experiences to be the focal point of the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Quantitative methods involved a hypothesis and analyzing variables (Babones, 2015). Given that testing a hypothesis would not have been a part of the purpose of this research, selecting a quantitative method was not an appropriate choice. Mixed methods researchers gathered data from qualitative and quantitative research designs concurrently, resulting in the subjectivity of qualitative research and the numerical data for quantitative research (McKim, 2015). Because gathering information from multiple related sources within a case was the goal, as opposed to collecting data consecutively using statistics and texts, the mixed-method approach was not appropriate for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the focus of this study:

RQ1: What are probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community?

RQ2: What are the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision?

RQ3: How do coping resources prepare Black female offenders to transition into society?

Setting and Participants

Setting

The setting was in the Southeast U.S. The researcher conducted the audio-recording interviews using a videoconference platform called Zoom. Janghorban et al. (2014) proposed that online interviews gave researchers the flexibility to overcome setting and distance constraints. The interviews took place by the researcher via Zoom from a secure and private office location. All participants were asked to locate a safe and private space to conduct the interview. This interview setting provided privacy, confidentiality, convenience, and comfort. All the participants had the option to interview after hours or on the weekend at a convenient time. The researcher interviewed eight participants using an audio recorder. Jamshed (2014) acknowledged that recorded sessions allowed for precise transcription of interview content. Before the start of the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants. The participants had sufficient time to read and ask questions before the interview. Each participant received the consent form (Appendix A) once they verbally confirmed participation during the prescreening telephone call. The participant read and signed the interview consent and then returned it via email. The researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym (e.g., alpha, beta, delta, charlie, echo, kappa, lambda, masonic60) to protect the participants' confidentiality throughout the interviews. This process ensured confidentiality while personalizing

conversations and subsequent reporting of qualitative data. As an extra layer to protect the identity of the participants, the participants were not required to use the video camera recording for Zoom. The participants had to call in to the interview using one of the dial-in-telephone numbers in Zoom.

The researcher utilized memoing to capture ideas, gestures, nonverbal cues, thoughts, and perceptions throughout the interviews. As mentioned, all individual interviews were conducted on Zoom, which was a reliable video platform that automatically produced a transcription of the interview. The researcher also used a backup recorder in the event of any technical mishaps.

Participants

The participants for this study were eight POs who supervised Black female offenders on post-release supervision in the Southeast U.S. Participants included both males and females between the ages of 55-65 years that were either U.S. or naturalized citizens that could read and understand English with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or a related human services field. All participants had been POs with at least two years of experience supervising Black female offenders that had connected or attempted to connect Black female offenders to community resources to assist with needs.

The Researcher's Role

In scholarly studies, the role as the researcher was to reduce the risk of harm arising from the study while removing any prejudices and preconceived notions. The researcher must have been cognizant that any prejudices, cultural biases, and assumptions could have comprised data. As an educational instructor in the CRV program, the researcher had a professional relationship with the study population. Therefore, there was a potential risk of compromising the participants'

responses. The researcher identified as a Black woman and had worked in a state correctional prison providing drug treatment services to Black female offenders assigned to the Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency Program.

Working as an educational instructor for the CRV prison centers, the researcher provided education services (e.g., life skills, social skills, employment readiness) to Black female offenders who had committed technical violations on probation. In that role, she developed a professional rapport with POs, reported any behavioral issues, and made recommendations for other services for female offenders assigned to the program. Throughout data collection, the researcher utilized bracketing to eliminate any prejudice and preconceived ideas that may have swayed the participants' account of the phenomenon with the researcher's experiences. A researcher's assumptions, opinions, and beliefs must have been deliberately put aside to achieve bracketing, so that the participants guided the interview instead of the interviewer (Chan et al., 2013). It was important to stay unbiased to ensure personal viewpoints did not influence the interpretation and understanding of the collected data and the findings. Reflexivity must have been assessed and examined during the process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019); researchers must have considered that participants were the experts regarding their lived experiences.

Procedures

Permissions

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval FY21-22-567 number from Liberty University (Appendix B), the researcher used non-random sampling to recruit participants.

Recruitment Plan

POs were contacted by email and invited to participate in the study. A purposive approach was used in qualitative research for non-random sampling to select a particular sample of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013), which for this study, was POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. The researcher started the selection process by obtaining former employees' contact information from current emails. Next, she made contact with the prospective participants by telephone or email with recruitment intentions for participants in the study (Appendix C). Included in the email communication was the purpose of the research, the research questions, participants' criteria, procedures of the study, informed consent, and contact information on how to schedule an interview. The participants reached out to confirm their interest after responding to questions to make sure they met the research criteria.

Sample Pool

Sampling was the process of selecting a subset from a larger population under study (Englander, 2012). The general population for this study was POs in the Southeast U.S.

Sample Size

Moustakas (1994) contended that, unlike quantitative studies that generalized the findings to an entire population, the essence of phenomenological studies was to provide a contextualized understanding of participants who experienced similar lived experiences. Thus, the sample size in phenomenological research tended to be small and made up of discreetly and purposefully chosen participants who shared common experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose was to generate noted patterns of opinions and descriptive meaning, but the sample size needed to be large enough to achieve saturation. Data collection continued until complete data saturation

(Robinson, 2014). The sample size for the phenomenological approach was less than 12 participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). For this study, the researcher used a sample size of eight participants to collect descriptive data from the participants in this study (Pietkiewicz, & Smith, 2014). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) discussed that samples did not indicate a population, but rather a viewpoint. Hennink et al. (2017) “examined 25 in-depth interviews and found that code saturation was reached at nine interviews, whereby the range of thematic interviews were identified” (para.1). Data saturation was reached with eight female ex-offenders in a qualitative study conducted by Martilik (2018). A qualitative study by Brown (2018) that was conducted to explore and understand the experiences of reentry into society for five female offenders reached data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) cited that data saturation was reached when no new information or themes were emerged.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used based on the specific inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling was used in qualitative research for non-random sampling to select a particular sample of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013). Purposive sampling was described as:

A form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample is taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Oliver & Judd, 2006, para. 1).

Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling was a highly efficient sampling technique used when the researcher found difficult or hidden populations (Waters, 2015). As a two-step process, snowball sampling consisted of a researcher asking participants to recruit other individuals who met the criteria for the study (Patton, 2014). Then,

the process was repeated until the desired sample size was recruited (Waters, 2015). The researcher selected participants with knowledge of the phenomenon to provide an in-depth, rich-experience narrative (Vagle, 2014). Likewise, Morgan (2008) described snowball sampling as using “a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study” (p. 816).

Sample Inclusion

The researcher recruited participants by retrieving former employees’ contact information from employees on a state probation agency website. This information for each state employee was a matter of public record. McGuire et al. (2012) asserted that researchers frequently utilized public websites to find prospective participants. The researcher used the contact information of previous employees to send a recruitment letter (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix A) to all prospective participants. Once the prospective participant contacted the researcher, recruitment criteria was assessed to determine if the prospective participant met the inclusion criteria or exclusion criteria for the study. Prospective participants who met the inclusion criteria and verbally committed to participate in the study scheduled an interview. Using snowball sampling techniques, the participants were then asked to nominate other prospective participants who met the inclusion criteria for the study. All interested participants who did not meet the criteria were excluded from the study. The same recruitment template was used for all recruitment methods. One week before the interviews, the researcher followed up with participants via telephone to remind them of the interview.

The recruitment letter that was sent to the prospective participants (Appendix C) included the following recruitment information: the purpose of the research, the research questions, participant criteria, procedures of the study, informed consent, and contact information for how

to schedule an interview. Purposive sampling was the most-used technique in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013). The sample size included eight participants for this study. The criteria for participating in the research study required that participants (a) be male or female, (b) be 21 years or older, (c) have been a probation officer, (d) have at least two years' experience supervising Black female offenders in the Southeast U.S., (e) have connected or attempted to connect Black female offenders to community resources to assist with needs, (f) be able to read and understand English, (g) hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or a related human services field, and (h) be a U.S. or naturalized citizen. The researcher interviewed all the participants using the same semi-structured, open-ended questions (Appendix D) for approximately 60-90 minutes. Data gathered from the participants interested in the study also included demographic data, such as race, gender, age, level of education, and years of work experience. The data helped with confirming that participants met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Finally, to establish a relationship and rapport with the participants, before the interview process, the researcher discussed academic career and professional credentials and recapped the three research questions. Sprecher et al. (2013) suggested that researchers immediately start developing a relationship upon initial contact with the participant. Similarly, Pezalla et al. (2012) contended that researchers must have disclosed their employment history to have built rapport with the participants. Likewise, Fletcher (2014) argued that researchers must have disclosed their academic learning with the participants to have strengthened communication and trust and helped maintain a positive relationship.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection process consisted of individual interviews. The interview questions (Appendix D) consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions to examine the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). All eight participants completed the semi-structured interviews. The individual interviews lasted roughly 60-90 minutes each to attain in-depth and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Interviews

The researcher was the sole instrument for data collection. Before starting the data collection process, the researcher obtained IRB approval from Liberty University (Appendix A). Interviews were the main source of collecting data. Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of POs. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) viewed semi-structured interviews as a one-on-one meeting that included an organized interview; even so, the researcher had the flexibility to add extra questions, when necessary, throughout the interview to collect data. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect data regarding the lived experiences of POs. Each of the one-on-one interviews was audio-recorded by the researcher. The participants answered 15 open-ended, semi-structured questions (Appendix D) that presented the information needed to understand the phenomenon, including five demographic questions.

In the past, researchers stated that most of the qualitative research involved the use of interviews, as interviews permitted researchers to have acquired more detailed answers that otherwise may have been impossible to collect using other collection strategies (Bevan, 2014; Isaacs, 2014; LeBel, 2012). Before the study, all the participants were issued informed consent forms (Appendix B). The researcher reiterated to the participants that the study was completely

voluntary and that they could request to withdraw from the interview without consequences or repercussions, regardless of the study's outcome.

The researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews using a videoconference platform called Zoom. Janghorban et al. (2014) proposed that online interviews gave researchers the flexibility to overcome setting and distance constraints. As an extra layer of confidentiality, the participants were not required to use their video camera; instead, they called in to the Zoom meeting using one of the dial-in-by-location telephone numbers. The audio-recording interview took place via Zoom in a private location chosen by the participants away from others. The researcher chose a private location within her private office. All individual interviews were conducted on Zoom, which automatically produced a transcription of the meeting. The researcher used Rev.com as a backup audio recorder in case any technical mishaps occurred and as another way to ensure trustworthiness. Jamshed (2014) maintained that audio-recorded sessions allowed for precise transcription of interview sessions (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Similarly, Drabble et al. (2015) determined that telephone interviews were a practical alternative to gather rich narrative data.

The researcher requested (Appendix E) and was granted (Appendix F) permission to adopt and modify the interview questions by Dr. Elaine Ginnison, Professor and Graduate Program Director of the Department of Criminal Justice at Seattle University; Dr. Jacqueline Helfgott, Professor and Director of the Crime and Justice Research Center at Seattle University; and Cecilie Wilhelm, a graduate student at Seattle University, as published by the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. The article, *Correctional Practitioners on Reentry: A Missed Perspective*, was 23 pages with a total of 14 interview questions (Gunnison et al., 2015). The researcher condensed the interview instrument (Appendix D) to only include those questions in

the interview process related to the research (see Appendix G). The interview questions assisted in verifying the perceptions and experiences of the POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. The interview questions helped to validate the information gleaned from the interviews by collecting data regarding the research questions.

