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Factors of Black Transgender Ex-Offender Women that Contribute to Recidivism

Brittany Shakir
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Brittany Shakir

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Factors of Black Transgender Ex-Offender Women that Contribute to Recidivism

by

Brittany Shakir

MM, University of Maryland University College, 2017

MS, Kaplan University, 2012

BS, North Carolina A&T State University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

December 2020

Abstract

Black female transgender ex-offender recidivism rates continue to rise at a higher percentage than males. This has resulted in transgender female ex-offender unemployment and homelessness, which in turn creates opportunities to commit crimes. However, there are no programs that advocate for creating resources to ensure successful reentry of transgender ex-offenders into their communities. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand contributing factors to recidivism among Black transgender women ex-offenders while addressing an under-researched group of people, the transgender community. The theoretical framework for this study was McGuire's inoculation theory. The research question focused on what experiences affected the recidivistic behaviors of Black transgender ex-offenders. A qualitative phenomenological study design was employed using semi-structured interviews of 10 Black transgender women ex-offenders using purposive sampling in the Northeastern United States. Transcripts from interviews were categorized for thematic analysis with a 6-step coding process. Based upon the coding process that was applied to the data that was gathered, 4 main themes emerged: (a) living in one's truth, (b) acceptance and the desire to belong, (c) means of survival, and (d) character realization of self-sustaining. Study results indicated homelessness, unemployment, violence, hunger, lack of support, and peer pressure were factors that contributed to recidivism among the target population. Implications for social change include informing and educating policymakers of the importance of developing policies and programs to support the transgender ex-offender population.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all transgender people who feel they have no voice.

Acknowledgments

As my high school coach used to say, “I don’t believe in luck, I be in excellence” and because of that saying I have always chose to be excellent in all that I do.

God, I would like to thank you for giving me the will, courage, and strength to complete this excellent phase of my life. To my family who have been understanding as I took this journey, thank you so much, I love you. To my husband, thanks for being supportive. Sarai and Samiyah, thank you for being patient as mommy dedicated time to this dissertation and sacrificed time with you both on many occasions. Aunt Becky and Aunt Geneva, although you both aren’t physically here to witness this, I know you both would be very proud. To Dr. Jones and Dr. Walker, thank you for guiding me throughout this journey. Johnson, thank you for being my buffer so I could complete this study. To the individuals that participated in this study, thank you for your time and allowing me to hear your life story. To my co-workers that listened to me talk about my topic, witnessed this process, and been super encouraging, thanks. Celisa, thanks for always checking on me. Raymond, thank you for being my cheerleader and helping me from beginning to end. And last but not least, my good friend Tim, thank you for pushing me to complete this journey even when I had no motivation to do so. Thank you Thank you Thank you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Transgender offenders often experience discrimination within the U.S. criminal justice system. Often, personal belief systems and cultural norms prevent transgenders from receiving the support that they need to be successful after their release. According to Buist and Stone (2014), “personal beliefs and cultural norms often play a part in legal decisions, particularly those regarding transgender criminal cases” (p. 37). Black transgender female ex-offenders compose a minority population that faces several challenges within the criminal justice system. Transgender is defined as a population of individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth (Quinn & Swain, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the term transgender woman or female is used to refer to an individual who was born male but identifies as a female.

Although members of the LGBTQ community have gained gradual social and political influence during the 20th and 21st centuries in the United States, many difficulties remain, proving that there is a need for further research regarding issues surrounding transgender communities. While the American criminal justice system’s current focus is shifting towards a rehabilitative model and reducing levels of recidivism, transgender offenders often suffer from higher rates of recidivism (Kilgore, 2015). Recidivism is defined as the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). While ample literature on recidivism exists, little literature exists examining behaviors and why Black female transgender ex-offenders recidivate at higher rates, prompting a need for further research.

In the current study, I evaluated the Black female transgender ex-offender population in the Northeastern United States regarding their lived experiences with recidivism. Understanding which common factors contribute to transgender ex-offenders recidivating would be useful for many organizations. Many transgenders are not given the opportunity to explain their experiences, especially when they need support. According to Quinn and Swain (2018), “external pressures such as social stigmatization, rejection, discrimination, harassment, violence, and barriers to accessing health services contribute to elevated rates of unemployment, homelessness, high-risk sexual behavior, substance abuse, and suicide among transgender individuals” (p. 2). It will be beneficial to understand which factors increase recidivism as explained by individuals.

It is essential to use a framework for this study which involves why people choose to behave the way they do given the circumstances they are presented with. The theory of inoculation which was developed by William McGuire explains how existing attitudes and beliefs of humans can change through resistance and persuasion. Committing crimes and choosing to repeatedly commit crimes because of mitigating factors is a belief that needs to be understood, especially within groups of people who already face many challenges such as the transgender community. For this study, I used McGuire’s theory of inoculation to better understand the lived experiences and behaviors of contributing factors to recidivism amongst Black transgender women ex-offenders.

Chapter 1 outlines the problem of recidivism among Black female transgender ex-offenders. Chapter 1 also discusses the theoretical framework and operational concepts. Principles from this study will contribute information to policymakers for developing

policies and programs to support the transgender ex-offender population in northeastern United States.

Background

Black female transgender ex-offenders are a minority population that faces many challenges. Discrimination makes it harder for them to be self-sufficient in their communities (Bender-Baird, 2011). When an ex-offender is released into a community and they have difficulties being self-sufficient, the temptation to recidivate becomes easier. Recidivism and not having resources for transgender ex-offenders upon release is a problem. Black female transgender ex-offender recidivism rates continue to rise at a higher percentage than males (Kilgore, 2015). There are an estimated 4.8 million adults who are on parole in the United States, with over 580,000 Black men and women in state or federal prisons as of 2011 (Brewer et al, 2014). A common crime that transgender women recidivate with are sex crimes like prostitution. Buist and Stone (2014) found that Black transgender women had the highest rate, with 44% being sex workers compared to other ethnicities.

This current study was undertaken to fill a gap in literature regarding factors that influence recidivism within the Black transgender women ex-offender community in northeast United States. This current study was also undertaken to provide information on a population of people that existing general gender policies and laws do not protect. Lastly, this research can be used as information that can be disseminated to criminal justice organizations and policymakers for potential incorporation of resources (such as

food, housing, therapy, drug rehabilitation centers and jobs) for transgender women offenders so they can be successful once they are reintegrated into their communities.

This phenomenological study is needed because the transgender population faces challenges being treated equally due to criminal justice and governmental organizations not knowing or understanding them. Criminal justice and governmental organizations tend to not know about the transgender population because they have dated laws that follow social norm ideology. This study can provide background information regarding personal experiences that can be disseminated to criminal justice organizations and policymakers. This study can also provide necessary resources to transgender women ex-offenders so they can transition into their communities more successfully, which then can potentially decrease recidivism amongst this population of people.

Problem Statement

Black female transgender ex-offender recidivism rates continue to rise at a higher percentage than males (Kilgore, 2015). This has resulted in an increase in transgender female ex-offender unemployment and homelessness, which in turn creates additional opportunities to commit crime (Matricardi, 2016). Currently, there is a DC Trans Coalition campaign whose aim is to improve the lives of transgender residents who are and have been arrested and detained in Washington DC. However, there are no other programs in the northeastern United States that advocate for creating resources to ensure successful reentry of transgenders into their communities (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). This problem impacts communities because once offenders are returned to a community, some are choosing to commit crimes. A disproportionate number of minority transgender

women are incarcerated and lack adequate support programs (Sevelius & Jenness, 2017). My study can contribute information to policymakers to use when developing policies and programs to support the transgender ex-offender population in the northeast United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand contributing factors to recidivism amongst Black transgender female ex-offenders. This study is unique because it addressed factors that influence recidivism within a more diverse group of people, transgender females in the northeast United States. This study addressed a gap in literature by adding information about black transgender female ex-offenders. This study used semi-structured interviews with Black transgender women ex-offenders in Northeastern United States. The results can be used as information that can be disseminated to criminal justice organizations such as prisons and police departments. The results can also be used for potential integration of resources such as food, housing, therapy, drug rehabilitation centers and jobs to transgender women offenders so they can be successful once they are reintegrated into their communities.

Research Question

The overarching question that guided this study is:

RQ: What factors related to Black transgender ex-offender women contribute to recidivism?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was the theory of inoculation, which was developed by William McGuire. The inoculation theory was chosen for this study because it is a practical method for the reduction and prevention of recidivism. The inoculation theory postulates that existing attitudes and beliefs of humans can change under resistance and persuasion (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). Negative attitudes and perceptions about the United States judicial system and their employees (officers, judges, and lawyers) tend to shift when an individual becomes a part of the system as an inmate, so the United States penal system hopes that offenders who are released from prisons have new positive attitudes and are not persuaded into recidivating. Committing crimes and choosing to repeatedly commit crimes because of mitigating factors such as homelessness, lack of education, and substance abuse is a belief that needs to be understood by the United States judicial system and society especially within groups of people who already face many challenges such as the transgender community. The inoculation theory explains the change of attitudes and beliefs which in turn aligns with this study because it is black transgender women offenders whose attitude and beliefs had to change towards the United States judicial system in order for them to be successful in their communities upon release.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research aligns with the phenomenological approach because it focuses on the essence of

a phenomenon by exploring a lived experience. This study explores lived experiences of Black transgender women ex-offenders. The best approach for my research question was the phenomenological approach because it allowed me to focus on commonalities amongst black female transgender ex-offenders, involved setting aside bias and assumptions, helped me achieve my goal of arriving at a description of lived experiences and allowed me to gather information to determine a universal meaning about a phenomenon pertaining to human experiences, feelings, and responses. Keeping the focus on experiences (contributing factors) of Black transgender women ex-offenders in the Northeastern United States aligned with McGuire's inoculation theory because the lived experiences that were documented occurred based on the attitudes and beliefs of each participant, which then changed due to becoming incarcerated.

Data for my dissertation were collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to make observations and notes regarding participant's feelings and reactions. Face-to-face interviews was also conducted in order to ensure that I was able to gather participants perceptions based on their lived experiences without firsthand information. My data were analyzed by listening to audio-recorded interviews and determining common codes and themes. Data from interviews were coded and categorized for thematic analysis and comparison using Microsoft Excel. To transcribe the files, I used Microsoft Word and hand-transcribed manually.

Experiences that contribute to recidivism amongst Black transgender female ex-offenders was the phenomena that was being explored so it was important to observe

participants who fit the inclusive criteria for my study. Black, adult, and transgender ex-offender women who were not currently on probation or parole were the participants for my study. I was able to interview 10 participants. Interview durations were initially expected to be no longer than an hour, but this was based totally on the discretion of interviewees, so semi-structured interviews was chosen to allow participants the ability to elaborate on their thoughts without feeling restricted. Participants were also provided a consent form that they signed before interviews were conducted where they were debriefed about the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the study. A gift card for \$10 was given to every participant who interviewed with me. The research was completely anonymous, and all collected data were stored on a password-encrypted personal laptop and backed up on a hard drive.

Operation Definitions and Terms

Gender: Either of the two sexes (male and female), the way a person presents himself or herself to society (Hastings, 2014).

Gender dysphoria: When an individual feels that their body does not match their true gender (Bender-Baird, 2011).

Gender identity: How one sees themselves in terms of gender (Buist & Stone, 2014).

Recidivism: The tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend (Matusitz & Breen, 2013).

Sex: One's physical or biological attributes (Hastings, 2014).

Transgender: A population of individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. Transgender individuals may identify as either male to female or female to male or non-binary (Quinn & Swain, 2018).

