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Experiences of African American Female Offenders on Parole and Under Community Supervision

Shirley Lawson
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Walden University

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Shirley D. Lawson

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Experiences of African American Female Offenders on Parole and Under Community
Supervision

by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MALS, Excelsior College, 2017

BA, Midwestern State University, 2021

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Human & Social Services

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Abstract

African American female offenders on parole under community supervision reenter communities as convicted felons and face the challenges of intersectionality and collateral consequences. The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. General strain theory was used to explore the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. Data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews with a purposive sample of 10 African American female offenders, ages 18 and above who were on parole and under community supervision. Colaizzi's seven-step method was used for data analysis. Four major categories emerged during the data analysis: (a) experience of returning home on parole and under community supervision, (b) experience with conditions of parole and under community supervision, (c) coping on parole and under community supervision, (d) and situation as African American female offender on parole and under community supervision. This study contributes to a current body of literature by providing a better understanding of the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

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Dedication

To God be the Glory! For without him, nothing is possible! I dedicate this dissertation to African American female offenders sentenced under the criminal justice system. You are unique and sharing your experiences contributes to a better understanding that may create policies, programs, and services that improve reentry, reintegration, and recidivism that may lead to social change.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Women offenders remain the most rapidly growing segment of the criminal justice population (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Community supervision remains the largest component of the U.S. criminal justice system, with approximately 4.5 million adults that represent 69% of the correctional custody population (Carson, 2020; Zeng, 2020). As of 2019, there were 1.3 million women under the supervision of the criminal justice system in jails, prisons, on probation, and on parole (Bronson & Carson, 2019). One of the most significant challenges of the criminal justice system is the reintegration of released offenders under community supervision (Gelb & Velazquez, 2018).

Probation and parole are the two most common forms of community supervision (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2020). Probation is a supervision program imposed at the beginning of the offender's initial sentence as an alternative to incarceration, allowing convicted persons to live in their community with specific conditions for a period specified by a local criminal court judge (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2020). Parole is a conditional release granted for convicted offenders who are released earlier than their original sentence and allowed to complete the remainder of their sentence under community supervision (Charles Koch Institute, 2019). The state's criminal justice system is the supervising authority for parolees (Kaeble & Alper, 2020). Offenders on parole may be released from prison into the community on an active status mandated to report frequently and adhere to specific conditions under community supervision (National Institute of Corrections, 2020).

Annually, over one million women are conditionally released from prison and ordered to complete their sentence on parole and under community supervision (Kaeble & Cowhig, 2018). Approximately one in every 89 women in the United States is involved with the criminal justice system, with 85% on probation or parole and under community supervision (Golder et al., 2015; Kaeble & Glaze, 2016). Women face an array of collateral consequences imposed by federal, state, and local laws (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2020). Collateral consequences may create barriers and restrictions that limit an individual's ability to reintegrate into their community (Love & Schluskel, 2020).

Women offenders on parole and under community supervision face numerous obstacles in meeting the conditions of their parole release (Chamberlain & Boggess, 2018). Women who are parents and are on parole and under community supervision experience socioeconomic vulnerabilities that place their role as mothers at risk for failure to comply based on the obstacles they face (Robison & Miller, 2016). Likewise, women on parole and under community supervision frequently encounter more challenges than men with child custody, single parent households, and networking with family and friends (Stone et al., 2018). Compared to men on parole, women have higher rates of substance abuse, mental health issues, and traumatic experiences (Green et al., 2016). Stone et al. (2018) asserted that women offenders' descriptions of their experiences on parole, negative influences, and toxic events associated with their criminality might help understand their character. Morash et al. (2017) concluded that repeat offending women respond to parole and under community supervision conditions based on their propensity to recidivate.

Women released from prison and reentering communities face numerous obstacles, such as substance abuse issues, lack of access to health care, mental health issues, posttraumatic stress disorder, inadequate educational and employment services, neighborhood conditions, lack of community resources, and collateral consequences resulting from criminal convictions (Nicewarner, 2019). Researchers found that African American women face multiple stressors during community supervision, and the experiences of their recent stressful life events are associated with negative emotions (Fedock, 2018). Many criminal justice researchers have posited African American women's mental health needs as risk factors for incarceration and recidivism (Malcolme et al., 2019; McCormick et al., 2015). African American female offenders also deal with the intersectionality of race, gender, and class, in addition to collateral consequences of a felony conviction and incarceration that may limit their abilities to reintegrate into society and their communities (Bunn, 2019). African Americans are between 50% and over 100% likelier of being charged with parole violations than Caucasians (Moy, 2021). African Americans also have a higher probability of returning to prison for parole violations (Curry, 2016).

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the study. In addition to the introduction, I address the background, problem statement, purpose of study, and the research question. I also present the nature of the study and the theoretical framework. The subsequent sections of this chapter conclude with the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. I end the chapter with a summation.

Background

The United States has the highest adult female incarceration rate in the world (Kajstura, 2018). The number of women in prison has been increasing at twice the rate of male offenders since 1980 (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Thirty-four percent of released female offenders are rearrested, and 14 per 100 female offenders are returned to prison for parole violations, such as failing to report to their parole officers, substance abuse, and not having a job (Alper et al., 2018; Kaeble, 2018). Johnson (2015) found that almost one third of women offenders released on parole and under community supervision had previously recidivated two to four times before their current parole status expired.

Research has shown that collateral consequences may create barriers for African American women on parole to reintegrate into their communities (Williams & Rumpf, 2020). These barriers are: (a) securing employment because of occupational licensing restrictions, (b) obtaining housing, (c) child custody, (d) receiving public assistance, (e) owning a firearm, (f) obtaining a driver's license, (g) qualifying for financial aid, (h) gaining college admission, qualifying for military service, and (j) possibility of being deported versus maintaining legal status as an immigrant (American Bar Association [ABA], 2021; Goulette & Frank, 2018). Collateral consequences also restrict public assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and public housing (Hersch & Meyers, 2019). Also, many convicted offenders are subjected to felony disenfranchisement, a collateral consequence that

restricts most convicted offenders of voting rights, which varies across states (Chung, 2019).

Women offenders on parole and under community supervision often return to neighborhoods marred with violence, abuse, mental disorders, and toxic relationships (Boppre & Salisbury, 2016). According to Wu (2019), women offenders experience challenges—such as employment, housing, health care, and education—that may increase stress and impede their ability to reintegrate into their community. Women offenders frequently have a significant background of substance abuse and physical and sexual abuse (The Sentencing Project, 2020). The first few months of prison release are critical for some women offenders on parole and under community supervision to desist criminality. According to Stone et al. (2018), some women offenders use their negative experiences to make positive changes, and others use their experiences to create obstacles.

Despite a declining incarceration rate of 55% between 2000 and 2017 in state and federal prisons, African American women maintain a higher imprisonment rate than other female racial groups (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2020). For example, in 2018, the imprisonment rate for African American women was 88 per 100,000, the highest among all female ethnic groups (Carson, 2020). The imprisonment rate for Hispanic women was 65 per 100,000, while the imprisonment rate for Caucasian women was 49 per 100,000 (Carson, 2020). Kaeble (2018) noted that the number of African American female offenders was almost double the imprisonment rate of Caucasian women released from prison in 2016 to parole and under community supervision. At the end of 2016, 25% of

African American women imprisoned at state prisons were sentenced for drug offenses; and over half of African American female inmates in federal prisons were convicted for drug trafficking (Bronson & Carson, 2019).

Link and Oser (2018) found that criminal thinking among African American female offenders might be a maladaptive coping technique to grapple with pressures of gendered racism, economic tension, and network loss. However, Isom-Scott and Grosholz (2019) posited that African American women offenders are a distinct subgroup more prone to use criminal behaviors as a coping mechanism to manage strains and negative emotions than Caucasian women offenders. Furthermore, Isom-Scott and Grosholz (2019) discovered that African American women experience more social conditions conducive to crime due to dwelling in socioeconomically disadvantaged environments plagued with low income, unemployment, and dysfunctional households. The effects of intersectionality on race and community supervision of African American women have been underresearched (Gueta, 2020; Malcolme et al., 2019).

African American women offenders' issues may be aggravated by the presence of co-occurring stressors salient in their daily lives, such as gendered racism, financial worry, and loss of support during incarceration and post release (Link & Oser, 2018; Oser et al., 2016). Researchers have concluded that barriers such as obtaining identification documents, transportation, and lack of support can impact an offender's transition into the community, yet research is limited in exploring whether an offender's coping mechanisms affect this process (LaCourse et al., 2019; Oser et al., 2016). Many women offenders released from prison face collateral consequences that will last beyond their

sentence (McConnell, 2017). Few studies have been conducted to investigate gender's role in association with community supervision and recidivism (Miller et al., 2019; Yukhnenko et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

According to the BJS (2016), approximately one fourth of women recidivate within 6 months of release from prison; one third fail within a year, and two thirds fail within 4 years of reentering their community (Snyder et al., 2016). Of the 6.7 million offenders under the U.S. criminal justice system, approximately 4.5 million are on probation and parole, collectively under community supervision (Jones, 2018). Over a million women are on parole, accounting for 1 in every 8 parolees (Horowitz, 2018). The incarceration rate of African American women is higher than among other female racial groups (Carson, 2018).

Despite comprising 13% of the total U.S. population, African Americans account for 30% of community supervision (Jones, 2018). Waldman (2015) asserted that in addition to dealing with the stigma of being a female felon and parolee, African American women offenders reentering communities face additional obstacles such as regaining custody of their children, uniting with their families, and finding employment as they attempt to reintegrate and meet the conditions of parole and under community supervision. African American women offenders' mental health has been underresearched concerning the intersectionality of race, gender, and community supervision (Gueta, 2020; Malcolme et al., 2019).

There are numerous complexities inherent in navigating parole that are amplified by mental health issues, collateral consequences, and systemic barriers such as racism and sexism that can inhibit African American female offenders on parole from completing community supervision (Fedock, 2018; Goodson, 2018). As a convicted felon, an African American woman offender may be more vulnerable and hide their motivation to complete community supervision (Goodson, 2018; Robison & Miller, 2016). The inability to effectively reduce the cycle of recidivism among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision may be grounded in the challenges of salient stressors, such as race, economics, support networks, and cognitive behaviors (Link & Oser, 2018; Pew Charitable Trusts, 2018). Although researchers have focused on African American women offenders, I have found no research conducted to explore African American female offenders post release on parole and under community supervision. Further research is needed for an investigation of the experiences among African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision to address the documented problem of the increase in recidivism among African American women offenders (Solinas-Saunders & Stacer, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. This research adds to the body of literature on the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The results of this study may provide a deeper understanding of the experiences that influence the

behaviors of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

Research Question

What are the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision?

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Robert Agnew's (1992) general strain theory (GST) provided the theoretical framework for this study. GST places significance on the experience of adverse situations resulting from exposure to stressful or negative circumstances (Barbieri & Connell, 2017). Agnew (1992) asserted that under GST, a person may experience three types of stressors: (a) failure to achieve a positive goal, such as employment, housing, and financial stability; (b) loss of something positive, such as child custody, intimate relationships, and a personal vehicle; and (c) the presence of adverse stimuli, such as negative support networks, family violence, and parole conditions. Stressors create negative emotions, such as anger, depression, frustration, and anxiety, which might influence an individual to engage in legitimate coping or criminality (Agnew, 2016). For example, an individual may take corrective action to eliminate the stressor by stealing, committing acts of violence, engaging in substance abuse, and violating their parole sanctions. GST can be used to illuminate my analysis of participants' experiences on parole and under community supervision.

African American women offenders' experiences with the criminal justice system may lead to unique stressors (Maxwell & Solomon, 2018). African American female

offenders may use criminality as a coping mechanism for negative emotions prompted by a failure to achieve goals, a loss of positive stimuli, and the presence of negative stimuli (Isom-Scott & Mikell, 2018). Using GST, I conducted this study to help explain negative emotions and coping strategies resulting from experiences that influence African American women offenders on parole and under community supervision. The research question addresses the purpose of this study about African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. This study was designed to analyze data using Colaizzi's seven-step method within the context of the GST.

African American women's mental health needs are risk factors that may lead to incarceration and recidivism (Malcolme et al., 2019; McCormick et al., 2015). African American women offenders' coping techniques are attached to various mental and physical health behaviors (Malcome et al., 2019). By understanding how African American women offenders experience parole and community supervision, insight may highlight behaviors, areas of concern, and circumstances in which the offender experiences success. Morash et al. (2017) emphasized that the high number of women offenders under community supervision is a significant justification for further research. In this study, I explored the experiences of African American women offenders who are active on parole and under community supervision.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative descriptive phenomenological methodology in which I examined the experiences of African American women active on parole and under community supervision. I created a Facebook page specifically for the

study to recruit volunteer participants for purposive sampling. My goal was for a sample that consisted of 6 to 10 volunteer participants released from incarceration who had reentered into their communities. The flyer posted on the Facebook page displayed three prescreening questions for prospective participants to consider in predetermining their eligibility. The questions to determine eligibility criteria asked if the volunteer was age 18 and above, if they identify as an African American woman, and if they are in an active status on parole and under community supervision. The flyer contained an email link for prospective participants to contact me directly for additional details and receive a prescreening questionnaire in the email requesting yes or no to eligibility criteria questions.

Upon receipt of their email acknowledgment, the selected volunteer participants received an informed consent form following Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. I coordinated telephone interview appointments with the participants at a designated time with the option to reschedule should disruption or cancellation occur. The telephone interviews were semi-structured with 10 open-ended questions. Lastly, Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step strategy, which predominately influenced Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, was used for analysis of the data collected from the interviews (Wirihana et al., 2018).

Colaizzi's seven-step strategy (1978) allows a researcher to identify, describe, organize, and analyze emerging themes from the qualitative data collected (Nowell et al., 2017). The Colaizzi seven-step analysis provides a systematic data review and analysis that limits the possibilities for a researcher to deviate from the original information

collected from the volunteer participants (Morrow et al., 2015). The seven steps include (a) familiarization with the data, (b) identification of the relevant statements to the topic of interest, (c) formulation of meaning, (d) clustering the identified meaning into themes, (e) description of the phenomenon in question using the emerged themes, (f) production of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and (g) verification of the generated structure of the phenomenon in the context of the study. A thematic data analysis following Colaizzi's seven-step method may increase the validity and credibility of the study by providing a structured data analysis plan (Nowell et al., 2017).

Definitions

Community supervision: The mandated oversight by parole board of criminal offenders in their designated community (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2018).

Offender: The person who perpetrates a crime (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2020).

Parole: The conditional release of an ex-prisoner under the authority of the designated state agency or jurisdiction to serve the remainder of their term under supervised release (BJS, 2020).

Parolee: Convicted person released from prison to finish a portion of their sentence under supervision in the community and expected to comply with the conditions of their release to complete their sentence (BJS, 2020).

Recidivism: When an individual who is the object of criminal justice sanctions commits a new criminal offense or relapses into criminal behaviors (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2020).

Reentry: Offenders release from imprisonment to return to their community (NIJ, 2020).

Reintegration: The process of transitioning from incarceration into the community, adjusting to living outside of incarceration (Center for Justice & Reconciliation, 2022).

Reoffending: Measured by the criminal actions that lead to rearrests, reconviction, or reincarceration during the first 3 years of an offender's prison release (BJS, 2020).

Revocation: The removal of an offender from their parole status due to noncompliance with the sanctions of their parole or engaging in new crimes (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2018).

Assumptions

The first assumption was that participants would respond openly and honestly to interview questions for this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study. The second assumption was that the purposive sample of 10 participants was a fit for my qualitative study and sufficient for data saturation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The third assumption was that the data collected would provide a clear description of the participants' experiences on parole under community supervision in relation to the study. My fourth assumption was that the qualitative interviews would contribute rich information about African American women offenders' experiences as a parolee under community supervision.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to the experiences of African American female offenders who are on parole and under community supervision. In this study, I focused on volunteer participants who identify as African American female offenders, ages 18 and above, active on parole, and under community supervision. Data were collected from a purposive sample of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision through coordinated telephone interview sessions, maintaining privacy and confidentiality. This study was not designed to focus on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, parole, or community supervision. The focus was on the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

Limitations

A limitation of a descriptive phenomenological qualitative study includes the researcher being cognizant of the implicit bias during data collection and analysis (Neubauer et al., 2019). A researcher is responsible for convincing the audience about the credibility of the phenomenological study (Johnson et al., 2020). A researcher must set aside personal experiences and grasp the essence from others' experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). My professional experience as a case manager with the parole system may expose this study to researcher bias. I used bracketing and journaling to document my feelings, thoughts, and preconceived ideas during the study to mitigate bias.

A second limitation of this study was the participant selection of African American female offenders on parole. I chose participants through purposive sampling,

predicated on participants being age 18 and above, identifying as an African American female, and in an active status on parole and under community supervision to limit the lens in gathering rich data for analysis (Wendt & Fraser, 2019). The inclusion criteria are limitations because they did not include a sample characteristic of all African American women. The results of this study do not generalize all offenders on parole and under community supervision.

A third limitation study was the small sample size of 6 to 10 African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The sample size in qualitative research pertains to the appropriateness of the sample composition and size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The sample tends to be small to support the depth of the analysis that is fundamental to the phenomenological approach (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Malterud et al. (2016) reasoned that the more information a participant possesses concerning the qualitative study, the smaller the sample size needed for saturation.

Lastly, a fourth limitation was excluding participants' criminal history (Morash et al., 2019). I did not consider participants' criminal convictions or the length of prison sentences for this study. For example, African American women on parole and under community supervision follow different pathways into the criminal justice system for felonies, such as sex crimes, property crimes, acts of violence, and substance abuse (Walt & Jason, 2017). Future research is needed on groups of women offenders in different settings to establish the generalizability of results concerning recidivism (Morash et al., 2019).

Significance

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision based on GST (Agnew, 2016). The significance of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study is that findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how African American female offenders cope with their experiences on parole and under community supervision. This study might contribute to the existing body of literature available through the Crime Prevention and Improvement, also known as the Reentry Council, established by President Trump's Executive Order in March 2018 (White House, 2018). The mission of the Reentry Council is to improve practice and policy in crime prevention and recidivism to enable offenders to reintegrate into communities successfully (White House, 2018).

The increased understanding may help the Reentry Council's collaborative partners to improve policy and programs at national, state, and local levels aimed at African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. As a collaborative partner, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) increases awareness and impacts policy to reduce the cycle of recidivism among African American female offenders returning to prison. Through its policy, education, and training programs, the U.S. Department of Education increases technical training, college, and educational opportunities for African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services increases awareness and impacts programs and service delivery of health and social services for African

American female offenders active on parole and community supervision. Through its policy and programs, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides stable and affordable housing for African American female offenders on parole and under supervision and for their families, thereby reducing homelessness. Also, through policy, programs, and training, the U.S. Department of Labor increases the employability of African American women on parole and under community supervision.