All transcriptionists used for the service were required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect the raw data. Easton et al. (2000) suggested hiring professional transcriptionists to prevent mistakes throughout the transcribing process. The researcher provided a copy of the transcription (Appendix G) to each of the participants for cross-checking of their answers and to make any necessary changes or addition to the transcripts. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher assigned each participant to a pseudonym (e.g., alpha, beta, delta, charlie, echo, kappa, lambda, masonic60), rather than other identifiers easily traceable to the participants. All confidential documentation and audio recordings were saved on a password-protected flash drive and an external hard drive and secured in a locked, fireproof safe. Following the guidelines of Liberty University, all files were destroyed after three years.

The researcher followed the interview protocol (Appendix D) to steer the investigation of the lived experiences of eight probation officers. Peer review established the reliability and validity of the survey instrument (Gunnison et al., 2015). As recognized by Patton (2015), validity “depends on careful instrument construction to ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (p. 22). The dissertation committee, consisting of the dissertation chair and dissertation reader, reviewed the semi-structured interview questions to confirm the reliability and validity of the interview questions.

Interview Data Analysis

Throughout the data collection and data analysis procedures, the researcher practiced bracketing by journaling her judgements, views, and biases to check her understanding and constructions. Sorsa et al. (2015) stated that bracketing allowed researchers to remove any assumptions regarding the topic. The researcher chose a qualitative phenomenological study to examine and understand how POs described their lived experiences of how reentry programs contributed to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community, how reentry programs best served the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision, and how coping resources prepared Black female offenders to transition into society in the Southeast U.S. Next, Moustakas' (1994) modified seven steps of van Kaam's methods were followed:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping-"Horizontalization is taking every statement or horizons from each of the interviews and giving them equal value as it pertains to the topic or research questions" (Moustakas, 1994, p.118).
2. Reduction and elimination-From the composed listing and grouping, organize each statement to start narrowing the list of codes into categories against two requirements. Each expression must: (1) "contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it," and (2) it must be "possible to abstract and label it" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Moustakas also recommended "saving vague, repetitive, and overlapping statements into a new document and saving to review again, in the event information was overlooked in the horizontalization process" (p.121).

3. Clustering and theming the invariant constituents-Once repetitive statements were categorized, they were grouped together (Moustakas, 1994). These clusters became the “core themes of the experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).
4. Validating and identifying final invariant constituents and themes-Next, each theme was tested against the transcript to determine if the categories and themes were “expressed explicitly in the complete transcription” or compatible to what was “expressed explicitly” for each participant (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).
5. Individual textural description-Now that the codes had been established and verified, the next step was to create a “textural description by utilizing the verified codes and categories to construct the experiences of the participant using verbatim examples from the transcription” (Moustakas, 1994, p.121).
6. Individual structural description-“Using the individual textural description and imaginative variation to construct a description of the structure of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p.121). The individual structural description provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience” and how the experience made the participants feel” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 135).
7. Textural-structural description-“All of the textural-structural descriptions for all of the research participants be combined to form a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

There were other alternative methods to examine qualitative data. In a previous study, Conrad and Scott-Tilley (2014) used the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen approach to examine data regarding the experiences of female combat veterans (Moustakas, 1994). The approach was not applicable for the study because the method did not propose the use of bracketing by researchers

to mitigate their biases. Bevan (2014) emphasized the importance of bracketing in phenomenological research because it required the setting aside of any assumptions from the researcher, and, therefore, permitting open communication of the lived experiences of the participants.

Trustworthiness

The researcher established a trustworthy rapport with the POs. Morse (2015) stated that the trust of the participants allowed them to feel comfortable to open up and share their lived experiences, and the researchers were able to gather valid information. Ravitch and Carl (2019) stated that the aspects of trustworthiness addressed credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability, as well as triangulation, member checks, audit trail, and reflexivity.

Credibility

In a qualitative study, credibility was described as “confidence in the truth of the findings” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, para. 1). Credibility was linked to instrumentation and data in a qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Credibility was increased by utilizing triangulation and member checks. Milosevic et al. (2015) reported that member checking allowed participants to accept, clarify, or authenticate the data’s truthfulness. Thus, the participants for this study were emailed and received a copy of the transcripts to review and verify their responses for accuracy and improve the interview’s integrity (Houghton et al., 2013). Triangulation was achieved using interviews, member checking, and the researcher’s journal.

Transferability

Transferability referred to external validity in a qualitative study. Diversity in participant choice assisted in guaranteeing that a cross-section of people was represented. The researcher recruited participants in the Southeast U.S. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described transferability as

“showing that the finding has applicability in other contexts” (para.1). The researcher used the thick description of the findings to show themes in the POs’ perceptions of Black female offenders’ successful reentry to enhance transferability by permitting other researchers to decide if any parts of the study were germane to other populations, places, and times.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability revealed that the findings were reliable and repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish dependability, the researcher established a rational justification for the method of data gathered (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The data collected must have satisfied the questions presented. To have been able to audit the study, actions and biases also aided to prove trustworthiness in a research study (Carcary, 2009). For the study, the researcher kept an audit trail of the research process.

Epoche/Bracketing

The lived experiences and perceptions of POs influenced this study. The researcher put aside any preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies called epoche, or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). According to Creswell (2014) and Moustakas (1994), utilizing a transcendental phenomenology approach centered the study on rich, thick descriptions on the essence of the research.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the IRB was to ensure that the researcher followed ethical, moral, and legal protocols to minimize potential risks to participants. According to Maxwell (2013), researchers collecting data from human subjects considered the effects of the research questions, the methodology, the instrumentation, any potential harm to the participants, a procedure to minimize risks, the data collection, the informed consent, the data analysis, the confidentiality,

and the distribution of results. The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines, and for privacy protection, data de-identification was used to remove all participants' personal identifiers with a pseudonym as a substitute for names. The only identifier was an e-mail address coded and stored separately from the data collection. Participants signed a consent form (Appendix B) before the researcher collected any data. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and participants reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The informed consent form advised the participants of the procedures regarding the research, consisting of the data collection, possibility of harm or advantages of the research, confidentiality agreement, and withdrawal procedures for the research study (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

The study sample consisted of eight POs who supervised Black female offenders on community supervision in the Southeast U.S. All the participants who met the criteria were eligible to participate in the study. Chapter Three presented the research design utilized to understand the research study answered by examining the experiences of POs who supervised Black female offenders on community supervision. The research design for the study was the phenomenological qualitative approach, with the data collection procedure and data analysis revealing inferring the process of providing rich and detailed data from the emergence of the themes.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. Chapter Four started with a demographic description of each participant in the study. Data was collected using semi-structured, open-ended questions, and the findings were presented in three major themes, as they addressed the gap in literature involving POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to Black female offenders' successful transition and reentry back into the community. Finally, the chapter ended with a summary.

Participants

To have sufficiently provided data that was appropriate to examine the research questions guiding this study, participant must (a) have been male or female, (b) have been 21 years or older, (c) have been a PO, (d) have had at least two years' experience supervising Black female offenders in the Southeast U.S., (e) have connected or attempted to connect Black female offenders to community resources to assist with needs, (f) have been able to read and understand English, (g) have held a minimum of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or a related human services field, and (h) have been a U.S. or naturalized citizen.

Of all eight participants in the study, seven identified as Black or African American and one as Caucasian or White. The education levels differed for the participants, with five participants having bachelor's degrees, one participant possessing a doctoral degree, one participant having all but dissertation, and one participant having a

master's degree. The participants' experience ranged from 8-31 years, and as a group, the participants held more than 157 years of experience as POs.

The youngest participant was 55 years old, and the oldest was 65 years old. The eight participants were included in Table 1 with a brief demographical introduction, including their age, sex, ethnicity, years of experience, education level, and if the participant had attempted to connect or connected probationers to community resources. The participants were identified by agreed-upon pseudonyms to protect their identities. Masonic60 elected to choose his own pseudonym for the study.

Table 1

Probation Officers' Demographics

Participant	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Education	Connect or attempt to connect to community resources
Alpha	61	M	B	16	B	Yes
Beta	56	M	B	30	B	Yes
Charlie	61	M	B	8	B	Yes
Delta	57	F	B	11	ABD	Yes
Echo	57	M	B	31	B	Yes
Kappa	55	F	B	15	PhD	Yes
Lamba	65	F	W	30	B	Yes
Masonic60	62	M	B	16	M	Yes

Alpha

Despite limited community resources, Alpha (61-year-old), relied on community support to connect probationers to resources in the community. As stated by Alpha, "I did not really believe there were enough programs available at the time for females to come out to. It looks as there was more programs for males than for females." Alpha was one of the second-oldest male participants in the study. Alpha, a Black male, acknowledged 16 years of experience as a PO and held a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice.

Beta

Beta (56-year-old) relied on collaborative community relationships to connect probationers to community referrals and outside services agencies. Beta reported, “I noticed that my later years of work there were more programs federally funded that were popping up, and lots of non-profits that were popping [up were] geared towards helping women in general and Black females.” The youngest of the Black males in the study, Beta held a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice and had 30 years of experience as a PO.

Charlie

Charlie (61-year-old) was the least-experienced participant. However, during his tenure, he was still able to connect probationers with community resources to help meet their needs. According to Charlie, finding the necessary resources was not always easy. He stated, “I wish the Black community was more involved, [and] there is still a need for transitional shelters in the county—ones operated by the Black community [by] someone who looks likes them.” Charlie was a Black male who held a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice with eight years of experience as a PO.

Delta

Delta (57-year-old) was a Black female who held an all but dissertation for PhD (ABD) in Counselor Education and Supervision and had 11 years of experience as a PO. As said by Delta:

I think this is an awesome study. It's needed. It's been needed. And I wish it had been done when I was a probation officer, because there were so many women that could have used the assistance or just knowing that there is somebody out there that is actually really concerned about the things that they are going through.

Delta was the least-experienced and most-passionate of the female participants about helping the probationers when she discussed how she helped to meet their needs.

Echo

Echo (57-year-old), a Black male, was the most-experienced participant with 31 years' experience as a PO. Echo held a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Echo shared, "I think we do an exceptional job to address the issue upon their release, we have courageous conversations with the offenders." Echo was proud of his work with the probationers and the number of community referrals used to assist the probationers transition into society.

Kappa

Kappa (55-year-old) was the youngest female participant in the study with the highest education. She held a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Counseling. With 15 years' experience as a PO, Kappa reported, "In my experience, more can be done to help the probationers." Kappa acknowledged she did not always have to connect the probationers with certain resources if the programs were not part of their terms of condition for probation.

Lambda

Lambda (65-year-old) was the oldest and the only Caucasian participant in the study. Lambda stated that to connect the probationers to community resources, she would "interview and assess whatever their needs were at the time of their release and then whatever referrals I could make I would make on them." Lambda also stated, "I personally didn't feel that the prisons had a good reentry back into the community. The programs offered, you know, I just don't think they offered these women equal opportunities as they did the men." Lambda had 30 years of experience as a PO and held a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice.

Masonic60

Masonic60 (62-year-old) held a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. With 18 years of experience as a PO, Masonic60 noted that at the time of release, he connected the probationers to pre-release and aftercare programs to enhance the felon to get adjusted to society. According to Masonic60, "There is a lot to be improved in the system!" Masonic60 was the oldest of the male participants in the study.

Results

The results section consisted of the step-by-step techniques used to analyze the data and identify the themes that developed utilizing data from the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. These techniques produced a listing of the themes that emerged with repetitive words and expressions. The themes developed provided the information necessary to answer the research questions guiding this study, which assisted to determine the POs' perspectives of how reentry programs contributed to Black female ex-offenders' successful transition and reentry back into the community. Additionally, POs' perceptions of how reentry programs best served the specific needs of Black female ex-offenders during community supervision and POs' perceptions regarding how coping resources prepared Black female ex-offenders to transition into society were examined.

