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Probation and Pre-Trial Officers' Perspectives on the Impact of Maternal Incarceration on Children

Shaniqua Anderson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Shaniqua Anderson

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Review Committee
Dr. Tony Gaskew, Committee Chairperson,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Dr. Tamara Mouras, Committee Member,
Criminal Justice Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

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MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MS, William Carey University, 2018

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Because of the mass incarceration of women, maternal incarceration has become a phenomenon within itself. This phenomenon has led to an increase in Black children with an incarcerated mother; however, there is a lack of information about how the cycle of the mass incarceration of Black women is perceived on the community supervision level. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children. Three research questions explored how participants viewed the impact of maternal incarceration on Black children, recidivism, and positive reentry. Critical race theory was used as the framework to explore how systemic racism is viewed by employees of the criminal justice system. The study followed a phenomenological qualitative approach with criterion and snowball sampling methods. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted using Zoom with six probation and pre-trial officers who were employed by Mississippi Federal Probation or the State of Tennessee. Data were analyzed using in vivo coding and NVivo 14 software. Six themes emerged, and overall results indicated that while the participants loved their jobs and strived to help their clients, they believed maternal incarceration was unfair and caused detrimental consequences for the incarcerated mother and her children. Findings promote positive social change within the criminal justice system by reminding those employed in community supervision to continue increasing positive reentry for their Black clients who are mothers while recognizing systemic racism.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my study to my mother Roshonda Carr. She has been patient, loving, and encouraging throughout this entire doctoral journey. I know she will be so proud to call me Dr. Anderson. I would also like to dedicate this study to my boyfriend and best friend Marvin Warren who repeatedly told me "they are not going to give it to you!" Anytime I wanted to give up, his constant encouragement gave me the strength to finish. I would also like to dedicate this study to the Black women who are currently incarcerated or on community supervision. Your struggles are being heard. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this study to the Black children who have or had incarcerated mothers. The consequences you face due to having an incarcerated mother are unfair, but the cycle does not have to be an expectation.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing me to reach and accomplish this milestone. Second, I want to thank my family and friends who supported me while I have been on this doctoral journey. Thank you all so much for being understanding when I had to decline fun in order to finish this goal. I would like to thank my chair Dr. Tony Gaskew and my committee member Dr. Tamara Mouras for their guidance and support. Finally, I would like to thank my participants. Thank you for allowing me to view the impact of maternal incarceration from your perspectives. I could not have completed this without you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The United States leads the world in incarceration rates, and the majority of those incarcerated are parents (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2019). However, the incarceration of women has grown into a separate phenomenon beyond the parental incarceration phenomenon with 1 in 111 White women, 1 in 45 Latina women, and 1 in 18 Black women being likely to become incarcerated in the United States (Goodwin, 2020, para 20). Further, the prison population for women grew by 832% between the years of 1977 and 2007 (Goodwin, 2020, para 15). In addition to the incarceration rates of women reaching high levels, over 60% of women in state prisons have at least one minor child (The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 1); therefore, maternal incarceration has increased because of the mass incarceration of women mainly due to the War on Drugs and petty property offenses (Mears & Siennick, 2016; Martin, 2017; Simmons, 2018; Williams et al., 2020). The number of children with incarcerated mothers has increased 100% since the initiation of the War on Drugs in the 1980s (Martin, 2017, p. 2).

There are many who suffer from maternal incarceration including the women who are incarcerated, their children, their spouses, their family, and communities. The incarcerated individuals' family members become hidden victims, with the consequences of incarceration including the inability to secure housing and/or employment or the abuse of drugs and mental health issues, which impact the incarcerated individuals' families (Martin, 2017; Mears & Siennick, 2016). Children of incarcerated mothers also face traumas such as anti-social disorders, behavior issues, and emotional detachment that often exceed the traumas of the mother (Williams et al., 2020).

Black women are more likely to be subjected to mass incarceration and reentry protocols as well as face different socioeconomic disadvantages such as being single parents, having poor job opportunities, and living in less than standard housing accommodations (Williams et al., 2020). By examining the perspectives of probation and pre-trial officers employed by Mississippi Federal Probation and the State of Tennessee who supervise Black women with at least one child, a better understanding can be obtained on how the prevention of Black women maternal incarceration, which can address the issue of mass incarceration and impact on the child of the incarcerated mother. This chapter introduces the study by providing a background, describing a problem statement, and incorporating a theoretical framework that aligns and helps to explain the research and problem statements. Other sections include research questions (RQs), nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's significance and its implications for positive social change.

Background of the Study

The United States incarcerates more women than any other country in the world (Goodwin, 2020). Prison populations for women have grown from 500,000 to over 2 million inmates within the past 30 years (Mears & Siennick, 2016, p. 5), and approximately 231,000 girls and women are incarcerated nationally (Williams et al., 2020, p. 3). Using the latest data from 2016, Mississippi ranks 14th out of the 50 states for female incarceration rates (Lui, 2018, para 4).

The increasing incarceration rates for women only represent a part of the issue, as

racial disparities between White, Latina, and Black women are present. Black women are incarcerated at twice the rate of their White counterparts (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2020; Schiffer, 2014). The incarceration rate for Black women is 113 per 100,000, while the incarceration rate for White women is 51 per 100,000 (Goodwin, 2020, para. 23). The racial disparities within incarceration are influenced by drug and property crimes, and the war on drugs has been targeted toward Black women (Williams et al., 2020). Black women are more oppressed due to the triple disadvantages of gender, race, and class (Enos, 2012; Williams et al., 2020), and mass incarceration is no exception. The mass incarceration of women leads to the increasing number of women on probation and parole (Enos, 2012; Johnson, 2015; Kajstura, 2017; Smith et al., 2020). Community supervision is incarceration especially to disadvantaged Black women since reentry can be equally criminalizing as committing a crime (Williams et al., 2020). The likelihood of probation and parole violations increases for Black women because unlike their White counterparts after incarceration they return to structurally disadvantaged communities (Williams et al., 2020).