Transgender woman or transgender female: An individual who was born a male but identifies as a female (Kilgore, 2015).

Assumptions

I expected the participants of this study to be honest, open, and straightforward regarding their experiences. I also assumed that participants would provide me with enough information in terms of their answers during their interviews in order to accurately and efficiently answer my interview questions. I also assumed that the information that I was provided will help determine what further research needs to be conducted.

Scope

The interviews that were obtained in this study included a Black transgender woman who were ex-offenders and not currently on probation. The study population was Black men who identify as Black women. The study population was Black transgender women who had committed crimes in their lives, but they were not currently on probation or in any legal trouble.

Delimitations

The delimitation of this study were the specific participants. The participants of this study were Black transgender women who were ex-offenders and not currently on probation. The participants of this study were Black men who identify as Black women.

The study population was Black transgender women who had committed crimes in their lives, but they were not currently on probation or in any legal trouble.

Limitations

A barrier of this study involved difficulty recruiting participants for interviews. During the study, the world was in a global pandemic where all nonessential establishments were closed, so data collection stalled for a few months. With data collection stalling for a few months, recruiting participants for interviews was not able to happen. That barrier initially created difficulty recruiting participants for interviews but was overcome because establishments opened back up and only required health precautions such as temperature checks upon entering the building.

Another potential barrier of this study involved participants being hesitant about openly and voluntarily giving detailed information during interviews. With interview questions set up via a semi-structured format, detailed information was left up to the discretion of the participant. Also, with this study being about a sensitive topic, participants may have felt they did not want to openly and voluntarily give detailed information about their lives since they were talking to a stranger. To overcome this barrier, I made participants feel comfortable with me by thoroughly explaining what I was researching and the social change I am seeking to create. I felt I overcame that barrier because after I gave my explanation of what it was I was researching, the participants chose to interview with me.

Another potential limitation involved generalization of individuals when trying to recruit participants through snowballing. Snowballing is a sampling technique that

researchers use in order to gain participants for their research. Snowballing involves participants recruiting other participants. Snowball sampling is common when participants know each other such as friends. I chose snowballing because I know that my target population is very specific so it would have been easier for participants to recruit other participants that they knew specifically fit the criteria.

Significance of the Study

The research that was gathered during this study involves factors that influence recidivism within the Black transgender women ex-offender community in the northeast United States. The results can be used as information that can be disseminated to criminal justice organizations such as police departments and government policymakers for potential incorporation of resources like food, homes, therapy, drug rehabilitation, and jobs, to transgender women offenders so they can be successful once they are reintegrated into their communities. Results of this research can also allow for essential services and needs to be recognized for a minority population, black transgender female ex-offenders in the northeast United States.

Potential Impact of Study on Social Change

This study can provide transgender specific information that is not known in order to address the physical, social, and individual needs of transgender individuals within the judicial system. If the physical, social, and individual needs of transgender individuals are met it could potentially decreasing recidivism within that group of people. The

implications for social change can include informing policymakers regarding the importance of developing policies and programs to support this population.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 1 was to introduce the research problem and focus of the study. Recidivism and insufficient resources for black transgender female ex-offenders in the northeastern United States upon release is a problem. Chapter 1 included the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, overarching research question, theoretical foundation, operational definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and potential impact of this study on social change. Chapter 2 introduces existing research regarding the transgender ex-offender population and related concepts. Chapter 3 includes information about the research methodology of this study and how a qualitative phenomenological design was used to examine the behaviors of Black transgender women ex-offenders in the northeastern United States. In Chapter 4, research findings are presented. Chapter 5 includes my discussion, conclusion, recommendations, implications for social change, and reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Recidivism amongst black female transgender ex-offenders is a problem. It is more necessary to continue to commit crimes when there are no resources or services available to ex-offenders. Without having a true understanding of transgenders, the judicial system does not allocate resources that are necessary for transgender ex-offenders to thrive once released into their communities. Because the U.S. judicial system does not have a clear understanding of transgenders, it makes it easier for transgenders to continue to not be treated equally and not protected by the laws that govern U.S. citizens. A major issue that transgender individuals face is that they have increased adversity in the U.S. judicial system because of their chosen sexual identity. Discrimination, harassment, homelessness, violence, crime, and substance abuse are some of the challenges that black female transgender ex-offenders face in their communities. Being an ex-offender is already a test for those reentering into communities, so being a minority and a transgender ex-offender makes successful reentry into communities more challenging. In this chapter, I examined literature regarding recidivism amongst transgender ex-offenders.

Literature Search Strategy

To begin my search strategy, I looked for primary topics involving transgender issues, gender identity, recidivism, gender dysphoria, and inoculation theory. This section describes the literature search and various strategies used to discover relevant literature. This is followed by current research as it relates to key concepts and definitions and the

theoretical foundation of the research, which is the inoculation theory. Chapter 2 ends with a summary and conclusion of the literature search. I conducted an exhausted review of literature regarding black transgender women ex-offender populations.

The search for relevant material involved a variety of scholarly databases and sources. The sources explored included peer-reviewed journals, books, and reports. The sources were assessed using Walden University's Library Criminal Justice Database, Lexis Nexis, ProQuest, Internet Explorer and Google Scholar.

The keywords used in databases for research were *transgender*, *transgender offenders*, *black transgender black transgender offenders*, *black transgender's in jail*, *black transgender women*, *transgender women*, *transgender crime*, *transgender violence*, *transgender recidivism*, *recidivism*, *reoffending*, *gender dysphoria*, and *transgenders in jail*.

Relationship of the Literature to the Problem

The literature search provided valuable material that related to transgenders in the criminal justice system, their experiences with the police, legal classification of gender, and the issues they face while being incarcerated. However, I did not find information on the specifics of black women transgender ex-offenders and their experiences which cause recidivism after being released into their communities, so I also had to search topics that were related but not specifically about the problem in order to have more current research. Interviewing Black women transgender ex-offenders will be important for the scope of this study because they will provide specifics of lived experiences so that

conclusions about what factors influence recidivism amongst black transgender women ex-offenders can be gathered and analyzed.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was the inoculation theory. In the inoculation theory, existing attitudes and beliefs of humans due to social interaction can change under resistance and persuasion with cogent messages (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). The inoculation theory is a practical method for the reduction and prevention of recidivism because it explains attitude transformation. Negative attitudes and perceptions about the United States judicial system and their employees (officers, judges, and lawyers) tend to shift when an individual becomes a part of the system as an inmate, so the United States penal system hopes that offenders who are released from prisons have new positive attitudes and are not persuaded into recidivating. The inoculation theory minimizes undesirable behavior amongst vulnerable populations with treatment (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). Committing crimes and choosing to repeatedly commit crimes because of mitigating factors such as homelessness, lack of education, and substance abuse is a belief that needs to be understood by the United States judicial system and society especially within groups of people who already face many challenges such as the transgender community. The inoculation theory explains the change of attitudes and beliefs which in turn aligns with this study because it is black transgender women offenders whose attitude and beliefs had to change towards the United States judicial system in order for them to be successful in their communities upon release.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Ideas

Transgender Issues

There is no actual universal definition of the term transgender, but for the purpose of this study, transgenders are a population of individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. A transgender woman is one who was born anatomically male but identifies as female. Transgender individuals often feel they are trapped inside of a body that does not accurately reflect the gender they identify as. Because sex refers to biological attributes, transgenders do not presume to be the sex they were born with since their biological attributes are not as what they identify as. According to Lee and Kwan (2014), the term transgender is an adjective and noun that is used to describe individuals whose biological sex is different from their recognized gender identity.

According to Hastings (2014), the term transgender is sometimes commonly used as an umbrella term for social categories such as cross dressers, transvestites, and transsexuals. Transgenders are often grouped with gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, but according to Liu and Wilkinson (n.d.) in their opinion, transgenders are the least understood population in the LGBT community. Transgenders are multidimensional and can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual, as well as any economic class or race. There is no actual accurate information regarding the number of transgender individuals in the U.S. due to their not being a transgender category on the census form. According to Liu and Wilkinson (n.d.), there are approximately 1.4 million adults who identify as transgender. Estimates of the population of transgenders in the United States are likely to

be low because if a transgender individual has undergone gender reassignment surgery, they identify as their chosen gender. An estimated 1% of the United States population consists of transgender women and men (Hastings, 2014).

There are people in United States society that believe transgender individuals are deceiving people about their true gender. Transgender women are thought as being men that dress as women or really men which centers one's gender identity. Because of societal norms, United States society makes individuals believe that gender is based on one's bodily sexual organs.

Gender Identity

Because individuals identify based on how they feel, it has changed the way of life. Describing one's self based on how they feel or see themselves whether male or female even when they are born the opposite gender is known as gender identity. Transgender individuals have the highest rates of concealing their gender identity (Flentje, Heck, & Sorensen, 2014). Entities such as the government have not completely recognized gender identity which creates barriers for people that identify as transgender. According to Sellars (2018), it is the poor attitude of the government towards gender identity that creates isolation for transgenders and makes it challenging for transgender individuals to receive assistance. Different states have created policies to allow transgenders to go by their chosen name which in a way allows for some acceptance of identity, but Idaho, Ohio, and Tennessee are the only three states that prohibit transgenders from amending legal documents to reflect their gender identity. In 2016, the State Equality Index graded state policy provisions to determine if protected classes were

covered by referencing gender identity or sexual orientation. States that protect transgenders, by acknowledging the distinctions between gender identities, also ensure that discrimination is prohibited based on sexual orientation. State policies are only one factor that contributes to the lived experiences that transgender's have. According to Buist and Stone (2014), the assigning of gender identity by individuals and social institutions to the transgender community is very often understood to be the source of social stigmatization.

Social Stigmatization

People are used to commonly classifying a person according to the gender they were assigned at birth. Assigned birth gender is considered socially normal. Being transgender, challenges what people deem as being socially normal because a transgender individual is identifying as the opposite gender than what they were born as. It is assumed that if the genitalia are a penis then the individual is a man, which challenges the thought of being a transgender woman because they have a penis, but they identify as being a woman. The narratives of transgenders identity are based on stereotypes. Society assumes that there are only two sexes, male and female, but as a biological or physical trait. It is because of society's assumptions and definitions with stigmatizations, it leads to the idea of gender dysphoria which in turn can contribute to transgender's recidivating.

Gender Dysphoria

There was a notion that people that have gender dysphoria had a mental disorder. Gender dysphoria is defined as a condition where an individual feels discomfort because their body does not match their gender. With their being an increased interest in

requesting gender reassignment, gender dysphoria becomes a major issue for transgender individuals. Gender dysphoria creates ethical dilemmas for endocrinologist, mental health professional and sexual specialist (Levine, 2018). Not only does the term gender dysphoria presume that a transgender individual is not normal, it also implies that transgender individuals suffer from a mental disorder. Many transgenders suffer from gender dysphoria before coming out to their loved ones but when they come to terms with their gender dysphoria, it can cause other mental anguish due to lack of understanding from their loved ones, which creates lived experiences for that transgender individual.

In 2016, the United States became entangled in a debate over public bathroom use being organized by biological sex or by individual's gender identity (Levine, 2018). There were different attitudes about changing the pattern of public bathroom use because some believe that with supporting the change further morally deteriorates society because then the definition of a male and female must be decided. Society has placed definitions on what they think are normal and abnormal in order to create law and order, but those definitions contradict how a transgender identify themselves in society, which in turn creates factors that easily contributes to recidivism.