Participants echoed repetitive words and expressions during the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Once the repetitive words and expressions were recorded, the researcher prearranged the listing of reused words and same patterns of words according to their similarities, in a process called reduction and elimination (Moustakas, 1994). These repetitive words, same patterns of words, and expressions, contributed to identified themes, which were confirmed based on the actual collected data (Moustakas, 1994).

The findings were structured around three major themes that emerged through data analysis. The first theme was Community Resources, the second theme was Social Support Systems, and the third theme was A Seat at the Table. The researcher separated answers into two categories: textural and structural description. Creswell (2014, p. 193) suggested to “write a description of ‘what’ the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon,” known as the “textural description” of the participants’ experiences. Textural descriptions supported themes one and two. Creswell (2014, p. 194) suggested that researchers should have written a “description of ‘how’ the experience happened,” referred to as “structural description,” to reflect “on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.” Structural description supported theme three.

Community Resources

All of the participants discussed a need for more resources and partnerships in the community to help the Black female offenders successfully transition into society. Employment, housing, substance abuse, mental health treatment, and transportation were identified as needed Community Resources. Many of the Black female offenders returned to communities that had little to no resources, either leaving the offender to visit a neighboring county for assistance and creating other barriers like transportation and childcare, or receiving the bare minimum of services from mom-and-pop agencies in rural counties. The researcher asked how they had attempted to connect or had connected Black female offenders to community resources to assist with their needs. The participants responded with the following comments and described different approaches they used to determine the best rehabilitative programs, mental health services, and substance abuse services, and how they made the necessary arrangements for offenders on their caseloads.

Lambda stated, “I would interview and assess whatever their needs were at the time of their release.” Delta’s method was similar to Lambda’s

I would interview the persons that were on my caseload to find out what their needs were and then try to match them with community resources. I’ve reached out to housing providers, substance abuse agencies, and employers to see if they would be willing to hire someone that was an ex-offender.

Charlie and Echo described similar experiences, stating that Black female offenders released from prison were already connected to Community Resources. According to Charlie, “If the offender was coming out of prison, typically they already were in a program set up already for that specific housing.” Echo reported, “The female population, upon the release from correctional institutions, they have everything in order. They typically have housing already arranged as well as stable employment.”

Employment

Black female offenders with a criminal history faced harsher challenges to secure employment, career advancement, and getting their lives back on track, compared to their White counterparts in the same position, with Black women encountering very difficult hurdles to climb. According to Williams et al. (2019), employment was the most important need for former offenders to successfully transition into society. The participants were able to voice their perspectives. The researcher asked, based on their experience, whether they felt the reentry support provided addressed the employment needs of Black female offenders to prepare them for successful reentry.

Lambda and Delta both discussed the gender and race disparities that they observed about the lack of or nonexistence of accessible programs to address the needs of Black female

offenders. Lambda explained, “I’m going to state that I felt there were more training programs that you know, that we offered for men than there were women. I don’t think women were offered enough. Program referrals, employment opportunities referrals, as they did males.”

Delta stated:

To be honest with you, I don't necessarily know that reentry adequately addresses helping Black females because they will just do it as a whole. And nine times out of 10, women of color just don't have either the family support or the resources that no persons of color have. And so, I can't say that I've seen a program that just really addresses some of the issues that Black females face.

Two other participants used their community relationships to refer Black female offenders for employment opportunities. According to Charlie, “There were several agencies that we will refer them to. I developed contacts for people wanting to go to work.” Masonic60 shared the benefits of establishing relationships with community partners to find Black female ex-offenders’ employment by stating:

Yes, several companies would support hiring ex-offenders. There wasn’t a lot, but there were some that came forward and asked for them, probably primarily they would get a tax credit in their business for that. One of the participants noted she did not provide any kind of job referrals. Kappa stated, “A lot of them were already employed when they were arrested and placed on probation.” Furthermore, according to Alpha, “I think obtaining employment is one of the main things that most females need.”

Housing

Participants acknowledged the lack of housing resources as crucial for successful reentry. Upon returning to their community, former offenders may have encountered homelessness

(Asberg & Renk, 2015). The researcher asked, based on their experience, if they felt the reentry support provided adequately addressed the housing needs of Black female offender to prepare them for successful reentry. The participants noted that Black female offenders were overlooked and encountered challenges finding housing. Lambda said, “I’ve had people live in like these little rooming places, women. But I don’t know of too many housing programs designed for women upon release, from the present.” Delta explained, “I’ve reached out to housing providers to see if they were able to help someone that needed housing.”

Charlie echoed, “My experience is the Black female offender that came straight out of prison to me typically did not have housing. They were having to go to a shelter, um, halfway house.” It was important to note that the participant addressed the absence and lack of support from the Black community. Charlie expressed, “I wish the Black community was more involved [and] there is still a need for transitional shelters in the county – ones operated by the Black community someone who looks likes them.”

Substance Abuse Treatment

Drug use had been recognized as one of the leading causes for ex-offenders during reentry. Wilfong (2018) studied the impact of treatment services on female ex-offenders on community supervision and discovered that former offenders were more successful at abstinence when collaborative efforts were with probation, parole, and substance abuse treatment services. Some of the participants were able to use their community partnerships to help address the need for substance abuse treatment. The researcher asked, based on their experience, whether they felt that the reentry support provided adequately addressed the substance treatment needs of Black female offenders to prepare them for successful reentry.

Masonic60 stated, “Substance abuse would be one of the biggest problems.” He further shared, “There were different church groups and organizations that specifically address these needs for ex-offenders. We would suggest and send them over to participate in these programs, which were voluntary on their part unless it was court mandated.” Delta used a similar method to address the immediate need for substance abuse treatment. She admitted, “I’ve also reached out to substance abuse agencies to get someone into treatment that had a substance abuse issue.”

Although Charlie discussed the ineffectiveness of the local drug treatment program, he relied on his relationship with community partners to refer the offenders for treatment. According to Charlie, “Our area relies on a community agency for drug assessments, which was, to me, not the most efficient operation—a lot of turnovers or the ball got dropped.” Likewise, Echo discussed the inconsistency within his program to address substance abuse needs:

I think we do an exceptional job. I think we address the issue upon their release, we have courageous conversations with the offenders. We provide a great deal of financial funding for that. But once again, if it's up to the individual to work the program, if they're willing to work, the program programs work. In some of these smaller towns, where we have to contract, you're not going to get the same level of treatment. So, I hate to say it, but it's dependent upon where the person resides if they're going to receive the best substance abuse care upon release.

In the addition, this participant discussed the limited access to services related to substance abuse treatment. Black females were referred to other counties due to the lack of services in their communities. Similarly, Beta shared that he referred them to a substance abuse center for women.

Transportation

Access to transportation was a key factor to successful reentry, which was needed to complete essential and routine tasks, such as finding employment, transporting children to and from childcare, and reporting to the PO. The researcher asked, based on their experience, whether they felt the reentry support provided adequately addressed the transportation needs of Black female ex-offenders to prepare them for successful reentry. Not all participants had the same experience.

Some indicated that their programs provided some support by giving offenders a means to utilize public transportation. In that regard, Echo stated, “So, in our district, we have first step act on where we can assist offenders with bus passes, or in areas where they have a light rail system, train tickets to get back and forth to work.” Beta added to that by stating, “We have we had what you call vouchers, that the agency would you know, give to several offices.” In addition, Delta noted that her program went a little further with help, saying, “On some level, so, the reentry program that I am familiar with did give free bus passes, monthly bus passes, once a person had a full-time job. We also gave weekly and/or daily bus passes to assist persons in finding.”

However, other participants recounted different experiences related to their ability to link Black female offenders to transportation. Charlie noted, “The only transportation that we provided was if they got out, we would take them to the shelter.” When asked if he was able to link them to transportation in their community, Charlie replied, “No, I can't say I ever did. No.” Similarly, Lambda acknowledged that transportation was not provided by her program. She furthered echoed, “In terms of transportation, I did not deal with transportation at all.” On a related note, Masonic60 reported, “I can't comment on that. I don't have any data or anything

about transportation mode.” He explained further, “Most of us left it up to them to get through programs themselves.” Alpha also concurred, “I did not address any transportation needs.”

Since there were varying levels of support while addressing the need for transportation, some participants suggested that there was a need for improvement. Kappa explained, “I think that there was a need to improve because in a lot of those reentry programs, the onus was on the probationer to get to the different programs.” When asked if she had ever provided services like a bus pass, Kappa responded, “No ma’am.” Echo powerfully expressed the need for transportation accessibility: “I think there's a lot more work that needs to be done regarding that. I think you need to look at providing some type of public transportation assistance.” Echo furthered suggested ways to help eliminate transportation barriers: “For most individuals, at least for six months minimum. In some instances, it may require up to a year.” Like many other participants, Delta voiced concerns about the need for more transportation support: “The problem is that if you live in an area that has limited bus routes, or they lived in an area where the bus was not readily accessible to them, then it was just going to be hard.” Charlie pointed out, “It wasn't necessarily the state's probation policy to provide transportation.”

Social Support Systems

The participants agreed that supportive relationships had a positive impact in the lives of Black female offenders. Female offenders were less likely to recidivate when they had established key and positive relationships (Schlager, 2018). When asked what specific coping resources enabled the Black female offender to successfully transition into society, the participants addressed the support of the POs and family.

Probation Officer Support

POs were viewed as community leaders with influence and affluence and were vital to the successful reentry of offenders. POs were a source of help and support, therefore, reducing both relapses in criminal behavior and substance use (Holmstrom et al., 2017). Lambda maintained:

I would say that the probation officer gave more of the social support, you know. I think 100% support because we have, I don't mean to use the word power but we have the power the authority to return them back to where they came from. And to be some, you have to be supportive of everybody that comes out of prison for successful completion of their sentence. And if we don't support them, we might, you know, probation officers sometimes can be the only support the offender might have. Especially if they've been in the system for a long time.

Delta explained, "I will say support from the PO support from a reentry program, a counselor, you know, someone that they can talk to about problems that can relate or can understand." Echo added to that by stating:

I think it's important that the support staff in the office should be reflected or population supervised. So, if you had African American female, and it could be African American male, if you have no, no bearing or concept of the culture.

The participants wore many hats acting as a social worker and advocate for the offenders.

Family Support

Family relationships were essential for female offenders (Brown, 2018). Echo stated, "I think it's important that they have a mentor. Just like a sponsor with someone with a substance abuse problem. Someone they can call upon for, you know, things they don't quite understand.

The world has changed.” Charlie acknowledged that Black female ex-offenders had little support from family members, by saying:

It just seemed like the male offender’s family were more likely to be, do, go up out of their way, more likely to help the male versus the female. It seemed like when a female got in trouble, pretty much the same, like the family just didn’t deal with them, and they just shut them off. I really don’t understand that dynamic, but it just, that’s what I saw.

The males, you know, mom would always take them back, and, but not so much with the female in the scene, they didn’t have that undying support from their family.

A Seat at the Table

The complexity of women’s successful reentry entailed many facets, focusing on transportation, child custody concerns, mental health, employment, education, and housing (Koski & Costanza, 2015). The planning should have started during admission to the institution and continued after release to achieve efficiency. In addition, women should have obtained a GED or other training, skills, or certifications to increase their wage potential (Koski & Costanza, 2015). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism.