Mass incarceration also leads to maternal incarceration, meaning children have an incarcerated mother. The number of children in the United States affected by parental incarceration is elevated because the United States leads the world in incarceration rates (Arrastia et al., 2020; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2019). The incarceration rates for women have increased faster than the incarceration rates for men, doubling the number of children with a mother incarcerated since 1991 (Thomson et al., 2018). Using information from a 2007 report from the U.S. Justice Department, an estimated 1.7

million children have at least one incarcerated parent (Kautz, 2017, p. 557). Parental

incarceration often means finding alternative care for a child, especially when it is the

mother who goes to prison, because women are most often the caregivers prior to arrest

and/or incarceration (Dannerbeck, n.d.; Kautz, 2017; Williams et al., 2020). Studies have

shown that children who grow up with an incarcerated parent do not develop into well-

functioning adults (Dannerbeck, n.d.), and this may be due to the interruption of the

parent-child relationship (Martin, 2017) and/or based on the statistic that children of

incarcerated parents are six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves (Martin,

2017, p. 2). A parent's imprisonment may lead to an intergenerational cycle of criminal

behavior (Martin, 2017), especially since children with an incarcerated parent face

various difficulties including academic, behavioral, sociological, and psychological

challenges (Kopak, 2016; Martin, 2017; Thomson et al., 2018). Said difficulties are

exacerbated when it is the mother incarcerated because they are most commonly the

primary support to the child.

  The literature is filled with the positives and negatives of the effects and impact of

parental incarceration on children (Johnson & Easterling, 2015; Kautz, 2019; Kopak &

Smith-Ruiz, 2016; Mears & Siennick, 2016; Sobba et al., 2017; Yun & Cui, 2020; Zeman

et al., 2018); yet, there are limited resources on incarceration prevention. If mass

incarceration is addressed, maternal incarceration can be reduced along with the impact it

has on children. Studies have been conducted that focused on the relationship between

the client and probation/parole officer (Johnson, 2015), but not on how the perceptions of

the mass incarceration of Black women, maternal incarceration, and the impact maternal

incarceration has on children within the Black community from probation and pre-trial officers are viewed, supporting the need for the current study.

Problem Statement

Research has shown that Black women are being incarcerated at higher rates (Kajstura, 2017; The Sentencing Project, 2020; Zeman et al., 2018); however, more focus is placed on overall parental incarceration rates or paternal incarceration explicitly. For example, the female incarceration rate in Mississippi increased by 925% between the years of 1978 and 2016 (Lui, 2018, para. 3), and nationally the African American rate of incarceration was 83 per 100,000 in 2019 (The Sentencing Project, 2020, p. 2). But most of these incarcerated Black women are mothers to at least one minor child. Several studies have discovered that an adolescent with an incarcerated parent is more likely to display conduct problems, suffer from internalizing and externalizing problems, and are at an increased risk for criminal convictions as an adult (Kautz, 2019; Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016; Sobba et al., 2017; Zeman et al., 2018). Specifically, children with an incarcerated mother are more likely to suffer from de-identification with the incarcerated mother, trauma reactive behaviors, and substance abuse (Kautz, 2017). While much of this issue has been studied in a broad context, there was room for studies to focus solely on the Black community and how it is affected by the maternal incarceration rate.

The specific research problem that was addressed through this study is the limited information pertaining to how probation and pre-trial officers perceive how the mass incarceration of Black women precedes maternal incarceration and how it impacts children within the Black community. Although researchers have investigated the mass

incarceration of women, the issue of Black women on community supervision is understudied. The increasing incarceration rates of women affects the number of women who are released on parole (Johnson, 2015). It is estimated that 1.2 million women are under criminal justice supervision in Mississippi with 1 million of this number being on probation or parole (Liu, 2018, para. 8). Studies have explored women's experiences of being incarcerated and recidivism (Heidemann et al., 2015) and women's perspectives of their probation and parole officers (Johnson, 2015). The correlation between parental incarceration and childhood delinquency has also been researched (Sobba et al., 2017). Nevertheless, little to no studies have explored how probation and pre-trial officers perceive mass incarceration, maternal incarceration, and maternal incarceration's impact on children within the Black community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the targeted population, which consisted of probation and pre-trial officers who are currently employed in the southern states of Mississippi and Tennessee. This population was appropriate for two reasons: (a) perceptions from probation and pre-trial officers were being sought, and (b) the incarceration and community supervision rates for Black women are elevated within southern states and especially the State of Mississippi; therefore, it was likely the probation and pre-trial officers would supervise Black women. Implications for positive social change include the potential to gauge an in-depth

understanding of how employees of the criminal justice system perceived how the criminal justice system impacts Black women and their children.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How do probation and pre-trial officers perceive how maternal incarceration impacts Black children?

RQ 2: What strategies do probation and pre-trial officers implement to mitigate recidivism and increase positive reentry?

RQ 3: What themes emerge from the probation and pre-trial officers' responses regarding criminal involvement in children as a result of maternal incarceration?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used for this study is critical race theory (CRT). CRT is an intellectual movement originating from the critical legal studies of two scholars, Alan D. Freeman and Derrick Bell, who were frustrated with how Civil Rights movements did little to nothing to keep Blacks away from racial discrimination (De La Garza & Ono, 2016; Fortin, 2021). CRT dates from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, and since its inception scholarly research from Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Cheryl Harris, Richard Delgado, and Mari Matsuda have been acknowledged as well (Elnaiem, 2021). Specifically, CRT is rooted in the belief that race and racism are ordinarily and firmly fixed within United States societies (Schiffer, 2014). For instance, legal systems are designed to maintain a White supremacist racial order (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). Racism is more than an individual social condition but rather exists and must be understood at institutional, political, and historical levels (De La Garza & Ono, 2016),

as CRT points out the structure that benefits Whites and views them as superior over people of color (Brown, 2017; Fornili, 2018). "The struggle by black people to obtain freedom, justice, and dignity is as old as this nation" (Bell, 1992, p. 363).

CRT was appropriate to use as a framework for this study because of its origins in racial studies. There continues to be an unequal impact on Black women in the criminal justice system (Schiffer, 2014). The mass incarceration of Black women has reached disproportionate numbers, and there should be more consideration taken when it comes to race because parental incarceration within the minority communities is basically another form of oppression (Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2018). CRT has been used to address the concept of maternal incarceration for Black mothers in other studies. Specifically, Elliott and Reid (2019) and Williams et al. (2020) mentioned the punishments that are imposed on Black mothers within the mass incarceration era and the lived experiences of Black women reentering their communities, respectively. Williams et al. also use CRT in their study to emphasize its foundation in people of color's lives daily and how it impacts formerly incarcerated Black women.