Recidivism

Recidivism can be defined as the tendency to reoffend. In terms of criminal behavior, recidivism is a relapse after being convicted on a previous offense. Transgender people often recidivate because of the many challenges they face being in the community. Transgender ex-offenders more often recidivate because of the added challenges and

pressures of having a history of incarceration and trying to reacclimatize and survive in their communities. According to Matusitz and Breen (2013), in 2004 the National Center on Health Statistics measured recidivism amongst both genders, and it resulted in 64.6% of males and 50.5% of females who recidivate after being arrested with the highest count percentage of offenders that recidivate being African Americans. The amount of time spent incarcerated has minimal effects on recidivism rates (Matusitz & Breen, 2013).

Recidivism not only hurts the actual offender because they are sent back to prison and given lengthier sentences, but it hurts society. Recidivism impacts society because it costs taxpayers causing resource allocation from the government to be overburdened. When criminals recidivate, the government must provide they have to provide more money to the judicial system for many aspects like prosecutors and public defenders as supposed to providing money for schools, roads, hospitals and other entities. Being released from jail is a major transition for inmates but often it makes them feel the threat of psychological, relational, and economical challenges while trying to avoid recidivating.

Incarceration and recidivism rates differ amongst different ethnicities. According to Brewer et al. (2014), elevated incarcerated and recidivism rates amongst black men and women have contributed to many factors such as high unemployment, reduced educational and economic advancement opportunities, limited housing, disenfranchisement, poor health, inadequate access to health services, disruption of relationships and family lives, and altered norms related to sexual behavior, concurrency,

violence, and drug use. In 2011, the incarcerated transgender population comprised of 16% as compared to 5% of the United States population (King, 2019).

Many methods that are used to decrease recidivism have declined such as pre-release treatments, educational programs, religious instruction, drug intervention, and vocational programs (Matusitz & Breen, 2013). In order to decrease recidivism, a released offender must have resources in order to allow them to be successfully self-sufficient. According to Matusitz and Breen (2013), if the judicial system neglects prison programs and giving resources to offenders, then recidivism will continue to increase. If recidivism rises amongst transgenders, then that means that crime is continuing to be committed indicating that there are factors and lived experiences that contributes to it.

Crime

Transgender individuals face multiple challenges in the criminal justice system making them very vulnerable and susceptible to committing crime. Many transgenders are forced to do illegal work in order to survive in a community that does not protect them or grant them equal rights. Common crimes that transgender women commit are sex crimes such as prostitution. According to Buist and Stone (2014), Black transgender women had the highest rate of 44% being sex workers.

Not only are the numbers elevated for transgender's who commit crimes, but they are also elevated for crimes committed against them. Transgenders are a vulnerable group of individuals, where society deems them as not being socially normal, so they find themselves being victims to crimes very often. Whether committing a crime or have a crime committed against them, transgenders are never strangers to the criminal justice

system. Incarceration is another challenge that transgenders are faced with that contributes to recidivism.

Incarceration

According to Brewer et al. (2014), there are an estimated 4.8 million adults that are on parole with over 580,000 black men and women in state or federal prisons as of 2011. Individuals who identify as being transgender were more likely to repeat a history of incarceration. A repeated history of incarceration indicates crimes continuing and repeatedly being committed.

While incarcerated, transgenders face many issues. One dilemma that same sex prison have is difference. Determining how to treat a transgender individual for the purposes of safety and security poses a challenge for prisons, but despite transgenders choices, they should be treated like all other prisoners. Because of transgenders uniqueness, it requires prison systems to reconsider the laws and social policies on same/difference with sex segregation and safety. According to Drakeford (2018), transgenders that are incarcerated are more likely to experience circumstances that are detrimental to their well-being. Because all prison facilities situate individuals according to the social definition of gender, it creates a problem for transgender women that are housed in men prison facilities creating a dilemma of difference.

Many correctional facilities face policy issues regarding the provision of transgender medical care and the appropriate housing of transgender inmates because many states have not actually enacted policies to handle those provisions. Transgender inmates are greatly impacted by their housing while incarcerated because it means that

the government has the ability to govern transgender's assignments based on external genitalia since that is the normal protocol, with that many preoperative transgender's are incarcerated and housed according to their assigned birth sex rather than their identified sex. If transgender inmates are not housed according to their identified sex, it heightens the chances of them facing physical and sexual assaults while incarcerated.

Protective custody is one method that is often used to eliminate the victimization of transgenders while they are incarcerated. Protected custody can be considered by some to segregate and alienate transgenders. Incarceration overall is a stressful experience for inmates, but it is especially harmful for transgenders due to the many shortcomings of current correctional policies.

Understanding which common factors contribute to transgender ex-offender's recidivating would be useful for many organizations. Many transgenders are not given the opportunity to explain their experiences, especially when they need of support. According to Quinn and Swain (2018), "external pressures such as social stigmatization, rejection, discrimination, harassment, violence, and barriers to accessing health services contribute to elevated rates of unemployment, homelessness, high-risk sexual behavior, substance abuse, and suicide among transgender individuals" (p. 2). Recognizing and understanding that there are many factors that contributes to recidivism amongst transgender ex-offenders is vital, and discrimination is one of them.

Discrimination

Many transgenders feel majority of their issues they face revolve around discrimination. There are many forms of discrimination. People in society do not

understand transgenders life choice so instead they discriminate to alleviate themselves from potential problems. Transgender individuals want to be able to express themselves and live life free of discrimination (Levine, 2018). According to Liu and Wilkinson (n.d.) with the limitations on data, there is not much information about discrimination or the resources that are provided to transgender individuals to fight discrimination being committed against them.

According to Buist and Stone (2014), crimes that are committed against transgender's often serve as the effects of discrimination. With there being many forms of discrimination, transgenders face and experience increased levels of it daily. Employment, housing, and gender are only a few of the different forms of discrimination that transgenders face. Not only is there discrimination against transgender individuals in through employment and housing, discrimination happens in the United States court system and correctional institutions. According to King (2019), discrimination in court is accompanied by problematic laws which has predictable outcomes where transgender individuals are often harassed and abused.

There are federal provisions that prohibit discrimination based on gender. States have created policies that make discrimination illegal in different areas. Housing discrimination against transgender is illegal in only 20 states.

Discrimination can be experienced every day for many transgender individuals. According to Thoroughgood, Sawyer, and Webster (2017), 97% of the transgender respondents in their study, reported some form of discrimination at work where they were forced to act traditionally gendered, denied access to appropriate bathrooms, harassed, or

was given adverse job outcomes. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2020) reported that the National Transgender Discrimination Survey showed 26% of transgender people lost a job in their lives due to bias and 50% were harassed on the job (2020). Transgender individuals experience increased prejudice in the form of discrimination, abuse, and harassment which all collectively contributes to recidivism.

Harassment

Transgenders are harassed at alarming rates. President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, which expanded federal hate crimes legislation therefore including sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity; however, transgender rights organizations like The National Center for Transgender Equality, do not believe that this legislation addresses harassment (Buist and Stone, 2014). It is important to protect transgenders from harassment because it will ensure that they stay positively active in their communities. With research indicating that that transgender's experience higher and more elevated rates of prejudice, there are additional factors that creates lived experiences amongst transgenders. Harassment is only one of the many factors that contributes to transgender ex-offender's recidivating, violence is another one.

Violence

There have been many forms of violence such as homicides and assaults against transgenders within the last five years and they continue to rise at alarming rates. Many people believe that transgenders are easy targets, so they are often targets of violence. There are different reasons why transgender individuals encounter violence. Violence is

thought to be encountered by transgender individuals because they are not “normal” (King, 2019). It is hard to assess the statistics on violence against transgender’s due to there never being an effort to collect statics based on gender identity bias, so those crimes go significantly underreported. There are a few private organizations that have begun to collect statistics on violence against transgenders. In 2011 the International Transgender Day of Remembrance Project reported that over 330 transgender murders occurred in the United States since 1970 (Hastings, 2014). The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) found that 431 transgender persons were victims of violence in 2010 which indicates that each month between 30 and 36 transgenders are victims of violence in the United States and that means every day one transgender is subjected to violence.

According to Kenagy and Bostwick (2005), different forms of violence is prevalent amongst transgender individuals such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and verbal abuse. Many transgenders are reluctant to disclose their biological gender for fear of being victims to violence. Perpetrators often use power and control with transphobia as leverage for committing violence towards a transgender by attacking the transgender’s gender and expression. When violence committed against a transgender is hate bias, the perpetrator’s goal is to terrorize the transgender and the community they belong to. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program also found that transgender’s people of color are most likely to be victims of violence (Hastings, 2014). It was found that much of the violence that is committed against transgender individuals is perpetrated by young males.

According to Buist and Stone (2014), the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program does a yearly study which found that transgenders women of color are most vulnerable to violence. In 2012, violence that was reported against transgender women comprised of 50%. Violence is not uncommon for the transgender women of color community due to oppressed identities intersectionality. According to the Human Rights Campaign (2020), fatal violence disproportionately affects transgender women of color particularly black transgender women. Because of the violence that the transgender community faces, they are expected to have a shorter life span (Buist and Stone, 2014). Another issue that transgenders have being victims of violence is there not being a complete understanding in contextualizing their reactions. Being that transgenders are often grouped with gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, people assume that violence against them is solely based on sexual orientation.

Intimate partner violence is another major form of violence that transgender individuals face. According to Peitzmeier et al. (2019), intimate partner violence is higher amongst transgender's and are 2.2 times more likely to experience physical intimate partner violence and 2.9 times more likely to experience sexual intimate partner violence than a cisgender individual. Intimate partner violence is often experienced by transgender individuals because they do not have many people in their lives that supports their life's choices creating them to be lonely and often rejected by people that they love. Rejection is another contributing factor that transgender's experience that can influence recidivism.

Rejection

Feeling rejected, misunderstood, and not accepted is one issue that transgender's face in daily life. Because many transgender's face rejection, it is very common for them to choose to hide their identity. Rejection contributes to an individual having mental health adversities since they feel they are not being accepted for the decision they have made. According to Pariseau et al. (2019), with many transgenders having a higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes, acceptance is important in transgenders psychosocial adjustment independent from those that identify as the transgender individuals do. Transgenders face rejection most from their family as well as society. Because an alarming rate of transgenders hide their identity, it creates another factor of difficulties to accessing health services which can contribute to recidivism as well.

Barriers to Accessing Health Services

Many transgender individuals face barriers to healthcare. Some issues transgender individuals face with health are discrimination and insensitive people. Another barrier transgender individual's face is physicians do not know how to properly provide medical services to them because most medical literature focuses on individuals that seek medical services for wanting to live as the opposite gender.

According to Kenagy and Bostwick (2005), transgenders have barriers with health care due to discrimination because of gender identity. It was also found that mental health care is more accessible than medical care. Being able to undergo a physical can cause emotional difficulty and be a deterrent because the transgender woman has to be treated as a man. Competent care for transgender individuals is a need. According to Douglass

et al. (2018) many transgenders report negative experiences with medical providers related to their identity and barriers to obtaining transition specific services because of exclusion clauses. Also, many of the doctors that specialize in transition services are out of network doctors and have long waits for people that need and want service.

According to Buist and Stone (2014), because many transgender people cannot afford gender affirming medical treatment, they are not legally assigned the gender they present. When transgenders do not receive gender affirming medical treatment, it creates emotional and psychological issues when the individual must go to a physician. When medical services is concerned, transgenders fall into five categories which are patients who want to live as the opposite sex with medical assistance, those who want to live outside of cultural stereotypes for gender but don't want to biologically change themselves, transgenders who want medical care for health concerns other than those concerning gender, transgenders with sexually transmitted diseases, and cisgender individuals that want psychiatric help for mental issues with gender (Levine, 2018).