The Role of The Black Church

The absences of the Black church, faith-based organizations, and community organizations was cited by most of the participants in the study. In essence, the power of the Black church as a civil rights activist had a deep history of speaking up and speaking out, advocating and fighting back against society and racial discrimination in opposition to the Black community (Douglas & Hopson, 2001; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Warnock, 2014).

Participants explained that after returning to society, the Black female offender often discovered that access to family support, churches, and community assistances had changed or were unavailable. Larsen (2017) discovered that former ex-offenders' trust and faith in a higher power were the reasons for their positive and successful ability to rejoin their community.

Black female offenders encountered various obstacles returning to their community.

Masonic60 stressed:

Me personally, if I had to do it, I would reach out to more, I think, more of our church groups, more involved. Have we, have on our community, and especially the female offenders, a lot of churches don't even go and reach out. But if some, if we had more and more on the scene, I think that would be a big help to the offender coming out to adjust.

Because the, you know, a lot of, a lot of the resources are just limited. I mean, you know, so.

Echo stated, "I would like to see more involvement from the faith-based community. I think they could have the biggest impact."

The Black Community

Black female offenders lack the inability and accessibility to obtain basic community resources to meet their needs for stability and security to become productive citizens. According to Houser et al. (2018), communities that offer a plethora of services and social support can have an impact on criminality and reoffending. The participants expressed the role of the Black community involvement as an essential component in assisting the Black female ex-offenders in successfully reentering society.

Charlie stated, “Encourage Black people to be, get, more Black people that do transitional housing. That's a big need and good houses. I think we need more transitional housing that are ran by good quality minority.”

The absence or lack of community involvement was mentioned by most of the participants. Echo described the significance of collaborative partnership by stating:

I would like to see more involvement from the faith-based community. I think they could have the biggest impact. I think that's something that the probation officers use as a resource and more reach out to the faith-based communities to establish a partnership with them to be able to connect with these young ladies once they're released from the institution.

Policy Changes and Practices

Shirley Chisolm, the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Congress in 1968, stated, “If they do not give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair (Carter & Lautier, 2022).” The call to action for immediate change was a concern for most of the participants supporting policy changes and practices that promoted successful reentry and reduced recidivism rates. Most of the participants discussed various areas for policy improvement. However, two of the participants stated that change in the policies set forth were not necessary. Participants recommended the government adopt policy changes on local, state, and national levels for more equitable access to quality programs to enhance Black females’ return to society.

Policies that granted the privilege of full citizenship, including voting rights, were restored upon release from prison:

Approximately 5.2 million Americans cannot vote. Of that population, 1.2 million are women who comprise over one-fifth of the total disenfranchised population. One in 16

African Americans of voting age is disenfranchised, a rate 3.7 times greater than that of non-African Americans. Over 6.2 percent of the adult African American population is disenfranchised compared to 1.7 percent of the non-African American population.”

(Chung, 2019)

Echo stressed “the need and importance for policy changes on a state and national level.” He specifically called for the Black female ex-offenders to have voter rights restored. He stated, “Well, I mean, first thing comes from to mind as I mentioned before is the right to be able to vote.”

Removing barriers to housing and providing government housing subsidies to assist with suitable and affordable housing was another important topic. Alpha replied, “Having programs that when they come out and then to show them what would enhance the lives as far as giving them a good place to live, a good place to eat.” Echo reported:

I will like to see more being done, more stable and constructive as far as housing for those that may not have that family. That's a huge barrier. If you come out and you don't have any family or friends, there needs to be something. Someone needs to be able to have some type of grant provided by some municipality government, that will provide some degree of how you can ask for some type of assistance from the offender to [a] certain degree, but I think, you know, we have a lot of vacant building standard, and what could be used for housing to help people get on their feet and to be able to, you know, save enough money for first and last month's rent.

Eliminate or change administrative rules for monetary obligations to be waived for indigent offenders was another important policy. Lambda implied:

We definitely need changes in policies and procedures, all of [the] policies need to be changed about violating a person who has no income for failure to complete a program, when we should be kind, be offering them the program free of charge so they don't have to go back and be violated.

Delta concurred:

If we knew that an offender could not afford to pay supervision fees, we could ask the judge to waive those supervision fees. Then policy came out that said we could no longer ask the judge to waive supervision fees. They had to pay it. But if that offender is bringing you his check stub, and showing you that this is how much money I make, I have to pay rent, I have to pay bills. I can't afford this extra amount that that's a person at the top that's making decisions for people at the bottom and it is it creates havoc.

Policy reform that addressed sentence inequalities in sentencing of Black women were important. Kappa said, "If offenders are sentenced equally across the board without any regard for race or ethnicity." Charlie stated:

I think policy changes where the probation officer will be more of a social worker than law enforcement. It seemed like probation goes back and forth, whether they're going to be more law enforcement, or more social, depending on the administration.

However, two participants stated the policies set forth were equal to all offenders. Specifically, Masonic60 stated, "I don't think there needs to be any change in policy. It's no different from for Black females, Hispanic females, White females, any other racial group or what have you." Beta took the similar approach and stated, "I don't know if any changes policy changes are needed at this time. I think it's more so the client, the client's willingness to accept those resources that the department has to offer, and take advantage of those resources."

Diversity Training

Incorporating cultural diversity training is essential for POs because they provide supervision for offenders from different races, ethnicities and backgrounds. Training POs to become cognizant of unconscious barriers and encourages positive attitudes can minimize cultural barriers and embrace cultural differences (Gavin, 2018).

Participants discussed the need for cultural awareness and gender-specific trainings to better understand and assist the needs of the Black female offenders. Delta reported:

To be honest with you, I don't know of any, as a probation officer, I don't know that we had any training, and it doesn't really delve into the problems that Black female offenders face. Because the Black female offender is, she is just kind of left behind and pushed to the back. Just no concern.

Likewise, Echo stated:

Cultural awareness training needs to be a requirement for every district to maintain your law enforcement certification every year, and maybe twice, that needs to be a requirement. And this could go back to policy change. It needs to be a requirement. If you have no understanding or no knowledge.

Masonic60 described a similar experiencing by stating, "When I was working, there really wasn't any specific programs to help us deal with situations." The participants agreed that diversity training was a missing part of their program. Kappa echoed multicultural training:

None that I know of was just a standard. They didn't specify these are steps we want you to take with people of color. It was just for everyone. And specific needs of different ethnicities were not addressed. There was no, like, yearly refresher training. Our training pertained to safety for ourselves and self-defense or, you know, about drugs.

Lambda contended, “In my experiences, no. It was related more to, you know, gearing to all offenders, not specifically towards Black females, White females, but it was geared towards all. In my personal opinion, I think it was geared more towards males.

Participants acknowledged negative attitudes or dispositions of Black female offenders during community supervision. In the interview, Kappa mentioned having bad experiences with Black female offenders during community supervision. She noted, “Believe it or not, the, in my experience, the Black females were more aggressive and display more of an attitude and wanted to, as it appeared to me, like there was no desire to do what they wanted to do.” Lambda echoed that feeling when she said, “The females appeared to be a little bit more hardened than the males, and hardened. I mean, attitude-wise, their attitude was a lot different than the male.”

Kappa’s feeling concerning the ex-offenders’ attitudes implied a resistance to authority when she said, “They were quite vocal about not wanting to do what the judge told them they had to do.” However, Lambda felt that it was possible the resistance went even further to the ex-offenders taking issue with her gender. She acknowledged it was just a feeling she had by saying, “I don't know if that's because I was a female working with a female. And being that the males were easier maybe because I was a female working with a male. I don't know that answer.”

Masonic60 also described a negative experience with Black female offenders. He shared, “A lot of them, they would probably shy away from it because they had the attitude, ‘I don't need anybody to help me.’”

Research Question Responses

RQ1: What are probation officers’ perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female offenders’ successful transition back into the community?

The purpose of the first research question gave voice to the participants and their

perceptions of how reentry programs contributed to the phenomenon of transitioning back into the community. The analysis of data displayed the four subthemes related to the research question (a) employment, (b) housing, (c) substance abuse treatment, and (d) transportation. Most of the participants addressed the challenges of available resources for Black female ex-offenders. Participants acknowledged that Black female offenders had needs that were distinctive from male offenders or White female offenders. The participants discussed the many barriers Black female offenders encountered upon release from prison.

RQ2: What are the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female offenders during the community supervision?

The second research question intended to recount POs' firsthand experiences of the specific needs of the Black female offenders that were addressed and met during community supervision. The analysis of data displayed the two subthemes (a) probation officers' support, and (b) family support. Most of the participants reported that while few programs were accessible to Black female offenders, overall, more was needed to be done to meet the needs of the Black female offenders.

RQ3: How do coping resources prepare Black female offenders to transition into society.

The third research question was asked to understand how coping resources enabled the positive transition of Black female offenders returning to society. The four subthemes that emerged were (a) the role of the Black church, (b) the Black community, (c) policy changes and practices, and (d) diversity training. Of the three research questions, all the participants let their voices be heard about the need for policy changes, partnerships with community organizations, and cultural diversity training. The participants explained how the theme of A Seat at the Table could improve reentry reform and create a better path for Black female offenders to successfully

reenter society.

Summary

Chapter Four started with a demographic description of each participant in the study. The study represented the eight participants' lived experiences as POs from the Southeast U.S. The participants all shared their experience as POs having connected Black female offenders to reintegration programs to meet their needs upon returning to society, which was the phenomenon under examination. Seven of the participants were Black or African American, and one was Caucasian. The youngest participant was 55 years old, and the oldest participant was 65 years old. All of the participants had a minimum of a four-year degree.

All of the participants discussed their experiences in detail as they experienced the phenomenon during the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. The interpretation of the data found three major themes. The themes that emerged from the data were (a) Community Resources, (b) Social Support Systems, and (c) A Seat at the Table. The purpose of this research was to capture POs' perceptions regarding how reentry programs contributed to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community, how reentry programs best served the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision, and what coping resources prepared Black female offenders to transition into society.

The information gathered using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews revealed insight to the challenges Black female offenders encountered after discharge from correctional facilities to community supervision, with most of the POs describing identical or nearly identical perceptions. In the study, the POs disclosed experiences that potentially assisted Black female offenders' successful transition and reenter into society.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of POs who provided supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. The problem is that there is limited research on how POs' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to the successful reentry of Black female offenders into society. The aim of this study is to give the POs who have supervised Black female offenders on community supervision a voice to share stories of their past experiences. Chapter Five presents a summation of the study findings and results. The chapter includes the a discussion of the interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and empirical implications, delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

In this section, the researcher examines each of the major themes within a broader perspective of the review of the literature in Chapter Two.

Interpretation of Findings

Data analysis reveals three themes related to POs' perceptions of Black female offenders' transition and successful reentry into society. The first major theme, Community Resources, reveals the participants' responses and helps to develop the subthemes. The four subthemes revealed are (a) employment, (b) housing, (c) substance abuse treatment, and (d) transportation. This data assists to explain the first two research questions. The second major theme revealed in the findings is Social Support Systems, and from that, two subthemes are: (a) probation officer support and (b) family support. In the last major theme, A Seat at the Table, the participants were

able to discuss changes needed to better assist Black female offenders while on community supervision through the development of four subthemes: (a) the role of the Black church, (b) the Black Community, (c) policy changes and practices, and (d) diversity training. These responses help to answer the third research question, which asks how coping resources prepare Black female offenders to transition into society.