Nature of the Study

To address the three research questions in this phenomenological qualitative study, the specific research design included a narrative approach involving individual semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. A qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach was used because it allows researchers to explore, obtain, and better understand the information being provided about the phenomenon by the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, qualitative research uses a natural

approach to uncover what may be unknown about a specific phenomenon (Cypress, 2015), which aligns with the purpose of the study.

Semi-structured interviews were used because the open-ended questioning platform allowed the interviewed participants the opportunity to openly engage (Williams et al., 2020). The ability to build rapport with the participants and ask follow-up questions was pertinent to the study as well because participants needed to feel comfortable and not hesitate to engage in conversation. Individual interviews were used instead of focus groups because individual interviews generate more detail and are capable of providing more insight about the participant's personal perceptions when compared to focus groups (Guest et al., 2017). These interviews were conducted with probation and pre-trial officers who are currently employed in the states of Mississippi and Tennessee who supervise Black women who are mothers to at least one child. Answers obtained from the interviews and auditory field notes were recorded and transcribed to analyze themes. This type of data collection and analysis aided in the development of better understanding how said officers perceive mass incarceration and the role it plays in how maternal incarceration impacts children.

Definitions

Critical race theory (CRT): — A movement developed from Derrick Bell's legal and philosophical writings that is rooted in the belief that Blacks will never be equal to whites because racism is socially and inherently present in many facets of the legal and educational systems to protect White supremacy (Bell, 1992; Legal Information Institute, n.d.; Simba, 2017).

Maternal incarceration: — Arrastia-Chisholm et al. (2020) defines parental incarceration as the experience of arrest, detention, incarceration, probation, or parole of a parent. For this study, maternal incarceration is defined as the incarceration, probation, and/or pre-trial status of a mother.

Probation: — Community supervision sentence imposed on offenders often instead of incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.).

Parole: — A conditional release from incarceration imposed on criminal offenders in which the remaining portion of the sentence is served in the community (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.).

Recidivism: — Relapse into criminal behavior by an individual who has either been incarcerated, rehabilitated, or both (National Institute of Justice, n.d.).

Reentry: — The transition of offenders from being incarcerated to living in the community (National Institute of Corrections, n.d.).

Assumptions

The assumptions that I encountered with this study included the ontological, epistemological, axiological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions related to the qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 1994). The ontological assumption explains that reality is subjective; therefore, individuals view reality differently. Based on this assumption, I assumed that each participant would view how the mass incarceration of Black women and maternal incarceration may impact children from various lenses. Further, individuals see different realities within the same phenomenon, and it is the researcher's responsibility to recognize similarities and differences to uncover themes (Cypress,

2015).

The epistemological assumption explains that the researcher interacts with what or whom is being researched. Since interaction was required, it remained important that rapport was established between the participants and me. The participants were given an informed consent form which detailed how the interview was strictly voluntary and all identities and answers would remain confidential. From an epistemological viewpoint, I assumed that the participants would remain comfortable during the interview and provide thoughtful, relevant, and truthful answers. Quality is preferred over quantity in qualitative research (Kautz, 2017), so I assumed that the quality of the answers provided by the participants would add depth to the interactions of the study.

The axiological assumption explains how the subjective realities are personal. I assumed the participants' answers to the interview and any applicable follow-up questions would derive from the personal experiences he or she had with their Black female probationer or pre-trial client and not be based on generalized protocol. The methodological assumption explains the research process. Qualitative research is inductive and interpretive in nature (Ravitch & Carl, 2016); therefore, I assumed that relevant themes would emerge from the participants' in-depth content. The rhetorical assumption explains the research language. Although the interview was semi-structured, I assumed that as the participants provided answers, due to the established rapport impersonal answers and pauses would be provided and present, respectively. The overall purpose of utilizing a qualitative paradigm was to better understand and interpret a specific phenomenon or event. A plethora of data was being sought; therefore, the last

assumption was that data saturation would be reached. Data saturation is when information collected from research participants is not new or becomes repetitive (Kautz, 2017; Williams et al., 2020).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to currently employed probation and pre-trial officers in the state of Tennessee and Mississippi Federal Probation. Specifically, the perceptions of mass incarceration of Black women, maternal incarceration, and the impact both have on Black children were assessed. Delimitations are limitations an author is aware of and sets prior to the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Therefore, participants for this study were probation and pre-trial officers currently employed by the state of Tennessee and Mississippi Federal Probation. Previously employed probation and/or pre-trial officers were excluded due to the nature of wanting updated perceptions of the phenomenon. Demographics, specifically whether the participant was a probation or pre-trial officer, place of employment, and length of employment were recorded for classification purposes only. Gaining the different perceptions from probation and pre-trial officers of different demographic backgrounds further expanded the knowledge relevant to the purpose of the study. Although the attachment theory has been used to help explain the relationship between maternal incarceration and its impact on children, it was not used in this study because the Black women probationers nor their Black children were the participants in this study.

Limitations

Limitations are "potential weaknesses out of the researcher's control"

(Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018, p. 156). The limitations that were encountered while

conducting this study included the difficulty in recruiting participants and the inability to

notate body language or facial expressions, due to the disabling of participants' Zoom

video. Qualitative data provides more depth than surveys used in quantitative research;

however, the small number of participants recruited for the study is often not

generalizable to society. Data saturation is said to occur once coding is complete, and the

emerging themes appear repetitive (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020; Williams et al., 2020).