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) is an organization that has members that are familiar with the needs of transgenders, so they provide guidelines for clinicians and act as advocates for transgender people (Levine, 2018). The WPATH has a Standards of Care publication that asserts different policy statements in order to eliminate discrimination while dealing with transgender people's health needs and care. The WPATH organization is credited with having professionals that specialize in handling people that struggle with gender. According to Levine (2018), WPATH emphasizes that it is unethical to not accept an individual's gender identity and

it should be accepted not interrogated. Overall, adequate and appropriate medical care is vital to the well-being of transgender individuals. Medical care is given when an individual is employed with a company. Medical care would be easily accessible if unemployment wasn't another factor that contributes to transgenders recidivating.

Unemployment

Unemployment and employment discrimination are other issues that transgenders must deal with. Currently there is no federal legislation that protects transgender employees. Because there is no federal legislation, transgenders must rely on state and local laws for workplace policies in order to protect them against discrimination based on gender identity. Because of discrimination, employment opportunities tend to be a challenge for transgender individuals. According to Thoroughgood, Sawyer, and Webster (2017), with gender being what people classify themselves as, transgenders face challenges at work because of their deviation from what society deems as being the defined genders so issues such as bathroom usage, being misgendered by coworkers, and a lack of awareness arise. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2020) reported that transgender people experience unemployment at three times the rate of general United States population. If transgender women ex-offenders are not employed, it makes it difficult to self-support thus creating an opportunity to recidivate.

According to Bender-Baird (2011) workplace discrimination is very common amongst transgenders. Being transgender challenges societal notions and norms because assigned at birth is the gender that is socially recognized. Many workplaces do not have proper policies and procedures to handle special circumstances with transgenders so it

creates difficulties and discrimination in the workplace. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality (2020), 30% of transgender people report being fired, denied a promotion, or experiencing mistreatment in the workplace due to their gender identity.

According to Douglass et al. (2018), transgenders face double the national rate of unemployment. With having to deal with discrimination and harassment, it creates barriers for transgenders to get and keep employment. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality (2020) rates for transgender people of color is up to four times the national unemployment rate. If a transgender is not employed, it creates difficulties to have and maintain housing, so homeless becomes an issue, which is another factor that contributes to recidivism.

Homelessness

Because of discrimination, many transgenders have trouble finding and keeping housing especially if they use social services. According to Douglass et al. (2018), homelessness is a major health problem in the United States that disproportionately affects the transgender community and that one in five transgender individuals experience homelessness at some point. Because a disproportionate number of transgenders are homeless, the government does not remove barriers to prevent homelessness since there is not a clear reorganization of gender identity. The National Center for Transgender Equality (2020) reports that 30% of transgender people have been homeless at some point in their lives. The welfare system, which is very hard to be placed into, is one of the last hopes for transgender's being able to seek assistance with stability

or temporary housing, so by the government providing the services to aid homelessness, it is much more challenging for transgenders.

Many transgenders seek housing in shelters but are often turned away due to the shelter policies requiring the individual to stay in the shelter that matches that individual's birth gender. An issue with transgender inclusive homeless shelters according to Sellars (2018) is that the shelters either use the approach of having guidelines that outlines when and where transgender people can stay or the jurisdictions that create transgender only facilities to avoid logistical problems.

Many transgenders attribute homeless to housing discrimination. When transgenders are homeless, they are more likely to experience discrimination and harassment. When transgenders are homeless, they are more willing to participate in behaviors to get them money, so they are able to live in communities such as engaging in high risk sexual behavior. Engaging in high risk sexual behavior is another factor that transgenders deal with that contributes to recidivism.

High-Risk Sexual Behavior

Many transgenders engage in high risk sexual behavior. High-risk sexual behavior often includes sexual acts where protection is not used. Having sexually transmitted diseases and choosing to have sexual intercourse is forms of high-risk sexual behaviors. Contracting sexually transmitted diseases is a potential risk for having high-risk sexual behavior.

Transgenders who are homeless, have a higher risk of engaging in sexually risky acts, sex work activities, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Transgenders

often engage in sexually risky acts in exchange for food and shelter. Transgender women are significantly more likely to have the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. Engaging in high-risk sexual behavior and substance abuse are two factors relating to lived experiences that transgenders have that contribute to recidivism.

Substance Abuse

Using drugs as a coping mechanism for the challenges that transgender's having to face is another problem that transgender's deal with. Substances that are used and abused are drugs and alcohol, both causes harm to the body. Smoking cigarettes is considered another drug that is abused amongst transgenders. According to Flentje et al. (2014), transgender women in Washington DC identified higher rates of substance abuse disorders than amongst the transgender community. Transgender women also have greater needle use than the rest of the transgender community. There is a higher rate of non-medical use of prescription drugs amongst transgenders who are discriminated against. When a transgender individual abuse a substance to cope with their problems, they are also more likely to commit suicide to deal with their problems, which is another factor that contributes to recidivism.

Suicide

Suicide is another issue that plagues transgender individuals for many different reasons. With not being accepted and having to face the many daily challenges they have to face; suicide becomes a solution for many transgender individuals. Kenagy and Bostwick (2005) said 52% of transgenders they interviewed have attempted suicide because of gender issues. According to Douglass et al. (2018), transgenders attempt

suicide at a rate of 40% compared to the general population of 4.6% of the U.S. population. According to Drakeford (2018), gender-based victimization increased the odds of attempting suicide amongst transgender individuals. Suicide, substance abuse, discrimination and harassment are not the only factors that creates lived experiences that contributes to transgender's recidivating, legal decisions also play a major role in how transgenders are able to conduct business and interact within different entities.

Legal Decisions

Transgender individuals are currently still facing challenges with having equal rights and protection under the law. Laws do not change the vulnerability that transgenders face. With regards to transgender cases, personal beliefs and cultural norms often play a part in legal decisions, for example the United States penal system classifies inmates according to their birth assigned gender making it problematic for transgender individuals. Law places emphasis on biological sex characteristics therefore the United States judicial system considers transgender people as being outside of the category for courts recognition of defined humans.

Law were enacted to make gender and sexually variant acts transgressive crimes (King, 2019). According to Buist and Stone (2014), in the 1850s and through the 20th century, it was illegal to participate in gender transgressive behaviors meaning dressing in the opposite sex clothing was illegal and was done so in order to target transgender individuals. In the 1850s, the concept of being transgender was very taboo and still unfamiliar to the government. Even with time and the formation of many advocacy groups, crimes that target transgenders have yet to be eradicated.

Laws based on changing gender markers on legal documents vary from state to state. Many states will allow gender marker changing if the transgender has undergone sex reassignment surgery. Many states also have laws that allow the changing of names if the transgender has undergone sex reassignment surgery. In 2014, New York adopted a law that allowed transgender individuals to change their gender marker on their birth certificates without first undergoing sex reassignment surgery.

Hate crime legislation have been enacted in order to address crimes against people based on their real or perceived sexuality and their gender identity or expression (Buist and Stone, 2014). Under President Obama's administration, the Mathew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2009 was enacted which added to federally protected identities. California law includes gender and sexuality as protected statuses, they also have a variety of hate crime-based enhancement sentences.

Bias legislation had to be enacted for people to be found guilty when they commit murder against transgenders and not be able to use crime of passion as their defense. The Gwen Araujo Justice Victims Act provides that the jury shall be instructed by the courts, upon the request of the party, to not show any kind of bias, prejudice, sympathy, or public opinion to influence their decision. The Anti-Bias 2501 bill bars defendants from contending that they were motivated into a crime of passion based on the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Currently, under the Trump administration, many of the Obama-era reforms were removed regarding transgender inclusive policies on the federal level. With the transgender inclusive policies changing at a federal level and will continue to change, that

would mean that state and local governments must have policies in order to protect transgenders' rights. Of all the states, the District of Columbia provides perhaps the most progressive transgender protective polices to date.

Summary and Conclusions

Research proved that the United States judicial system is grossly unprepared to justly and equally interact with transgender individuals. Transgender individuals face many barriers and have a wide range of needed services. Having a concrete definition of biological sex creates many issues for transgender's and how society chooses to acknowledge and interact with them. By removing inequalities that cause transgenders to face challenges, this would be the most effective way for them to receive assistance so they can be good citizens. This chapter covered the many factors that contribute to transgender ex-offenders recidivating.

There is a gap in research regarding what behaviors contribute to recidivism amongst Black transgender women ex-offenders. The common issue of discrimination due to gender identity is a major reason why transgenders face the challenges they do. There was not any literature regarding behaviors that contribute to recidivism amongst black transgender women ex-offenders but there was literature regarding incarcerated transgenders, transgender definitions, the issues that transgenders face such as increased violence committed towards them, transgender mental states, and how society deals and has dealt with transgenders. This research will serve as a new body of literature and give readers more concepts to evaluate when thinking about transgender ex-offenders.

This research will also provide policymakers and other stakeholders in the U.S. criminal justice system recommendations and considerations for how to equally and properly include gender identity and expression then address the physical, individual, and social needs in order to decrease recidivism amongst transgender ex-offenders. It is important to recognize and understand that there are many factors that contribute to recidivism amongst transgender ex-offenders in order to create appropriate and equal policies to govern everybody.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand contributing factors to recidivism amongst Black transgender female ex-offenders. This study is unique because it addressed of factors that influence recidivism within the Black transgender community. To address this gap in research, this study used semi-structured interviews with Black transgender women ex-offenders in the Northeastern United States. The results will be used as information that can be disseminated to criminal justice organizations such as police departments and correctional institutions and policymakers for potential incorporation of resources to transgender women offenders so they can be successful once they are reintegrated into their communities. The research question is: What are factors of Black transgender ex-offender women that contribute to recidivism? The study population consisted of 10 study participants who are Black and transgender women and have been convicted of a crime but are not currently on parole or probation. Chapter 3 will include the research rationale, my role as the researcher, methodology, instrumentation, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Collected data used for this study involved face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview questions. Interview questions allowed me to address the main points of the interview while also maintaining flexibility for potential follow-up questions.

Research Question

RQ: What factors of black transgender ex-offender women contribute to recidivism?

Rationale for Using Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach was the most appropriate research design approach because it allowed me to focus on commonalities amongst black female transgender ex-offenders, involved setting aside bias and assumptions, helped me achieve my goal of arriving at a description of lived experiences and provided me the ability to gather information to determine a universal meaning about a universal phenomenon pertaining to human experiences, feelings, and responses. According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative phenomenological approach is used to capture the essence of human experiences based upon a phenomenon. The phenomenological approach aligned with me being able to better understand my target participants with engagement and gather principles, concepts, ideas, and beliefs while putting my own beliefs to the side. Also with considering the sample size that was used for this study, the kind of data I was collecting, and the method of data collection, I felt it was most appropriate to utilize a phenomenological approach for this qualitative research.

Rationale for Eliminating Other Qualitative Designs

The reason why other qualitative designs were eliminated was because of my overall goal to gather information about a specific subject based on actual lived experiences without there being any room for bias or fallacy. I was not trying to provide a

theory behind events so I felt it was not appropriate to use the grounded theory. I was not focusing on context or culture so I did not think it was appropriate to use ethnography. My sample size was 10 people so I did not think it was appropriate to use narrative. I also was not trying use multiple types of data sources, only interviews so I did not think it was appropriate to use case study. When deciding which qualitative design is most appropriate, the kind of information and the way that it will be analyzed should always be considered. Based on the kind of data I was collecting, the method of data collection, and the sample size, the phenomenological approach was best for this qualitative study.