The data from the study align with the FT, and the findings confirm the results of the theoretical framework. The emergent themes reveal that POs encounter some of the same challenges and results trying to connect Black female offenders on community supervision to reentry programs and services. The challenges of overcoming resource barriers indicate that specific programs and services are needed to meet the unique needs of Black female offenders. The following subthemes align with the literature review: employment, housing, substance abuse treatment, transportation, PO support, family support, social support, and policy changes. Reentry programs are intended to aid former offenders' positive transition into society. Reentry programs are resources offered to former offenders in collaboration with community partners to assist the offenders in successfully returning to society upon discharge from prison (Cohen, 2017). Female ex-offenders recidivate at higher rates, due to limited community resources that are needed to help get their life back on track (Berry, 2019). The findings reveal a lack of accessible reentry programs for Black female offenders, creating systematic barriers that make reentry challenges. The theoretical framework is guided by the FT. According to Imenda (2014), the theoretical framework guides research and serves as a cornerstone for researchers to focus on a particular issue to address from the literature. While recent studies examine the transition experiences of ex-offenders, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the reentry experiences of Black female offenders. The FT is utilized as the theoretical framework to create

the interview questions asked of the POs. The FT lens helps to understand each participant's perception of the reentry challenges Black female offenders on community supervision encounter in the Southeast U.S. Intersectionality is considered one of the core contributions to the FT (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to describe the oppression of Black women not only in anti-discrimination law, but also in feminist and antiracist theory, as well as political and legal practices. Gender and race are two essential factors of this research. Black women are repeatedly confronted with the difficult task to decide how they want to be identified in the U.S. They have a choice to be legally classified as Black or a woman, but not both in society (Baer, 2017). Exploring how the intersectionality of being Black and a woman affects the success of reentry following incarceration is the essence of this study.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of POs who provide supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. This section implicates the need for areas of improvement to develop and promote critical strategies and programs necessary for Black female offenders to complete their probation, help reduce recidivism rates, and reintegrate into society. The findings of this research provide critical insight and data that could be used by state or federal legislators, corrections officials, community corrections agencies, and other reentry organizations in the planning of policy, reentry programs, community partnerships, and community resources for Black female offenders' return to society.

Equal opportunities and equal rights are critical to dismantling the impact of entrenchment of these inequalities. Criminal justice systems, local government, and reentry

practitioners should reexamine the policies, procedures, and practices that reinforce and unfairly discriminate and prevent the transition and successful reentry. Studies have shown that the critical barriers female ex-offenders face to reentering society are employment, education, social support, housing, substance abuse, and mental health; understanding these critical factors, the penal systems section for policies and procedures and reentry programs and services must respond to these necessities (Kaeble et al., 2016; Taylor, 2016; Valentine & Redcross, 2015).

The study is consistent with previous literature on this topic and results confirm existing literature in research. The participants all shared their lived experiences and challenges as POs having attempted or connected Black female offenders to reintegration programs to meet their needs upon returning to society. Their lived experiences echo themes identified in previous literature, recanting the limited resources available in the community. The eight participants discuss the specific gender needs and challenges for Black female offenders on community supervision. Consistent with previous research, the participants' experiences confirm that Black female offenders remain a vulnerable and invisible population facing challenges to transition and successfully reenter society until underlying marginalized barriers are addressed, such as gender, race, and class (Richardson & Flowers, 2014). The intersectionality lens sheds light on systematic challenges and exclusions of Black female offenders from political, social, and economic equality (Crenshaw, 1991).

The findings for this study reveal that there are limited or no resources available to assist the Black female offenders' transition and successful reenter into society. The lack of accessibility to employment, housing, substance abuse treatment, transportation, and social support systems are critical barriers revealed in the study. The themes of this study aligned with the FT, and in the research, there was nothing found to suggest or imply that this population is

considered when the criminal justice systems and policymakers reform laws, policies, and practices to improve reentry outcomes for Black female offenders to become productive citizens. Furthermore, the FT shed awareness that the criminal justice system, policymakers, and reentry practitioners have yet to address the gender-specific needs of Black female offenders to transition and successfully reenter into society. The findings support the principles of the FT, highlighting the necessity for Black female offenders to receive quality, accessible programs that are required for a positive transition. The study's participants reveal that there is no gender-responsive programming to address the needs of Black female offenders upon discharge from prison. Moreover, the findings reveal that Black female offenders supervised during post-release need the reentry programs and services required to overcome barriers during community supervision. The focal point of the criminal justice system, POs, and reentry agencies and organizations must be to develop gender-specific programs for Black female offenders that meet their unique needs, rather than implementing general programs for offenders upon discharge to society. These findings help to fill the gap in the literature by providing an examination of POs' perception of Black female offenders' transition and successful reentry into society.

The current policies and reentry programs and services in place are more of a benefit to former male offenders and White female offenders. The criminal justice system and community corrections division should include set inclusion targets within reentry programs and services for POs, community contractors, and community correction divisions, and require them to present substantiated proof of proactive diversity and inclusion efforts that result in equal access and resources. While some programs are available, it is important to have A Seat at the Table to level the playing field and foster accessible and quality Community Resources to reduce recidivism. The implementation of training programs for POs is necessary to support reentry preparation,

planning, and progression, before and after the offenders return to society. Barriers to diversity need to be addressed further.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Theoretical

The findings of this research substantiate the theoretical framework that guides this study. Black female offenders continue to experience invisibility and marginality in a male-dominant society. This study sheds light on Black female offenders being released from prison without needed access to community resources and the continual barriers this population encounters. Black female offenders face dire economic consequences with a felony record. The offender has little to no employment training or employment opportunities to help in the state of the economy. Black female offenders can expect to face racial disparities in an inflated housing market that is already disproportionately designed to exclude Black and Brown households. Black female offenders' challenges to rent limited their access to safe, quality, and affordable housing.

This study is essential because it contributes data to help bridge the gap between the criminal justice system, research, and the community. The benefit of the findings can help to improve prison reentry policies that contribute to racial and ethnic disparities and provide A Seat at the Table for criminal justice policies and community partnerships. The study can help to reevaluate recent and ongoing reforms to reduce recidivism in the criminal justice system, launch and support evidence-based pilot programs, and increase the outcomes of successful reentry and reduction in Black female offenders' return to prison. Understanding and addressing reentry plays a pivotal role in assisting key stakeholders, criminal justice systems, POs, and policymakers to effectively create and implement evidence-based practices to address related reentry barriers that Black female offenders face upon discharge from a correctional institution.

Empirical

There is a plethora of research on the topic of reentry. However, historically, reentry programs are designed for male offenders; therefore, most criminality studies utilize men as subjects, with male offenders embodying the standard to benefit from reentry policies and programming (Cadreche, 2014; Herberman & Bonczar, 2015; Olson et al., 2016). The need for this study is evident to fill the gap in the literature, due to limited research on Black female offenders. This study is needed to examine the lived experiences of eight POs' perceptions on how reentry programs contribute to and meet the needs of the Black female offenders reentering into society. The research is relevant because it provides insight into the unconscious bias and lack of resources made available to Black female offenders. The study shows that while some programs are provided, Black female offenders receive limited access to resources readily available to male offenders and their White counterparts, such as housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, and transportation. The concerns there remains a need to increase access to programs related to social integration to improve reentry outcomes.

Delimitations and Limitations

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of POs who provide supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. The qualitative research is not without limitations. In this section, possible delimitations and limitations are discussed.

Delimitations

The researcher intentionally chose the research design and set the specific boundaries for the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). She chose transcendental phenomenology as the appropriate method for the study. The qualitative research design was fitting because it permits

the participants to share their lived experiences of supervising Black female offenders in community supervision (Creswell, 2014).

The selection of the research participants is the first delimitation in the study. The researcher had complete control over which persons to include in the sample. She limited recruitment based on the requirement to be male or female. Selected individuals had to be 21 years and older and have been POs. The participant must have had at least two years of experience supervising Black female offenders in the Southeast U.S. and have connected or attempted to connect Black female offenders to community resources to assist with needs. Only participants who could read and understand English, held a minimum of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or related human services field, and was a U.S. or naturalized citizen were recruited to participate in the study. Another delimitation was the geographical location. The study was purposely limited to participants that have been POs in the Southeast U.S.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is the geographical limits to participate in the study. The research site is located in the Southeast U.S. Thus, the participants in this region are not representative of POs from other state and federal community correction agencies and regions in the U.S., particularly POs who provide community supervision for Black female offenders in metropolitan or urban regions. Therefore, these findings cannot be representative beyond the Southeast U.S. or a larger sample population of POs.

The second noted limitation is the gender and ethnicity of the sample population. The phenomenon in the study is Black female offenders. Historically and traditionally, research about reentry has been conducted on male offenders and female offenders. This study is important

because it fills the gap and presents empirical evidence that there is limited research on the Black female ex-offenders and whether reentry programs assist in their successful transition into society. However, the study can be replicated using males and Hispanic female ex-offenders.

The third concern of this study is the lack of accessibility to physically observe the participants' nonverbal cues during the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. As an added layer of confidentiality, the participants were not required to turn on their recording cameras. All telephone interviews were audio-recorded through videoconference platform called Zoom. Participants had to use the dial-by-location telephone number in the Zoom meeting.

The small sample size and number of participants of the study is another limitation. The sample size for this transcendental qualitative study was limited to eight POs who had supervised Black female offenders on community supervision. Qualitative research methodology and research design does not require a large sample size (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Patton, 2015). In addition, of all eight participants in the study, seven identify as Black or African American and one as Caucasian or White. Therefore, the findings are not a reflection of all POs in the region of the Southeast U.S.

Another limitation is the importance of the researcher to prevent potential biases. As a former employee of a state correctional institution, the researcher has knowledge of the phenomenon under study. The researcher set aside any experience, preconceived judgments, and notions using a method called bracketing (Lomangino, 2015).

The last limitation is the age of the participants in the study. All of the participants are between the ages of 55-65 years old. Therefore, they provide a limited perspective, based on their age group, and their perspective cannot be generalized to all groups. This study limits the representation of data, as the age groups between 21-50 years are not represented in the study.

Thus, there is no data in this study on how these age groups may answer regarding the phenomenon being studied.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study aims to fill the gap in the literature by describing a detailed account of the participants' subjective experiences of Black female offenders' reentry experiences and community resources that can help their transition and successful reentry into society. The following recommendations for future research are suggestions for changes to improve reentry policy, procedures, and practices to assist Black female offenders in reentering society.

Treatment Program Evaluation

One recommendation for future study is to evaluate the outcomes, effectiveness, and feasibility of treatment programs for justice-involved Black female offenders. "Outcome evaluations measure how clients and their circumstances change following participation in treatment and rehabilitation, and whether the treatment experience has been a factor in causing this change" (World Health Organization, 1999). This study is relevant to assessing how effective these treatment and rehabilitation services are and improving the overall quality of care.

Reentry Practitioners

Another recommended area of research is to examine the perceptions of reentry practitioners that provide services for Black female offenders returning to society. Most research conducted uses the offender population.; however, limited studies are using correctional staff. The voice and perceptions of the community reentry practitioners are imperative to fill the gap in the literature and provide insight into the feasibility of programs created to increase employment opportunities, education, housing, and other programs upon release from prison; it is important to measure resources and allocate funds most efficiently and effectively.

Attitudes Towards Behavior

A third future recommendation is to research how the race and sex of the PO impact the outcome of reentry success. This study helps to determine if there is a correlation in how thought processes or perceptions can impact the outcome because of the perceived behavior.

Replicate the Study

A final recommendation is to replicate the phenomenological research using a diverse population of POs to include a larger sample size, the diversity of age, race and sex of the participants. This study includes eight participants; by replicating the study, the use of a larger sample size would help gather additional data and present the findings to the criminal justice system, local government, and reentry practitioners to change policies, procedures, and practices that reinforce and unfairly discriminate and prevent the transition and successful reentry of Black female offenders.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study aims to describe the experiences of POs who provide supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism. Moreover, this study gives voice and presents insight from POs on their shared experiences of their perception of Black female offenders' transition and successful reentry into society. This study reveals that Black female offenders on community supervision encounter barriers and stigmas not faced by male or White female offenders. These barriers they face are specific to their needs, as revealed in the study.