Although recruitment strategies began early to secure participation, individuals were slow

to respond to my recruitment flyer. Also, individuals who did respond with interest to

participate either did not meet the full participation criteria or did not provide informed

consent in a timely manner. The inability to view and notate participants' body language

and facial expressions was also a study limitation. To increase the level of confidentiality,

the Zoom video for each participant was disabled. Without video, it was impossible to

view if an interview question offended the participant or if the participant felt

uncomfortable or annoyed. To remedy this limitation, each interview was audio recorded

so that any audible pauses were noted.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it filled a literature gap by allowing probation

and pre-trial officers to better understand how incarcerating Black women impacts their

children. Conversations pertaining to the issue of the mass incarceration of Black women

and maternal incarceration are prevalent (Schiffer, 2014; Simmons, 2018; Williams et al.,

2020); however, there was a gap in the usage of CRT to help explain how the targeting of

Black women in the criminal justice system impacts their children. CRT has been used as a foundation for how race is an institutionalized platform that subjects Black women to the criminal justice system in a disproportionate manner. However, as employees of the criminal justice system probation and pre-trial officers are excluded from the conversation and asked to merely supervise the client with little regard to successful reentry. The rationale for this study was based on the notion that probation and pre-trial officers' voices should be heard aside from the basic concepts of how the relationship between them and their clients is or how large their caseloads are. Parole officers are the gatekeepers to a female parolee's reentry in the community (Johnson, 2015). Based on this role, the perceptions from the probation and pre-trial officers should open the door for discussion on the prevention of incarcerating Black women and rather the development of community programs for them and their children. By preventing incarceration, reentry success will increase, recidivism will decrease, positive opportunities for Black women will be reinforced, and Black children of the previously incarcerated Black women will reap benefits rather than feeling the impact of their mother's incarceration.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The incarceration of Black women who are mothers has increased within the past three decades. Research has shown that the main reasons are the War on Drugs and minor property offenses (Martin, 2017; Mears & Siennick, 2016; Simmons, 2018; Williams et al., 2020). The issue goes beyond the incarceration itself, because the rates of Black children with an incarcerated mother also increase. With this increase comes the

consequences that fall onto the children with much emphasis being placed on conduct disorders, mental health issues, and criminal justice involvement. The research problem included the limited data related to how probation and pre-trial officers employed by the state of Tennessee and Mississippi Federal Probation perceived the topics of mass incarceration of Black women, maternal incarceration, and this incarcerations' impact on children. In Chapter 1, research questions pertaining to what strategies and themes emerge from the study, CRT as a theoretical framework, the qualitative nature of the study, definitions of critical race theory, maternal incarceration, probation, parole, recidivism, and reentry, assumptions, scope and delimitations of the study, limitations, and the significance of the study were discussed. Chapter 2 will review the literature more in depth concerning critical race theory as an appropriate theoretical framework for the study, mass incarceration of women, mass incarceration of Black mothers, children of incarcerated Black mothers, probation and parole origins, recidivism, and reentry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are currently 2.3 million people incarcerated in the United States, and this is the result of the United States using incarceration as a means of controlling poverty instead of addressing the root causes of crime (Ortiz & Jackey, 2019, p. 485). The female incarceration rate for the United States is also the highest in the world (Campbell, 2020), and incarceration numbers for women have surpassed those of men (Johnson, 2015). Blacks and other people of color have been at the center of mass incarceration research due to how they are disproportionately incarcerated, and the most recent examinations of the issue between race and mass incarceration are largely centered on the war on drugs and felony disfranchisement (Gross, 2015). Racial disparities are recognized within the criminal justice system, but they continue to exist (Schiffer, 2014). Throughout the history of the United States, Blacks have been viewed as being less than human in comparison to their White counterparts; therefore, Blacks are treated unfairly in every stage of the criminal justice system (Kruttschnitt & Otto, 2019). The inequality continues to spread to Black women in the criminal justice system due to systemic racial biases and the history of negative stereotypes such as "angry Black woman" given to them (Simmons, 2018). The legal and criminal justice systems have made Blacks adapt to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, and the oppression and marginality for Black women has led to early mortality (Malcome et al., 2019).

Though it is known that the criminal justice system is designed to keep Blacks suppressed, research has not examined how the system's design is viewed from probation and pre-trial officers. The research problem that this study addressed is the limited

information pertaining to how probation and pre-trial officers perceive how the mass incarceration of Black mothers impacts children within the Black community. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children.

In this chapter, in-depth reviews of relevant literature pertaining to CRT, the mass incarceration of Black women and incarcerated Black mothers, parental and maternal incarceration's impact on children, aspects of community supervision, recidivism, and reentry are provided. Specific emphasis is placed on the importance of how Black women are affected by reentry because of the double standards they are obligated to live by, which further affects their children. Within this chapter, CRT is described as a relevant theoretical foundation on which the mass incarceration of Black women is built. I review the role the mass incarceration of Black women plays in the incarceration of Black mothers. I also review parental incarceration which is the umbrella for maternal incarceration and its impact on children in the criminal justice involvement, mental health, and resilience aspects. Specific attention is given to how Black children are affected by parental and maternal incarceration. An overview of probation and parole is provided before expanding into recidivism and reentry. Barriers, challenges, and disadvantages are discussed in each of these sections; however, the focus is Black women and how they fare during each stage. Black women's perspectives from the literature are explained and this shapes the relevance of probation and pre-trial officers who supervise Black women. The chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

The Walden University library was used to obtain the relevant sources for the literature review. The specific databases chosen for my research were the Thoreau advanced search database, Criminal Justice database, Sage Journals, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, Dissertations and Theses @ Walden University, and Google Scholar. The main objective was to find relevant peer-reviewed articles and books written between the years of 2017 and 2022; however, articles written prior to 2017 were included, especially if they contained valuable information related to the theoretical framework, parental or maternal incarceration's impact on children, or aspects of community supervision. The ProQuest Dissertations and Theses databases were accessed to view and locate additional references related to my topic of study. The keywords and search terms used during the literature search included mass *incarceration, Black women, African American women, parental incarceration, maternal incarceration, mother*, children of Black women, juvenile delinquency, coping strategies, probation officer, parole, perspectives of incarceration on children, critical race theory,* and *Black populations*. These terms were often used in combination to receive the most relatable results.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is CRT. Getting its origins from legal critical studies (Williams et al., 2020) and scholars such as Derrick Bell and Alan D. Freeman, CRT is rooted in the belief that racism is a permanent fixation within the United States and its many institutions such as education and criminal justice (De La

Garza & Ono, 2016). CRT explains racism, its manifestation and function within society, and experiences of those who are subjected to it in an ideological manner (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). CRT has become a general classification for studies related to race and racism, although scholars recognize that multiple methods of power and oppression exist and may exist simultaneously (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). This general classification comes as a result of the five tenets of CRT which include the ideas of race still matters, narratives are central as an analysis method, liberalism critique, commitment to social justice, and acknowledgment of interdisciplinarity importance (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). Although the Civil Rights Movement and appointments of people of color to prestigious positions such as Supreme Court judge and Vice President of the United States have occurred, Bell (1992) stated that Blacks are not equal to Whites and never will be. Campbell (2020) added to the conversation by stating that achievement of racial equality will not occur as long as one race is prioritized. Another aspect to CRT is its awareness of how race and racism affect people of color (De La Garza & Ono, 2016).