Role of the Researcher

With phenomenological research, personal bias is eliminated for clarity, so my first role was to eliminate any personal bias and preconceptions. My role in this research was that of an observer-listener. My role as a researcher involved conducting interviews, recording interview responses audibly, and ensuring participants are not harmed. I also took recorded responses and transcribed them for analysis purposes. Also as a researcher it was my role to ensure that the recorded responses shared with me was kept confidentially and stored securely.

Being that I am a Black woman, I am aware of the many perceived and real obstacles that exist within Black communities. Being that I am a Black woman I have experienced many obstacles that exist within Black communities. Being that I am Black woman and a researcher it is my role was to ensure that I conduct the interviews and not have any bias or preconceptions.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

I contacted different transgender organizations in the northeastern United States such as Casa Ruby, Harm Reduction Experts Improving Lives Since 1993 (HIPS), and CheckIt to get permission to speak with transgenders who frequent those organizations based on my chosen criteria. The people in charge of the various organizations knew the research I was conducting because I provided them with a letter of cooperation. The people in charge of the various organizations knew which individuals fit my criteria for participant selection.

Participants were informed of the study, the kind of research that was being conducted, and any risks that could potentially have been associated with participating in order to determine willing participants. Each participant was required to give informed consent to participate in the study. Participants were informed that their personal information would remain confidential and names would not be directly used in research.

The 10 participants in this study were Black adult transgender women who were ex-offenders. The participants in this study were not on probation or parole. The participants in this study lived in the northeastern United States.

The sampling strategy for this qualitative study was purposive in conjunction with snowball sampling in order to gather the 10 intended participants so a variety of information could be gathered. The reason for using purposive sampling is because it is selective and establishes a criterion. With the snowball method, samples are expanded because one participant recommends other participants for interviews.

Instrumentation and Materials

Since I was interested in knowing and understanding lived experiences of transgender ex-offenders, interview questions were created in order to gather responses based on lived experiences. To ensure validity and credibility, interviews were recorded and played continuously for accuracy during transcription. Also, to ensure validity and credibility, a peer debriefer was used just to reread what the researcher found during their interview.

I was able to develop my questions based on reading similar qualitative research articles, reading textbooks, and the interview guide work worksheet. I thought about what answers I was wanting to gather with the kind of research I was trying to study. I also thought about what I was trying to prove based on the study I did, so I was able to think of interview questions based on that. I developed questions based on the phenomena of interest and ensure they match with keywords and ideas. The interview guide is found in Appendix B. The questions listed are for the interview phase of the phenomenological study.

1. Where are you from?
2. Where is your family from?
3. When did you transition into your chosen identity?
4. Where were you born?
5. What are the factors in your life that have caused to want or feel the need to commit crimes?

6. What are some experiences that have happened in your life that contribute to you committing crimes?
7. What kind of crimes have you committed? And why?
8. What resources do you need in order not to recidivate?
9. What resources do you currently use so you do not recidivate?

Other than interviews, there were other data sources. Another data source that was collected were notes that were taken during interviews. All data sources used was uniform and consistent during the data collection process.

Procedure for Recruitment and Data Collection

Data collected through interviews were conducted and recorded with an electronic audio recording device. The interviews were conducted in a neutral office setting where there was no distractions. The participants were debriefed with conversation through an introduction and conclusion where they were able to ask any questions that they might have had before and after the interview. Ethical procedures that were practiced during the interviews in order to protect the participants during the recruiting, data collection and debriefing process included providing informed consents, reassuring confidentiality with conversation before the interview, not providing specific names of the participants in order to keep their identity confidential, and only providing audio to the peer debriefer for feedback but not giving any identifying information on each participant.

Data Transcription and Analysis

My sampling plan included purposive sampling technique. According to Patton (2015), “phenomenological research is the study of essences” (p. 116). The behaviors that

I noted during data collection is the essences. I want to understand a lived experience based on my phenomenon of interest. Key elements and data for the study included semi-structured interviews with a representative group of 10 Black transgender women who are ex-offenders using purposive sampling. A digital voice recorder was used during the interviews which allowed me to transfer all information that was gathered directly to a secured private personal laptop from oral to written transcripts. Data from the interviews were coded and categorized for thematic analysis and comparison using Microsoft Excel. To transcribe the audio recorded files, I used Microsoft Word and manually transcribed.

There were many considerations in order to determine which if any QDA software was best to use for this study. Those considerations were based on the needs, goals, and purpose of my research. Two factors that determined which QDA software was used to analyze data are methodology and data collection. QDA software is not hard to configure because they all have similar functions. QDA software is used to alleviate the burden of having to hand code and analyze large amounts of data. Using QDA software could also capture codes that the researcher might not capture with hand coding. For financial reasons I resorted to using manual hand coding with Microsoft office software instead of using QDA software.

Issues of Trustworthiness

With considering credibility, I used different participants that were all within the inclusive criteria and had first-hand lived experience. Credibility is needed in order to ensure that the sources that are used in research are not unreliable. The participants that were used for the research is credible because they were the actual affected targets.

Another way that the researcher showed credibility was with utilizing peer debriefing in order to gain feedback for all the steps that were taken during data collection. A strategy that I was used when I conducted my research was triangulation for data collection. Transferability refers to the degree of generalizing. With considering transferability a strategy that I used for data collection is purposive sampling when selecting the target subjects. With considering dependability, I can show how reliable my research is because the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. A strategy that was used for my study with regards to dependability is having data audits. With considering confirmability, a strategy that was used for my dissertation was looking for evidence that could contradict any observations that are made.

Ethical Procedures

Before meeting anyone for my research, I first got permission from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Approval number 03-19-20-0747476) to ensure and reassure my interview questions do not harm the participants. Standard ethical procedures were followed that had been outlined by the Institutional Review Board. Informed consent forms were provided to each participant of this study before interviews were conducted. The informed consent form had information pertaining to my research including contact information, the expectations, participant's rights, and confidentiality agreement. Because transgender individuals experience many hurtful times in their lives, I encouraged the participants to stop the interview if they felt it was necessary at any moment. No other person has access to any of the information that I gathered, and all information is completely protected with password encrypted personal laptops. The data

gathered was properly and confidentially stored for and will be stored for five years before appropriately disposing and deleting of the files.

Privacy

While many people want to open up about their lived experiences, I understand that dealing with a group of individuals who have been considered a vulnerable population would want their privacy especially when discussing personal matters. To ensure privacy I told all the participants that their information will be strictly confidential which was also explained and detailed in the informed consent document which was provided before the interviews. Also, actual names were not used in during this study, which ensures privacy was maintained.

Protection

During this study, actual names were not used to ensure that the participants' identities were protected. I also told the participants that their actual names would be kept confidential for this entire study. I ensured the participants were protected by interviewing them individually.

Informed Consent Forms

Informed consent forms were given to every participant of this study. The informed consent form that was provided came from Walden University. The informed consent form was approved by the IRB.

Possible Risk of the Study

The possible risk of this study was the participants having to relive an experience when they were answering my questions during the interview. Other than the participants

reliving experiences that could be hurtful from their past, there were no other possible risks of this study as the purpose of this study was to allow readers to understand a group of people that have gone understudied for far too long.

Vulnerable Populations

The vulnerability of the population that was studied was determined by the IRB of Walden University, which was approved. As the researcher and understanding that the population that was being studied wants equality and not to be discriminated against or treated like they are different, calling them a vulnerable population would go against what they are fighting for. The population that was studied is ex-offenders meaning they no longer incarcerated but have been arrested before. The population is also African Americans who identify as female. Delving into the past experiences of this population would potentially create emotions, which is the only thought that I had to keep in mind when conducting interviews.

Conflicts of Interest

I did not foresee any actual conflict of interest during this study as the individuals were not known to me. I have never had any encounters with the participants. I have never seen any of the participants that I interviewed before.

Summary and Conclusions

Transgender ex-offenders face many challenges while being released into communities. Providing resources is a critical step for decreasing recidivism amongst transgender ex-offenders. Transgenders are understudied due to lack of understanding from the United States federal government and people in general because of

predetermined definitions regarding what gender is. By conducting this study, policymakers and stakeholders involved in the U.S. criminal justice system will have the opportunity to understand transgender needs and articulate the experiences of black female transgender ex-offenders. These shared experiences allowed me, as the researcher to create ideas and concepts that Black female transgender ex-offenders have which could put policies in perspective and could create change. In this chapter, the research design and reasons for conducting this study were explained. My role while conducting this study was also addressed in this chapter. In Chapter 4, the findings of this research are discussed in further detail. I will begin with an introduction of how interviews were conducted in real time, followed by a thematic analysis of the collected data, results, and a summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of Black transgender women ex-offenders. Primary data were collected from interviews with 10 participants. This research is needed for societal awareness to be increased amongst criminal justice organizations that are not knowledgeable about transgender issues and the resources they need to be equals in society. I conducted this study with hopes that criminal justice organizations such as police departments, court systems, and correctional facilities would become educated about transgender individuals and change policies making them more inclusive and specific so that transgenders can be treated fairly and equally and provide resources such as food, housing, therapy, jobs, and drug rehabilitation so that transgenders can be successful upon reentry into communities.

The following research question was addressed in this qualitative study: What factors of black transgender ex-offender women contribute to recidivism?

In this chapter, results of data collection are presented. I discuss in full detail the setting in which this study took place and conditions of the setting while collecting the data. Sampling and demographics that were relevant to this study were also described. I also discuss evidence of trustworthiness and any issues related to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, the results of this study were examined before a chapter summary.

Setting

I conducted this study in a quiet private setting. The location for this research was in the northeastern United States. Each face-to-face interview was conducted in a private office within a public setting so interviewees were able to freely and confidently communicate. I had no associates while collecting data, interviewing, transcribing, or analyzing. During the research period, no deviations or changes occurred in terms of conditions related to the study that would have influenced participants or their experiences at the time of the study.

Demographics

For qualitative phenomenological research, sampling involves obtaining a suitable number of participants to gather data from that is satisfactory enough to answer the research question. A purposive sample of 10 black adult transgenders living in the northeastern United States was used in this study. All participants self-identified as transgender women who were born men but identify as women. At the time of this study, all participants were living as their identified gender role. Also at the time of this study, all participants had committed crimes before in their lives but were not currently on probation or parole. All participants met inclusion criteria of being black transgender women ex-offenders not on probation or parole and demographic qualifications of being located in the northeastern United States to participate in this study.

For the purposes of keeping every interviewees identity anonymous and information confidential according to the signed and agreed upon informed consent,

every interviewee was given an alphabetical letter in the order that the interview was conducted, which is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Place of birth	Family From	Age of knowing	Transition Age
A	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	12 years old	20 years old
B	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	5 years old	15 years old
C	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	9 years old	30 years old
D	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	Since ability of knowing as a child	33 years old
E	South Africa	South Africa	From first moment of consciousness	Adult
F	Germany	Germany	8 years old	14 years old

(table continues)

G	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	6 years old	18 years old
H	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	12 years old	17 years old
I	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	5 years old	20 years old
J	Northeastern United States	Northeastern United States	11 years old	25 years old

Results from the demographic data revealed that eight interviewees were born and raised in the northeastern United States, one interviewee was born and raised in South Africa but moved to the northeastern United States as an adult, and one interviewee was born in Frankfurt, Germany but moved to the northeastern United States. Demographic data also revealed that eight of the participants' families were from the northeastern United States. Results from the demographic data also revealed that all participants knew they wanted to transition into their chosen identity as children, but all transitioned into their chosen identity as adults except three of the participants, who transitioned as teenagers.