The participants narrated their lived experiences and understanding of the reentry transition process endured by Black female offenders on community supervision regarding the essential programs and services needed, the difficulties encountered accessing programs and

services, and the various approaches utilized to help the Black female offenders in obtaining the programs and services. The goal of the criminal justice system, stakeholders, community, and reentry agencies is to reduce recidivism and improve reintegration into society. These systems must collaborate to ensure Black female offenders are afforded the necessary resources to meet their needs. Changing policies and laws, including creating vouchers, grant programs, and subsidies for housing, transportation, education, childcare, substance abuse treatment, and employment, is one method of immediate change that can help prevent the return to drug use, criminal behavior, prostitution, and homelessness, as well as prevent high recidivism rates, as benefits and services are readily available in the community. Therefore, it is imperative to provide support to assist the Black female offenders in gaining access to primary necessities to build a positive and productive life and become productive citizens once again.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Examination of Probation Officers' Perception On Black Female Ex-Offenders Transition and Successful Reentry into Society

Principal Investigator: Anita Bryant, MA, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be (1) male or female, (2) 21 years and older; (3) employed as a probation officer (4) at least two years' experience supervising Black female ex-offenders in the Southeast, United States (5) have connected or attempted to connect Black female ex-offenders to community resources to assist with needs (6) read and understand English (7) hold a minimum of bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or related human services field (8) and be a US or Naturalized citizen.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of probation officers who provide supervision in a reintegration program for post-release Black female offenders concerning their efforts to reduce recidivism.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded, open-ended interview via Zoom (60-90 minutes).
2. Potentially be asked to participate in a follow-up interview via telephone if needed (20-30 minutes).
3. Review your transcript from the interview for accuracy to verify data credibility (1 to 2 hours).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

The benefits to participation are indirect; the study of probation officers in the Southeast, United States may offer consciousness into the problem impacting many Black female ex-offenders and generate data that will help bridge the gap between research and policy. Other benefits to society include cutting down on recidivism within the justice system, reduced strain on state and local budgets, reduced crime rates, increases in the number of successful transition and reentry into society, and decreased prison populations.

The study can benefit reentry policy, planning, and programs by permitting the participants to share their lived experiences, program effectiveness, and impact.

Liberty University
IRB-FY21-22-567
Approved on 1-24-2022

Understanding and addressing reentry plays a pivotal role in assisting policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels to successfully develop and implement best practices to address reentry-related challenges

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom in a secure and private location of the researcher and participant's choice, where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Data collected will be kept for three years, after which all electronic copies will be permanently removed from my computer's hard drive and all paper documentation will be destroyed by cross-cutting shredding.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- The North Carolina Department of Public Safety will not conduct this research project. They will not get a copy of your interview transcript. The Department of Public Safety may receive a copy of the overall results at the end of the study but will not be able to identify you personally from the copy they receive.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. All participants will receive a \$25.00 gift card via email at the end of the interview. If the participant does not complete the study, they will still receive a \$25.00 gift card.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

There is no cost to participate in the study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Liberty University
IRB-FY21-22-567
Approved on 1-24-2022

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study, is Anita Bryant. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Richard Green at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix B

Liberty University IRB Letter

LIBERTYUNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 24, 2022

Anita Bryant
Richard Green

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-567 A Phenomenological Examination of Probation Officers' Perception On Black Female Ex-Offenders Transition and Successful Reentry Into Society

Dear Anita Bryant, Richard Green:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRS). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: January 24, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.11), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C

Recruitment Email Letter

Dear Prospective Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to examine probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female offenders' successful transition back into the community. Furthermore, my study focuses on the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female offenders during community supervision, and probation officers' perceptions regarding how coping resources prepared Black female ex-offenders to transition into society.

To participate, be (1) male or female, (2) 21 years and older; (3) employed as a probation officer in the Southeast, United States, (4) at least two years' experience supervising Black female ex-offenders in the Southeast, United States (5) have connected or attempted to connect Black female ex-offenders to community resources to assist with needs (6) read and understand English (7) hold a minimum of bachelor's degree in criminal justice, correctional services, psychology, social work, or related human services field (8) and are a United States citizen or Naturalized citizen. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to (1) participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded open-ended semi-structured interview via Zoom for approximately 60-90 minutes, and (2) potentially answer follow-up questions via telephone interview for approximately 20 to 30 minutes if needed (3) and review his or her transcript from the interview for accuracy to verify data credibility called member checking, which should take approximately 1 to 2 hours. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] for more information or to schedule an interview. A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me via email at the time of the interview. Participants will receive a \$25.00 gift card upon completion of the interview.

Sincerely,

Anita Bryant
Dissertation Candidate

[REDACTED]

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Interview: A Phenomenological Examination of Probation Officers' Perception on Black Female Ex-offenders' Transition and Successful Reentry into Society	
What I did	Script-What I said
1. Introduce the interview	<p>My name is Anita Bryant, and I want to thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study.</p> <p>I am studying a phenomenological examination of probation officers' perception on Black female ex-offenders' transition and successful reentry into society. The following research questions guide this study: What are probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs contribute to Black female ex-offenders' successful transition back into the community? What are the probation officers' perceptions of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of Black female ex-offenders during community supervision? What are probation officers' perceptions regarding how coping resources prepared Black female ex-offenders to transition into society? There are 15 interview questions asked during the interview.</p>
2. Provide the participants the chance to introduce themselves	<p>I have been a student at Liberty University for approximately 2.7 years. I had worked with the Department of Public Safety for seven years. Prior to that, I spent eight years with the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, first as a correctional officer for one year and senior correctional officer for three years, and then as a health information technician for four years.</p> <p>Just as a reminder, you have agreed to participate in this research study by consenting to be interviewed.</p> <p>To reiterate, your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or consequences.</p> <p>Do you have any questions or concerns regarding the informed consent form or consent process?</p> <p>In addition to using the built-in Zoom transcription audio-recording. I will audio-record the interview with a back-up</p>

	<p>cassette recorder and take notes. Your participation, including the interview, will be kept confidential and private.</p> <p>At this time, do you have any questions or concerns regarding the confidentiality and privacy of your participation in this study? Are there any questions or concerns regarding any of the information I have discussed with you?</p>
	I'll start with the questions
1. Observe nonverbal communication (cues)	1. What is your race?
2. Restate as needed (paraphrase)	2. What is your sex?
3. Ask probing follow-up questions to gather more in-depth, rich, thick data	3. What is your age?
	4. What is your highest education level?
	5. How many years of experiences do you have as a probation officer?
	6. Describe how you have attempted to connect Black female ex-offenders to community resources to assist with needs.
	8. How do you describe successful reentry?
	9. Describe the methods you use to track Black female ex-offenders' progress.
	10. Based on your experience, please explain how the probation supervision needs of Black female ex-offenders differ from male offenders on probation supervision.
	11. Based on your experience, what do you perceive as the most significant factors that contribute to the successful reentry of Black female ex-offenders on probation?
	12. Based on your experience, what differences, if any, have you observed in reintegration results between Black female ex-offenders who participated in their reentry program and those who did not?
	<p>13. Based on your experience, what ways do you feel the reentry support provided addressed the needs of Black female ex-offenders to prepare them for successful reentry?</p> <p>Sub-questions: If these areas are not mentioned. Ask participant to be more specific in discussing employment, transportation, substance abuse treatment, childcare, housing, mental health, education, and social support programs.</p>

		14. Based on your experience, please describe what you feel is the most effective assistance that can be provided to meet the needs of the Black female ex-offenders returning to society. What would be the ideal plan?
		15. Based on your experience, what do you feel is the most important factor Black female ex-offenders encounter during supervision when it comes to reentry programs? Sub questions: If these areas are not mentioned. Ask participant to be more specific in discussing childcare and parenting skills development.
		16. Based on your experience, when working with Black female ex-offenders on probation, what other supportive services, assistance, and support groups do you believe would be beneficial to assist the successful reentry of Black female ex-offenders that differs from male offenders?
		17. What specific coping resources enable the Black female ex-offenders to successfully transition into society?
		18. In what ways do you think changes in policy would better promote successful reintegration for Black female ex-offenders?
		Sub questions: What suggestions would you give to improve community relationships to better provide services that meet the needs of Black female ex-offenders? Sub questions: What programs are in place to train the probation officers on how to deal with multicultural offenders? Sub questions: What suggestions would you give to new probation officers on how to work with Black female ex-offenders?
4.	Conclude the interview and thank the participant once again for volunteering to participate in the study	Would you like to add anything else? This is the end of our interview. Thank you once again for volunteering to participate in the study.
5.	Arrange potential follow-up member checking	

Appendix E

Request to Adopt Interview Questions

Dr. Elaine Ginnison, Dr. Jacqueline Helfgott
Criminal Justice Department
[REDACTED]

Dear Dr., Ginnison and Dr. Helfgott:

My name is Anita Bryant, and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, completing a doctorate in Community Care and Counseling. I am writing to ask permission to use the interview questions in your research study, *Correctional Practitioners on Reentry: A Missed Perspective*. My research is on *A Phenomenological Examination of Probation Officers Perspectives on Black Female Ex-Offenders Successful Reentry into Society*. I am currently enrolled in the Dissertation Proposal and Research Course with hopes to defend my dissertation proposal by the December 3, 2021, deadline. My dissertation mentor is Dr. Green, Adjunct Professor at Liberty University. Your survey instruments (questions) align with my research topic and fill the gap in the literature on this critical topic. I want to use your survey instrument under the following conditions: I will use the interview questions only for my research study and will not sell or use it for other purposes. I will include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instrument. If you have specific information of attribution that you would like me to include, please provide it in your response. At your request, I will send a copy of my completed research study to you upon completion of the study. If you do not control the copyright for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact. If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at the email in the body of this letter!

Sincerely,

Anita M. Bryant, Doctoral Candidate
[REDACTED]

Appendix F

Permission to Adopt Interview Questions

RE: Request to Use Survey Instrument

From: Gunnison, Elaine (gunnison@seattleu.edu)
 To: michelle.bryant43@yahoo.com
 Cc: Ambryant7@liberty.edu; jhelfgot@seattleu.edu
 Date: Monday, November 8, 2021, 04:25 PM EST

Hi Ms. Bryant,

Thank you for your email.

Both Dr. Helfgott and I grant our approval for you to utilize our instrument in your dissertation and research. If you would be so kind as to credit our names and corresponding publication in your dissertation and publications when discussing the source of your questions or describing the questions (such as in your Method or variable description section), we would appreciate that.

Feel free to contact us again if you have any questions.

Please also send us your completed research as we are both interested in reading it.

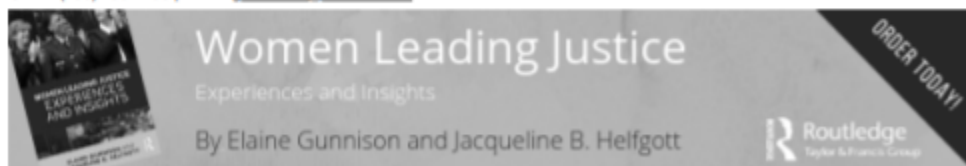
Good luck!