Although CRT maintains its critical legal studies thinking, the framework on which the theory is built helps to better understand the undeniable White supremacy doctrine (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). The theory challenges how racial power is distributed within the American legal culture (Ortiz & Jackey, 2019), which is the primary institution responsible for maintaining and controlling a White supremacist racial order (De La Garza & Ono, 2016) or status quo (Bell, 1992). By identifying Blacks as criminals, Whites are naturally identified as being law-abiding citizens, which maintains White supremacy thinking and ideology (Schiffer, 2014). Black women are not exempt

from this subjection.

As a theoretical framework, CRT will be appropriately applied to this study because the maternal incarceration rate of Black women has increased, and it can be attributed to how facets of the legal system are designed to hinder Blacks. The influence of racism is prevalent through U.S. governing institutions, and state agencies responsible for serving justice are no exception (Williams et al., 2020). Probation, pre-trial, and parole offices fall under state agencies who are assigned to lead individuals back into society as law-abiding citizens. However, often whether the probationer or parolee enters successfully is not made a priority and rather these individuals are removed from community corrections and placed behind jail and prison walls. Thus, this study was focused on probation and pre-trial officers.

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**</div>

Mass Incarceration of Black Women

As a result of male incarceration rates obscuring data, the explanation for reasoning related to the increase in women incarceration rates does not exist (Kajstura, 2017). Nevertheless, the incarceration rates for women have continued to grow for both jails and prisons (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2019). An additional elevated issue is that the incarceration rates for Black women have increased substantially within the past three decades; however, the issue is also frequently overshadowed by the disproportionate incarceration rates of Black men (Gross, 2015). The incarceration rate for African American women is smaller in comparison to men (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016), but even with this comparison Black women are the fastest-growing population in prisons

throughout the United States (Williams et al., 2020). This may be due to the fact that

Black women, in comparison to White women, are five times more likely to be

incarcerated (Schiffer, 2014, p. 1206). Black women incarceration is rooted in the

discriminatory and racially biased laws legislated within the United States (Simmons,

2018). Race and class are oppressions that continue to keep Black women down within

the criminal justice system, and these oppressions formed because of the laws set in place

(Williams et al., 2020). The increase in Black women incarceration rates may be

attributed to overpolicing in communities of color and the disproportionate punishments

distributed by the legal and criminal system (Malcome et al., 2019).

Examining the historical experiences of Black women, 72% of Black women in

Philadelphia who stood trial before juries were convicted between the years of 1794 and

1835, Blacks made up less than 2% of the Illinois population in the 1860s but Black

women accounted for 15% of incarcerated female prisoners, and arrests of Black women

between the late 1980s and 1990s grew by 828% for drug related crimes (Gross, 2015, p.

29). In addition to these statistics, Black women continued to outnumber Black men in

prison throughout the 18th and 19th centuries 47.5% to 29%, respectively (Campbell,

2020, p. 33). Black women's incarceration rates grew during the 1980s when severe drug

policies became prominent across the United States (Williams et al., 2020). In recent

times, Black women are now subjected to the injustices of mass incarceration and reentry

(Williams et al., 2020). Overall, the literature has brought attention to how the mass

incarceration of Black women has become a societal issue within the United States.

While this issue has sparked debate and concern, a more pressing issue is the

incarceration of Black mothers. From behind prison or jail walls or even in the middle of community supervision, Black mothers must fare with parenting from an oppressing distance. The next section reviews the literature on Black incarcerated mothers.

Black Incarcerated Mothers

Aside from Black women being overrepresented in incarceration rates, Black single mothers from less than adequate communities are more likely to enter the criminal justice system (Williams et al., 2020). Several studies have highlighted how Black women are often the sole providers in their households prior to their incarceration (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016; Simmons, 2018; Williams et al., 2020); therefore, when it is the Black mother who enters the criminal justice system any supervision and custodial duties for their children become jeopardized. The effects of mass incarceration for Black mothers may include biological, physiological, psychological, and sociological contexts (Williams et al., 2020). For example, to regain the label of "mother" instead of "ex-con", the justice system should expunge the Black female offenders' record so reentry may become easier (Simmons, 2018). The scholarly literature is abundant on the detriments of the mass incarceration of Black women and Black mothers. The impact of how the incarceration event impacts children will be discussed in the next three sections.

Parental Incarceration's Impact on Children

It is estimated that over 5 million children have experienced parental incarceration within the United States (Zhang & Flynn, 2015, p. 883). Because the United States places much emphasis and reliance on incarceration, a large number of American children spend their adolescence with a least one parent in jail (Johnson & Easterling, 2015). Research

has shown that children are affected by parental incarceration in various ways including being exposed to substance abuse, economic challenges, and family challenges (Kjellstrand et al., 2018; Sobba et al., 2017. Parental incarceration experienced during a child's life is not considered normal (Zhang & Flynn, 2015), and parental incarceration can become a lifelong burden for children that creates hardships for them later in life (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016). The parent-child relationship is destabilized, and as a result of this separation the child suffers from problems in school and other external and internal issues (Enos, 2012). Children who experience parental incarceration are at a heightened risk for antisocial behavior, which include but are not limited to impulsivity, lack of empathy, and deceitfulness (Sobba et al., 2017).

As if being a child with an incarcerated parent is not difficult enough, children transitioning to adulthood with an incarcerated parent(s) is challenging as well (Mears & Siennick, 2016). Parental incarceration is a turning point that has potential negative effects on criminal behavior and other social, psychological, and emotional developments for children advancing toward adulthood (Mears & Siennick, 2016). For instance, children who experience parental incarceration are more likely to drop out of high school (Sobba et al., 2017). Special attention is given on children of incarcerated parents delinquency and criminal justice involvement, mental health, and resiliency in the next sections.