Data Collection

Approval from Walden University's IRB for data collection was granted on March 19, 2020 (Approval number 03-19-20-0747476). Data were collected through face-to-face in-depth individual semi-structured interviews with 10 Black transgender

women who were ex-offenders. The purpose of using a semi-structured interview format was so that my research question could get answered as best as possible but also allowed the participants to elaborate as much as they felt comfortable with. I developed an interview guide (see Appendix B) designed to answer the research question. I asked five demographic questions and six representation questions during the interview.

Location and Procedures

I interviewed each participant separately and at a location that was familiar and comfortable for them. Initial contact was made with transgender individuals who fit the criteria for inclusion of my study; those individuals helped refer me to other qualifying participants. This continued until I was able to interview 10 qualifying participants.

Before any interviews commenced, invitation and consent forms were provided and reviewed to ensure each participant understood my study and the questions I was going to be asking. I clarified any questions each participant might have had and eased any concerns pertaining to participation in the study if there were any. Each participant was reminded that participation was strictly voluntary and they could stop the interview at any time. A hotline was also provided in the consent form for therapeutic purposes if any participants felt uneasy feelings due to reliving or discussing their past. Every participant was also ensured that their names would not be provided in the study, so any information that was discussed would be confidential and anonymous, and it was their lawful right to be protected. My contact information was also given in case participant had questions after interviews were concluded.

Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to an hour, leaving room for them to elaborate on each answer as they saw fit. All interviews took place during the month of June 2020. All interviews were done in person, individually, and in the afternoon. I recorded the interviews using audio recording equipment with the permission of each participant. A \$10 gift card was given to each of the participants for voluntarily participating in the interview. I used Microsoft Word to manually transcribe all the audio recorded interviews. The transcription took a week to complete. The audio-recorded interviews were stored on a secure and password encrypted personal laptop until it was transcribed, then deleted, per my IRB-approved data collection plan. The transcripts were also secured on a password encrypted personal laptop and were stored on an encrypted, separate, backup hard drive. Personal identification information from each participant was only on the consent forms but was blackened out to keep the research completely anonymous, per my IRB approved data collection plan. The transcripts will be deleted 5 years after completion of this study.

Notes were taken which were only recorded simple feelings and impressions of each interviewee and summarized responses to my interview questions. An interview guide (see Appendix B) was used to ensure I asked all the questions I intended on asking and so there could be consistency and uniformity amongst every interview. I ensured that identical measures were taken with every interview.

Every participant only interviewed one single time, and the interviews lasted about 30 minutes to an hour based on how much the participant wanted to elaborate on

each answer. All interviews were conducted in June 2020. All data were collected uniformly through the data collection process of this study.

The only unusual circumstance that occurred during the data collection process was there being a global pandemic causing organizations to close so interviews had to be conducted after the organizations opened back up. Temperatures had to be taken to enter the building. I had obtained IRB approval for collecting data in March 2020 and did not collect data until June 2020. Part of the standards for conducting any business in public settings during the global pandemic was social distancing amongst strangers. With keeping social distancing in mind, I made sure that I was wearing a mask and created space of approximately 6 feet between me and interviewees while conducting face-to-face interviews. I also sterilized the audio recording equipment with a disinfectant wipe and provided one alcohol sanitized pen for the interviewees to use for signing their consent forms while wearing gloves.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, a process for organizing and analyzing collected data is coding. Because my sample size was small, I felt it would be more cost effective to manually code the data that I collected during this study. Codes link data together to develop themes. In the thematic analysis, the process of analyzing collected data includes moving codes to broad categories and then to themes based on the underlying phenomena. Thematic analysis is compatible with phenomenological studies because it focuses on participant's subjective experiences. The coding process is broken down into a six-step process to ensure that the research is precise, consistent, and exhaustive. There

are various forms of conducting a thematic analysis but the most common forms follow the six-step process of familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). I followed the six steps for thematic analysis and incorporated open coding to break down the data into two parts to examine the similarities and differences. Themes was then determined with an inductive approach because I allowed the data to conclude my themes. Theming is the extrapolation of underlying phenomena (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

First, all participants were asked all the same questions while being audio recorded. I asked each question and repeated each question if it was necessary for the participant to understand. Participant E's responses were slightly different from the other interviews because she was from South Africa so actions that are considered crimes is different there then from the United States, so Participant E was the discrepant case of my study but the information she provided was still very relevant and vital to this study. None of the questions were altered but some of the questions were answered in one response based on the elaborate and detailed response that the participant gave. I manually hand transcribed the audio recorded interviews so that analyzing could be achieved.

Starting with step one of the thematic analysis, I read the transcripts that I manually composed of the audio recorded interviews for themes and patterns of consistency and so I could be familiar with my data. Being familiar with my data allows for better organization of the data. Being familiar with my data also allows me to be an

expert in my subject matter. Then according to step two of the thematic analysis, I reread the transcripts a second time to divide data into meaningful sections and code. At this step, it is where I definitively placed my data into codes and categories based on reoccurring keywords.

Codes were developed based on patterns that I noticed during the interviews (see Table 2). One pattern that I noticed with all interviewees was that when asked when they knew they wanted to transition into their chosen identity, they all stated that they knew since childhood or moment of consciousness. The interviewees knew they did not feel the way their parents and society categorized them according to gender. Another pattern that I noticed was that when asked when they transitioned into their chosen identity all except three participants transitioned as adults, the three transitioned as a teenager. Theft, drugs, and prostitution were common crimes that the interviewees all said they committed and were prosecuted for which was another noticed pattern. Another pattern I discovered was homelessness, unemployment, and peer pressure being common reasons why the participants stated they chose or felt they needed to commit crimes. Lastly, using their selves as a resource to change and not recidivate was a pattern that I noticed in the participant's responses. Table 2 depicts codes that were gathered and which alphabetical lettered participant the code emerged from.

Table 2

Codes and Participant Emergent Origin

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Codes										
Age of knowing				X						
Moment of consciousness					X					
Theft	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Bad influences			X			X	X			
Peer pressure				X		X	X		X	X
Support		X	X	X	X					

(table continues)

Prostitution	X	X	X	X						
Sell Drugs		X		X						
Homelessness	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hungry		X						X		
Unemployment		X			X	X		X		X
Fast Life				X			X			
Violence	X		X			X				
Myself	X	X	X			X		X		X
Religion				X		X				

Categories emerged from the codes that I gathered through the responses during the interviews that I conducted. One category that emerged was keeping up with the joneses, which was found through the codes of theft, bad influences, peer pressure, and

support. Another category that emerged from my codes was committing crimes and illicit behavior based on prostitution, selling drugs, homelessness, unemployment, hungry, fast life, and violence. Two other categories that formed from the codes that I gathered were to use myself as motivation as a resource and use myself as motivation to not commit crimes. All categories and codes were important because they explained why my participants chose to commit crimes that suggest the logic and answer of lived experiences and factors that cause recidivism pertaining to my research question. All the categories constructed themes.

I then continued with the third, fourth, and fifth steps of the thematic analysis by developing, reviewing, and defining/naming themes. Four emergent themes were identified and defined. The theme of living in one's truth was found while conducting interviews because many of the participants felt that as children they were living in lies due to living a life according to a gender that was forced upon them by their parents and not how they actually felt. The themes of acceptance and belonging as a reason for committing a crime was also found while doing the interviews. Many of the interviewees admitted to committing crimes for the purpose of trying to keep up with society so having nice clothes and material items was a priority. Another theme that was noticed in the interviews was character realization for self-sustaining. When asked what resources you currently use in order to not recidivate, many of the participants said they use themselves by considering the obstacles they overcame and knowing they have better and do not wish to go back to that place in their lives. The emergent themes are further discussed in detail in the results section.

Then concluding with the last step of the thematic analysis, I wrote up my analysis of my collected data. To ensure that my analysis was accurate, my chairperson reviewed the themes and provided me with feedback. After getting feedback from my chair, I incorporated the feedback into my research.

Participant E was the discrepant case because her responses were slightly different from the other interviews since she was from South Africa, so crimes are defined differently in South Africa as that of the United States. Participant E's crime was a criminal nuisance for using a public bathroom, so she still fits my criteria for being an ex-offender because she was arrested. Participant E was the discrepant case of my study but the information she provided was still very relevant and vital to this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The quality standards for qualitative research are confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure the four components of qualitative research, I made sure the entire study aligned with IRB approved Ethics Self Check form. I also made sure that the explanations in the IRB approved Ethics Self Check form was uniformed with the final research.

Credibility

With considering credibility, I kept the questions consistent throughout all the interviews. I used different participants that were all within the inclusive criteria and had a first-hand lived experience. Credibility is needed in order to ensure that the sources that are used in research are not unreliable. The participants that were used for the research is credible because they were the actual affected targets. Another way that I showed

credibility was by using peer debriefing in order to gain feedback for all the steps that were taken during data collection. I collected data privately, in the same setting, individually at different times. With regard to credibility, there were no deviations in terms of strategies that were explained in Chapter 3.

Dependability

Dependability is needed to ensure that the data is stable over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I can show how reliable my research is because the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. A strategy that was used for my study with regards to dependability is having data audits. For audit trail, I kept detailed records of interview information such as dates and times, observations, notes, and electronic audio-recordings. By taking observation notes and reflecting on each interview it allowed for there to not be any bias. I collected data privately, in the same setting, individually at different times. With regard to dependability, there was no deviation during this study in terms of strategies that were explained in Chapter 3.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree of generalization and attempts to make them applicable to other situations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Purposive sampling was used when determining what the target population would be for this study. In purposive sampling, the characteristics of the participants were directly related to the research question, ensuring transferability. With regard to transferability, there was no deviation during this study in terms of strategies that were explained in Chapter 3, and the entire study was uniform.

Confirmability

Confirmability proves the ability of researchers to confirm your study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). A strategy that was used during this study to ensure confirmability was looking for evidence that could contradict any observations that were made. Other researchers would be able to replicate the results of my study because it did not show any bias. Having a data audit trail also ensured there is confirmability in my study. With regards to confirmability, there were no deviations during this study in terms of strategies that were explained in Chapter 3.

Results

I asked all 10 participants the same 11 questions in order to explore their lived experiences with recidivism. The first five questions were demographic questions that covered birthplace and where they were raised, family origin location, age when the participants knew they wanted to transition, and actual age that the participant transitioned. The rest of the six questions were representative questions. Representative questions were utilized to provide responses that would answer my research question. Participants were designated in alphabetical order as A through J. The results of the interviews are presented next.

Findings

Questions 1 through 5 of the interviews were close-ended. Questions 1 and 2 asked where the participant was born and where were they from. I felt it was important to ask both questions in order to gauge demographic information. Most of the participants were born in the northeastern United States except for Participants E, and F, but

Participants F, and G grew up in northeastern United States. Most of the participant's families were from northeastern United States except for Participant E and Participant F.

When I asked Question 3, eight of the 10 participants gave actual numerical responses while Participant D and E gave a logical explanation. Participant D responded by saying, "I knew at a very young age, I would say since I've known, was able to know anything I knew that I felt different um as a young child um and I always geared more to girly things, things that interested women interested of a man". Participant E responded by saying, "it was never a decision, I always knew, from my first moment of consciousness, I knew this is who I was." The fact that both Participant D and Participant E could not provide a numerical number but knew that it at very young childhood age that they wanted to transition proves that even as children, there is an understanding of the concept of feeling or being different.

When the participants were asked the six representative questions, answers were very similar. The responses the participants gave to the six representative questions allowed for codes, categories, and themes to be made. All the categories, codes, and themes that emerged were vital because they provided an explanation as to why my participants chose to commit crimes, what common crimes they repeatedly committed, and what resources they used in order to not commit a crime in the future. The emerged codes, categories, and themes suggest the logic and answer of the lived experiences and factors that cause recidivism pertaining to my research question.