Dr. Gunnison

Elaine Gunnison, Ph.D. | Professor/Graduate Director, Co-Editor of *Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society*,
CRIMINAL JUSTICE, CRIMINOLOGY, & FORENSICS | SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

901 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122-1090

Office: (206) 296-2430 | Email: gunnison@seattleu.edu



Follow Seattle University Criminal Justice, Criminology, & Forensics on social media:

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Appendix G

Participant Transcript

Speaker 1

This meeting is being recorded. My name is Anita Bryant and I want to thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. I am studying a phenomenological examination of probation officers' perception on black female ex-offenders transition in successful reentry into society.

The following questions guide this research, what our probation officers' perception of how black of how reentry programs contribute to black female ex-offenders success for which trips transition back into the community. What are the probation officers' perception of how reentry programs best serve the specific needs of the black female ex offender doing community supervision? And what our probation officers' perception regarding how coping resources prepare black female ex-offenders to transition into society. There are 15 interview questions asked during this interview. I have been a student at Liberty University for approximately 2.7 years, I have worked with the Department of Public Safety for seven years. Prior to that I spent eight years with the Department of Justice Federal Bureau of prisons first as a corrections officer for one year and a senior correction officer for three years and then as a half information tech for four years. Just as a reminder, you have agreed to participate in this study by consenting to be interviewed. To reiterate, your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalties or consequences. Do you have any questions or concern regarding the consent form or consent process?

In addition to us, in zoom transcription, audio recording, I will audio record the entire interview with a backup cassette recorder and taking notes. I am going to start the first interview question. Okay,

Speaker 1

what is your race?

Speaker 2

African American?

Speaker 1

What is your sex?

Speaker 2

Male?

Speaker 1

What is your age

Speaker2

60?

Speaker 1

Can you please state your highest education level?

Speaker 2

bachelor's degree?

Speaker 1

And how many years of experience do you have as a probation officer?

Speaker 2

Eight

Speaker 1

Describe how you have attempted to connect or have connected black female ex-offenders to community resources to assist with me.

Speaker 2

Mostly they were the women's shelter for abused women. If the offender was coming out of prison, typically they are already we're in a program so that they are case managers in prison typically had them set up already for that specific housing. And I would just interface with them

Speaker 1

how do you describe successful reentry?

Speaker 2

Successful and reentry to me would be when the offender comes out. They already have living arrangements have an ideal are prepared to seek employment and already have their counseling set up.

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, please explain how the probation supervision needs of the black female ex offender differ from the male offenders on probation supervision.

Speaker 2

My experience is the black females that came straight out of prison to me typically did not have housing. They were having to go to a shelter or you know, halfway house where most of the black male offenders coming out. For the most part, they were more likely to have a relative there to take them in our girlfriend. never really saw a black female coming out with a husband or a boyfriend and take them back

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, what do you perceive as the most significant factors that contribute to the successful reentry of the black female ex offender on probation

Speaker 2

having they're having their aftercare setup for, if they were dealing with drugs that they already were in South light, or they already had they're set up to go to get their tasks assessment done. And that was the biggest thing is having their whether it was mental health, whatever type of treatment they needed, already have that in the, in the works.

Speaker 1

And were you responsible for connecting the offender to these resources,

Speaker 2

in some cases, I was. In some cases, they already had it, but usually part of their release, if it was in their release orders, then you know, I would send out to have him set him up for their assessment or if they were to come in after being out 90 days and they tested positive for drugs, I was set a bar by observed any activity that I felt like needed counseling, I will refer them to task four assessment

Speaker 1

based on your experience, what differences if any, have you observed in reintegration results between black female ex-offenders who participated in their reentry program and those who did not

Speaker 2

the ones that participated had a better chance higher success rate of being successful on their post release the ones that didn't they typically were re you know, re incarcerated are and typically the ones that weren't successful were the ones that had drug issues. But if they were for crimes like issues with money or theft, typically they were more successful

Speaker 1

is that because they had drug treatment programs readily available for them and the community?

Speaker 2

I think what I've seen of the way it was more like to me if they had a drug problem coming in and they were addicts they were addict or coming into the prison. And they were still they were coming out and then once they got around their environment because sometimes the sister living places or the transition housing there's other addicts there and it made it harder to stay clean for them that's where they would typically if they were gonna fail it was gonna be to a drug issue they had

Speaker 1

and you were saying something about versus the inmates with that had maybe money problems. I don't know if he was trying to say charges

Speaker 2

like larceny? If it was well, I mean, some of them you know, had robbery charges and some of them might have been in gangs. I have one black female that came out on a second-degree manslaughter charge. And that was dealing with um, she did like 12 years and but she came out

but she was one of the rare ones that had a place to live and basically got right to work. And she was successful. For the nine months I had her I can't say what I never saw her come back up on the rest port or anything. But she didn't she didn't have a drug problem.

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, what do you feel the what ways do you feel the reentry support provided address the needs of black female ex offender to prepare her for successful reentry?

Speaker 2

Well, if between the case manager and the probation officer, if we were successful getting them into a housing and that housing there, some of them had, you know, job training setup they had if they coming out and maybe they went in without a skill meet, some of them came out with little certificates that they have attained from the being incarcerated, they were more ready to go to work. And so those programs and some of the houses were real good at having good control and does not lead and it just go off into drug use. And sometimes it just really depends on which house that they were able to get in. And, you know, some houses were real strict and they would, you know, you test positive, they will definitely will put you out, and I think some of them seem like they might have been just turning the knob, you know, addressing those type of issues.

Speaker 1

Can you explain, this is the same question. Can you explain if reentry support address the needs? Transportation?

Speaker 2

We know, I mean, on probation side of transportation, the only transportation that we provided was if they got out, and we didn't have a home plan, we would take them to the shelter, or if they were going to a shelter, we provided transportation. It wasn't necessarily our policy, to provide transportation, some of the programs that are the houses, they might transport, provide transportation to get them to their meetings, and I mean, so it wasn't necessarily the state's policy probation policy to provide transportation if we could, but having our caseload as full as it was, it was hard for myself to provide transportation for the offender.

Speaker 1

Were you able to link them to transportation in their community?

Speaker 2

No, I can't say I ever did. No.

Speaker 1

Same question. Can you explain if reentry support addressed the needs of employment?

Speaker 12

Yeah, definitely addressed the need of employment. There were several, several agencies that we will refer them to, and even just developing contacts, like I had somebody at Applebee's, to hey, you know, obviously still work. If you have somebody who really wants to work, you know, refer him to, you know, I'll give him a chance because he actually was an ex-offender. And so, I

through the course of working as a probation officer, I developed con contacts for people really wanting to go to work. And you know, they, they, the halfway houses are, you know, the reentry houses, they have programs for employment.

Speaker 1

What about the substance abuse treatment?

Speaker 2

They can, I mean, we had, you know, in our area and relies on a community agency for drug assessments, which was, to me, not the most efficient operation a lot of turnover or the bomb got dropped the counselors, turnover rate was high as well as probation officers turnover rate was high. So, we had somebody on post release. And it got to the point where, you know, they had nine months. And by the time, you know, it might take 45-60 days for them to get in to see the counselor. And really, the program they might want a man was going to take longer than their post release was. So, a lot of times we wouldn't know if they completed it. And of course, after they were done with post release, then you know, we wouldn't hear from them. And it wasn't guarantee that they were going to stay in the program. And a lot of them wouldn't. They weren't too successful; I can't say we had a high rate of success with the drug treatment program.

Speaker 1

Childcare.

Speaker 2

As far as being a probation officer, I did not get into childcare, and not at nothing on the net release documents, bulk of childcare that said that they're supposed to take care of their family, but it didn't address the need are for childcare.

Speaker 1

And, and since you're saying that, so were you able to network on length, black, female ex offender to all refer to childcare services in the community.

Speaker 2

I didn't have any experience with that. But there was like a couple of church organization that one was, I believe it was off of East Street downtown. They had offenders that had children. But as far as my experience was, I did not. I've never linked up anybody to childcare. I know there were some places like Salvation Army place off of capital. They have places for offenders with children, but nothing with the state that I dealt with, on my end.

Speaker 1

housing

Speaker 2

housing. Now, as far as like any program for assistance, we would find, you know, there were places that we would try to see if they had vacancies are sometimes the offender Meyer got this place out of one and we would try to, you know, our best to get them in and, like the demands, they have a men's shelter that took in a lot more males versus the women, it was harder, there's

fewer places for women, like they didn't really have a place like the men's shelter where they could go

Speaker 1
mental health

Speaker 2
we would do a mental health assessment, if we notice it are a lot of times coming out. Part of their release plans were for them to either attain assessments, our continued the treatment that was already set up for him like they might would have to, you know, they might have been getting mental health treatment and they were supposed to continuing with certain organization. We did try to our work with mental health. And then if somebody's you know, in the mental health score, if it was high enough, we had by time I love probation we had, I think there was three officers that handle mental health cases. So, the probation in county did have mental health officers that were that was their caseload for mental health. And those officers prior probably, you know, were more hands on with their offenders and they probably made sure are provided where they could for transportation and stuff like that taking them person you know, in their state car to their meetings and even attending their counseling sessions are updating and communicating with their, their mental health provider more than like a regular probation officer

Speaker 1
education

Speaker 2
really coming out if they didn't have their GED you know, their their post release orders might have directed them to obtain their GED. But of course, they're not we were the stay wasn't going to keep them on post release after those nine months. If they didn't obtain their GED, they still were going to be released, so wasn't too much you could do as far as you could make them get it but you know, we would direct them rolled and then notify the commission that they had. And then the commission typically would just give him a letter of reprimand. And then by the time all that happened, the nine months were up, and then we still were going to discharge them from their post release. So they weren't going to keep them on post release, to enable them to complete their GED or attain their GED

Speaker 1
and social support programs

Speaker 2
not really nothing that as being a probation officer, we weren't necessarily directing them to any social programs. So I didn't, I didn't deal with the

Speaker 1

based on your experience, please describe what you feel as the most effective assistance that can be provided to meet the needs of the black female ex offender, returning to society. In other words, what is the ideal plan?

Speaker 2

Definitely housing. I think that's the big thing, if you could get them get the black female. I mean, even if the idea would be like, hey, set her up with her with her apartment within maybe three to three months after being released, maybe started off in a transition home and get her to scale, make sure she has a scale to manage, and help her transition to her own place. Because more than likely, I think that was the biggest thing most black females coming out did not have a place to go. From what from what I saw. I think housing was a big thing and in teaching or live life skills, I mean, there were some programs like through tasks but I just didn't have a high opinion of task isn't think that it was just like a paper drill but more of a situation, give them give them housing and really helpful with job training so that they can support themselves and as far as if they had kids, I know a couple of somebody else had taken the responsibility of raising the kids while they were incarcerated and a lot of times for whatever reason they didn't the either the children they want to go back are the people it was a struggle, you know, getting that those children that that relationship build back up
But on the probation side of it, we really didn't have too much training to navigate that those type of social issues. So, I mean, the probation officers would have to be trained fingers coming out with children because we didn't have that kind of training.

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, what do you feel is the most important factor, black female ex-offenders encounter during supervision when it comes to reentry?

Speaker 2

Can you ask that question one more time?

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, what do you feel is the most important factor black female offender encountered on supervision when it comes to reentry programs?

Speaker 2

Are you saying like the problems they have with the probation officers are? Are you saying just that they dealt with or I mean, sometimes they were reluctant to trust the probation officers are date in felt like they were tired of being under supervision. making bad choices because they were looking for a relationship

Speaker 2

is that where you as you were saying?

Speaker 1

With your answering, yes, your answer my question? And could you elaborate any on any parenting skill development.