Delinquency and Criminal Justice Involvement

The delinquency, externalizing behaviors, and criminal justice involvement impacts on children who have suffered from parental incarceration are the most prevalent

within the scholarly literature. Research has shown that children with parental

incarceration history are one and a half times more likely to display externalizing

behaviors than children with no history of parental incarceration (Kjellstrand et al., 2018,

p. 629). In their study, Mears and Siennick (2016) used criminal offending as a parental

incarceration impact or factor for children and described it as a child damaging property,

stealing, burglarizing, using a weapon on someone, selling drugs, and fighting. To

complement this, Kjellstrand et al. (2018) examined the impact of parental incarceration

from late childhood across adolescence using data from the Linking Interest of Families

and Teachers (LIFT). The authors utilized a child behavior checklist for the parents to

rate their child's externalizing behaviors which included destroying things, threatening

people, and physically attacks people. Results indicated that parental incarceration was a

significant predictor of an increase in child externalizing problems over time. Despite this

prevalence, the differentiation between if the impact is caused by maternal or paternal

incarceration is commonly nonexistent (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016).

Mental Health

Parental incarceration is known to cause mental health issues for children (Sobba

et al., 2017). Mears and Siennick (2016) used depression as a parental incarceration

impact on children and described it as being bothered by things that normally do not

bother them, inability to shake off the blues, inability to focus, tiredness, sadness, and a

sense of not belonging or being disliked. Aside from depression, mental health issues

may also include overall emotional experiences brought on by parental incarceration.

Kautz (2017) examined the lived experiences of having a parent or parental figure

incarcerated during the participant's adolescence. Among the results, the emotional

influence of parental incarceration with specific emphasis on stigma was experienced by

the participants. Due to the stigma associated with having a parent incarcerated,

participants stated that they only told select individuals about the incarceration out of fear

of being labeled. In an extension to the previous study, Kautz (2019) used the same

participants to explore the lived experiences of having a parent or parental figure

incarcerated during one's adolescence but focused more on the emotional experience.

Fear, worry, anxiety, sadness, and helplessness were felt in some form by the participants

for either themselves or the incarcerated parent.

Resiliency and Coping

The experience of children who appear to cope positively with parental

incarceration is often ignored within the scholarly literature (Zhang & Flynn, 2020). This

comes because of much more emphasis being placed on the intergenerational criminal

behavior and other negative impacts or outcomes. Nevertheless, Poehlmann-Tynan et al.

(2019) mentioned that some children do benefit from parental incarceration especially

when substance abuse is present. Zhang and Flynn (2020) identified how family support

was the most critical aspect of their participants' ability to build resilience towards their

parental incarceration experience. Participants specifically identified how positive role

modelling, advice, and community service engagements helped to build their identity to

be different from their offending parents. To complement resiliency, children and

adolescents often develop coping mechanisms to help ease the burden of having

incarcerated parents. Kautz (2017) highlighted that protective factors such as a supportive

family, extracurricular activity engagement, and positive individual attributes like easy temperament help ease the burden of parental incarceration for adolescents. Johnson and Easterling (2015) explored the coping strategies children develop during and after experiencing parental incarceration. Results from the study indicated that children often desensitized the incarceration, deidentified from the incarcerated parent, or built strength through control of the incarceration experience. In addition to deidentifying from the incarcerated parent, Johnson and Easterling (2015) concluded that adolescents will replace the parental role of the incarcerated parent with another person or parental figure. While the impact can take on several different forms, it has not been studied from a community supervision perspective which paves the way for why this study should be conducted. It is necessary to identify the potential issues and risks for children experiencing parental incarceration to harness the attention of policymakers and service providers, including social workers; however, focusing solely on the 'negatives' may have the indirect effect of reinforcing stigma and reducing aspirations and expectations for these children.

Maternal Incarceration's Impact on Children

Studies have shown how maternal incarceration impacts children, and Sobba et al. (2017) mentioned that maternal incarceration may be more harmful than paternal incarceration. Sobba et al. (2017) also mentioned that very little research has focused on the impact of a mother's behavior or incarceration on the delinquency of children. Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2019) mentioned that mothers are more likely to reside with children prior to incarceration in comparison to fathers, and Kopak and Smith-Ruiz

(2016) stated how a mother's absence changes caregiving arrangements for her children and this results in a decrease in supervision and an increase in deviant and delinquent activity. Children of incarcerated women are susceptible to the burdens imposed upon their mother (Kajstura, 2017). These burdens include socioeconomic disadvantage and housing availability (Sobba et al., 2017), and Williams et al. (2020) commented on how long-term traumas may be experienced by children of incarcerated mothers which include lower self-esteem, abandonment issues, and emotional detachment disorders. Sobba et al. (2017) examined the relationship between a mother's criminal behavior and incarceration and a child's delinquent tendencies of destroying property and fighting. Results from this study indicated that a mother's criminal behavior was not associated with a child's tendency to destroy property but was an influence on a child's risk for fighting. Despite the evidence linking the impact of maternal incarceration on children discovered within these studies, a literature gap exists regarding how formerly incarcerated Black women's lived experiences are passed down to their children. While these statistics and studies have shown progress in how children are impacted by maternal incarceration, there is a gap in the literature relevant to how probation or pre-trial officers perceive the phenomenon.

Impact of Parental Incarceration on Black Children

The outcomes among Black children of incarcerated parents are imperative to study due to the disproportionate incarceration rates for this racial group (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016). Sobba et al. (2017) explained that African Americans are overrepresented in relation to parental incarceration, and research has determined that

11.4% of Black children in comparison to 1.8% of White children have an incarcerated parent (Johnson & Easterling, 2015, p. 245). Despite the disproportionate likelihood that African American children have experienced the incarceration of a parent, there is a significant gap in the research overlooking the potentially different relationships according to maternal and paternal incarceration, as well as the combined influence of having both parents incarcerated. Kopak and Smith-Ruiz (2016) filled a gap in the literature by focusing exclusively on how parental incarceration negatively affects children of color. The authors designed the study to analyze how African American children who experienced paternal incarceration, maternal incarceration, or parental incarceration (both parents) fared with depression, drug use, and criminal involvement. Study results found that a mother's incarceration was associated with several of children's criminal justice-related outcomes, including a greater likelihood of being arrested, a higher number of arrests, and arrest at an earlier age. One explanation for this may be related to the quality of the mother-child bond as one of the most influential in a child's life, especially given how the absence of a mother will likely weaken parent-child attachment, supervision, and disciplinary actions for African American children.