Participant E's responses were slightly different from the other interviews because she was from South Africa so actions that are considered crimes is different there then

from the United States, so Participant E was technically the discrepant of my study but the information she provided was still very relevant and vital to this study. Participant E stated that the crime she had committed and was charged with was criminal nuisance for using what society deems as the wrong public bathroom for her gender. Participant E stated she was criminalized because of being a transgender individual. Participant E also stated that her gender identity was incongruent to what South African society knew, so it was the cause of her being criminalized and therefore arrested.

Demographic questions were utilized to gauge where the participants originated from. Representative questions were utilized to provide responses that would answer my research question. All responses received from the participants during the interviews were relevant to the study.

Emergent Themes

There were four predominant themes that emerged from the analysis of the participant's responses to the interview questions (see Table 3). The themes were strengthened by their responses to each following question that was asked as the interview progressed. The themes derived from the codes and categories that were analyzed by the participant's responses. Those themes were as follows: (a) living in their truth, (b) acceptance/the desire to belong, (c) means to survival, and (d) character realization of self-sustaining. As explained in Chapter 1, the inoculation theory involves how existing attitudes and beliefs of humans from social interaction can change under resistance and persuasion with cogent messages. With the emergent themes of acceptance/the desire to belong and means to survival, participants beliefs and attitudes

were that they had to commit illegal acts in order to sustain in their communities and they continued to commit crimes with that perception but with the emergent theme of character realization of self-sustaining, the participants were able to transform and change their attitudes to resist the temptation of committing crimes. The findings of each emergent theme are further explained in the next sub-section according to their defined name.

Living in One's Truth

During the interview, when asked participants Question 5, Participant F stated she began, "living in her truth at 14" indicating that beforehand she was living a life that was a lie since it wasn't according to what she felt. According to Bukhair, Mushtaq, & Aurangzaib (2016), "from the moment a child is born (perhaps even before that) his or her gender plays a significant role in influencing how the child is viewed by the world" (p. 94). The participants all stated that they knew they want to transition into their chosen gender as children even though their parents made them grow up as the opposite gender but then was honest with themselves and lived in their truth when they became adults. The theme of living in one's truth formed from listening to the participant's responses about when they knew they wanted to transition and when they transitioned into their chosen identity.

Acceptance and the Desire to Belong

During the interview, when I asked participants Questions 6, 7, and 8, the majority of the participants responded by saying they wanted to be accepted or wanted to belong as to their reasoning. When there is not acceptance or a sense of belonging, there

is not support. Many of the participants were not accepted by their families, so they felt it necessary to be accepted by friends for support. The desire to belong or be accepted or keep up with the joneses designated illicit behavior according to the participants.

Acceptance is a major issue that transgender individuals must deal with in society because they are openly choosing to live differently than what society deems and defines gender. Even if there is a cultural shift in the transgender community, it does not necessarily mean that there is a growing acceptance (Cobb & McKenzie-Harris, 2019).

Means of Survival

Many of the participants explained that they committed crime to survival when asked Question 8. Most of the participants stated that homelessness was a factor or a lived experience that influenced recidivism, so with attempting to survive in their community, it was easier and faster to commit crimes for money. According to Begun & Kattari (2016), “homeless individuals, regardless of gender identity, often obtain food, housing, and other basic necessities through their participation in survival sex” (p. 98). When people are faced with hardship, many feel their only way to be able to survive is to commit crimes because that is a quick way to get anything they need.

Character Realization of Self-Sustaining

A common response that many of the interviewed participants stated was that they used themselves as resources when asked Question 11. Participants mentioned that they motivated themselves to not commit crimes by considering the past obstacles they had overcome and being grateful for what they currently had so using themselves as a resource to not recidivate is vital and effective. Self-sustaining involves maintaining a

certain state without the help of any outside resources or assistance. Self-sustaining is an independent effort.

Table 3

Emerging Themes, Categories, and Codes

THEME	CATEGORY	CODES
A. LIVING IN ONE'S TRUTH		-age of knowing -moment of consciousness
B. ACCEPTANCE/ THE DESIRE TO BELONG	-Keeping up with the jones's	-theft -bad influences -peer pressure -support
C. MEANS TO SURVIVAL	-Committing crimes and illicit behavior	-prostitution -sell drugs -homelessness -hungry -unemployment -fast life -violence

(table continues)

D. CHARACTER	-use myself as	-Myself
REALIZATION OF	motivation as a	-religion
SELF-SUSTAINING	resource	
	-use myself as	
	motivation to not	
	commit crimes	

Through the analyzed data, there were many factors that contribute to recidivism amongst black transgender ex-offender women. The codes, categories, and themes that emerged were evidence of the factors that contribute to recidivism. Specific factors that contributed to recidivism for this target population in this study were homelessness, unemployment, violence, being hungry, lack of support, and peer pressure. Those same factors were found and discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Homelessness

Homelessness was one factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Homelessness was a code that developed from responses given by the participants of this study. Participant E stated, “Being homeless, fighting homelessness, being 16, 15, only in the 11th grade, I slept in a laundry mat with other friends” was an experience that led to her committing a crime. Participant G responded by saying homelessness was an experience that had happened in her life that contributed to her committing crimes.

Unemployment

Unemployment was another factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Unemployment was a code that developed from responses given by the participants in this study. When asked what contributed to committing crimes, Participant D stated, “Not working”. Participant G identified unemployment as being an experience that had happened in her life that contributed to her committing crimes. Participant I stated that had she been employed she would not have chosen to commit crimes.

Violence

Violence was another factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Violence was another code that was developed from responses given by the participants of this study. Participant C said, “My violent crimes were from me defending myself because someone was trying to attack me” in response to an experience that had happened in her life that contributed to committing crimes. When talking about experiences in her life, Participant D stated, “I am a survivor of gun violence.”

Hunger

Being hungry is another factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Being hungry was another code that developed from responses given by the participants of this study. Being hungry goes in conjunction with being homeless. Participant G stated, “If I was hungry or needed food” that factor in her life contributed to her committing crimes.

Support

Lack of support is another factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Support was a code that developed from responses given by the participants of this study. Support is aid that an individual want or need. Participant B stated,

I wasn't supported at a child, when I turned 15 years old I was put out so I had to basically take care of myself, so living on your own it takes more than just a regular job especially at 15 years old the job I was capable of getting I could not really support myself, so I went into prostitution...If my parents would have supported me I probably would have went on to graduate from a good college but I had to pretty much take care of myself.

Participant C said, "I try to be a support system to younger transgenders because they don't have that option right now, being here, there are so many kids that come through here that have families but they are not treated as they have a family." Participant D explained, "Not having that push from your family, support from your family like someone sitting me down telling me this is how it should be done and in the meantime the streets were hot" is a factor that contributed to her committing crimes.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is another factor that contributed to recidivism amongst the target population in this study. Peer pressure was a code that developed from responses given by the participants of this study. Participant A stated that "Inclusiveness, wanting to be with the gang, hanging with the wrong crowd" contributed to her committing crimes.

Participant D indicated she found herself engaging in criminal activity because, “it was a thing to do, it was something like peer pressure in a sense. I was able to make my own decisions. I wasn’t pressured into it but everyone else was doing it and it appealed to me, the fast life.”

Summary

Ten black transgender women who were ex-offenders not on probation or parole in the northeastern United States were interviewed. Results were organized according to findings which were then divided into terms of emergent themes. The research question was: What factors of Black transgender ex-offender women contribute to recidivism?

Based upon the coding process that was applied to the data that were gathered from my target population, four main themes emerged: (a) living in one’s truth, (b) acceptance and the desire to belong, (c) means of survival, and (d) character realization of self-sustaining. Through the analyzed data, there were many factors that contribute to recidivism amongst Black transgender ex-offender women. Codes, categories, and themes that emerged are evidence of the factors that contribute to recidivism. Specific factors that contributed to recidivism for this target population in this study were homelessness, unemployment, violence, being hungry, lack of support, and peer pressure. Those same factors were found and discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

This chapter began with an introduction and brief overview of the purpose of this study and the research question. This chapter then thoroughly described the setting, demographics, data collection process, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results.

Chapter 5 begins with an introduction to the purpose of this study and then follows with an interpretation of findings. Emergent themes from Chapter 4 are also summarized. Chapter 5 details the limitations that were edited in Chapter 1. The recommendations that are mentioned in Chapter 5 are based on the study and the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 then ends with implications for social change, reflections, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the personal lived experiences of Black adult transgender females who are ex-offenders and have committed crimes repeatedly in their past. This current research was a phenomenological qualitative study that explored the lived experiences of transgenders in the northeastern United States. This study was conducted using a very specific sample population because while researching black transgender issues I found there to be a gap in literature about the specific population and there had been news coverage about violence towards black transgender women so it sparked my interest.

This study was necessary because it can contribute information that many criminal justice organizations are not aware of, give reference for criminal justice policymakers so they can create and integrate more inclusive and specific laws, and gave a specific minority population a voice. This study addressed factors that influence recidivism within the Black transgender community. Transgenders are one group in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning population that has yet to be completely understood and accepted. Learning about the experiences of a group of diverse minorities can aid in improving the lives of that group as well as LGBTQ communities as a whole.

This study answered the research question: What factors of Black transgender ex-offender women contribute to recidivism? Factors that contributed to recidivism for this target population in this study included homelessness, unemployment, violence, hunger, lack of support, and peer pressure.

Interpretation of Findings

Through the findings of my study, much was learned about transgender participants. Data analysis supported the four predominant themes that emerged and helped me to further understand the factors that contributed to recidivism amongst Black transgender female ex-offenders. The data that were collected and analyzed in this study further extended the literature regarding transgender issues that were found in peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. Through analyzed data, there were many factors that contribute to recidivism amongst Black transgender ex-offender women. Specific factors that contributed to recidivism for this target population in this study included homelessness, unemployment, violence, being hungry, lack of support, and peer pressure.

I learned that transgender individuals often know they are different or do not feel like the gender they were born as from early childhood, so they struggle with trying to gain acceptance from their family and peers. As participants struggled with acceptance, a reoccurring issue during the interviews was that participants felt peer pressure and no support, so getting money through the fastest and easiest means such as prostitution and selling drugs was the only answer.

Other countries such as South Africa categorize crimes differently than the United States when they involve transgender individuals. Participant E was from South Africa and stated that they used specious charges such as criminal nuisance to criminalize her. According to Bukhari et al. (2016), “although different nations are claiming to recognize

the rights of transgender people, in the name of civil rights and modernization, still discrimination against this group of people can still be seen all around” (p. 95).

I also discovered that many of the transgender participants were not able to transition until their adult years. Many participants were not able to transition until they were adults due to financial reasons. Participant D said a transgender individual never fully transitions because there is always a process that has to be done whether it involves hormone, laser hair removal, or gender reassignment or cosmetic surgery to maintain the gender change.

Themes

Four predominant themes that emerged from the analysis of participant responses to the interview questions were: living in their truth, acceptance and the desire to belong, means of survival, and character realization of self-sustaining. The inoculation theory involves how existing attitudes and beliefs of humans in terms of social interaction can change due to resistance and persuasion with cogent messages (Matusitz & Breen, 2013).

Individuals in this study had the attitude that they were functioning in a manner that was not reflective of who they identified as in terms of gender, and therefore, committing illicit behavior was deemed acceptable to them until they were able to transform their attitudes by using different counseling, rehabilitation, and positive role models. Participants’ attitudes had to change in order to live in their truth. By accepting their reality, participants were able to alter their attitudes and make positive decisions.