This research may contribute to social change by providing a deeper understanding of how African American female offenders cope with their experiences in meeting the conditions of parole and under community supervision. The findings of this study may contribute to criminal justice reform issues that impact African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The findings of this research may impact social change to reduce the cycle of recidivism among African American women on parole and under community supervision. The results from this study may be used to create suggestions for programs, service delivery, and resources to facilitate reentry and reintegration among African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Further details are presented in Chapter 2.

Summary

In this study, I investigated the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. This chapter included an introduction of African American women on parole and under community supervision. A brief overview was provided with background information. A problem statement highlighted the importance of this research. The purpose of this research was to examine the

experiences of African American women offenders active on parole under community supervision.

A research question was developed to address the issues and to investigate the experiences of African American women offenders active on parole and under community supervision. GST and its relevancy to the offenders' behaviors are discussed for the conceptual framework. The nature of the study discussed was the qualitative descriptive phenomenological methodology. Key definitions frequently used were identified and defined to enhance a deeper understanding of the study. Assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations within this research were also discussed. The significance of this study and its opportunity for social change were conveyed.

In Chapter 2, I provide an exploration of literature, search strategies, and the theoretical foundation. In Chapter 3, I give a detailed description of the methodology, the researcher's role, research design, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis. Chapter 4 will cover a presentation of the data collection. Chapter 5 entails the findings of the research and the conclusion of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

I conducted a literature review to understand the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The outcome of this research could benefit a variety of stakeholders, such as parole officers and counselors. For this research, I examined existing literature on female offenders, GST, parole and community supervision challenges, and strains impacting successful reintegration. Quantitative and qualitative studies highlighting female offenders, primarily African American women offenders were reviewed. This chapter consists of an analysis of research about African American female offenders, GST, the criminal justice system, and topics related to parole and under community supervision, which can lead to recidivism. GST provides the foundation for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library to access EBSCO, Elsevier, ProQuest, PsycArticles, Psychology Database, Research Gate, SAGE Journals, Science Direct, Social Science Database, Sociology Database, Wiley Online. Google Scholar was a valuable resource in identifying related relevant articles by other scholars to benefit my research. Google Books were invaluable to access the general strain theoretical framework, strain theorist, and criminology resources in support of the literature review.

My keyword search began with literature about African American women on parole who had recidivated while reintegrating under community supervision. Limited studies exist on African American women as repeat offenders, which led to several words

and phrases in attempts to locate as much related information as possible to contribute to the literature review and identify the existing gap in this subject area. General searches of literature reviews on female offenders, strain theories, and the criminal justice system contributed significantly to this study of repeat offending among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. Mass incarceration, criminal justice history, history of women in prison, and the war on drugs were additional keywords used to expand the literature review of women in the penal system.

Also, my search for relevant data about African American female offenders led me to government databases, the DOJ, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, NIJ, and the U.S. National Library of Medicine. The DOJ provides access to archives, news, and data about criminal activities. The government databases consisted of information, reports, policies, and updates. The NIJ conducts research, development, and evaluation under the DOJ. I accessed knowledge about reducing crime and justice at the national, state and local levels.

The NIJ's database covers related topics of reentry programs, recidivism, corrections, courts, crime, sentencing, adjudication, and violent crime. The National Criminal Justice Reference Service is a valuable resource for criminal justice information that supports research, policy, and program development. National Criminal Justice Reference Service has a virtual library that consists of 225,000 records, of which 80,000 are online resources. This federally funded resource center offers justice and drug-related information to globally support research, policy, and program development. The search for African American female offenders led to the National Center for Biotechnology

Information, a division of the U.S. National Library of Medicine. This site displayed 16 databases of articles about African American female offenders, including culture, criminal thinking, stress, and coping problems.

This review includes articles focusing on strains and stressors relating to African American female offenders during incarceration, reentry, reintegration, post prison release, and the recidivism process. Books and other literary resources encountered were reference tools in linking to additional scholarly articles. The research consisted of the listed keywords to broaden the literature review: *African American female offender, African American woman offender, African American female recidivism, African American female reentry, African American women offender reintegration, Black female offender reentry, Black female offenders, Black women offenders, Black women on parole, community corrections, community supervision, coronavirus, collateral consequences, COVID-19, exoffenders, exprisoners, female offender reentry, female offenders on parole, female offenders under community supervision, female parolees, formerly incarcerated African American females, formerly incarcerated Black women, General Strain Theory, GST, homeless women, homeless female offenders, homeless, pandemic, parole officer, parolees, racial disparity, repeat incarceration, repeat offender, sentencing disparity, and women parolees.*

Diversion and *intervention* addressed strategies to reduce recidivism among the female parolees convicted of repeat offenses and are mandated to complete the prison sentences under community supervision unless new crime or technical violations warrant new sanctions, including a return to prison. African American women in prison history,

alternatives to incarceration, criminal justice history, history of criminal justice, the history of prisons, women, and mass incarceration expanded on the criminal justice processes concerning this study. Search terms included traditional strain theorists Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton, Robert Agnew, and Alfred Cohen. Given the challenges African American women face in acquiring stable housing, I considered it practical to research homelessness. Some of the relevant articles of African American women offenders were published in health journals and medical databases.

This literature review included an overview of African American female offenders, strain theoretical framework, the criminal justice process, and challenges during reintegration upon release from incarceration. The literature review was focused on peer-reviewed articles published within the last 4 years to ensure recent information; however, articles are mentioned outside this period to explain the data provided in detail. Keywords and phrases were continuously identified and revised because of findings during searches for scholarly and peer-reviewed articles.

Theoretical Foundation

GST is the foundation of this study and describes characteristics of stressful events and situations that influence some individuals toward criminality (Agnew, 1992). GST describes strains as events and conditions not favored by individuals (Agnew, 2002). Robert Agnew (1992) founded GST on the premise that negative interpersonal relationships cause three significant strains. GST builds on previous strain theories by highlighting new types of strain, loss of stimuli, the introduction of adverse stimuli, and new types of goal blockage. In this study, I explored African American women

offenders' experiences in relation to strains while serving on parole and under community supervision. Researchers have confirmed that many strains experienced by African Americans are related to criminality (Aseltine et al., 2000; Mazerolle & Maahs, 2000; Piquero & Sealock, 2010). Strains are not always criminogenic, placing negative behaviors as an alternative to a wide range of coping mechanisms for individuals (Broidy & Santoro, 2017).

Many offenders reenter their communities facing negative stimuli because of systemic barriers, recurring stressors, and problems inciting strains. The way that offenders react to stressors depends on various circumstances, contextual pressures, and strategies (Agnew, 2009a, 2009b). Agnew argued that these negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, create a demand for corrective action, causing individuals to react negatively (Agnew, 2009a, 2009b). Agnew (2016) proposed that strains or stressors press individuals into crime. For example, socioeconomic factors can contribute to an array of negative feelings, generating pressure for correction efforts—with criminal coping mechanisms.

Many persons possessing social control who are affected by the influences and the tendency of crime do not react with criminal behavior (Agnew, 2011). Agnew (2013) also affirmed that criminality is likelier among people with minimal social support, coping skills, and resources. Criminal coping has a higher probability among individuals who associate with criminals, hold views in favor of crime, and possess a high level of negative emotions (Agnew, 2013). Strains most likely lead to criminal behaviors when they are (a) viewed as unjust, (b) perceived as high in importance, (c) associated with low

social control, and (d) create some stress or motivator to engage in criminal coping (Agnew, 1992).

GST is used to argue that strains or stressors increase the probability of negative emotions like anger and frustration that create pressure for corrective action, and crime is one possible response (Agnew, 1992). Agnew (2012) asserted that a repeat of strains triggers negative emotions that increase an offender's capacity to reoffend. Factors such as coping skills, resources, social supports, and selected characteristics are perceived to influence strains (Agnew, 2013). The concept of strain refers to the stressors on socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals to engage by any means needed to accomplish society's goals deemed for financial success (Agnew, 2001). Massoglia (2008) asserted that minority offenders face an array of collateral consequences because of racial and structural barriers that possess higher rates of mental health issues than the general offender population.

Literature Review

For this research, the criminal justice process includes incarceration, reentry, reintegration, recidivism, parole, and community supervision. Current researchers discovered female offenders incur paths as they maneuver a route to exist in the criminal justice system (Gross, 2013). The experiences of women of color in the criminal justice system are essential for researchers to explore why there is a difference in their rehabilitation (Harmon & Boppre, 2018). African American female offenders have a higher likelihood of recidivating when released from prison than other offender populations (Hartney & Vuong, 2009). Race and ethnicity can increase the possibility of

offenders being prone to recidivate (Hartney & Vuong, 2009), with gender, race, and ethnicity affecting the transition process (Bloom et al., 2003).

History of Strain Theory

Anomie

Anomie theory established culture as the infrastructure of the social classes explaining the concept of deviant behavior (Hilbert, 1989). Emile Durkheim (1956) posited that the social structure of each culture distinguishes the image of man. Anomie is a weakening in society's ability to control a person's healthy cravings (Vold et al., 2002). According to Durkheim (1956), the more an individual possesses, the more they crave to possess. Durkheim argued that society exist as its own entity "in and of itself" obeying its own rules and creating its own effects (Allen, 2012, p.50).

According to Vold et al. (2002), Durkheim portrayed the present-day person as deficient in adhering to society's rules, focusing on circumstances with unlimited goals that lead to a breakdown in societal norms. According to Agnew (2013), Durkheim posited that an individual's social roles or functions hold society together. Agnew (2013) also confirmed that Durkheim's focus transitioned from macro to micro as he researched the causes and functions of social phenomena. Durkheim focused more on society, and Merton emphasized individualism. Durkheim posited that deviance prevents anomie, and Merton asserted that anomie causes deviance, concluding that anomie prevents anomie (Hilbert, 1989). Durkheim saw deviance as a "ritually generated protective device" of society, such as leaving aside questions about what specific actions will or will not count as deviance within a given social context (Hilbert, 1989, p.242).

Strain Theory

Robert Merton (1938) defined goals that can become so oppressive that individuals can feel pushed to alternatives to reach these goals. Merton argued that individuals who possess no legitimate means of achieving societal values turn to illegitimate means (Holton, 2004). Merton accounted for deviance as an objective phenomenon of actions identified as deviant before the causal analysis (Hilbert, 1989).

Merton (1938) posited strain theory as culturally defined objectives and interests and the acceptable means of acquiring these goals are the two most important aspects of determining the probability of deviant behavior. Merton (1938) highlighted a disconnect between ethical goals and social norms using legitimate methods to achieve them. Merton's strain theory is based on Durkheim's concept of anomie. Merton (1938) discovered four approaches that comprise deviant behaviors: retreatism, rebellion, innovation, and ritualism. *Retreatism* identifies with the individuals who shun their goals and disengage from their situation. The *rebellious* and nonconforming individuals portray unruly behavior. The *innovator* may refuse legitimate ways, using illegal means to achieve the accepted goal at the end and may use alternatives or unlawful means to accomplish their goals. Persons engaged in *ritualism* openly support legitimate techniques to achieve their goals. Internally, they give up and search for options versus enduring a struggle to accomplish their goals. Conformity became the fifth method.

The term *social structure strain* (Vold et al., 2002) was initially used to describe certain social conditions. In subsequent theories influenced by Merton, the strain became central to understanding deviant behavior. Merton shifted from Durkheim's theory of

rapid social change, arguing about the connection between certain relatively stable social situations and the overall high rate of crime (Vold et al., 2002). Merton also advanced the comprehension of social groups by developing a reference group theory, thereby asserting that individuals may belong to groups that differ from the groups they align themselves to, elaborating the concept of in-group and out-group (Holton, 2004).

Subcultural Strain Theory

Albert Cohen is considered one of the most influential theorists on juvenile delinquency, asserting that society is permeated by middle-class success goals that also affect school-age boys in working-class families (Kelly & Balch, 1971). Cohen developed a subcultural strain theory derived from a dominant culture with a different value system (Kelly & Balch, 1971). Cohen determined the dominant culture to be deep-rooted in middle-class socioeconomics, which triggers a strain for the lower class because of their lack of skills to be competitive in the job market (Barmaki, 2016).

Cohen found that status created the strains due to the individual's failure to achieve their goal leads to frustrations, stimulating the negative emotions that support the subculture by engaging jointly in the deviant behavior as an alternative (Kelly & Balch, 1971). Cohen argued that strains were more interpersonal, considering that the reaction created linked to the frustrations felt and the criminal behavior (Barmaki, 2016). Cohen studied gangs affirming that subcultures surfaced due to the dominant culture's conduct (Barmaki, 2016).

General Strain Theory

Agnew (2013) posits that race and crime are critical factors that manage and may elevate criminality. Agnew (2001) clarified GST by highlighting that strains are most conducive to criminality when perceived as unjust, high in magnitude, associated with low social controls, and creates incentives or pressure to engage in illegitimate coping. Robert Agnew (2013) reported criminal coping as an expansion of the GST, arguing that citizens may commit crimes based on the stressors that they face based on their social structure increasing. The researcher also acknowledged that GST provided new insight on determining factors of criminal behaviors explaining the differences in crime between groups.

Agnew (2016) posited that crime is a response that provides individuals with an alternative to reduce or escape from strains such as stealing money, running away from domestic violence), vengeance against the source of the strain or related target, and alleviate negative emotions (substance abuse). Certain conditions and events are more prone than others to create pressure for crime or function as criminogenic strains, including terrible situations that are inclined to be severe, often, long-lasting, and expectations threatening core goals, needs, values, and or identities (Agnew, 2016).

Anger is maintained as especially conducive to crime because it reduces concern for the consequences of one's actions; reduces the ability and inclination to engage in legitimate coping, driving the person to perform, and creating a desire for vengeance (Agnew, 2016). Anger has been the focus of many empirical studies, as it is a crucial component that initiates urgency in adjusting responses in deviant behaviors (Agnew,

1992). Agnew (2009a, 2009b) argues that chronic strain leads to emotions characterized by negative feelings because persons are continuously experiencing pressures with a lack of resources to handle the strain.

Agnew (1992) posits that an array of factors influences an individual's choice of behavior towards strains. According to GST, specific events and conditions create negative emotions, such as anger and depression that increases the likelihood of criminal coping (Agnew, 2012, 2016). These events and conditions that generate pressure include finances, unemployment, victimization, discrimination, homelessness, and the failure to achieve individual goals (Agnew, 2016). People believe that the events and conditions leading to criminogenic strains are voluntary and intended violation of traditional norms.

Individuals are more likely to resort to illegal activities when they experience strain (Agnew, 1992): (a) failure to achieve positively valued goals, (b) the removal of positively valued stimuli, and (c) the presence of negative stimuli. Strains can engender negative emotions such as anger, frustrations, and depression, which create the offender's tendency towards deviant behaviors and criminal coping (Agnew, 2009a, 2009b). Agnew (1992) affirms that strain is least likely to lead to criminal coping when the individual has the capability and support to manage legitimate coping techniques desisting criminality.

Agnew (2002) posits that experienced, anticipated, and vicarious strain leads to criminal behavior. He also views the experienced strain because of personal experience based on negative relations. Agnew (2002) stated that vicarious strain observes, witnesses, or has knowledge of the negative experiences of people and relationships with individuals, which may enable a stressful event for the woman offender. Agnew (2002)

identified vicarious strains that can lead to criminality resulting from: (a) strains transpiring close to others; (b) stressors that occur to groups the person identifies with or belongs to; (c) strains are within proximity; (d) strains are unresolved; and (e) strains are passed from one to another.

Agnew (2002) also identified anticipated strain recognizing negativity for future expectations, clarifying that people experience strains expecting the worst in their future or present strains. Consequently, the anticipated strain would more likely lead to criminal behavior when it is believed (Agnew, 2002). The anticipated strain would more likely lead to criminal behavior when there is a perceived probability of anticipated strain (Agnew, 2002).

According to Agnew (2001), victimization is a wrongful and overpowering strain. Criminal victimization occurring in situations of low social control is related to the social learning of crime (Agnew, 2001). Agnew (2001) noted that victimization causes negative feelings that can cause people to engage in crime to reduce strains. Criminal coping may be a method for reducing strain (e.g., stealing the money you desire), seeking revenge, or alleviating negative emotions (Agnew, 2013). Agnew argues that persons failing to achieve goals are more likely to commit crimes or display those behaviors (2001). As a result, individuals often react to strains with various legitimate coping methods and only resort to criminal behaviors when these tactics fail to alleviate their strain or negative feelings (Agnew, 2013).

Criminal Justice System

Pew Charitable Trusts (2011) describes the American criminal justice system as a revolving door or offenders who are cycling in and out of the prison system. The criminal justice system is comprised of agencies at the local, state, federal, and tribal levels in different jurisdictions that are responsible for controlling crime and imposing penalties on violators of laws (Patterson, 2018). Patterson (2018) acknowledges three key components of the criminal justice system: legislative, law enforcement, courts, and corrections. These jurisdictions of the criminal justice system consist of many subcomponents with specific responsibilities that include parole officers, corrections officers, law enforcement officers, lawyers, judges, legal assistants, community-based providers, and other networks who possess differing opinions about the criminal behaviors, consequences, and the rehabilitation of the offenders (Pyrek, 2007); whose diverse communities are subjected to differing laws, behaviors, and crime statistics involving the criminal justice system (Wehrman & De Angelis, 2011). Variations in women's path into the criminal justice system, women's behavior during incarceration, behavior on parole and community supervision, and the circumstance of their experiences impacts the standards within the criminal justice system (Bloom et al., 2003).

Coronavirus Disease 2019

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr, implemented guidelines for the criminal justice system to quickly adapt its community supervision practices in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines (Vera Institute of Justice, 2020). Worldwide, the United States has the highest

number of COVID-19 cases and the largest incarcerated population (Macmadu et al., 2020). More than 4.3 million individuals are on parole or probation under community supervision (Viglione et al., 2020). Most convicted offenders are required to report in person to assigned officers who monitors their progress (Viglione et al., 2020). Criminal justice administrators adopted policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 for offenders who pose a lower risk (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Parole officers under community supervision changed mandatory in-person reporting via telephone, online, or postcards, suspending or limiting technical violations for reporting late, missing meetings, or failing a drug test versus committing a new crime (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020).