Overview of Probation and Parole

The majority of individuals who fall under corrections are on probation and parole and both are often known as community supervision (Jones, 2018). Community supervision has become the new incarceration based on the national statistics that 1 in every 38 adults were under some form of correctional supervision in 2015 (Malcome et al., 2019, p. 663), 1 in 55 adults were under community supervision at the end of 2016

(Kaeble, 2018, p. 1), 4.5 million individuals were subjected to it in 2018 (Ortiz & Jackey, 2019, p. 47), and 81% of adults under community supervision were on probation (Kaeble, 2018, p. 1). In Mississippi, the community supervision numbers complement the national statistics. At the end of 2016, there were 29,067 individuals on probation (Kaeble, 2018, p. 13) and 8,645 individuals on parole (Kaeble, 2018, p. 18). As of December 2019, there was a decrease in probation numbers and an increase in parole numbers with 28,458 individuals under probation and 10,432 individuals under parole (National Institute of Corrections, 2019, para. 3). Nevertheless, community supervision has been overshadowed by incarceration (Jones, 2018). Although community supervision is imposed to divert individuals from jails and prisons, the restrictions and conditions that are often enforced only escort them back behind bars (Jones, 2018). For example, Morash et al. (2019) explained how individuals sentenced to probation and parole must conform to various requirements such as avoiding drugs, paying fines and fees, avoiding contact with other felons, and maintaining approved stable housing and employment. As unfortunate as it may seem, probation is the lead manipulator of mass incarceration (Jones, 2018). Approximately 350,000 people are subject to return to jail or prison while sentenced to community supervision (Jones, 2018, p. 6). This comes as a result of many individuals who are under community supervision being poor, having mental illnesses, and lower educational attainment. This is troubling because much like incarceration, community supervision strikes a hard blow to marginalized populations (Jones, 2018). Morash et al. (2019) stated that women are a part of the many individuals on community supervision. Over one million women are under community supervision and many of

them describe this experience as bringing anxiety and making them feel powerlessness (Malcome et al., 2019, p. 665). Johnson (2015) qualitatively examined the parole experiences of 60 women in a Southern state. Many perspectives were addressed in this study, but how the women overcame parole reporting, how they felt about their parole officer, and their strategies used for successful reentry were specifically explored. Although much attention has been given to the shift from mass incarceration to mass supervision (Morash et al., 2019), specific attention is given to Black women on community supervision in the next section.

Black Women on Probation and Parole

Although many individuals in the United States are subjected to community supervision, Black women are especially vulnerable targets. Malcome et al. (2019) mentioned that the probation and parole experience for many Black Americans extends to the historical experiences of systemic racism and less than equal citizenship status. Community supervision appears to only lead to increased difficulty and unhealthy physical and mental health risks. To gain a better understanding of how Black women fared with their mental health, Malcome et al. (2019) studied 169 Black women (the majority were mothers) on probation and parole in a large county in a Southeastern state. The study's purpose was grounded in examining how social supports served as protective factors to buffer the relationship between being on community supervision and exhibiting depressive symptoms. The gap for this study was identified as Black women's mental health being underresearched despite the disproportionate number of Black women in the criminal justice system. This study also identified community supervision for Black

women as a blatant form of systemic racism. While the findings filled a gap in the scholarly literature pertaining to Black women on community supervision and systemic racism, CRT was not used as a framework and the perspective of how probation and pre-trial officers perceive the ramifications of having a Black woman who is a mother under the grip of the criminal justice system was not examined. Relevant literature and statistics on recidivism is discussed in the next section.

Recidivism

The term recidivism applies to the action of a previously incarcerated individual committing a new crime or being revoked while under community supervision (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Approximately 70% of individuals who are released from imprisonment are rearrested within three years (Ortiz & Jackey, 2019, p. 493), but on average 66% of women released from American jails are rearrested within three years (Campbell, 2020, p. 34). Williams et al. (2020) mentioned that a Black woman's recidivism rate increases when she is destined to return to a disadvantaged and underserved community, but Johnson (2015) observed that positive rapport between women parolees and parole officers has an impact on reintegration and recidivism rates. Returning to such community often leads to difficulties in maintaining community supervision rules and results in return to incarceration (Williams et al., 2020). A plethora of research has been conducted to support this claim, and Malcome et al. (2019) stated that a Black woman's mental health poses as a risk factor for incarceration and recidivism. The great role that women take on within their families dictates what type of crime they will commit and their recidivism rate (Simmons, 2018). It is likely that Black

women, especially those who are single mothers, will return to their communities and find that they are predisposed to safe housing and employment barriers. If the situation presents itself where she is forced to choose between feeding her children by committing an illegal act in risk of going back to jail it is likely she will take that risk. Simmons (2018) indicated that the current laws leave little to no room for opportunities of healing or advancement of socioeconomic status for Black female offenders. Instead, this leads them to feel a sense of powerlessness and despair which in turn encourages them to commit illegal acts. Kruttschnitt and Otto (2019) mentioned that a limitation of any benefits such as food stamps or housing increases the likelihood of reoffending. The revolving door of recidivism rears its head, and Ortiz and Jackey (2019) concluded that this entails that the criminal justice system is not broken but rather designed to keep minority populations marginalized. In another study to predict the likelihood of recidivism for women, Morash et al. (2019) explored the relationship between technical violation treatment or punishment responses and supervision intensity. The results indicated that high-risk and low-risk women responded differently to treatment and punishment depending on if the technical violation was drug related. This dependency relies on the woman's recidivism risk level. Overall, recidivism not only affects the female probationer or parolee, but their families and children specifically especially in the Black community. A discussion of the aspect of reentry is discussed in the next section with a specific emphasis on Black women's reentry barriers and challenges.

Reentry

The term reentry applies to the process of an individual returning to a place they

most likely have been before. In the context of this study and several others, reentry is when an incarcerated individual returns to the society him or her belonged to prior to the incarceration period. Mears and Siennick (2016) noted how individuals are often stigmatized following their incarceration and this makes securing housing and resuming relationships with family and friends which are a part of the reentry process difficult. Ortiz and Jackey (2019) described the prisoner reentry industry (PRI) as an outgrowth of mass incarceration. Its purpose is to help formerly incarcerated individuals have a successful reentry process; however, its hidden agenda is to maintain control of the most marginalized groups in society to keep the racist criminal justice's revolving door in motion. Black women belong to this marginalized group and upon being released from jail or prison they must report to community supervision. The reentry process can be troubling to those who return to communities that are impoverished or disadvantaged (Williams et al., 2020). Schiffer (2014) stated that the reentry process for these individuals often comes with fear, shame, and legal exclusion. Malcome et al. (2019) asserted that women who returned to disadvantaged communities of color are faced with many obstacles including educational attainment, employment opportunities, safe housing, and social support. Johnson (2015) studied 60 women parolees to understand how they experienced challenges and barriers while returning to their communities which included limited or less than standard housing, employment, education, and transportation. The study's purpose was to increase the knowledge of reentry challenges of women parolees, and Campbell (2020) mentioned how employment for women reentering the community is often part-time with income at or below the poverty line.