Speaker 2

And there was no through the state, I mean, as being a probation officer. We didn't get into parenting, education. There were times when I saw my children, we might call you know, social services. And if we felt like the offender wasn't taking care of their, their children, and we might would have like, worksheets for them to fill out on asking them questions about our doing. Assignments for I would give them assignment on budgeting, or one time I went in, and this lady's house was this filthy and I just sat her down and just told her like, came up with a plan to how you need to attack straighten up your house, don't try to look at it, you know, just broke it down room by room, little by little and trying to get her to get people out of her house that really didn't need to be there. And I just use the threat of calling social services. And if I didn't see a change, when she got better. I mean, let's see was also dealing with a drug problem as well. And honestly, I have more black females on my caseload that were on probation versus coming out on post release.

Speaker 1

Can you explain the difference between the two?

Speaker 2

Well, probation, you know, like women, the black female, you know, instead of being incarcerated, they would be on probation. So, they never really went into prison. And they might have had like DWI charges are misdemeanor charges and and instead of being incarcerated, they might have got 18 months of probation and and that's a bigger, though, there's more that I've dealt with probation that they didn't really get sent to prison and then, you know, those were the ones that maybe they were still in their household and they maybe they were dealing with a drug issue, and maybe the corridor are told them to comply with treatment. And those were more the I had a lot more black females that were on probation than I ever had coming out of prison. So, they typically still had a place to live. They were, you know, maybe they were still with their family or their their mother, or their boyfriend and they hadn't been in the system, they I think there's a lot more that then women, black females that I saw, I interacted with, there were more on parole, probation, the post release, and a whole lot on just this guy probation instead of being sent to prison.

Speaker 1

Now, if we could just go back, I know, I thought I heard you say, trust issues with the probation officer was a issue. What suggestion would you give new probation officers on how to work with the black female ex offender

Speaker 2

from us letting them know more that, you know, trust building trust with them, because I think a lot of probation officers might come across, straight up harsh with them. And and really be there for helping them and, you know, not putting them in a position that oh, you know, I lock you up at the first time you make a mistake and that kind of stuff. So I think it was more both sides, like, you know, you have to be successful with them, you gotta let them know that you're, you know, you're, you're gonna enforce the what the court order or the judgment, or the post release or say, but also that, you know, you really want them to be successful, at least that's what my goal always was, like, you know, I said, you know, like, I really don't want to ever have to be rescued. But if you violate this, and that can go against the court order, but you know, take the steps to, to

really work with them. And really like me, if they felt one drug test, if it was marijuana, I probably was, I wasn't going to lock them up unless the court orders said like, you know, that they must be locked up on first drug test. But if you tested positive for marijuana, then you know, we'll talk about it, and then I'll try to see a you know, in 45 days, you know, you would come back in, and I need a clean drug test, you know, to try to work with them, and then refer them to task for drug assessment. And, you know, but some people would just like the first time he test positive, we could back before COVID, you know, you we could lock them up for up to three days. Do delegate authority and some some owners what they would do, I would, I would try, I wouldn't do that. Unless the Court order said to do that, but if you know, but then if it, but if it's cocaine or anything else, then that's, to me, that was different, but just try to work with them. And you know, as long as they try to work with me, I'm gonna try to work with them. And, um, but yeah, just, you know, work with, work with the offender and try to let them know that, you know, without turning a blind eye to crime, that you know, you want them to be successful.

Speaker 1

Based on your experience, when working with black female ex-offenders on probation, what other supportive services assistance support groups do you believe would be beneficial to assist the successful reentry of the female that differs from male female male offenders?

Speaker 2

difference I just think if I think the social side of it family, if we can do a better job at building up, bridges, broken bridges or burn bridges of their fans I'm going to relationships, it just seemed like the male offenders family were more likely to be, do go up out of their way more likely to help the male versus the female, it seemed like when a female got in trouble, pretty much the same, like the family just didn't deal with them, and they just shut them off. I really don't understand that dynamic, but it just, that's what I saw. The males, you know, mom would always take them back and but not so much with the female maid in the scene, they didn't have that undying support from their family they might we want to take their children from them, but they really didn't want to have them back in the house

Speaker 1

describe the methods you use to track black female ex-offenders progress?

Speaker 2

Well, you know, the monthly, the monthly in office meetings, we would had a checklist of what they were supposed to do, they were required to go to task, you know, we would check up with the task coordinator and see if, you know, they, they got their assessment done. And then if they had they did that task assessment and they got assigned whatever program we would check up and see their are they attending classes and try to get updates from their case managers at that whatever program they were in. And if they weren't, if they didn't get the tax assessment and that was part of their work or judgment, they will be in violation and we will bring them in front of the probation violation court we would try to do check in on them on a monthly basis unless it was required for them to do more meetings or we go to their house once every 30 days or within 60 days just depending get into the habit of calling their jobs because that could be a detriment to their job you know

Speaker 1

what specific coping resources enable the black female ex offender to successfully transition into her community

Speaker 2

the transitional housing there were some good houses that really got in they go they had their AAA meetings or that that helped them with reentry and it seemed like some of the houses had you know programs that you know, that had a higher success rate of you know, sometimes it was like some houses Yeah, you had you weren't gonna be there for no more than 90 days or 180 days so you had a stand up a program that you had to be you know, stay in the program you should be able to graduate and their goal was to get their their own place. But that was nothing that on on the state side that was had to do with that particular transitional housing, transitional housing and Wake County they really need a lot more of as a big need more transitional housing know, I never worked I didn't work at arms. I didn't work at women's prison, but they had a lot of the guys had jobs through work release programs. And those guys were Um, you know, when they came out, they had some money in their account. And they also had the job waiting. I don't know if that exists for women, and then when COVID hit, they changed because of whatever the reason was they changed way correctional. And I think that took a lot of way of those work release jobs. I don't know if that was the case at women's prison where women had worked release jobs. But also, I know that for the men to get to work release, you had to have a relationship with a community volunteer. And the black males were like, they really didn't want to do that. They didn't want to go to the meetings, to be able to go out into the community with a community volunteer to build up to where they could get a work release program. I don't really know if that was the case of women's that they had a lot of them on work release or not. But the ones who had jobs coming out of prison, and they already had a little bit of money in their account, those were the ones that were more successful. So, if it was a case, I think work release programs were great. It just has, I don't know, if black females coming out of prison had that stigma where they didn't want to develop a relationship with the community volunteers, I don't know. But I think that's a good program, community volunteers, getting them out with a job, you know, a work release job that they could transition to, and they've already have employment, and they would have a little bit of money in their account or, you know, depends on how long some of them might be released with \$5,000 in their on their card or I was, Well, I think we're releases great.

Speaker 1

And what ways, if any, do you think changes in policy were better promote successful reintegration for black female ex-offenders?

Speaker 2

I think policy changes where they the probation officer will be more more of a social worker than law enforcement. Like through my journey, the working with the Department I started and as a correction officer, and you really can't help people there. Because really, you're there to just control you're not really wasn't job where you could really make a difference in somebody and then I've transitioned over to being a probation officer. And it was more about basically protecting the state's interest. And it wasn't really so much on the social side. And it seemed like

probation goes back and forth, whether they're going to be more law enforcement, or more social, depending on the administration. I think being more on the sell side and law enforcement, making those where we really were putting more into the social aspect and instead of being the law enforcer tangos policies, my widow What about a probation officer when they don't even understand their job because it's like we they say it's a hybrid sometimes your law enforcement, sometimes your social and it gets confusing and the lines get blurred? You know, most probation officers are just so uptight about being under investigation losing their job getting written up. And the probation officers are overwhelmed on their caseload and they're just so many so high numbers that you really can't focus in on one person. One person can take up a whole day and then you got 6070 other people that you weren't even able to address are see if you get an arrest that just blows up your whole day because you might have five scheduled appointments and then you're gone out the office and then nobody else wants to watch your you know, do your report. My name is and then I'm gonna do the appointment like you would do. And it does give you as always catching up and then there's like a paper drill, you know protecting, you're protecting, documenting stuff so you don't get in trouble. And you really don't have time to put that much effort into any one person. So, it is overwhelmed on their case load. So many so high numbers that you really can't focus in on one person. One person can take up a whole day and you got 60 or 70 other people that you weren't even able to address or see if you get an arrest that just blows up your whole day because you might have five scheduled appointments then you're gone out the office any nobody else wants your, do your appointments then they not gone do the appointments like you would do and its always catching up, um like a paper trail. You know protecting your, protecting documenting stuff so you do not get in trouble and you really don't have time to put that much effort into any one person. So you're just overwhelmed.

Speaker 1

what suggestions will you give to improve community relations, to better provide services to meet the needs of the black female ex offender

Speaker 2

Encourage black people to be get more black people that do transitional housing. That's a big need and good houses, you know, people really, really wanted the people to see and not just trying to make money. But we just that definitely a big need is black home transitional housing. That is the bottom line is because some of the better female transitional housing are ran by white females and they bring in mostly white females from prison. So, I think we need more transitional housing that are ran minorities. I think we need more transitional housing that are ran by good quality minority just not minorities. But that's that's what I would think, in some kind of way to encourage the minorities to do transitional housing. They have places to go, but there's just not there's not enough period and there's not that many black owned transitional housing like yeah, it was mostly white. Right? White ran facilities and like female ran facilities for female offenders and not really can't say I know what I ran into one not saying they're they're not black you know, transitional housing. This does mean wake counties getting so expensive. But if they're there's a great need for transitional housing. Policies are programs that encourage minorities to do transitional housing.

Speaker 1

Would you like to add anything else?

Speaker

Hmm. I think on the probation officers side to this, they did do one thing where I guess that they gave them like about a \$10,000 Raise based on their years and they're trying to they did do something about the pay inequity. Trying to cut down on the the turnover rate, but also there's a greater need for I don't know if it's more probation officers. So the caseloads wouldn't be so high, I think on the state and that we have to as a society, determine how much we willing to spend on a person that make them to get them get them right. Me. So I have to struggle with that. It's like well, how much effort should be put into helping someone you really don't want them to be codependent. But without help, they're gonna fall. So, I would say the probation officers they need more probation officers so and pay raises, hopefully, it slow down the turnover rate. I think the state did good but need more officers, a lot more officers and so that the case load is going to be down because obviously the state shutting down prisons as they can and putting more people out on probation instead of sending them to prison go to the prisoner can't stay staff. It is the whole system these overall because he got figured out why don't correction officers stay. I mean, there's a merit issue why they don't They and then the reason why probation officers don't stay then you have no consistency. And this year is going to be interesting. If you look in July, there's gonna be a whole lot of probation officers that are going to retire because we switched over to the state trooper retirement plan so that certain a lot of them are gonna be able to go out and they're gonna be able to get the retirement plus Social Security supplement. And wait counties gonna lose probably proof me lose 20 officers and chiefs and throughout the state, I don't know how much the number is. That's why I think they tried to give them more, they gave him the \$10,000 increase because I know a lot of them are getting ready to leave. And between October, I mean, July and October, a lot of your senior officers are going to be leaving their jobs. So, what that's going to mean you have a bunch of younger inexperienced officers this year is going to be interesting.

Speaker 1

And last question, what is an average caseload for a probation officer?

Speaker 2

I would say 70 to 75 offenders. I can't say to say what it was today, but when I left, I would say the average caseload within the 70s You really can't. It'd be hard to really give great attention to 30 people, let alone 70.

Speaker 1

That concludes the end of our interview. I want to thank you once again for volunteering to participate in this study. I will provide you with a copy of the transcript in a few days to review for accuracy and ensure the intended meaning of your response was capture. And if you decide to make any changes you would so at this time, sign, and return to me. Please stand by why I stop the recording.

Speaker 12

Okay, thank you. I hope I answered your questions.