Prisons are epicenters for infectious diseases transmitting between prisoners, staff, and visitors, between prisons through transfers to and from the community (Hooks & Sawyer, 2020). Correctional custodial settings are critical parts of the public health response to COVID-19 (Kinner et al., 2020). From March 31, 2020, to June 6, 2020, researchers found through an analysis of prison COVID-19 cases that inmates test positive 5.5 times higher than the U.S. general population; with a prisoner case rate of 3,251 per 100,000 inmates in comparison to 587 cases in the U.S. general population (Saloner et al., 2020). The researchers found that the prison COVID-19 death rate was three times higher than the U.S. death rate of the general population; 39 deaths per 100,000 prison residents versus 29 deaths per 100,000 people (Saloner et al., 2020).

According to Figgatt (2020), states follow public health experts' guidance and issue early release orders for some offenders without providing needed reentry and

reintegration services, such as transportation, housing, and treatment upon the reentry into their community (Figgatt, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic impacts the community justice process from policing to community supervision (Chapman et al., 2020). The focus has primarily been on the pandemic's impact on the incarcerated populations (Akiyama et al., 2020; Kinner et al., 2020). However, the pandemic has directly affected community supervision agencies and the offending population (Swan & Campbell, 2020).

The coronavirus has magnified the challenges encountered by released offenders with high unemployment and social distancing practices among communities to curb the spread (Franco-Paredes et al., 2020). When offenders obtain employment, they often face a disproportionate risk of infection given their higher prevalence of working in the food industry, manufacturing, and maintenance (Lindquist et al., 2018). The biggest challenge facing community supervision is holding individuals accountable with limited resources; for example, limited resources, such as limited availability of treatment, inability to drug test due to office closures, or the process for testing (Swan et al., 2020).

COVID-19 has accelerated the potential toll of technical violations (Trounstein, 2020). Community supervision agencies are adapting traditional practices to reduce in-person contact, thereby increasing the use of online and telephone meetings, reducing arrest and incarceration for technical violations, and reducing, postponing, or eliminating parole and community supervision fees (Henderson, 2020). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2020), the focus of parole and community supervision should be on the offenders who benefit while limiting travel, office visits, and reincarceration of parolees that can increase exposure and transmission of COVID-19.

There is little research that explores how community supervision agencies adapt and respond to a global pandemic. Further research is warranted to assess criminal justice data and learn the short and long-term outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic response (Novisky et al., 2020). There is limited understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed parole and community supervision, such as virtual contacts, technical violations, home visits, and worksite visits (Swan & Campbell, 2020). Due to systemic racism, African Americans have been disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration and subjected to higher COVID-19 cases and mortality than Caucasian populations (Millett, 2020).

The pandemic has altered parole conditions under community supervision across the United States (Viglione et al., 2020). Health and financial hardships exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately harm all women, and especially women of color, involved in the criminal legal system (Golembeski et al., 2020). Alternatives to incarceration and continued support services are essential for disproportionately affected women offenders during the pandemic and beyond (Golembeski et al., 2020).

Criminal Justice Process

Over the past 30 years, the criminal justice system has received an influx of inmates causing overcrowding that has led to the proliferation of the prison industry (MacKenzie, 2001). According to Patterson (2018), people entering the criminal justice system move through agency networks applicable to their situation affecting the services received and the outcomes. However, women enter the criminal justice system contingent upon the different paths that lead to criminality (Belknap, 2015). Researchers have

discovered a difference in women's reactions to imprisonment, programs, rehabilitation, parole, and community supervision compared to men's (Miller, H. V., 2021).

History of Women's Prison

The first all-female penitentiary opened in 1839 under the administration of a male prison in Ossining, New York (Mallicoat, 2019). Women prisoners were initially housed in segregated areas of men's prisons with limited access to services (Freedman, 1981). The first stand-alone women's maximum-security prison opened in 1873 in Indiana (Jones, 2015). The United States established reformatories and custodial institutions throughout the 20th century to house female prisoners (Rafter, 1983).

Although reformatories were designed to rehabilitate women inmates, the custodial institutions were modeled as male prisons; warehousing female prisoners with access to very few programs or treatment (Johnson et al., 2017). The women sentenced to prison had committed felonies, such as property offenses and violent crimes (Johnson et al., 2017). Rafter (1983) reported African American women prisoners were held to lower standards and deemed to lack the ability to rehabilitate.

The 1970s was an era of prison advocacy for female inmates to be afforded the same programs and services as male prisoners (Belknap, 2015). Also, the courts began to challenge the practices of women's prisons to remedy the disparities in treatment (Belknap, 2015). This advocacy led to new policies that required the same treatment of male and female inmates (Thomas & Zaitzow, 2003). Researchers discovered that programs created for men did not meet the needs of women prisoners (Belknap, 2015).

Gendered policy methods called for a new viewpoint of the criminal justice system to recognize the behaviors and social differences mean the women prisoners needed the same programs and services as the male inmates (Bloom et al., 2003) between women and men offer in developing gender-responsive approaches. This approach required acknowledging women's lives, the pathways that led them to criminality, and the relationships that mold their lives (Bloom & Covington, 2000). The gender-responsive approach focused on socioeconomic, gender inequality, culture, and intervention to address family issues, chemical dependency, and dual diagnosis (Bloom & Covington, 2000). The gender-responsive programs were developed to transform the way that programs and facilities designed and managed the overall approach of programs aimed at female offenders (Bloom et al., 2003).

Women Offenders

Women's typical path to criminality is premised on surviving abuse, poverty, and substance abuse (Belknap, 2015). There is limited correctional research on women either through oversight or the sample size in mixed-gender studies (Belknap, 2015). Broidy (2001) proposed that men are more likely to react with anger, aggression, and violence. At the same time, women are likelier to experience depression, guilt, and anxiety that can lead to self-destructive behaviors like substance abuse (Broidy, 2001). Minority women are more likely than other women to endure the strains of marginalization in society and abuse in their families (Bush-Baskette & Smith, 2012). Strains can create negative feelings, but the reaction to strains is attached to coping mechanisms for adverse emotions (Agnew, 1992).

Along the same line, Agnew (2009b) argued that women have a more emotional social network in comparison to men and are least likely to have characteristics conducive to crime with higher levels of social control and fewer criminal associates. The researcher also reports that women are inclined to experience network strains, gender discrimination, and too many demands from family and other individuals. Women also have fewer skills and lower self-esteem than men, which can be associated with selecting self-destructive methods such as substance abuse (Agnew, 2009b).

According to Agnew (2001), gender creates the likelihood of a deviant reaction to negative feelings. Some researchers believe that women may identify with their gender but may not internalize the standard norms. The researchers argue that the degree the woman internalizes her different beliefs may affect her experiences and behaviors over their self-acknowledged gender identity. Isom-Scott and Mikell (2018) emphasize an important discovery about gender research as the difference between society's traditions and the person's reality of gender identification and portrayal that paves the way for individuals to embrace the different degrees of femininity and masculinity.

African American Women Offenders

Racism is a basis for persistent strains and psychological suffering for African Americans (Stevens-Watkins et al., 2014). African American women are disproportionately experiencing stress due to their intersectionality (Greer, 2011). Race, gender, and stress intersect as the offender experiences poverty, low wages, unemployment, trauma, and substance abuse (Carr et al., 2009). Greer (2011) attested

that the disproportionate strains African American women endure are partly because of their status.

Overall, African American women experience a higher level of health problems than Caucasian women (Williams & Sternthal, 2010). Mental health issues are more prevalent among African American women (Cutrona et al., 2005). African American women are disproportionately experiencing strains that are somewhat due to the intersecting disadvantaged statuses (Greer, 2011).

Broidy (2001) discovered that African American women are likelier than African American men to engage in legitimate coping such as praying or asking for prayer during hardships and that only self-directed emotions would have positive effects on the spiritual coping in response to strain. Jang (2007) supported Broidy and Agnew's findings that people are more likely to engage in legitimate coping behavior when they experience self-versus other-directed feelings in response to the strain. African American women are more prone to experience elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and anger than African American men (Broidy & Agnew, 1997). As a result of examining Broidy and Agnew's (1997) findings, Jang conceived the increased concern among African American women with financial issues reflected their reality as heads of households and supporting families (2007). African American women with strong beliefs and high self-esteem are more likely to use conforming and legal coping strategies in comparison to their male counterparts when they are frustrated by strains (Jang, 2007).

Mass Incarceration/War on Drugs

Mass incarceration surged in the 1970s, moving forward from a few hundred thousand to exceeding 2 million and continuing beyond 2.4 million in 2008 (Johnson et al., 2017). The female prison population increase exceeded 700% between 1980 and 2016 (Carson, 2018). African American women have been imprisoned at an alarming rate (Harris-Perry, 2016). One in 18 African American women encounters imprisonment during their lifespan, causing them to be 2.5 times more likely to be incarcerated in comparison to Caucasian women and versus Caucasian men (Guerino et al., 2011). By the end of 1970 through the 1980s and into the 1990s, at an unusual speed in history, an increase of the prison populations created a demand for prison housing (Travis et al., 2014). Travis et al. (2014) attested that a critical component of the increase in incarceration from the 1980s to the 1990s was drug offenses, with the incarceration rate at the state and federal prisons for drug convictions averaging 15 prisoners for every 100,000 adults.

By the middle 90s, the incarceration rate had escalated to 148 prisoners per 100,000 adults, with drug offenders comprising 60% of federal prisoners and 23% of the state prison population (Blumstein & Beck, 1999). Minorities and women offenders had an increase of incarceration from the 1980s to 1996, accounting for a 43% overall growth among female prisoners in comparison with 28% prison growth of male inmates, 36% of African Americans, and 32% of Hispanics compared with 17% Caucasians (Blumstein & Beck, 1999). Carson and Golinelli (2010) also found that women were most likely to land in prison, committing offenses such as identity theft, distribution of illegal drugs, felony

theft, first-degree burglary, and unlawful use of a motor vehicle. The number of women in the prisons increased, exceeding 750% between 1980 and 2017, resulting from more increased law enforcement, harsher drug sentencing policies, and reentry obstacles affecting female offender's reintegration (The Sentencing Project, 2019). The Sentencing Project (2019) found that the percentage of women convicted of drug offenses increased from 12% in 1986 to 25% in 2017.

Interestingly, feminist criminologists maintain that the war against drugs is about women of color who have a higher likelihood of drug convictions in comparison to Caucasian women who sell and use illegal drugs at similar rates (Nicewarner, 2019). The criminologist asserts that African American, Latin, and indigenous women comprise a disproportionate number of imprisoned women for substance abuse offenses even though Caucasians are almost four times likelier to use marijuana and three times likelier to use crack than African Americans (Nicewarner, 2019). Reagan (1991) discovered shocking statistics that showed 82% of substance abusers are Caucasian, yet the illegal drug issue portrays specific to the inner-city neighborhoods of color. Simmons (2018) argues that African American women are limited when released from prison for reentry and reintegration, believing that the laws promote a revolving door of recidivism and few opportunities to enhance their socioeconomic standing.

Quinney (2000) emphasized that whatever precedes crime is considerably more noteworthy to our discernment than the deed itself, believing that crime is the representation of a greater phenomenon. America's incarceration rate escalated so quickly beginning in the 1970s that researchers everywhere used the term mass

incarceration to explain the degree. However, other researchers favored the usage of hyperincarceration to clarify the cluster of imprisonment of minorities in marginalized communities (Dumont et al., 2012). According to Alexander (2010), mass incarceration is inclusive of laws, legislation, policies, and cultures that control the criminal offenders reentering and reintegrating into a society facing invisible stigmas and social exclusion as a segment of a target group.

Disparity in Sentencing

Most female offenders are sentenced to probation versus male offenders incarcerated (Harrington & Spohn, 2007). Women are sentenced more leniently than men across racial groups (Spohn & Beichner, 2000; Steffensmeier et al., 1998). Steffensmeier and Demuth (2006) found that Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic women are sentenced more leniently in comparison to Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic men. (Freiburger & Hilinski, 2009). Factors identified to influence decisions in the criminal court system are gender conditioned by the defendant's age, the offense, the characteristics of court staff, such as experience, age, gender, and education (Leiber et al., 2018).

Women who commit offenses that do not adhere to proper female behavior may be treated harsher than their male counterparts (MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2011; Tillyer et al., 2015). Also, women who possess extensive criminal backgrounds have a higher likelihood of receiving stricter sentences (Romain & Freiburger, 2017). Goulette et al. (2015) investigated 3593 felony cases to better understand how the criminal justice system treats women offenders. In comparison to Caucasian female offenders, African

American women offenders may be subjected to harsher treatment in the criminal courts because they are perceived as loud, forceful, and crime-prone; in addition to being more independent when assuming the role of head of household (Goulette et al., 2015)

Gender equality may portray a broader explanation of social and courtroom communities and help clarify where and how gender matters (Spohn, 2009). Daly (1987) suggests that the goal of lenient punishment toward women is to protect them, especially their children. According to Jordan and Freiburger (2009), the woman offender's role as caretaker may lead to leniency in sentencing.

Parole and Community Supervision

An inevitable aspect of reentry offenders on parole, according to Blumstein and Beck (1999), is that parole violations have continuously added to the increased growth in prison, with some states having parole violators as a significant portion of the prison admission. The researchers affirmed that a higher percentage of parolees over probationers fail community supervision (Blumstein & Beck, 1999). There is a continuing concern about recidivism among women offenders released from criminal justice institutions (Huebner et al., 2010).

Researchers frequently explore women offenders as a group, excluding the existing differences among the female offender's subgroups that may be pertinent in creating reintegration strategies (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). There is a scarcity of information about female offender's differences based on the severity of their crimes (Blackburn et al., 2016). Researchers have determined the existence of a typical depiction of female offenders under community supervision, disproportionately women of color,

frequently middle-aged, and the likelihood of a drug offense (Bloom et al., 2003). In addition to parole and under community supervision's governance, African American female offenders face issues of race, gender, poverty, and criminal history as they transition into society (Brown, 2010).

Drug testing, verifying employment, ensuring a place of residence, and technical violations risk factors are governed by the parole officer to ensure the offender is a good citizen to reduce recidivism (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). Schram et al. (2006) affirmed that many adult female parolees return to their communities with a list of prioritized needs that have been unmet during their incarceration that can drastically impact their reintegration into their neighborhoods. The women are released from prison to return to their communities with a stipulation to comply with their parole sanctions under the authority of community supervision while establishing their economic stability (Schram et al., 2006). Parole is characterized as borderline because the offenders shift between confinement and release to community supervision, maneuvering to comply with the conditions (Werth, 2012).

According to Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009), female offenders are sanctioned with conditions governing their behaviors to reintegrate into the community. The researchers described the general rules that women offenders are required to adhere to during parole and under community supervision that includes but is not limited to (a) weekly sessions with their assigned parole officer; (b) stipulations on driving abilities, residential facilities, alcohol selling establishments; (c) job readiness or job search activities; (d) participation in treatment programs; and (e) adhering to parole's

stipulations. Cornacchione and Smith (2016) emphasize the stigmas associated with the women's felony conviction and the possibility of recidivating are factors to be considered in creating barriers and threats to reintegration on parole and under community supervision.

Cornacchione and Smith (2016) conducted a study of whether female parolees discussed their needs or issues with their assigned parole officer and discovered that communication style affects the offenders' outcomes under community supervision. Parole and community supervision also used control and independence as techniques in communicating responsibility and guidance to the women offenders (Turnbull & Hannah-Moffat, 2009). Werth (2012) posits that circumstances in the female offender's lives demonstrate their experiences with community supervision as unfavorable concerning their reintegration. Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009) state that parole and under community supervision offsets offender's daily demands against successful reintegration.

The woman offender on parole and community supervision's harmonious relationship with their assigned parole officer, including their social and family network, is critical in forming their social identities of self (Bui & Morash, 2010). The relationship between the female offender, the parole officer, and the oversight of parole sanctions affects the reintegration and recidivism of the community supervision (Cobbina, 2010). The parole conditions and enforcement by the parole officer frequently clash with the female offender's reentry struggles (Opsal, 2014). Opsal (2014) also noted that parole stipulations could cause job loss and reduce contact with children for the female offender.

Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009) clarified that parole's management of the female offenders extends into monitoring the female offender's relationships to avoid involvement with the wrong persons. For the women on parole and under community supervision, the affordable and stable residency is a paramount issue among many women exiting prison because they lack the finances to afford a place or know where they will maintain residence (Schram et al., 2006). The women parolees arrive in their communities with other needs that require attention, such as substance abuse treatment, education, job readiness and training programs, mental and physical health issues (Schram et al., 2006).

The issues needing to be addressed, along with the financial instability of women released from prison, increased their probability for rearrest by almost four times, with the odds of parole violations by more than 12 times (Holtfreter et al., 2004). In a study conducted by Scroggins and Malley (2010) of the 155 reentry programs evaluated, researchers found that childcare, parenting, health maintenance, counseling services, stable housing, transportation, and education were essential for the women offenders reentering their communities. In addressing needs, researchers discovered that women offenders are often overlooked for reentry programs via a study of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative showed that women had a higher need for services in comparison to men (Garcia & Ritter, 2012). There was a distinction between the services that women offenders received in contrast to the services they needed (Garcia & Ritter, 2012).

Women offenders were primarily dependent on their families for support with money, housing and employment help, transportation, help with their children, and emotional support (Arditti & Few, 2006; Mallik-Kane & Visser, 2008). The women offenders were determined to have a lower probability of receiving family support, especially with housing issues (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). An inevitable aspect was that a lack of affordable residences might push some female offenders to reside in crime-infested communities (Berman, 2005). Transportation was another major issue for women offenders that may create hardships for accessing childcare (Berman, 2005) and overcoming obstacles that cause reintegration services to be inaccessible (O'Brien & Lee, 2006), along with challenges when using public transportation for shift work (Richie, 2001).

Benda (2005) contends that reliable indicators for African American women on parole and under community supervision to recidivate are childhood to adulthood sexual and physical abuse, negative feelings, and partner engages in criminal behavior and substance abuse. The number of children and the relationship is crucial for women offenders to reintegrate successfully (Benda, 2005). Researchers also stated the importance of addressing chemical dependency, physical and mental health problems that affect reentry and employability of released women offenders because these factors serve as critical predictors and indicators of their success on parole and under community supervision (Bushway & Apel, 2012). Addressing female offenders' basic needs, employment, family support, stable housing, transportation, and chemical dependency reduces criminal coping (Visser et al., 2003).