This study found that having the attitude of wanting to belong, not being left out, and social interactions amongst peers directly relate to criminal activity. If an individual

feels they are wanted or equal, they are more inclined to be persuaded to behave in a positive nature.

Participants in this study felt the need to commit illegal acts in order to survive in their communities, but attitudes involving being involved in criminal acts for survival had to be transformed. It is necessary for the participant's to improve established attitudes, but each individual must be made aware of vulnerabilities to commit crimes and problems with their existing attitude. Through incarceration and release then receiving therapy and different social services, the participants of this study were able to transform the attitude of committing crimes to survive.

Participant's used themselves as a driving force for positive change and committed to keeping a positive attitude by choosing to not recidivate. Many participants in this study stated that they did not use resources such as therapy to keep them from recidivating again, but they considered themselves a resource that kept them from recidivating. By thinking about what they overcame, the trauma of incarceration and living a life involving crime, many participants in this study stated they used themselves as a resource to sustain and resist the temptation of engaging in illicit acts.

Committing crimes and choosing to repeatedly commit crimes because of mitigating factors is a belief that needs to be understood especially within a group of people that already faces many challenges, the transgender community. Participants' beliefs and attitudes were that they had to commit illegal acts in order to sustain in their communities and they continued to commit crimes with that perception but with the emergent theme of character realization of self-sustaining, those same participants were

able to transform their attitudes to resist the temptation of committing crimes. The themes and theories that emerged during this research further evidenced and answered this studies research question.

Limitations of the Study

During this study, a global pandemic occurred causing all non-essential businesses and organizations to shut down. Because of the stipulations with the global pandemic, it caused the study and data collection process to halt until organizations opened back up, so there was about a three-month gap from when approval for the research was given to the actual collection of data. Once businesses opened back up then interviews were able to be obtained without a problem.

With the interview questions set up in a semi-structured format, detailed information was left up to the discretion of the participant. With this study being sensitive, participants might have felt like they did not want to openly and voluntarily give detailed information about their lives since they were talking to a stranger, so I worried about if the participants being completely forthcoming. To overcome that barrier, I made the participants feel comfortable with me by thoroughly explaining what I was researching and the social change I am seeking to create. Despite my worries and potential limitations, I interviewed 10 participants that gave me detailed information throughout their interviews because they wanted their story to be heard so they were eager to participate.

Another potential limitation was the generalization of individuals when trying to recruit participants through snowballing. As a researcher it would not be prudent to

assume that every transgender individual fits the criteria for this study, so snowballing was necessary since I did not know any of the individuals personally. Background checks were not being done, so I had to rely on the individuals being honest about their criminal status.

Even with the limitations, this study was able to be conducted and data was collected which produced results and conclusions to make appropriate and necessary suggestions for further studying and social change.

Recommendations for Action

There were many recommendations for action based on responses that participants gave during this study in order to decrease and eliminate recidivism amongst Black transgender female ex-offenders. One recommendation for action is having a support center. Adopting a place such as support centers for the transgender population to confide in people without feeling judged or scared is necessary. Many times, the researched population feels that they are not able to honestly reach out to people so there needs to be an organization available to assist as being a safe haven.

Another recommendation for action is mental health services. Having therapists readily available around the clock to deal with the mental capacity of the target population would be recommended so that the target population can have someone to talk to if they dealt with emotional stressors or traumatic experiences during their transition journey. Mental health services allow for transgenders to have someone to confide in. Mental therapy is a beneficial service because it gives transgender individuals a person to

talk to when they are trying to cope with and understand the life-altering decision they made.

Another recommendation for action is drug rehabilitation centers. Some of the participants in this study admitted to using drugs to cope with their struggles, so having drug rehabilitation centers readily available always would be beneficial. Drug rehabilitation centers would help retreat the habit of wanting to use and abuse drugs.

Another recommendation for action is having job readiness or workforce agencies available. Workforce agencies that specialize in transgender affairs and assisting with creating more professional careers versus just obtaining a job would be beneficial. Participants in this study claimed that the jobs they were able to get were not equivalent to normal people, so having job readiness or workforce agencies whose main focus is placing transgenders with more professional careers would be valuable.

Having more agencies that deal specifically with displaced transgender youth is another recommendation for action. Many of the participants stated that they were homeless and had been homeless since a teenager which caused them to commit crimes, so having agencies that are able to place transgenders could potentially decrease crime amongst the transgender population. It was proven through the responses given by the participants in this study that they knew they wanted to transition into their chosen identity as children, so providing services starting while they were youth would have been advantageous.

Equal access to education, employment, and housing is another recommended action that could lead to the betterment of the transgender community. Increased

knowledge of the laws that protect transgenders from discrimination is needed in order to ensure there is equal access to education, employment, and housing. According to Cobb and McKenzie-Harris (2019), “employment law guidance is split on whether transgender employees are protected from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation” (p. 52). Being able to obtain the same kinds of careers, schooling, and housing opportunities would make a difference in the transgender community.

Another recommendation for action is changing the mindset about transgenders. Breaking the culture of shaming other people for being different is necessary. People treat others in society a certain way based on what they are taught, so if they are taught that something is wrong or different then they are going to respond to others that contradict their teachings by ridicule or shaming.

Another recommendation for action is having more transgender-specific legislation. Changing legislation so that it is illegal for parents to put their children out if they identify as transgender. One participant felt their parents should have faced penalties for making her homeless as a teenager because she identified as being transgender.

Often, it is because of ignorance that institutions do not have or incorporate provisions for transgender individuals. Educating institutions and giving training about transgenders would allow for people to be made more aware of how to deal with them is another recommendation for action. Institutions such as schools, religious establishments, and work environments all need to be made aware of transgenders.

Lastly, having a buffer or someone with experience within the transgender community would be beneficial and is a recommendation for action. The buffer would act

as a liaison for contacting purposes. Contacting the transgender community mentors and allies would help with being able to gather first-hand knowledge about what the transgender community needs. Mentors and allies that are already in the transgender community are going to have all the information on resources that are already available and what is still needed in the transgender community.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are many recommendations for further study based on the findings while conducting this study. One recommendation for further study is starting from the beginning of the participant's lives. Getting to the root of every individual transgender's lives such as starting from birth would make research more thorough and detailed when trying to gather and determine conclusions. All of the participants stated that they knew they wanted to transition into their chosen identity when they were children, so for further study, it might also be beneficial to know what their childhood was like, as some of the participants discussed their childhood but not in full detail.

Asking more demographic questions for more detailed information to be gathered is another recommendation for further study. I did not ask how far along in their transition was each participant, I only asked when did they transition, so asking further questions for knowing if the individual has completely transitioned would yield more results for informational purposes. Also asking further questions for knowing how much of a transition they have done would yield more results for comparing and contrasting participants.

Believing in a higher power is a resource that many people use in order to continue on with their daily lives. Many of the participants of this study stated that they used religion for sustaining as a resource so they do not recidivate. For further study, it might be beneficial to include more representative questions such as which faith is used as a resource to not recidivate.

In terms of reaching saturation for a qualitative study, it is configured when responses start being similar without any deviation, so it is always best to know the appropriate number of participants to use when conducting research. The sample size for this study was 10 participants. For further study, having more than 10 participants might be beneficial to gather more conclusions.

Implications for Social Change

By conducting this study, I have created a potential impact for social change on different levels. On an individual level, by conducting this study, I was able to allow transgender individuals the ability to articulate their personal stories with hopes of gaining a better understanding so that change can be made. This study gave minority transgender individuals a voice. This study has the potential to create positive social change by increasing public understanding of transgender issues.

This study can be used to add and increase literature on transgender issues. When searching for literature it was found that literature was not specified according to the transgender individual. There was a gap of literature when it came to research on the specific target population used in this study, so this study added reference on black transgender women ex-offenders.

At a societal/policy level, this study can be used as a foundation for changing policies like incorporating transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination policies in many criminal justice organizations. This study can be used as a reference for enacting more transgender specific and inclusive policies in organizational structures such as government agencies. This study can also be used as a reference for configuring and identifying practical and necessary resources for transgenders so that they can feel equal in society.

The methodological implications of this study include the possibility of there being more detailed information to be gathered during the data collection process if interviews were not completely semi-structured but more lightly structured or unstructured when further researching recidivism amongst transgenders. Corbin and Morse (2016) states that unstructured interviews allow participants to express themselves in their own ways and pace. Gray (2012) states that unstructured interviews resemble a conversation more than an interview with the goal of gathering more in-depth information. During the interviewing, if the questions weren't so direct and semi-structured, one methodological implication for the furtherance of this research topic, based upon conducting this research, I believe could have resulted in more codes or emergent themes related to factors that contribute to recidivism.

Lastly, I intend to use the findings of this study by submitting my conclusions to criminal justice organizations and governmental agencies that provide services to transgender individuals. Correctional facilities, housing authority, police departments that have an LGBTQ liaison unit, mental service agencies, social services, and unemployment agencies would all benefit from the findings of this study. The many entities that provide

services for individuals so they can sustain could use my findings to help alleviate and decrease the want or need to commit crimes amongst the transgender community.

Reflections

It is my goal to introduce and educate people about who transgender individuals are, improve strategies, and provide policymakers with strategies that have been proven to be successful tools necessary for changing laws that make transgenders feel equal in society. By listening to each individual's interview, I felt even more obligated to want to make a change and show that change is feasible and attainable. The world is constantly changing and with those changes, policies in relation to the transgender community are changing.

I truly enjoyed conducting the research for this study. This study was a passion of mine. I learned so much while conducted this study.

Conclusions

Recidivism is an ongoing issue not only in the transgender community but in various demographics. Criminal justice organizations have researched recidivism with goals of decreasing and eliminating it so that ex-offenders can be successful upon release into their communities. Recidivism is an issue for many transgender ex-offenders because many are plagued with hardship and struggles that begin from the moment they decide they want to transition into another gender. This study does not disregard other demographics but it shows that there is a specific target population that has been overlooked and misunderstood for so many years, that also faces the same issues as other demographics and has it harder because of their chosen gender identity which was black

transgender women ex-offenders. Homelessness, violence, peer pressure, lacking support, being hungry, and unemployment are only some of the many factors that influence and contribute to recidivism amongst the transgender community but with further research more can definitely be recognized. There are so many resources and services that can be provided to transgender ex-offenders that would be beneficial for their successful reentry into communities, but it starts with understanding and equality. Organizations and individuals must understand all aspects of being transgender so that fair, necessary, and appropriate policies can be made. Currently, there is legislation that has appeared before the Supreme Court for protection from discrimination for transgenders which indicates that society is slowly trying to make a change and show equality for transgender individuals.

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Appendix A: General Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name
Contact Information
Date

Dear Researcher Name,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, “Factors of Black Transgender Ex-Offender Women that Contribute to Recidivism” within the _____. As part of this study, I authorize you to speak with, recruit, and interview participants about your study inside my public building, audio record the interviews, and provide all appropriate forms to the participants so they are aware of their rights. Individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. I will not be aware of who decides to participate in your study.

We understand that our organization’s responsibilities include: Providing a public space for interviewing so that it can be confidential and private. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization’s policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Demographic Questions

Where were you born?

Where are you from?

Where is your family from?

When did you know you wanted to transition into your chosen identity?

When did you transition into your chosen identity?

Representation Questions

What are the factors in your life that have caused you to want or feel the need to commit crimes?

What are some experiences that have happened in your life that contribute to you committing crimes?

How did you find yourself engaging in criminal activity and why?

What kind of crimes have you committed that led to prosecution? And why those crimes?

What resources do you need in order not to recidivate?

What resources do you currently use so you do not recidivate?