Reentry

Reentry has surfaced as a most difficult and persistent criminal justice issue (Pinard, 2010). Criminal convictions can bring unexpected sanctions and disqualifications such as child custody, living arrangements, government benefits, and occupations that may create stress on offenders reentering their community (Berson, 2013). American Bar Association (ABA) (2021) affirms that convicted felons may be subjected to approximately 18, 073 collateral consequences automatically imposed or inflicted because of a law, and 13, 567 discretionary collateral consequences, not requiring a decision made to impose the consequence and 1,202 collateral consequences that are mandatory with the option to be waived by the appropriate authority upon the affected individual's request (ABA, 2021).

When reentering society, women on parole may be treated as an outcast and judged by their criminal background that can hinder their reintegration and further criminality because of the humiliation women experience (Benson et al., 2011). The cost of being labeled a felon carries a substantial cost for women (Moore et al., 2016). Many women offenders feel stigmatized and discriminated against during reentry, which may adversely influence their self-concept (LeBel, 2012). These labels cause women to think that they will never overcome their criminal past (LeBel, 2012). Female parolees with low self-esteem who endure feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are more vulnerable to high levels of shame in their relations (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). All offenders do not experience negative repercussions from stigmas regardless of criminal

record (Moore et al., 2016). However, most released prisoners do not feel that their criminal conviction will affect their reintegration into society (Benson et al., 2011).

Gender, race, and ethnicity can affect the reentry process for African American women offenders (Bloom et al., 2003). Aday (1994) identifies African American women as a vulnerable target population due to their higher risk factors for poor health and disparity of risk compared to the general population. African American women offenders' restricted access to resources in presenting their health circumstances contributes to the convergence of their race, class, gender, and status, which escalates because of their involvement in the criminal justice process. Race and gender continuously shape female offenders' choices in their daily life (O'Brien & Lee, 2006). The stigma of being an African American woman offender on parole may create additional hardships of acceptance and access to needed resources (O'Brien & Lee, 2006).

Many offenders return to impoverished neighborhoods with high crime, unsafe environment, and a shortage of housing in urban areas (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Clear et al. (2014) posits that the concentrated nucleus of reintegration may trigger increased crime in these neighborhoods, causing African American female offenders to recidivate. The offender on parole and under community supervision reentering their community may escalate criminal behaviors by disrupting social networks and becoming a central figure in neighborhood disturbances (Clear et al., 2014).

Studies have also found that parolees convicted of severe offenses, previous criminal convictions, and assigned higher levels of community supervision have a higher

probability of recidivating (Stahler et al., 2013). Many female offenders who are reentering their communities experience poverty, emotional instability, difficulty finding employment, mental health issues, and an inadequate support system (Petersilia, 2001). Reentry is a challenging process for women offenders on parole attempting to reintegrate, finding a residence, securing a job, receiving treatment services, and adhering to the provisions of their community supervision.

Offenders on parole may encounter collateral consequences in obtaining government assistance, professional certifications and licenses, financial aid, retaining parental custody, and jury duty (Umez & Gaines, 2021). Newly released offenders face severe challenges in returning to their communities to position themselves in their previous roles before incarceration (Valera et al., 2017). They face roadblocks as they attempt to acquire entitlements, assistance, employment, and undertake other tasks to be an asset to society.

The amount of reentry support is limited in prison, and individuals may be released lagging further behind than when they initially entered prison. Upon release, offenders may have difficulty finding employment, lose financial aid eligibility, be denied enrollment into college programs, be separated, or divorced, and lack support from significant others (Ann E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Released offenders are being denied entitlements upon reintegrating into the community; for instance: loss or denial of renewing an occupational license, reinstatement of professional credentials received before incarceration, issuance of drivers' license, acquiring employment in certain occupations, right to vote, and jury duty based on specific requirements (Archer &

Williams, 2006; Geiger, 2006; Visher et al., 2003). Phillips and Lindsay (2011) discovered that offenders who re-offend are optimistic when reentering their communities with the intent to use legitimate coping techniques but succumb, regressing into substance abuse and criminal coping.

Travis (2005) explained the magnitude and effects of prison reentry, focusing on critical topics related to African American woman offenders as reentry challenges are housing, substance abuse, employability, physical and mental health. The researcher also noted that post incarceration is difficult for released prisoners anxious to find housing, acquire an official identification card, reunite with family and significant others, treat chemical dependency, find employment, and deal with a criminal history (Visher et al., 2003). Women offenders have special needs that have been an ongoing issue that presents challenges to their successful transition from prison into the community (Schram et al., 2006). Some researchers suggest that reentry is a gendered phenomenon because women's circumstances during reentry, and reintegration into their communities are unique compared to released male offenders (Cobbina, 2010; Heidemann et al., 2016).

Female offender's experiences and challenges differ in their roles as mothers because all situations are not the same (Aiello & McQueeney, 2016). Aiello and McQueeney (2016) posit that the diversity of the mothers who are offenders influences their perceptions of what a good mother is and applies to their culture and class. For African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision, few studies have explored the obstacles facing offending mothers (Cooper-Sadlo et al., 2018). In addition to psychological and financial strain, emotional strains place a burden on

significant others and family relationships imprisonment and during reentry and reintegration (Turney, 2015).

Reintegration

African American female offenders' reintegration into the community may be contingent upon their abilities to handle their basic needs and challenges that intersect (Travis, 2005). Furthermore, the stigma of being an African American female offender on parole and under community supervision increases obstacles that may hinder the offender's chances for successful reintegration into their communities (Novo-Corti & Barreiro-Gen, 2015). Most African American women offenders on parole return to the same marginalized community (Harding et al., 2013) portrayed by social chaos, high unemployment, family dysfunction, and the availability of limited services (Wallace & Papachristos, 2014). These concentrated neighborhoods may create a vulnerability to failed reintegration results (Chamberlain & Wallace, 2015). Wallace and Papachristos (2014) affirm that social disorganization plagues these communities, including high unemployment, family dysfunction, limited access to social services, social and physical disorder. The male and female offenders are competing for the same scarce resources in communities, including jobs, housing, and treatment programs and services (Massoglia, 2008).

Due to collateral consequences, offenders released from prison reentering their communities on parole and under community supervision may face challenges in obtaining stable housing, finding regular employment, abstaining from alcohol and drugs, disassociating from known felons, and adhering to parole appointments (Tyler &

Brockmann, 2017). Offenders must establish a secure residence for a successful reintegration that is crucial since most offenders who fail will do so within the 6 months of reentry (Petersilia, 2003). African American women offenders lacked resources in their communities that indicate a problem as many female offenders return to the same neighborhoods (Harding et al., 2013). Programs for reentry women are frequently designed for men, even though women have gender-specific needs that are unmet with the services women receive versus the services they need (Garcia & Ritter, 2012).

Women's unmet needs upon reintegration may complicate reintegration. There is a chance of increasing risk factors that lead to reincarceration with substance abuse and mental health conflicting with their reintegration into the community (Luther et al., 2011). These neighborhoods frequently lack a support system, stable relationships, and services to assist the offenders' reentry process (Fletcher, 2007). Some women relapsed after attempting to avoid criminal behaviors in their neighborhoods (Leverentz, 2010). The women have paths flawed with violence, abuse, mental disorders, and toxic relationships (Boppre & Salisbury, 2016). Women offenders reentering to disadvantaged communities infested with ex-prisoners have minimal opportunities to find an intimate mate lacking a criminal background (Leverentz, 2010).

Seagrave and Carlton (2010) discovered that women struggle significantly with loneliness and boredom, in addition to challenges accessing employment, housing, and healthcare. Impoverished minority communities in the United States usually comprise a large portion of reentering offenders (Harding et al., 2013). These communities often lack the support system and services to facilitate the offenders' reentry process (Fletcher,

2007). The offenders who return to these communities have a higher probability of recidivating and do so faster than those not returning to impoverished areas (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). The return of the ex-prisoners to these neighborhoods can increase crime by creating chaos among their network and escalate disorder (Clear et al., 2014). It is essential to find the dynamics that impact the successful reentry and reintegration process of the female offenders in developing effective programs and services upon their prison release (Blackburn et al., 2016).

African American female offenders subjected to numerous incarcerations face many psychological and social obstacles (Salina et al., 2011). Repeat incidences of incarceration give rise to the standard associated risk features such as depression, chemical dependency, and domestic violence (Salina et al., 2011). According to Richie (2001), the female offender's awareness of being marginalized within a socioeconomically disadvantaged community has a penetrating effect on her ability to transition. The offender's interactions between themselves and their surroundings may contribute to positive results or failure during community reintegration (LeBel et al., 2008).

The released prisoner's reintegration experiences differ based on sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, community, and state laws and practices (Herrschaft et al., 2009; Visher et al., 2003). The offenders encounter reentry challenges, employment, education, and housing (Petersilia, 2003). Barriers most addressed include employment, housing, family reunification, transportation, health care, accessing programs, and meeting the sanctions of their community supervision (Petersilia, 2003; Travis, 2005).

Women's top criminogenic needs identified are employment, financial, substance abuse, parenting, and anger (Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

Case and Fassenfest (2004) discovered that low self-concept is the toughest challenge in the reintegration process. The authors believed that women offenders' feelings of uselessness and powerlessness shatter their self-esteem, weakening their attempts to overcome hardships during reintegration. A more comprehensive understanding of what female offenders endure can enhance academic understanding and contribute to gender-specific programs for female offenders (Rodermond et al., 2016). Historically, studies have shown that persons engaged in criminality usually lack coping skills when facing stressful events (Phillips & Lindsay, 2011).

Motherhood

Approximately 60 % to 80% of imprisoned women are single parents and have dependent children (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Kennedy et al., 2020). Children of incarcerated parents' struggle with separation and are six times likelier to experience incarceration themselves (Boudin, 2011; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013). Many obstacles, such as imprisoned parent or caregiver's desire to prevent a child from exposure to the prison environment, distance, related costs, lack of child-friendly areas, and inconvenient visiting hours hinder the offender's visit with their children (Kennedy et al., 2020; Swavola et al., 2016; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2020).

Before incarceration and transitioning into parole and community supervision, many women offenders were primarily the heads of households raising their children before incarceration, which created a stressor when released from prison (Schram et al.,

2006). Very little research has focused on African American female offenders and motherhood during her reintegration (Gurusami, 2019a). Many African American women on parole and under community supervision are mothers whose challenges have increased when returning to society (Garcia, 2016). Approximately two thirds of incarcerated women have minor children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2019).

According to Brown and Bloom (2009), many released offenders are mothers who encounter many challenges as they strive to fulfill their parenting role as they address stable housing, employment and continuously meet the sanctions of community supervision to remain on parole. African American mothers engage in a parenting style specific to their experiences (Gurusami, 2019b). The stigmas of African American women on parole, being a convicted felon, highlights the mother as a felon, with consequences that affect her successful reentry into society (Garcia, 2016). As mothers, many women offenders experience a higher degree of discrimination than their male counterparts (Robison & Miller, 2016). Female parolees with children suffer more frequently from the stigma associated with incarcerations as society tends to view women offenders as unfit mothers (Kauffman, 2001; Teather et al., 1997). Women offenders strive to provide a positive environment and mentor their children to abstain from deviant behaviors and criminality (Cobbina & Bender, 2012).

African American women offenders renegotiate their role as mothers, with many demands for which possible frustrations occur from the challenges they face when released into the community (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Richie, 2001). African American women offenders reenter society encountering many of the same issues that interfered

before incarceration, such as unstable residencies, poverty, illiteracy, low wages, unemployment, insufficient social services resources, and substance abuse (Brown & Bloom, 2009). The intersectional identity of African American women offenders' identities intensifies their exposure to stigmas, especially their circumstances as a parent (Gunn et al., 2018). Despite the rapid increase in female incarceration, few research studies have explored the challenges previously incarcerated mothers have endured over the past decades (Cooper-Sadlo et al., 2018). Limited research has focused on African American women offenders' reintegration process as mothers (Gurusami, 2019a).

Incarcerated women are four times likelier to have children placed with child protective services than male offenders (De Claire & Dixon, 2017; Swavola et al., 2016). Many African American female offenders also have a history of maternal experiences with the criminal justice process and child welfare services (Brown & Bloom, 2009). Richie (2001) discovered that many women prisoners forfeited their rights to at least one of their children in the child welfare system. Harm and Phillips (2001) posited that the stress and frustration of dealing with issues about whether they reunite with their children might harm African American women offenders on parole and community supervision. Martinez and Christian (2008) also discovered that rebuilding family relationships was the most challenging segment of the reintegration process among women offenders (Naser & La Vigne, 2006).

Marital relationships can hinder the offender's criminality due to reduced time spent with peers (Leverentz, 2006). Women offenders have a low probability of finding a partner without a criminal history when the neighborhood is infested with crime and the

offending population (Leverentz, 2006). Some offenders' families may have been involved in the initial criminal activities and would provide an environment that promotes repeat incidences of criminality (Flowers, 2010).

Family is also critical in easing the personal relationships between the offender, their faith institution, lawful family members, good neighbors, and their community (Petersilia, 2003). Family relationships may be complicated from previous hardships and fear of a repeat cycle of crime (Travis, 2005), leading to a challenging homecoming (Harm & Phillips, 2001). Gaskins (2004) propose that female offenders frequently prefer to engage in criminal activities or use them to deal with financial instability or domestic abuse.

Education and Employment

Released African American women offenders on parole and under community supervision need to follow the guidelines that may mandate employment. According to Flowers (2010), deterrents for women offender's employability may be emotionally tiring, along with being financially challenged. Flowers (2010) affirmed that female offenders deal with limited potentialities and many barriers that may produce depression, insecurity, and continued dependence on institutional and support services. Many offenders use these social networks in finding employment, access to education, training, emotional and social support, which increases their human capital (Reisig et al., 2002). Researchers found that disclosing felony convictions contributed to the ex-prisoner's attrition rate in job search activities (Rosenthal et al., 2015).

Researchers discovered that offenders who acknowledged their felony criminal convictions when applying for college admissions were pushed away (Rosenthal et al., 2015). Kiyimba et al., (2019) discovered that correctional education and training received while incarcerated were useless to offenders when they returned to society. Upon reentering their community, the experiences resulting from the stigma of imprisonment, or the previous convictions may have an adverse effect and reduce their drive for employment (Kiyimba et al., 2019).

Health

Poor health can be a causation factor for stress in a person's life (Schroeder et al., 2011). On parole and under community supervision, African American women offenders may lack health coverage and access to health care facing challenges that can interfere with continuing health-related services upon reentering society (Tyler & Brockmann, 2017). Stress may be a deterrent to prioritizing health care as they manage community supervision requirements and struggle to meet their basic needs, including support (Patel et al., 2014).

Agnew (1992) described poor health as a nonsocial determination of strain because it is viewed as unjust, for example, a natural cause, accident, chance, or outcomes from an individual's behavior. African American women offenders may suffer from mental health problems such as depression, psychological disorders, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from childhood physical and sexual abuse (Covington & Bloom, 2007). Skeem et al. (2014) found that parolees with mental health issues share many of the same criminogenic risk factors as all parolees, even though they

differ substantially in their degrees of risk for recidivism. However, parolees with mental health problems are likelier to reoffend due to criminogenic risk factors, such as anger, illegitimate coping, and impulsivity (Skeem et al., 2014). Depression and other mental health problems are especially widespread among African American women who have a higher probability of lacking health coverage or pursuing preventative or other forms of care (Pullen et al., 2014).

Of the 600,000 prisoners released annually, most do not receive treatment services that fit their criminogenic needs during imprisonment or post release (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Female offenders overwhelmed with difficulties during the reintegration process may repeat incidences of substance abuse (Phillips & Lindsay, 2011). Substance abuse is a coping mechanism for traumatic situations (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Taxman et al. (2013) assert that offenders' reentry failure is exacerbated by limited access to relevant rehabilitation services while on parole and under community supervision. Taxman et al. (2013) reported that seven of 10 offenders suffer from chemical dependency. Only 5% of parolees receive suitable treatment services on an average day. Most offenders complete low-intensity treatment consisting of counseling and pharmacological medications (Taxman et al., 2007).

Agnew (1992) identified unpleasant neighborhood circumstances and experiences with traumatic victimization as examples of present noxious stimuli that may cause strain. Chronic strains contribute to emotional states by promoting negative self-perceptions and harmful coping techniques (Agnew, 1992). Agnew (1992, 2001) acknowledges anger as the dominant emotion connecting strain and crime, even though

depression and anxiety intervene, especially among women (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Jang, 2007). Agnew (2001) affirms that poor health is a source of strain with a likelihood of criminality. Agnew also stated that strain associated with poor health is high in magnitude and creates stress or motivation for criminal coping techniques (Agnew, 2001).

Welfare

African American women offenders may require public benefits to reintegrate into society. Public welfare has changed in many states for convicted offenders creating collateral consequences causing them to be ineligible for financial assistance, food stamps, Social Security, and public housing (Holtfreter et al., 2004). The researchers found that education, health care, housing, and job training drastically reduced recidivism by 83% or women offenders on parole and under community supervision (Salisbury et al., 2009). Female offenders were predicted to reoffend or violate parole with prerelease guidance on obtaining food stamps, jobs and meeting mandated requirements of community supervision (Harding et al., 2013).

Family and Community

Communication with a social network for reentry is critical for offenders to secure post release plans for reintegration (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Folk et al., 2019).

The loss of social networks varies among African American women offenders and can create difficulty with coping techniques related to life situations (Link & Oser, 2018).

Women's pathways to being enmeshed in the criminal justice system are frequently associated with their relationships, intimate partner violence, the pressure to

engage in criminality, and substance abuse (Jiwatram-Negron & El-Bassel, 2015; Meyer et al., 2014, 2017). Women offenders involved in an intimate relationship with a partner engaged in criminality are at a higher risk than their male counterparts of reoffending (Benda, 2005; Cobbina, 2010). The pressure of a relationship may cause the African American woman offender to reoffend.

The convicted women can find themselves reincarcerated with a new conviction or revocation of a technical violation (Gaskins, 2004). Researchers also found that female offenders with lower educational levels have smaller networks and receive more modest support (Reisig et al., 2002). Scholars also discovered that the women who tried to advance beyond their existing network could be ridiculed or subjected to resistance for being viewed as disrupting the group's unity, such as working versus engaging in criminal activities (Reisig et al., 2002).

Homelessness

Reoffending African American women on parole reentering communities encounter obstacles in acquiring housing. Housing is a critical component of the woman offender's successful reintegration (Graffam et al., 2004). Incarceration and instability in housing trigger social isolation and disruption in offender's networks, affecting their ability to create stable relationships. The interruption of these crucial risk factors disproportionately impacts the African American population (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Hartney & Vuong, 2009).

The importance of the offenders having a place to stay was identified with a need for funds and personal references to secure a residence in the private market (Travis,

2005). Travis (2005) also acknowledged that federal housing guidelines prohibit many offenders from accessing public housing and assisted housing, even though some offenders are barred from their family residence. These are risk factors that can lead to homelessness for African American female offenders. Many imprisoned women have been subjected to more than one incidence of homelessness coming from overburdened families, residing in overcrowded and substandard situations (Nicewarner, 2019).

On the contrary, there is considerable inconsistency in estimating the prevalence of homelessness among released offenders exiting jails and prisons, with significant disparities in assessing prisoners and parolee homelessness (Petersilia, 2003). McKernan (2017) investigated obstacles that homeless ex-offenders encounter in accessing housing and combatting unstable housing and homelessness among offenders. Limiting social services, collateral sanctions, including unstable housing, was also considered. Focused on barriers to offender reentry, homelessness, and ex-offenders, transitioning from prison to home, practices and policies were also addressed. The author posits reducing homelessness among offenders can promote public safety.

Covington (2001) posited that programs and services have neglected to identify options that meet the gender-specific and cultural needs of women offenders. Upon release from prison, stable housing is an indicator of the female parolee meeting the conditions of their community supervision (Bloom & Covington, 2000). Many adult female offenders discover that they are homeless or in a situation that does not support their successful reintegration (Covington, 2001). Unstable housing is a significant risk factor for women offenders on parole to face revocation (Schram et al., 2006).

Approximately ten percent of prisoners are homeless before being imprisoned, and the same number experiences homelessness upon release to reenter their community (Roman & Travis, 2004). Offenders with a criminal background experience homelessness approximately four to six times more than the general offending population (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2008).

Many offenders reenter impoverished communities with high crime, unsafe, and a shortage of housing in urban areas (Kubrin & Stewart, 2006). Researchers affirm that African American female offenders quickly secure a stable residence; since most offenders who recidivate do so during their first 6 months of reentry (Hamilton & Campbell, 2013; Petersilia, 2003). Kruttschnitt (2010) stated that some female offenders live with family members or a past or current partner who may already be overburdened. The authors also discovered the parolees were continuously stressed about finding and maintaining a safe and affordable home because they moved many times, dependent on others until they could establish their dwelling. Housing was very problematic since female offenders were unable to reunify or assume their parenting rights until a stable environment was created (Kruttschnitt, 2010). Thus, some female offenders recidivated after struggling to avoid criminal behaviors in their neighborhoods (Leverentz, 2010).

Alternative to Incarceration

Diversion programs are alternatives to incarceration that allow certain low-level and nonviolent offenders to divert from the regular criminal justice process (Wang & Quandt, 2021). The Center for Prison Reform (2015) affirms that diversion may occur before or after the filing of the criminal charge. Completing a diversion requirement

usually results in a criminal offense charge being dropped or reduced, while failure may result in the restoration or heightening of the original penalties (Center for Prison Reform, 2015).

Diversion is a criminal justice practice that emerged in the 1970s to reduce social stigmas, prison overcrowding, save tax money, rehabilitate, amenable offenders, and improve public safety (Wang & Quandt, 2021). The goal of diversion is to remove offenders bound for incarceration and place them in community-based supervision programs. Diversion focuses on the general offenders, using supervision and mandates as the primary tools to transform rather than imprison. According to Porter (2010), diversion research concentrated on offenders who were chemically dependent, suffering from mental health issues, and youth delinquency to assert structured interventions as the primary triggers of change and specially created to lessen the problems of mass incarceration.

Diversion programs were initially available to juveniles and small street criminals to reduce crime, allowing courts to focus on dangerous criminals and minimize the threats from diverted offenders imposed on society (Belenko et al., 2004). Current research suggests this is especially valid for women who have followed gendered trajectories into the criminal justice system (Day et al., 2014; Saxena et al., 2014). According to Van Voorhis (2016), studies that emerged in the 1990s brought attention to the critical differences showing women offenders more engaged in dysfunctional relationships, poverty, head of households, residing in unsafe residences, and neighborhoods portraying a higher need. Many women offenders enduring mental health

issues and traumatic experiences are connected to substance abuse (Bloom et al., 2003). Gender-responsive programs came to fruition to identify and address the women offender's needs, which was initially rejected by a lack of research (Van Voorhis, 2016). A meta-analysis discovered that high fidelity programs are more effective for women than high fidelity gender-neutral programs (Gobeil et al., 2016).

According to Gobeil et al. (2016), female offenders represent a small number in the prison system; therefore, the data in an evidence-based study primarily based on male offenders. Several researchers have acknowledged that existing reintegration postures are based on male models of change and fail to consider that desistance factors differ among men and women offenders (Herrschaft et al., 2009). Women offenders share similar problems; however, they also experience specific issues resulting from their race, class, and gender. McGee et al. (2014) found very few African American culture-related treatment programs across the criminal justice system. According to Mears et al. (2015), the released offender population is characterized by age, race, ethnicity, and sex, serving different prison sentences whose traumatic experiences differed; coping skills ranged from low to well, suffered mental health or substance abuse problems. Criminal justice history has shown that most treatment programs fail because they are poorly created initially (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Criminal justice agencies have widely adopted the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) principles to facilitate managing offenders by prioritizing program placement in the community based on risk factors that influence criminal behaviors (Taxman & Smith, 2020). The purpose of the risk need assessment tools is to measure an offender's risk

factors to recidivate, including criminal history, age, history of mental health, and substance abuse issues (Hamilton et al., 2016). The RNR model for reentry programs is effective based on a validated correctional theory (Hunter et al., 2016; Mears et al., 2015; Petersilia, 2011). Risk need assessment instruments are augmented to detect gender-specific dynamic risk and responsivity factors (Salisbury et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2012).

Women's pathways into criminality are affected by risk factors, such as victimization, childhood trauma, and mental health conditions (DeHart, 2018). Overlooking these factors during the intervention may continue to expend criminogenic stressors on offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Women offenders have different needs than men, which requires a different treatment component to be responsive to women's needs (Messina et al., 2006; Pelissier et al., 2003; Staton-Tindall et al., 2007).

Reentry programs are frequently marked by a lack of a transparent theoretical model and failure to explain which risk factors are targeted and have established predictors of recidivism (Mears et al., 2015). Taxman et al. (2013) assert that inmate reentry is highlighted by widespread failure exacerbated by the offender's limited access to appropriate rehabilitation services while on parole and under community supervision. Of the 600,000 prisoners released annually, most do not receive treatment services that fit their criminogenic needs during imprisonment or post release (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). According to Lattimore et al. (2009), very little evidence exists to prove reentry programs have long-term effects and can reduce offender recidivism. Four obstacles for effective reentry are a lack of programs based on recidivism theory, lack of accuracy in treatment

when implementing plans, and the inability of clarity in reentry evaluative studies such as SVORI to best deal with reentry offenders (Lattimore et al., 2009).

The reentry programs are created specifically to accommodate reentry offenders compared to prison or community-based programs that address criminogenic needs administered by the criminal justice system, nonprofit organizations, faith-based agencies, or ex-offenders (Lattimore et al., 2009). The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI); a collaborative effort among the U.S. Departments of Justice, Labor, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services whose aim was to increase successful offender reintegration in criminal justice, housing, health, employment, and education (Lattimore & Visher, 2010).

The services tended to be irrelevant to recidivism measures with some criminogenic effects, and the result is inconsistent on recidivism (Lattimore et al., 2009). A systematic evaluation of the SVORI targeting 16 most promising programs showed that at the end of 24 months, male and female participants had a higher reincarceration rate, with uncertainty if SVORI programs should serve as evidence-based models (Lattimore & Visher, 2010). According to Mears et al. (2015), most programs are not evaluated because of the difficulty of building a large body of studies that determine each program's variant. The risk principle concept involves matching levels of treatment to the offender's risk level (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Most reentry programs are implemented with little to no credible theoretical framework (Mears et al., 2015).

According to Jonson and Cullen (2015), the capacity to develop reentry programs informed by evidence-based corrections is limited. Existing evaluations spread across

various programs, rarely used experimental designs, often yield inconsistent results (Jonson & Cullen, 2015). Systematic reviews, including meta-analysis, suggest that reentry services do tend to decrease recidivism, but the program effects are heterogeneous and, at times, criminogenic (Jonson & Cullen, 2015).

Some prisons have implemented gender-responsive policies and programs to address women's different needs. Some programs have surfaced in communities to meet the needs of released female offenders identified with an increased need to expand services in meeting the needs of roughly 81,000 prison releases annually (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Reentry female offender's needs may become complicated, and overwhelming based on some models providing wraparound services for female offenders. Examples of these models include A New Way of Life Reentry providing transitional housing, case management, and legal services along with New York City, which has the Ladies of Hope Ministry, St Louis with the Center for Women in Transition, and Angela House in Houston, TX (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020).

Hundreds of thousands of women offenders continue to leave prison confines without needed resources, based on the gap between what the women need and the accessibility of the women offender's reentry programs (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). According to Pendergrast (2009), many meta-analytical studies indicated that cognitive-behavioral therapy and relapse prevention interventions reduce parolees' risk for recidivism. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is designed to transform criminality (Dowden et al., 2003). The treatment combines relapse prevention strategies that enable chemically dependent offenders to identify circumstances for drug use and criminal behaviors, create

and implement coping techniques in handling these situations, develop or strengthen their social network, and promote self-confidence (Dowden et al., 2003). Some researchers acknowledged that cognitive behavior therapy might not fit for those at the highest risk of recidivism and relapse since the curriculums usually have one or two sessions a week, which is considered low intensity (Landenberger & Lipsey, 2005).

Recidivism

African American women offenders subjected to strains may encounter difficulty adapting to society upon reentry, in addition to unemployment, unstable housing situations, antisocial behaviors, returning to neighborhoods with criminogenic influences, and limited availability of support can increase recidivism (Wright & Cesar, 2013). Researchers found that women probationers and parolees had a higher likelihood of recidivating (Holtfreter et al., 2004). Deschenes et al. (2006) discovered that the most decisive predictors of recidivism among African American women are race, age, and past criminal history, particularly those involved in juvenile delinquency. Repeat incidences of imprisonment may also create obstacles for families and marriage relationships (Travis et al., 2014). Offenders may become dependent on repeat incarcerations and develop an inability to function daily in the community without a structured system due to adapting to lengthy routines of prison life (Haney, 2002).

Subsequent removal from society and parole supervision may also strain social capital and personal relationships, increasing post incarceration criminality (Frisch, 2018). Schram et al. (2006) found among 350 variables in a quantitative study that women offenders reentering their communities reoffend when their needs are unmet. The

researchers acknowledged that many of the women were under-assessed for substance abuse treatment, housing, and other support because of the emphasis on imprisonment versus outside treatment in parole facilities (Schram et al., 2006).

A secondary analysis of a recidivism data set (Deschenes et al., 2006) discovered those female offenders had a higher probability of recidivating. Race and ethnicity are key features that can affect the likelihood of failing probation, parole, and successful reentry (Laub & Sampson, 2001). A recidivism study initiated by the DOJ showed African Americans were 72% more likely to be rearrested and 54.2% more likely to be rearrested versus Whites (Hartney & Vuong, 2009). African American women are 63% more likely to be rearrested, 43.8% reconvicted, and 34.0% returned to prison (Deschenes et al., 2006).

Alper et al.(2018) found that 82% of the prisoners rearrested during the nine years were rearrested within the first 3 years, and almost half of the prisoners who were not arrested within the first 3 years were arrested during years 4 through year 9. One fourth of women offenders recidivate within 6 months; one third fail within a year, and two thirds return to prison within 4 years of community reintegration (Snyder et al., 2016). Leverentz (2010) discovered that returning to their communities caused some female offenders to recidivate after wrestling with coping skills during reintegration (Leverentz, 2010). African American women offenders have a higher probability of recidivating (Hartney & Vuong, 2009).

Hartney and Vuong (2009) found that African Americans were 72% more likely to be rearrested, and 54.2% more likely to be rearrested versus Whites. African American

women are 63% more likely to be rearrested, 43.8% reconvicted, and 34.0% returned to prison (Deschenes et al., 2006). Some researchers affirmed that 73% of women are likely to reoffend in comparison to 64% of male offenders for technical violations (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Petersilia (2003) acknowledged that community-based programs for female reentry are limited, and parole officers faulted for being unhelpful. A lack of chemical dependency programs to meet female offenders' needs increases their chances of reoffending (Huebner et al., 2010; Scroggins & Malley, 2010).

Summary and Conclusions

African American female offenders return to prison twice of Caucasian female offenders. Research is limited to African American female offenders. During the searches, literature was limited on strains and reoffending African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. This chapter describes the history of the strain theory, beginning with Emile Durkheim, the founder of the anomie theory, adapted by Robert Agnew's GST. The major themes in this chapter relate to the African American female offender's experiences with strains on parole and under community supervision.

The literature review focused on the strains experienced during the criminal justice process that may trigger the offender to recidivate versus conforming to the mandates of their prison release. The literature review researched the leading strain theorist beginning with Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton, and Albert Cohen to describe the evolution of Robert Agnew's GST and its role in African American female offender's experiences on parole and under community supervision. This literature highlights

incarceration, reentry, reintegration, recidivism, diversion, and intervention strategies in reducing the behaviors that could impact African American female offenders' reintegration into the community.

Chapter 3 provides the reasoning for selecting the descriptive phenomenological qualitative approach to investigate the research question about African American female offenders active on parole under community supervision. This chapter will provide the infrastructure of the phenomenological method and determine why it was the best fit for the GST. The overview of the researcher details the role of this study. The sample, procedure, data collection, and data analysis are included and issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I investigated the lived experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Qualitative interviews serve as instruments for reticent and vulnerable populations (von Benzon & van Blerk, 2017; Williams, 2020). Although qualitative interviews risk emotionality, formerly incarcerated women may benefit from the opportunity to converse with someone, allowing for self-reflection, enhancing related topics and subject matter, and assisting someone else in the future (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Qualitative research can be storytelling from the participants' viewpoints and generate rich descriptive data (Roberts, 2004). In this chapter, I describe the research design and the rationale. This chapter also includes a detailed overview explaining the methodology, threats to validity, and ethical procedures related to the researcher's role. Lastly, the conclusion of this chapter consists of a summary of the research methods.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Question

Using Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach, also known as the descriptive approach, I examined the experiences of African American women offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The participants described their experiences on parole and under community supervision. My goal was to understand these women's experiences and how the experiences may impact behaviors among African American women offenders. The research question that was the foundation of

this research is: What are the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision?

Central Concept of Phenomena

According to Van Manen (2017), the objective of phenomenology is to understand how individuals experience or comprehend their environment. Additionally, Teherani et al. (2015) asserted that the meaning of phenomenology is rooted in the concept that individuals are naturally disposed to experience their world as meaningful. More so, Polizzi (2011) posited that the experience of strain, such as prison and parole, represents the phenomenology of experiences given meaning by individuals and people in their networks. I have selected the phenomenological research approach to grasp the essence of the experience of African American women offenders who are in an active status on parole and under community supervision.

Rationale for Phenomenology

Phenomenology is about understanding how people experience their world (Grossoehme, 2014). The phenomenological approach aids a researcher in investigating the participants' experiences, thoughts, and emotions and elicits the underlying details for how and why people behave as they do (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Phenomenology provides clarity in comprehending a human being's experiences (Polizzi, 2011). I chose the descriptive phenomenological approach to effectively explore African American women offenders' experiences on parole and under community supervision.

Phenomenology can be descriptive or interpretive in nature (Jackson, et al., 2018; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). I intended to obtain robust data with descriptions of the

experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision (Jackson et al., 2018). A descriptive approach allows participants to describe their experiences so a researcher can grasp the essence of the phenomenon (Hopkins et al., 2017).

Qualitative research is focused on words rather than numbers to perceive the world in its natural context (Walia, 2015). I can use this research to gather data from African American women offenders regarding their comprehension of situations to better understand the meanings formed in their experiences. Qualitative interviews are used when research is focused on vulnerable populations and sensitive topics that may trigger powerful emotions, such as anxiety and discomfort (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Qualitative research provides a method to reach a clearer insight into African American women offenders' experiences (Van Manen, 2017). Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of descriptive phenomenology provides an in-depth description of the body of knowledge about the human experience, creating an effective strategy and a foundation for studies (Shosha, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Pezalla et al., 2012). As the researcher, I investigated the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. I have worked as a senior case manager in the Texas parole system. A researcher must be self-reflective and conscious of biases that could influence the participants' descriptions of their experiences (Van Manen, 2016).

Bias can alter the authenticity of participants' experiences and misrepresent what participants are conveying (Wadams & Park, 2018). I reflected through journaling and bracketing to ensure my views did not cloud the data collection process (Cypress, 2017). Reflexivity occurs through researchers' ongoing reflection on being a part of society and recognizing, exploring, and comprehending how their background, location, and assumptions may impact their research activities (Palagnas et al., 2017).

Researchers are encouraged to acknowledge their presence, indicate their role in developing knowledge, and continuously scrutinize how their biases, beliefs, and experiences can affect their research (Berger, 2015). A researcher's role includes numerous responsibilities: (a) recruiting participants, (b) creating interview questions, (c) conducting interviews, (d) collecting data, and (e) coding and analyzing the data. The research must comply with IRB requirements for a doctoral research study involving participants.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The study's target population was African American female offenders, 18 years and above, active on parole and under community supervision. The target population for recruitment met the criteria and have experienced the phenomenon under study, which allowed me to adequately collect data for analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As a previous employee of the criminal justice system, I had no connections that may affect participants' parole release under community supervision; and all involved volunteered without any form of influence or coercion.

Sampling Strategy

The purposive sampling strategy consisted of 10 participants who are African American women offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Interviews were conducted until saturation is achieved. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that a sample of six to 10 participants possessing a likeness in their experiences would be adequate to collect data for analysis.

Purposive sampling is frequently used in qualitative research on information-rich matters about the phenomenon under study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling is focused on individuals with features who will be better suited to assist in the relevance of the research (Wu Suen et al., 2014). A purposive sampling strategy is an intentional choice of seeking participants who possess the likeness needed for the phenomenon under study (Etikan, 2016). Therefore, participants for this study were selected using a purposeful sampling strategy to self-identify individuals meeting the participation criteria.

Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Snowballing sampling was used to request that interested persons refer individuals meeting criteria to the recruiting flyer for direct contact with me. Once eligibility criteria were verified for prospective participants, I provided them with an informed consent form detailing the study and their rights as a participant. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study before deciding if they would participate. Participants were briefed that they would

maintain confidentiality throughout the study. I used pseudonyms, such as Participant A1, to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of their involvement in the research.

The individuals confirmed their voluntary participation by replying within an email containing the informed consent form, "I consent." Upon receiving the emailed consent form, I coordinated a telephone interview with each participant on a day and time that was convenient. Participants were encouraged to seek out a private setting that provides confidentiality so they could speak freely.

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

I began recruitment activities after the approval of my IRB application (#09-08-21-0786508). After receiving approval from the IRB, participants were purposively selected through social media by posting a flyer across Facebook to connect with the target populations meeting the inclusion criteria. Facebook is a more effective recruitment tool for capturing hard-to-reach, stigmatized, and marginalized groups (Carter-Harris, 2016; Russomanno et al., 2019). Facebook has been used by many researchers on sensitive and stigmatized topics and suggested as a recruitment tool for researchers aiming to recruit these target populations (Thornton et al., 2016; Whitaker et al., 2017). I requested that Facebook moderators across social media platforms display a recruitment flyer for potential participants to contact me directly.

The flyer contained the name of the study and explained the purpose of the research, type of interview (telephone interview), eligibility criteria for participants, and the expected benefit of this study. The flyer displayed three prescreening questions for

interested participants to determine if they met all criteria to participate in this study: identify as an African American woman, age 18 and above, in an active status on parole and under community supervision. I implemented snowballing by requesting that Facebook moderators and potential participants distribute the flyers to organizations serving the target population and others that may meet the criteria.

Participation

All participants were recruited voluntarily and had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I emailed participants meeting the eligibility criteria the informed consent form modeled after the Walden IRB sample. The participant were required to email a reply stating, “I consent” from the original email containing the informed consent form containing the details of the research study. The participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time.

Upon receiving the emailed informed consent form, I emailed each participant to coordinate a day and time for the telephone interview with the option to reschedule should a disruption occur due to connectivity issues or cancellation. Pseudonyms were automatically assigned upon receipt of the original email reply with the statement “I consent.” I notified participants that 90 minutes would be set aside for the telephone interview session. The participants received an email confirmation of the scheduled interview within 24 hours of the scheduled appointment. The email contained the participant’s assigned pseudonym for the study. Anonymity protects the participants’ privacy, and confidentiality encourages the participant to speak freely (Surmiak, 2018).

Participants' briefing covered confidentiality guidelines, including the assigned pseudonym.

I reviewed the informed consent form with every participant at the beginning of the telephone interview. I discussed the consent form with each participant, covering the purpose of the study and their rights and informing them that they could stop the interview at any time. Participants' identities remained private, and their responses are accessible to authorized individuals relevant to this research project. According to Walden IRB, data are anonymized to reduce the risk of disclosure of personally identifiable information. I informed each participant that there was no obligation to discuss anything, and they could stop the interview session at any moment. I restated to the participants that the information collected would be analyzed for a doctoral study. I conveyed that they would receive a \$20 thank-you Walmart e-gift card that was emailed within 24 hours of the interview session ending. I allowed participants the opportunity to ask questions before the interview session begins and during the debriefing at the end.

Data Collection

As the researcher, I conducted the data collection for this qualitative study. The data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews. The telephone interview enhances accessibility to hard-to-reach populations (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The telephone semi-structured interview sessions will be scheduled for 90 minutes. Semi-structured interviews allow the participants to openly discuss the phenomenon being explored as they see fit, according to their experiences (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

To protect the anonymity of each participant, I assigned pseudonyms beginning with Participant 1.

The instrument was 10 open-ended questions using a digital recorder and an audio recorder as a backup to collect data from participants secured in a private locked location within my residence. These open-ended questions enabled participants to respond freely with what they are thinking in their own words (Dillman et al., 2014; McLeod, 2018).

The semi-structured interview allows the researcher more leeway to follow up on participants' responses to better understand their experiences (Kallio et al., 2016). I requested permission at the beginning of each session to use the digital and audio recorder. An audio recorder was used as a backup to avoid missing any pertinent information and to avoid unforeseen technical glitches in the recording.

I manually transcribed verbatim from the recordings to describe the totality of the interview. I engaged in bracketing throughout the phenomenological research process. Bracketing sets aside any biases and personal views that may seep in on-topic through a journal of my thoughts, feelings, or underlying emotions about the subject matter to ensure data is interpreted based on participants' experiences. I documented brief field notes as a resource in explaining what transpires during the interview setting (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The field notes included reflections, nonverbal impressions, observations, and any relevant information in the transcripts for coding and the analysis (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Throughout the interviews, I conducted member checking for clarity of the participants' responses. At the conclusion of the telephone interview, I debriefed the

participants. The participants were also provided with contact information should any questions or concerns arise. I will dispose of all data following Walden IRB policy and procedures. All digital data, field notes, journals, transcribed interviews, and other related data are stored on a password-protected USB device and laptop computer. Any handwritten notes or physical documents will be maintained in a locked file cabinet and permanently disposed of at the end of 5 years.

A \$20.00 Walmart egift card was given as a thank you to each participant in the study. The Walmart egift card can be used for online or instore purchases. The thank-you gift card was emailed within 24 hours of the interview ending.

Instrumentation

As the researcher, I was the primary instrument. I created a recruitment flyer and an interview guide to be used in this study. A reflexive journal and field notes was also used throughout the study. I used an ONN audio recorder and a Philips Voice Tracer digital recorder to record all interview sessions. All electronic and print forms of data collected is secured and locked, including password protected. I created a recruitment flyer. The flyer was posted across Facebook pages with a message about the purpose of the study displaying the prescreening questions as a determinant in meeting the eligibility criteria. Participants meeting the criteria were emailed an informed consent form.

All potential participants were be asked to reply, "I consent." Upon receiving the informed consent form, I coordinated a date and time with each participant for a 90-minute semi-structured telephone interview. Data were collected through 10 semi-

structured interview questions with follow-up questions based on the participants' initial responses.

I implemented an interview guide to ensure that I follow the same procedure with each participant. The development of the semi-structured interview guide will rigorously contribute to the trustworthiness of the semi-structured interview as a qualitative research method (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide consisted of an introduction, review of the informed consent form, series of 10 interview questions, and a debriefing. Each session was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step data analysis method. Data is collected through 10 semi-structured open-ended questions, with the flexibility to probe for clarity and additional information based on the participants' response.

The interview protocol consisted of 10 participants until data saturation is achieved (Saunders et al., 2018). The debriefing at the end of the session reviews the steps taken during the interview process, allowing an opportunity to clarify and add information that may have been missed. I implemented member checking throughout the session towards the participants' responses (Forero et al., 2018). I established an audit trail using reflexive journaling, recordings, interview transcripts, and related documents that surface because of the interview process.

At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there is any additional information that they wish to share. I provided all participants access to a United Way Worldwide contact-free 211 helpline should they have experienced any stress during the

interview process or need social services. Each participant received a \$20 Walmart egift card for participating within 24 hours after the interview convened.

Data Analysis Plan

I employed Colaizzi's seven-step method that is rigorous and ensures the credibility and reliability of its results, allowing researchers to reveal emergent themes and interwoven relationships. Colaizzi's phenomenological methodology can be used to reliably comprehend an individual's experiences (Wirihana et al., 2018). The phrases, pieces of text, and words exemplify what the participants convey (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The data analysis plan engages Colaizzi's seven-step analysis to understand the experience of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision.

Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological data analysis uses a logical process through which the fundamental structure of an experience can be investigated. The Colaizzi seven-step analysis may limit or reduce possible deviation from the original data collected from the participants by the researcher (Morrow et al., 2015). Colaizzi's data analysis involves seven steps: (a) reading the transcript more than once to grasp an understanding of the entire content; (b) extracting participants' relevant comments separately to include original page and line number; (c) establish meanings from the participants' comments to capture the authenticity of the experience described by the participant; (d) categorize the meanings into clusters of themes; (e) integrate the findings from the research into a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon as described by the participants; (f) report on the construct of how the event was experienced; and (g)

validate findings with the participants to ensure the results matched with their experiences (Shosha, 2012). An in-depth description of the data analysis process is explained in Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness or rigor of any qualitative study depends upon the extensiveness in which credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability are completed and presented (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Trustworthiness is critical to the usefulness and integrity of research findings (Cope, 2014). Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the value of the processes defining the study and its conclusions (Connelly, 2016). Protocols should be in place for a study to be considered honorable by its readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Techniques must be structured to ensure validity in the research process before completing the evaluation (Cypress, 2017).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy of what is presented as legitimate data (Forero et al., 2018). Cope (2014) clarified that the researcher enhanced credibility by describing his or her experience as a researcher and verifying the research findings with the participants. I conducted member checking during interview sessions by repeating participants' responses to question for accuracy and adding to the information shared. I used reflexivity throughout the process, including interviewing and comprehending the data and themes developed (Sundler et al., 2019).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the benefits and applicability of the research findings (Sundler et al., 2019). Transferability refers to the extent to which data can be generalized and incorporated into other similar settings (Forero et al., 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I conducted an audit trail to record my procedures from start to finish, including my research details, strategies, all the raw data generated, and the method used for data analysis (Cope, 2014). This audit trail confirms the consistency of the methodology in my study.

The readers are the determinants of the applicability of the findings concerning their circumstances (Polit & Beck, 2014). Transferability occurs when I provide information about the process, participants, research context, and myself so the readers can determine how the results may transfer. The data collection and data analysis will benefit future studies of African American female offenders. The relevance, benefit, and meaning of the research findings need to be clear in their transferability (Sundler et al., 2019). Transferability is supported with a rich, detailed description of the context, location, target group studies, with transparency about the analysis and the trustworthiness to the readers (Amankwaa, 2016). I conducted member check procedures throughout the interview sessions with participants to affirm their responses.

Dependability

Dependability is defined as the extent to which this study can be reproduced by other researchers (Forero et al., 2018). The dependability is the method through which the findings evolved that should be precise and repeatable as often as possible. Dependability

refers to the stability of the information over time and the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). According to Burkholder et al. (2016), dependability in qualitative research refers to producing consistent results when analyzed data are collected at different time points using the same instrument. All data collected is maintained in its' original form and may be used to trace back any step that led to my findings.

Conformability

Conformability addresses the core that the finding should represent rather than the researcher's beliefs or biases (Moon et al., 2016). Conformability is the integrity of the conclusions in the data. The researcher must connect the data, analytic process, and findings so the reader can confirm the sufficiency of these findings. Cope (2014) posited that conformability is the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents participants' responses and not the researcher's viewpoints. My documentation confirms that data was a direct result of the participants' responses. The reflexive journal represents my thoughts and responses to offset preconceived ideas that might impact the data analysis and interpretation of the participants' experiences.

Ethical Procedures

This study began after Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study's application (#09-08-21-0786508). As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, I introduced ethical considerations to protect the participants (Clark & Veale, 2018). This study's ethics include the following procedures, consent, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and data security. Wolgemuth et al. (2015) noted that privacy and confidentiality were a major concern for research study participants.

Participants were assigned pseudonyms starting with Participant 1 to maintain anonymity, protecting their privacy and confidentiality throughout the study. I used the informed consent form for all participants involved in this study. I requested all potential participants reply in the original email containing the informed consent for the words “I consent.” I ensured that the results of my research are void of personal biases, perceptions, and opinions. I documented my biases, feelings, and thoughts in my reflexive journal. At the end of each interview session,

I secured the USB drive, field notes, journals, and recordings in a locked cabinet. The laptop used was password protected. All data, including a reflexive journal, field notes, recordings, and transcripts, was protected and secured upon completion of interviews during transport and storage. The information obtained during this research study, including the USB and any electronic data are maintained for five years as required by Walden University.

The possibility exists that privacy risks could include unintended confidential information breaches, such as intruded upon by participants’ family members or friends. Passwords address the data security of electronic information and locks for storage areas. Any issues that surfaced were submitted to the Walden University IRB explaining measures taken to minimize risk in providing participants with reasonable protection from harm, loss, or reputation. Lastly, upon completion, this study’s results will be available for dissemination to participants.

Summary

I provided an overview of the research design and rationale. I highlighted the methodology, instrumentation, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical processes. Chapter 4 will present data collection, data analysis, research conclusions, information related to the IRB approval process, and changes to the proposed plan. Besides providing an interpretation of the doctoral study results, Chapter 5 includes limitations, recommendations, and future research and practical implications.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. To address the purpose, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted in which I asked the participants about their experiences on active parole and under community supervision. This study focused on the gap in knowledge related to the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The goal of this descriptive phenomenological study was to acquire a better understanding of the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The following research question guided this study: What are the lived experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision?

In this chapter, I describe the study setting, demographics, data collection, and the data analysis procedures explained in Chapter 3. I then discuss the evidence of trustworthiness to describe actions taken to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, I provide the results of this study with verbatim quotations and conclude with a summary.

Setting

Once I received IRB approval (#09-08-21-0786508), I began the recruitment process. I posted a recruitment flyer across social media for potential participants (Appendix A). I used purposive sampling to recruit participants for this study.

Snowballing was also used to recruit participants. After reviewing the informed consent, all participants replied to my Walden University student email with the words “I consent.” I coordinated participants’ interviews on a day and time that was convenient for their privacy. All participants were agreeable to their telephone interview being audio recorded.

In this study, 10 participants completed the semi-structured telephone interviews using a phone. Each participant self-identified as an African American female, active on parole, age 18 and above. All 10 participants had been released from state prison to complete their sentence under the authority of their state’s criminal justice system. Each participant was provided a pseudonym to replace their names and referred to as Walden Participant A1–J1. I emailed a Walmart thank you e-gift card at the end of each participant’s interview session.

Data Collection

I interviewed 10 African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. I initiated recruitment efforts across social media by posting a flyer (Appendix A) the day after I received IRB approval. I also used snowball sampling as a strategy to recruit participants. All potential participants contacted me directly through my Walden student email to express interest in participating in the study.

Once I received an email from the potential participant, I responded thanking them for their interest and emailed them an attached informed consent form explaining the purpose of the research and their rights as a participant. I asked them to reply to the email received with the words “I consent” upon agreeing to participate in the study.

Upon receiving the participants' emailed reply containing the statement "I consent," an interview was scheduled. I initiated the semi-structured telephone interviews by calling the participants at the designated times in their time zone. The 10 participants' interviews ranged from 13 minutes to 30 minutes based on participants' responses, member checking as needed, and follow-up responses. The recruitment and interview took place within 30 days of receiving IRB approval.

Each interview included an introduction, an explanation of the study, and a debriefing. Each participant was reminded that all information would remain confidential, and that the participant could stop the interview at any time. All participants agreed to the interview session being recorded. Each phone interview was conducted from a private room at my home. I spoke clearly and repeated questions as needed when participant requested such. My questions were open ended, allowing participants the opportunity to freely share their experiences.

At the end of the interviews, I thanked participants for participating and participants were reminded of confidentiality. I informed the participants that they would receive the results upon completion of the study. All participants were emailed a \$20 Walmart thank you e-gift card.

The interviews produced rich data, and by the 10th interview, there was a lot of repeat information with no new insight. Saturation was achieved at 10 interviews. I recorded the interview sessions with a Philips digital audio recorder and a cassette audio recorder as a backup. I manually transcribed the audio recorded interviews verbatim.

All recordings and transcriptions were secured on password-protected computers and stored in a locked file cabinet at my residence. There was no deviation in data collection. The data collection process aligned as described in Chapter 3. I used a reflexive journal to document thoughts and address bias throughout the interview sessions.

Data Analysis

When the interviews were completed, I manually transcribed the interviews. Initially, my intent was to use REV.com transcription service. The REV application was defective and did not record any of the sessions. After following up with their technical assistance, I turned to my backup recording devices and manually transcribed the recordings verbatim. My focus in the data analysis was to explore the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. I applied Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step method to analyze the data in this qualitative phenomenological study.

The first step was to familiarize myself with the content. First, I listened numerous times to the recordings to accurately transcribe in a Microsoft Word document from the audio recorder. I read the transcript repeatedly to familiarize myself with the content. Simultaneously, I listened to the recordings as I read the transcript multiple times. Second, I separated statements, phrases, and words relevant to the study (Wirihana et al., 2018). I searched for recurrences and frequency of statements and phrases and how they related to each other in the responses. In the third step, I grouped the statements, phrases, and words to formulate meanings. I clustered themes with common meanings

and assigned codes. I continuously returned to the transcripts to ensure that I had grasped the essence of the participants' words.

In the fourth step, I developed a detailed description of the themes created to show the findings and participants' descriptions. Next, I reviewed the transcripts, clusters, and themes to ensure an exhaustive description from the transcripts. Then, I removed redundant, misused, and unnecessary descriptions. I condensed the thick, rich descriptions of the themes. My last step was to confirm my findings, which consisted of member checking when deemed necessary throughout the interviews to ensure accurate representation of the participants' responses. I used Microsoft Word to manually create a table for the data coding process.

Coding the data allowed me to organize the transcripts to identify themes that provide meaning to the information (Williams & Moser, 2019). I organized the data into four major themes based on the participant's responses to the interview questions: experience returning home on parole and under community supervision, challenges on parole and under community supervision, conditions of parole and under community supervision, coping on parole and under community supervision, and African American female offender on parole and under community supervision. The themes, subthemes, and codes from the data analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1*Themes, Subthemes, and Codes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Experience returning home on parole and under community supervision	Reentry	Failure to achieve goals
	Employment	Discrimination
	Family	Stigma
	Motherhood	Loss of positive stimuli
		Dysfunctional family
	Fragile parent–child relationship	
Experience with the conditions of parole and under community supervision	Adversity	Presence of negative stimuli
	Rearrest	Goal blockage
	Recidivism	
Coping on parole and under community supervision	Reintegration	Negative emotions
	Mental health	Deviant behavior
		Depression
		Fear
		Anxiety
Situation as African American female offender on parole and under community supervision	Intersectionality	Racism
	Black	Low expectations
	Female	Low self-concept
	Criminal	

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established by showing that data collection and analysis were conducted using a rigorous method (Nowell et al., 2017). I chose the descriptive phenomenological approach to effectively explore African American women offenders' experiences on parole and under community supervision. I ensured trustworthiness by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in every step of this study.

Credibility

Credibility is an important aspect of ensuring trustworthiness in how accurately a study presents the participants' experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I created credibility by establishing rapport with the participants through prolonged engagement with my initial contact, email correspondence, and semi-structured telephone interview. I used member checking throughout the interview sessions to ensure clarity and accuracy of the data collected from the participant to ensure that I understood the context of the participant's wording.

I confirmed data saturation was achieved when new information was no longer found. Participants were informed to contact me after the interview ended to provide any additional input or to clarify their responses further. I kept a reflexive journal expressing my thoughts, feelings, and biases that may have surfaced throughout the study. Reflexivity ensures the rigor of the study and data saturation by the researcher to maintain records of what is known about themselves and the participants in relation to the research (Aguboshim, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability indicates that other researchers could replicate the results of a study in a different setting (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The findings of this study are specific to a specific population and are not meant to be generalized to the public or other populations. I used a small purposive sample to extract rich information from African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. I described the context and methods used to portray how my study may be transferable in other

circumstances. I improved transferability by detailing all recruitment steps, informed consent, data collection, and data analysis. I maintained an audit trail of the interview recordings and a reflexive journal to reflect each step to identify preconceived biases.

Dependability

I established dependability for this study by creating an audit trail for readers to understand how steps were achieved and how certain conclusions were reached (Nowell et al., 2017). I used an audit trail to provide information about the data collection approach to recruit participants, providing transparency of all procedures implemented during the research process. My use of reflexive journaling throughout the data collection process was beneficial in identifying any biases. Member checking was conducted throughout the interview process to review participants' responses and verify accuracy in transcriptions (Rettke et al., 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability can be achieved when a researcher's blueprint is made accessible (Aguboshim, 2021). I allowed participants the opportunity to respond, asked for clarity, and provided follow-up questions for additional information. I conducted member checking when needed throughout interview sessions. I established a transparent audit trail of the process from the onset of the research to the study's results (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). As the primary instrument of the study, I used a reflexive journal to document my reflections and monitor any biases or assumptions during the study.

Results

In this study, I proposed to answer the following research question: What are the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision? All 10 participants were asked the same 10 open ended questions, and everyone responded. Four major categories emerged during the data analysis: (a) experience of returning home on parole and under community supervision, (b) experience with conditions of parole and under community supervision, (c) coping on parole and under community supervision, (d) and situation as African American female offender on parole and under community supervision. The literature review and study findings revealed that African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision are often exposed to stressors and negative emotional responses (Middlemass, 2017). The emergent themes, subthemes, and codes are presented in the next section.

Theme 1: Experience of Returning Home

The experience of returning home on parole and under community supervision was the first theme that surfaced. Participants were asked to describe their experience returning home on parole and under community supervision. This question led to their experiences with finding employment, family support, and their relationships with the children they had left behind. These were grouped as the participants' reentry experiences when released from prison.

Reentry

In describing her experience returning home, Participant A1 stated, “First of all, hectic like it’s really hard.” Participant B1 commented on her age explaining “I was 21. I hadn’t been outside. I hadn’t been outside. Cars were different. I felt uncomfortable. I hadn’t been in one.” She stated that an organization helped her find employment. She also commented, “Being rejected makes you feel like what am I working towards. I’ll figure something out.”

Participant F1 shared, “Okay one thing I thought was very difficult for me when I got home was fitting in to the community. And fitting in to the community was very hard for me. It was hard for me.” Participant G said she had no boyfriend, “No boyfriend because he broke up with me once I was going to prison. I generally felt like my life was starting over. It’s not moving. Not right now. I got it back.” Participant J1 conveyed, “Job, parole, job discrimination, profiling community at large, that is what really affected me.” According to Participant C1, society’s judgment is discriminatory:

Okay, some of the challenges experienced under community supervision one of them is judgment you receive from the people, community. Some people from our community are very judgmental another challenge is something is something like discrimination, some people are really really discriminating. They feel that you are one person, that you are this person, because you’ve been in prison. They discriminate against you.

Participant J conveyed returning to the community was an opportunity to prove herself. She stated,

They give me a chance to prove myself, but then I cannot say under community supervision, under rules, under the community, they don't expect you to do any mistakes. They expect you to be perfect and then stuff becomes very hard. It makes it very hard for me.

Another participant revealed her anxiety with seeing law enforcement.

Like whenever I see a police, I'm not that confident to even pass by them because I wonder what they might say or just decide to start searching me and stuff and you know, despite the fact that I am completely clean I feel fear. I live in fear.

Participant G1 conveyed how she felt,

Okay, they make me feel so bad. They make me feel, remember the mistakes I've done in the past. I don't even remember those mistakes because I'm trying to correct my life. Be better and maybe get someone in my life because I really feel like that. I'm so, they remind me of my mistakes. They make me remember the mistakes that I've done. You know I don't even remember those mistakes because I want to correct them. I wonder if they know how bad that is to remember our mistakes.

Employment

Participant A1 shared her view of finding employment, "Finding a job, once a criminal always a criminal, and finding a job, discrimination." Participant D1 shared her view of job search, "the first problem is the job seeking cause it's very hard to find a good job yeah especially when you are on parole, or you are the dirty filth of being sentenced"

She also gave details about her workplace relationship,

Okay, so these people, apparently, I'm employed in our family. It's our family friend for giving me that job but these are people not too close to me, but they know that I was just out of prison I was in prison, they really don't want to relate to me, the Black people, they feel that maybe the police might be so might follow them up so much because they you know I don't know if there is something with the police the Black people yeah.

Participant D1 continued by noting:

Okay that makes me feel so bad because I didn't think that something like that would happen and stuff. I didn't fully expect, I didn't really expect something like the sentencing and stuff. I expected us more life different you know normally I take my kids out without complications in life. But you know after the sentence it was totally different. He grown and even in the visits he we haven't spent as much time as a mother and a baby should spend, the connection is kind of hard and I wonder if I will be able to maybe put it to 100%. I don't know but I'm still trying. You know he's grown, when the baby is still small, but right now right now he's 4 years old. I left him when he was 3 years old so it's kind of hard. He's totally different and he's grown.

Participant C1 indicated their reputation was a factor, "I've had problems with finding getting a job because you know because it's within the community and I'm limited to staying in my home area. They know I was in prison and it's hard to find a job because of my reputation, yeah."

Participant J1 shared how race was a factor for employment opportunities. She stated:

Lack of employment and as Black people it is hard. We are not the right person. The person is not doing the right thing. When we find a job, it is insecure and a low paying position. You cannot get a good secure job. It will make you think in terms of needs.

Participant E1 shared,

For me when I come home, I was confused. I didn't really know where to begin. Everything was ok. Everything was a moment for me. I didn't know where to begin. Everything was confusing for me. Yes, it's like it was finding employment finding employment was hard for me finding just not employment and such was very hard for me. Finding something anything to do to continue. Now, that was very hard for me.

Participant F1 stated, "It was hard for me. I couldn't find employment. It was hard to leave my family. It was hard to live in community. It was really hard for me. Everything was hard."

Participant G1 explained how it's like starting over,

Okay, I went for the financing because you know when you come out of prison you can't become you because they don't know you, so it's like starting over. So looking for a job and if you get a job and you have no friends you have no friends you have no connection.

Family

Participant F1 stated they live with their family, “My family and I are together. It’s hard. I live with them. I just cool down and relax. There’s not much I can do.”

Participant I1 conveyed that upon release from prison, “I found out that my family had moved on. It really hard for me. It really hard for me cause my boyfriend had left me. He moved on with my son. Very hard.” Participant J1 shared, “My family members discriminated against me. It wasn’t okay. It wasn’t right and they discriminate against me sometimes. That is one thing that I can remember.”

Participant C1 stated.

Okay it was my mental health, I was very vulnerable, my mind, my brain and everything else was very dark, I didn’t know what to think So my mental health was very affected. Another thing what affected me was my family, at some point okay when I came back, they would not come and get support me.

Participant E1 described her relationship with her family as being difficult and non-supportive as she explained,

Family, it’s really difficult for me. Actually, I’m not living with my family. They kind of disowned me. They said what I have done is wrong. They kind of informed me. They feel bad that I am a bad person. So, actually I don’t live with my family. Right now, we have kind of a bad relationship.

Participant G1 discussed starting over without family’s presence,

So you start over maybe your family moved out. For me it was really personal point because I came back, and my family had moved to another state and

because I was told not to move to another state. I have to have permission from my parole officer, and it is quite a lot a very long process and so it's kind of hard."

Motherhood

Several participants shared their current relationship with their child. Participant D1 shared how incarceration has impacted her parent relationship. She stated,

When I was released let me say there are many things that are not the same. It was very hard for me. Before I went to prison, I left my baby back home so when I went back after the prison when I went back, I went in town because they shorten my sentence. When I went back, I met with my kids. They had grown. It was kind of hard to connect again. Yeah, I'm still trying it was not the way it had been if I had not gone to prison. I expected us more life different you know normally I take my kids out without complications in life. But you know after the sentence it was totally different. He grown and even in the visits he we haven't spent as much time as a mother and a baby should spend, the connection is kind of hard and I wonder if I will be able to maybe put it to 100%. I don't know but I'm still trying. You know he's grown, when the baby is still small, but right now right now he's he's 4 years old. I left him when he was 3 years old so it's kind of hard. He's totally different and he's grown.

Participant F1 revealed that she lived with family. She also shared, "The point of being released from jail that was my most moment because I came back to my children. My children that was really important for me."

Participant I1 revealed that her boyfriend had moved to another state with her son during her incarceration. She stated,

It was hard when I left my son. He was three. One year after three, it is hard. It is killing me. I talk to him on the phone. He didn't really know me. It is hard to move from state to state. I miss my son. I really miss him. When I was in jail, my boyfriend bring him to visit me. When I parole, it stop. He kind of kicked me out. I'm not sure if I will ever get close to my son."

Theme 2: Experience of Conditions of Parole and under Community Supervision

Participants expressed depression, frustration, and hardships meeting the conditions of parole. Participants expressed their limitation to travel as an obstacle to seeing their family, children, and maintaining relationships. They shared giving up on the difficult process of seeking parole's permission to relocate out of state.

Adversity

Participant C1 explained the conditions,

The feeling is generally I don't know what I can call it. But the feeling is let's say it's very bad. Like ranking 1 out of 10, 1 is not feeling bad at all and 10 is feeling bad, I choose 10 because it's really hard it's been hard, it's just a struggle to finish parole, go back to work, no more life.

Participant D1 provided an overview of how being on parole and under community supervision has impacted her. She stated,

The circumstances that have affected me like I said the fact that I had my kid who had completely forgotten about me and then the fact that I have a job problem. I

have read up to college, but I can't get a job because of my reputation; so fact that I'm in parole. I lost many friends. I lost many friends when I went to prison. So I have two cards, make new friends maybe catch up with the old ones. Then there is limitation of movement, I can't really meet my family or my friends whenever I want to meet them because I am limited and if I do that I could be put back to prison again so yeah it's the way that I am trying to keep myself you know clean so that for the sake of my kid and my life and the people then the people I think that select so much especially when you have a problem with the government corrections they isolate because they are in fear like my social life they disturb my psychological life. I'm afraid of going to some places because of the police.

Participant G1 expressed being overwhelmed with the sanctions in the state. She mentioned that she is aware of the process to request a transfer to another state. She conveyed:

Okay for the conditions, they've been hard. It's like drowning inside the state for me. For me and they told me I cannot move the state unless I speak to the parole officer. Trying to speak to the parole officer and trying to see my relatives. It is a really long process and I just give up. The parole officer, and then the counseling really work. I think it really helpful and then they told me to go to the counseling weekly and that kind of pressure, okay, but it keeps me on track because if I don't do it, I will be depressed. And then meeting with the parole officer.

Participant G1 shared that she was rearrested because she attempted to relocate,

I was trying to move out of my state, and I was caught up when I was release because I was trying to with the parole officer, and it was a long progress and I give up. I just plan go. I was caught. I was warned that if I try that again I will be put back in prison.

Participant H1 disclosed how she had almost returned to jail. She conveyed, I was almost arrested again; I was with some friends, and they were talking back, and they were high. The police arrested me I had to talk to my parole officer to let me out. I had to explain I think he was very understanding. Like not for him, I' have gone back to jail.

Participant I1 expressed trying to move out of state and the conditions, I can't get out of the state. And apparently, they can't transfer me out of the state. I need to go every week for drug testing. My friend help me get the job. Every week I need to see my parole officer for drug testing. It is really hard.

Participant F1 discussed her temper and the difficulty in having to control her temper, including substance abuse. She acknowledged it disturbs her because she may want to return to these behaviors. She responded:

Honestly it has been a hard one for me to some extent because when because there really are some things that you really have to abstain from like crime. Okay, my problem is I'm hot tempered actually it really disturbs me, so the thing is like you feel like you wanna get back to these things, you can't you just can't, you can't lose your temper, I have to stay cool so the person I am becomes hard for

me at point yeah and you have to abstain from substance abuse and everything that is not hard for me.

Participant J1 expressed the emotions that she feels in relation to what she considers harsh conditions on parole and under community supervision. She stated: “Generally, I feel tense. With everything getting caught up in prison. You’ve shown remorse. I feel tense. I feel like my life is tense. The harsh conditions will help me. The outcome will not be the same as it could have been.”

Theme 3: Experience of Coping on Parole and under Community Supervision

Participants are reintegrating into society sharing services received, such as psychotherapy, counseling, vocational counseling, substance abuse counseling and attending a women’s group for female parolees. Participants discussed limited resources and support in housing. Participants also expressed how they feel on parole and under community supervision. Participants share situations and how they are coping on parole and under community supervision.

In responding to coping, Participant A1 stated she uses online application tools to accept her life and commented “not really.” She followed up with, “Always a criminal.” She also noted that, “It affects me going out to have to talk to people, having to socialize, in confrontation is hard. People talk with sentiment. They’re thinking.”

Participant B1 stated,

I’m hanging in there. I don’t know how to express myself. I was put in a bad situation. I was going through a lot. I didn’t know a lot of things. I was going through a lot of things, and I didn’t have anything going on at the time.

Participant F1 shared the inability to be herself,

Honestly, I can just claim it and handle this chance I've been given to reform and prove I can be a bigger person but at some point, it is hard. You can't really be yourself something like to some extent you're faking it. That is not who you are, you have to stay cool all the time, make sure what you're doing every time, in most cases it's not possible that is not what you are supposed to do, at some point faking is not for me.

In response to coping, Participant I1 pointed out, "My father told me when I was in jail to let my son go with his father. I'm coping with my father right now." Participant D1 declared "when I married a woman like me" and expressed the need for more services for people "like her." Participant J1 shared support services received, "Some of the services I receive mental health. I receive a lot of help of that length; some vocational testing, and I've received some housing help. Some people, some personal from the community, and some encouragement. Yeah!"

Participant J discussed how she has changed,

Trying to be patient. My conduct has changed. I'm not pretending to have changed. I've really changed. My family and my community, I try not to keep reacting to everything. Tell them you have changed. That is what I am telling myself. That is what I am trying to do.

Participant D1 responded about the services, how she felt, and some benefit from receiving counseling and support. She stated:

It's been kind of helpful because at times I feel so remorseful that all of that happened. And to know that the sentence has changed in prison. I feel I regret so much. It kind of hurt my psychology, my psychology and you know sometimes I feel so trapped and overwhelmed with emotions. Yeah, I need someone to talk to and someone to tell me that everything gonna be all right.

Participant G revealed attending a program in the community that provides mental health assistance and some social services. She stated:

I haven't been receiving many of the services, but I've been busy with counseling. There are some things that I must do. Also, when you come out of prison unless I go there once a week at night it really helpful. And then there's a there's an organization it it's just for women and if you're somewhere in the community, they help us. They helping us psychologically and financially a little. Ok, financially just a little.

A participant acknowledged that her parole officer referred her for mental health services for her substance abuse issues. She responded, "Actually my parole officer had to connect me to local church to get me enrolled into psychotherapy. They connect me to psychotherapy. Basically, I'm on drugs. They help me on drugs."

Theme 4: Situation as African American Female Offender on Parole and Under Community Supervision

All participants identified as African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The participants face intersectionality based on race,

gender, and criminal status. All the participants referenced prejudices throughout the interviews. All participants shared it was harder because they are “Black.”

Participant A replied to her situation as an African American female offender on parole and under community supervision, “A nation of racism, Black criminal so bad!”

Participant C stated, “Racism, you a criminal.”

Participant D1 responded,

It’s really hard, you know it’s very hard actually because leave alone being on parole, being a Black woman in the United States it’s kind of its very hard so when you at parole it becomes excessively hard to try and cope, you just try and cope. The situation is very hard because everyone looks at you suspiciously, the people around you they look at you suspicious. Most of them don’t want to, most of them don’t want to be, most of them don’t want to be associated with because you know the police. The police are in on the Black people. So, when you’re on parole they isolate you because they fear they might get into the same mess you’re in. Again, I am afraid of being caught. You know I feel I think the police might be racist. They might find you doing something that does not really cause scolding, but they might scold you anyway. So, I’m just afraid and careful.

Participant J1 discussed African American women on parole versus Caucasian women on parole in her response. She also commented on her fear of the police. She stated:

It is different. You can’t compare a Black woman to a White woman on parole. I don’t know if I should say this, but the Black woman it seem like especially the

police, there is a lot of fear, like running fear. Your friends might not associate with you because they might get into the same fear. Yeah, that fear.

Participant I1 conveyed how she ran away to avoid an encounter with the police.

She discussed her fear of the police and responded:

Very hard. You know the police. You're African American. It is very hard if you and you can go out places, it's okay you went out before, you get out, it's really hard, you can get caught, I'm really afraid right now. It's really hard because last time around 2 weeks ago, we went out had drinks, cops showed up, so I had to really run away. My two friends were caught. When you caught they can look up your records. I ran two - three blocks and found my way home."

Participant H1 commented how hard it was based on being African American and interacting with the police. She stated, "It was hard because the police are still arresting the Black people. If you are Black, it is 10 times harder normally and they always follow you up when you're out with your friends." Participant J1 responded: "When it comes to employment it is hard to find work on parole. When it comes to discrimination, I can say that. Me being on parole and my family is embarrassment due to imprisonment."

At least four of the 10 participants interviewed had been rearrested and released. These individuals explained what caused them to recidivated. The participants shared running from the police to avoid being returned to prison.

One was rearrested by the police and released from imprisonment by her parole officer. One admitted her friends started a fight while they were out partying, and she had

to run because the police came and arrested her friends. She acknowledged they did not have a criminal record, but she did. She conveyed that she ran all the way home.

Participant D1 responded:

Okay so far so far, my most important, okay let me think, the most important there was I don't know if that was the most important. Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah so there was this time there was this time I was caught again. I was arrested. I don't know. Actually I had done absolutely nothing and the police just came and you know we were just moving around the area and I was just you know and I can't even tell you what I did because there was nothing absolutely okay and they were just like they were like you know they were you know they were they're just they're just they were just trying to look at me and I think they looked at my record because they ask my name and they looked at my record and they started looking at me and searching me, they didn't actually arrest me but they were almost they were about to I don't know maybe they thought that I had drugs or something. But I really felt bad. That's what made me start to feel turn every time.

One of the participants voiced that Black individuals were apprehensive to relate to African American female offenders because they may become targets of the police. She commented,

I was in prison, they really don't want to relate to me, the Black people, they feel that maybe the police might be so might follow them up so much because they you know I don't know if there is something with the police the Black people yeah.

Participants stated they felt very bad being on parole. They acknowledge that it is a struggle to complete community supervision. Some participants stated it feels good to be given a chance, but also state it doesn't feel good because they're supervised. Participants state they are discriminated against. Some participants say they need support to show they can change. A participant responded:

The feeling is generally I don't know what I can call it. But the feeling is let's say it's very bad. Like ranking 1 out of 10, 1 is not feeling bad at all and 10 is feeling bad, I choose 10 because it's really hard it's been hard, it's just a struggle to finish parole, go back to work, no more life.

Participant F1 stated: "Okay, I feel threat. I've had some bad times. I also feel bad because you are being really supervised by the community. It doesn't feel good. It feel good at some point you will be given an opportunity to reform."

Summary

In this study, I explored the experiences of African American female offenders on active parole and under community supervision. All the research participants have been released under the authority of the state criminal justice system to meet early from prison to reenter their community to meet the conditions of the criminal justice system to complete their community supervision. Four themes emerged from his study. "What are the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision?" The goal of this research was to provide a better understanding of the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Excerpts from the qualitative semi-structured interviews were

presented to illuminate the themes, subthemes, and codes created from the 10 interviews conducted with the research participants.

In Chapter 4, I provided the results of the research, the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and results from this study. In Chapter 5, I conclude this study with the findings, limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, researcher's reflections, and implications for social change, and future research recommendations are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The goal of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative design was to acquire a better understanding of the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The research approach selected allowed participants the opportunity to respond in-depth describing their experiences on parole and under community supervision.

A purposive sample of 10 African American female offenders who met the eligibility criteria volunteered to participate in the study. A semi-structured telephone interview was conducted with all participants. I identified four major themes using Colaizzi's seven-step method for data analysis: (a) experience returning home on active parole and under community supervision, (b) conditions of active parole and under community supervision, (c) coping on active parole and under community supervision, and (d) African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. In this chapter, I present the research findings. This chapter includes a brief summation of my research study and how the findings address my research question. Subsequently, I discuss the conceptual framework, limitations, recommendations, and implications. A summation of the study concludes this chapter.

Interpretation of the Findings

Findings Related to the Literature Review

The results of this study confirmed previous research regarding experiences of African American female offenders after release. The literature review and study findings agree that African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision face varying degrees of oppression based on their intersectionality (Battle, 2016). There has been limited research on African American female offenders active on parole under community supervision (Link & Oser, 2018). Through the data analysis noted in Chapter 4, four major themes emerged from this study: (a) experience returning home, (b) conditions of parole and under community supervision, and (c) coping on parole and under community supervision (d) African American female offender parole and under community supervision. The interpretation of the major themes' findings follows in the next section.

Theme 1: Experience Returning Home on Parole and Under Community Supervision

The criminal justice system is stressful regardless of race, gender, or age; however, African American female offenders are exposed to unique stressors from incarceration (Maxwell & Solomon, 2018). When reentering their community, the experiences resulting from the stigma of incarceration, or the previous convictions may have an adverse effect and reduce their motivation for employment (Pryor & Thompkins, 2013). African American female offenders' race, gender, poverty, and criminal history amplify their problems as they attempt to reintegrate (Brown, 2010). African American female offenders' intersectionality intensifies their experiences of stigma, especially in

the context of motherhood (Gunn et al., 2018). Participants in this study shared the difficulty and hardships experienced returning home on parole and under community supervision. African American women offenders return to society encountering the same issues with economics, minimum wage jobs, unemployment, and limited resources (Brown & Bloom, 2009).

Approximately two thirds of incarcerated women have dependent children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2019). According to Brown and Bloom (2009), many released offenders are mothers who face many challenges as a parent in finding stable housing, employment, and adhering to the mandates of prison release on parole and under community supervision. Formerly incarcerated mothers from different races and classes develop their ideas of what it means to be a good mother (Aiello & McQueeney, 2016). African American mothers' parenting concerns and challenges are unique to their lived realities (Mitchell & Davis, 2019). The lack of support for many formerly incarcerated African American mothers may shape their parenting strategies and ideas (Elliott et al., 2015). African American mothers may resist the social constructs of motherhood and engage in criminality to provide for their children (Mitchell & Davis, 2019). The stigmas of African American women on parole and being a convicted felon highlight the mother as a felon, with consequences that affect her successful reentry into society (Garcia, 2016).

Harm and Phillips (2001) argued that distress with issues that impact reunification with their children might traumatize African American women offenders on parole and under community supervision. African American mothers are far likelier to report depression than the general population (Taylor & Gamble, 2017). African American

women offenders renegotiate their role as mothers, with many demands for which possible frustrations occur from the challenges they face when released into the community (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Richie, 2001). The intersectionality of African American women offenders' identities intensifies their exposure to stigmas, especially their circumstances as a parent (Gunn et al., 2018). Race, gender, poverty, and criminal history exacerbate challenges for African American female offenders after release (Brown, 2010).

Theme 2: Experience of Conditions of Parole and Under Community Supervision

African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision are subjected to collateral consequences administered through restrictions that function as deterrents to reentry and reintegration upon release from prison (Devu, 2018). Many African American women on parole and under community supervision are mothers whose challenges have increased when returning to society (Garcia, 2016). Most African American women offenders on parole return to the same marginalized community (Harding et al., 2013) of social chaos, high unemployment, family dysfunction, and limited services (Wallace & Papachristos, 2014).

Theme 3: Coping on Parole and Under Community Supervision

The lack of support networks differs among African American female offenders and can create hardships with coping mechanisms related to life circumstances (Link & Oser, 2018). According to Flowers (2010), deterrents for women offenders' employability may be emotionally tiring, along with being financially challenged. Flowers (2010) suggested that female offenders deal with many barriers that may produce

depression, insecurity, and continued dependence on institutional and support services. Many offenders use these social networks in finding employment, access to education, training, emotional and social support, which increases their human capital (Reisig et al., 2002). Researchers found that disclosing felony convictions contributed to the ex-prisoners' attrition rate in job search activities (Rosenthal et al., 2015). Communication with a social network for reentry is critical for offenders to secure post release plans for reintegration (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2018; Folk et al., 2019). Furthermore, the stigma of being an African American female offender on parole and under community supervision increases obstacles that may hinder the offender's chances for successful reintegration into their communities (Novo-Corti & Barreiro-Gen, 2015).

Theme 4: Situation as African American Female Offender on Parole and Under Community Supervision

Racism is a basis for persistent strains and psychological suffering for African Americans (Stevens-Watkins et al., 2014). African American women are disproportionately experiencing stress due to their intersectionality (Greer, 2011). Race, gender, and stress intersect as the offender experiences poverty, low wages, unemployment, trauma, and substance abuse (Carr et al., 2009). Greer (2011) attested that the disproportionate strains African American women endure are partly because of their status.

African American female offenders who are mothers on parole and under community supervision may experience challenges exacerbated by motherhood (Garcia, 2016; Hayes et al., 2019). African American female offenders' motherhood is vulnerable

to social and economic exposure (Harp & Bunting, 2020; Robison & Miller, 2016). Many African American female offenders return to marginalized communities characterized by substance abuse and crime (Leverentz, 2010). Intersectionality of African American female offenders who are mothers active on parole and under community supervision intensifies their experiences of stigma (Gunn et al., 2018).

Interpretation of Findings to Theoretical Framework

I drew on Agnew's (1992) GST as the theoretical framework for the study. Agnew (1992) argues that strain is categorized by three types: (a) failure to achieve a positively valued goal; (b) removal of positively valued stimuli; and (c) the presence of negative stimuli leads individuals to experience negative emotions. Some of these negative emotions precipitate criminality, whereas others inhibit criminal tendencies (Ganem, 2010).

Strains more conducive to criminality include rejection, harsh punishment, financial problems, relationship issues, discrimination, abuse and neglect, chronic unemployment, and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Certain situations and circumstances serve as criminogenic strains that tend to be severe, frequent, long-lasting, and expectations threatening core goals, needs, values, and or identities (Agnew, 2016). Individuals may engage in illegitimate coping mechanisms, like substance abuse and criminal behavior, to alleviate the source of the strain or handle affective emotions (Slocum, 2010). Agnew (2016) attested that an individual's description of strain is not based on cultural or social-oriented goals. The strain theory expands to all gender, race,

and class, including personal differences among individuals, reducing stress (Olszewski & Fore, 2016).

The results of the study were based on the participants' experiences as African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The findings of the study were interpreted through the lens of GST (Agnew, 1992). Agnew (2016) argued that these stressors pressure individuals into criminal deviant behavior as a coping strategy. For example, participants shared their frustration with the limitation of boundaries that restricted them from crossing state lines to visit or relocate with family and friends. Four of the participants admitted crossing state lines. They were frustrated with the paperwork request process, longing for family and friends in an environment that accepted them. Some participants revealed depression because of their desire to see their children. Participants arrested for violating the conditions of parole faced the possibility of reincarceration. Participants engaged in illegitimate coping to alleviate their stress concerning limitation of movement, a condition of their parole release.

According to Agnew, strains most likely lead to criminality when they are viewed as unjust, are perceived as high in importance, are associated with low social control, and create some stress or motivation to engage in criminal coping (Agnew, 1992). Participants arrested for limitation of boundary described the approval process to visit or relocate as arduous. Participants viewed their family, friends, especially their children, of high importance, intensifying pressure to violate parole conditions.

The participants described their experiences as African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Within this study, the

participants consistently revealed that they felt terrible and depressed, expressed remorse, felt discriminated against, feared the police, and reported the conditions of parole and being under community supervision as harsh. Participants acknowledged difficulty finding employment, family issues, losing the custody of their children, losing the relationship with their child, and being unable to visit their child in another state. They affirmed their ongoing fear of the police in addition to returning to prison. They professed frustrations to limitations of movement, causing them to commit parole violations subjected to rearrest. They professed the need for mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and vocational training. All the participants viewed the conditions of parole as harsh, an adverse event.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the descriptive phenomenological qualitative study includes the researcher being cognizant of the implicit bias during data collection and analysis (Neubauer et al., 2019). The researcher is responsible for convincing the audience about the credibility of the phenomenological study (Johnson et al., 2020). The researcher must set aside personal experiences and grasp the essence from others' experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). My professional experience as a case manager with the parole system may expose this study to researcher bias. I used bracketing and journaling to document my feelings, thoughts, and preconceived ideas during the study to mitigate bias.

A second limitation of this study was the participant selection of African American female offenders on parole. I chose participants through purposive sampling, predicated on age 18 and above, identifying as an African American female, and in an

active status on parole and under community supervision to limit the lens in gathering rich data for analysis (Wendt & Fraser, 2019). The inclusion criteria are limitations because they did not include a sample characteristic of all African American women. The results of this study did not generalize all offenders on parole and under community supervision.

A third limitation study was the small sample size of 6 to 10 African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The sample size in qualitative research pertains to the appropriateness of the sample composition and size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The sample tends to be small to support the depth of the analysis that is fundamental to the phenomenological approach (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Malterud et al. (2016) reason that the more information the participant possesses concerning the qualitative study, the smaller the sample size needed for saturation.

Lastly, a fourth limitation excluded participants' criminal history (Morash et al., 2019). I did not consider participants' criminal convictions or the length of prison sentences for this study. For example, African American women on parole and under community supervision followed different pathways into the criminal justice system for felonies, such as sex crimes, property crimes, acts of violence, and substance abuse (Walt & Jason, 2017). Future research is needed on groups of women offenders in different settings to establish the generalizability of results concerning recidivism (Morash et al., 2019).

Recommendations

I researched 10 African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. These participants were released from state prison as convicted felons to serve the remainder of their prison sentence in the community. The participants are mandated to meet the conditions of the state's criminal justice system on parole and under community supervision. The insight shared about the participants' experience on active parole and under community supervision can highlight the need for policies, programs, and services addressing African American female offenders.

This study was not exhaustive around African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. Subject matter that was not covered in depth is an opportunity for future researchers to investigate. Based on the limitations in this study, I encourage future researchers to conduct qualitative studies on coping strategies of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. All participants expressed negative emotions in their interview sessions, which led to legitimate and illegitimate coping strategies to alleviate the pressures. This research would broaden the knowledge of other risk factors that may be a precursor to parole violations or new crimes. This study may highlight other strain factors that influence criminal thinking among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

Another recommendation is that additional research is needed regarding motherhood among African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Studies are limited on African American female offenders active

on parole who are mothers. This study would add insight into the parent-child dynamics and support network in relation to how it impacts the African American female offenders' mental health and coping mechanisms. Studies are limited on African American female offenders who are mothers post release on parole and under community supervision.

It is recommended that future researchers explore the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole based on criminal convictions and length of incarceration. African American women on parole and under community supervision follow different routes to entering the criminal justice system (Walt & Jason, 2017). This research can broaden the knowledge of the experiences of African American female offenders concerning criminal convictions.

Furthermore, a longitudinal qualitative study is recommended, which focuses on initial release from prison through the first year of prison release. This study would provide more comprehensive information about the experiences of the African American female offender on parole and under community supervision. This study would illuminate the legitimate and illegitimate coping mechanisms that may impact reentry, reintegration, and recidivism.

Future research into the intersectionality of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision is encouraged further to explore the intersection of these identities and criminality. African American female offenders reentering communities encounter obstacles based on race, gender, and criminal status. The African American female offenders who are mothers on parole and under community

supervision face increased challenges as the primary caregiver. These studies can build and broaden our scholarly understanding of the strains and coping techniques of African American female offenders as they transition into society.

Implications

I embarked on this study to better understand the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The outcomes of the study are critical in providing some new insights and confirming previous research findings. Implications include those for social change as well as recommendations for practice.

Reviewing the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision revealed strains that may lead to their parole revocation and recidivism. Findings from this study highlight the negative emotions experienced by African American female offenders in their daily life. Findings from this study also illuminate the need for increased mental health services because offenders revealed a need for counseling, noting their depression, confusion, stress, drowning, and other negative feelings. Furthermore, findings from this study show a need for parenting programs because female parolees expressed difficulty in reconnecting with their children. Along these lines, findings showed a need for coping skills based on the female offenders' shared frustrations and rearrest incidents with the condition "limitation of boundaries" in dealing with their children, family members, and friends in other states.

This study highlighted negative emotions experienced among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. Some participants

disclosed they had been disowned by family members who were embarrassed, ashamed, and discriminated against them. Participants conveyed that some African American women were afraid to associate with them because they did not want to draw attention from the police on themselves. Participants discussed being depressed about losing contact and custody of their children, and others expressed frustration. Some of the participants revealed that they were rearrested for attempting to relocate without permission. Some participants voiced uncertainty in seeing their child again or improving their parental relationship.

The participants described their experiences returning from prison on parole and under community supervision as very hard, very bad. Some of the participants admitted this was an opportunity to prove themselves. Participants also considered the conditions of parole under community supervision as harsh. These findings reveal a need for a better understanding of the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. These findings advocate programs, policies, and services that can impact social change among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

The goal of this phenomenological descriptive qualitative study was to use a small sample across social media to explore the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. The design was based on semi-structured telephone interviews with 10 African American female offenders, ages 18 and above, who were active on parole and under community supervision. All 10 participants were interviewed using the same interview protocol. The interview was guided by the

following research question, “What are the experiences of African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision? It consisted of 10 open-ended questions, including follow-up questions to get clarity or seek additional information from a response.

The interviews were manually transcribed, and statements, phrases, and words relevant to the study were separated. Colaizzi’s (1978) seven-step method was used for data analysis. Four primary themes surfaced during the data analysis: (a) experience of returning home on parole and under community supervision; (b) experience with conditions of parole and under community supervision; (c) coping on parole and under community supervision; (d) and situation as African American female offender on parole and under community supervision.

The studies of the experience of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision are limited. This study can be instrumental in starting conversations among policymakers, the criminal justice system, and community organizations about the African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. It is believed that this study will provide a better understanding that will aid in developing and implementing policies, programs, and services towards criminal justice reform among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision. It is also desired that this study will further the understanding of strains that will impact reentry, reintegration, and recidivism among African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision.

Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. In this study, I found that African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision endure strains resulting from failure to achieve a goal, loss of positive stimuli, and presence of negative stimuli. I also found that African American female offenders on parole and under community supervision are stressed due to experienced strains and anticipated strains, threats, and warnings of rearrest, extended sentences, and returning to prison.

Exploring African American female offenders' experiences on parole and under community supervision was informative. This research contributed to the gap in knowledge of African American women on parole and under community supervision. The findings of this study may contribute to criminal justice reform among policymakers for African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. The participants in the study consistently expressed negative emotions based on their circumstances as African American female felons active on parole and under community supervision.

A better understanding will bring about social change when considering the unique stressors that African American female offenders face on parole and under community supervision. In this study, I explored the experiences of African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision. Chapter 5 addressed the summary, implications, and recommendations for future researchers to continue

studies on African American female offenders active on parole and under community supervision.

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Appendix A: Social Media Recruitment Flyer

Study seeks African American female participants on active parole and under community supervision for telephone interview

There is a new study called “*Experiences of African American Female Offenders on Parole and Under Community Supervision*” that can help service providers like offender reentry councils and social service agencies to better understand African American female offenders on active parole and under community supervision. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences on active parole and under community supervision.

The telephone interview is part of the doctoral study for Shirley Lawson, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

About the study:

- One 90-minute telephone interview session
- To protect your privacy, all interviews will be confidential and no identifying information will be shared in presentations or reports.
- All participants will receive a \$20 Walmart “thank you” electronic (egift) card.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- African American female
- Ages 18 and above
- On active parole and under community supervision which means that you are required to regularly report to your parole officer.

**To confidentially volunteer, click
the following link:**

[mailto:Shirley.Lawson@waldenu.edu]

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience of returning home on parole and under community supervision when you were released.
2. What support or services have you received since you returned home on parole and under community supervision?
3. What challenges have you experienced on parole and under community supervision?
4. How has your experience been with the conditions of parole and under community supervision?
5. How are you coping in your community with housing, family, work, and resources?
6. How would you describe your situation as an African American woman on parole and under community supervision?
7. What was your most important experience since you were released onto parole and under community supervision?
8. Tell me about circumstances that have affected you on parole and under community supervision.
9. Looking back, describe how you feel being on parole and under community supervision?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share that I did not inquire about?