These challenges and barriers, especially with housing, result in women parolees returning to communities with higher levels of crime problems. Williams et al. (2020) explored reentry issues further by focusing on the lived experiences of nine formerly incarcerated Black women who were on the path of reentry. Of the nine participants in the study, eight were mothers and information from semi-structured interviews with a phenomenological approach revealed that Black women's experiences are unique because they lack services to support successful reentry, experience levels of trauma induced by mental well-being and separation from their children, and develop resilience. Ortiz and Jackey (2019) conducted a study in the East Coast and Midwest regions with formerly incarcerated gang members and reentry service providers. The study's results indicated that structural issues such as employment and debts introduced by reentry fees identified by the formerly incarcerated gang members encouraged criminality because it was all that they knew to survive. Although all these study participants were male, Kruttschnitt and Otto (2019) indicated that women struggle with reentry because they have the knowledge of their structural disadvantages and lack of social support prior to leaving incarceration and entering community supervision. Having this awareness creates another level of stress which leads to an unsuccessful reentry process and high likelihood of recidivism. While unlikely, reentry is not always a negative experience. Schiffer (2014) noted that certain individuals have various support systems that include families and friends waiting on them upon return who help with employment and housing barriers. While these studies expanded on the knowledge of reentry and allowed Black women's voices to be heard during their reentry process, no study discussed how probation or pre-

trial officers perceive the impact of Black women maternal incarceration on children.

Summary

Interaction with the criminal justice system is a distinct form of systemic racism, and a salient aspect of the lived experiences of many Black people and communities in the United States (Malcome et al., 2019). Chapter 2 provided an in-depth review of the current literature pertaining to CRT, the mass incarceration of Black women who are mothers, the impact of this incarceration on Black children, components of community supervision, recidivism, and reentry. While some individuals return to their communities with all the appropriate resources needed to have a successful reentry process, there are others who do not. Most of these individuals who do not have what is required to become what society considers a law-abiding citizen are Black women who are not only the fastest-growing population within the criminal justice system but also the most marginalized and stereotyped. The hardships and obstacles that these Black women face during incarceration, probation/parole, and reentry are often transferred to their children which creates another issue. The methodology for the study is discussed in Chapter 3. Specifically, the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, sampling strategy, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures is discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children. In this study, I addressed the lack of information pertaining to how probation and pre-trial officers perceive how the mass incarceration of Black women precedes maternal incarceration and how this maternal incarceration impacts children within the Black community. For this study, I recruited six participants by using criterion-based and snowball sampling methods. As a data collection method, semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom, which helped me to analyze the phenomenon through the lens of the participants. An in-depth discussion of the research method employed for this study is discussed in this chapter. Specifically, the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures is discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

A RQ directs the method for a qualitative study (Cypress, 2015). With phenomenological studies, RQs should be framed so that they may be answered (Burkholder et al., 2016). Qualitative studies can follow several different methods, but this phenomenological study was guided by the following three research questions:

- RQ 1: How do probation and pre-trial officers perceive how maternal incarceration impacts Black children?

- RQ 2: What strategies do probation and pre-trial officers implement to mitigate

  recidivism and increase positive reentry?

- RQ 3: What themes emerge from the probation and pre-trial officers' responses

  regarding criminal involvement in children as a result of maternal incarceration?

Design and Rationale

It is imperative for a researcher to understand what they are attempting to

understand better prior to conducting a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Based on

this preconceived understanding, the researcher makes the decision to conduct a

quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods study, and this is determined by what will

align with the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions. Qualitative

studies are used to gather in-depth and rich information that cannot be obtained using

other quantitative and statistical methods (Cypress, 2015); therefore, the rationale for

conducting a qualitative instead of a quantitative or mixed-methods study involved the

necessity of gathering in-depth narratives from the participants. For this study, the

qualitative nature allowed the probation and pre-trial officers to offer their lived

experiences of supervising Black women with a minor child and how this experience

builds upon the insight of the phenomenon of maternal incarceration. In addition to the

participants offering lived experiences, a qualitative nature was used for this study

because it aligns with the research problem and purpose of wanting to better understand

perspectives. In contrast to quantitative studies, qualitative research takes on a non-linear

approach which allows for ideas, perceptions, and interpretations to flow and unfold

naturally (Cypress, 2015). Qualitative research is used to explore, uncover, describe, and

or understand information about a phenomenon that has been undiscovered or not known in more depth (Cypress, 2015). Using the three research questions as a guide, the participants helped to unfold the phenomenon which resulted in a plethora of interpretations.

Specifically, a phenomenological research design was used for this study because the goal of the study was to understand the lived experience of the maternal incarceration of Black women phenomenon for several probation and pre-trial officers. Phenomenology is one of the most inductive qualitative research methods and it is specifically designed to illuminate and explore the lived experiences of several individuals (Cypress, 2015). Everyone does not respond to a specific phenomenon the same way; therefore, phenomenology helps the researcher understand the reasoning behind the different reactions based on perception (Burkholder et al., 2016; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). This study was descriptive in nature because its methodology of exploring, analyzing, and describing a phenomenon while maintaining richness, breadth, and depth (Matua & van Der Wal, 2015) aligned with the study's purpose.

Role of the Researcher

In any qualitative research study, the researcher's role is just as significant and critical as the participants' roles. The role of the researcher in a phenomenological research study is to collect, organize, and analyze the perceptions of individuals who have all experienced a particular phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016); therefore, my role as the researcher in this study included collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the responses from the participants to answer the three research questions.

However, before any data collection and analysis occurs, the researcher must be aware of his or her role and reflect on certain attitudes, actions, biases, and beliefs. Researcher bias should be avoided by not leading the participants to answer questions in a certain manner and refraining from making facial expressions and gestures (Burkholder at al., 2016). This describes the process of reflexivity, which allows the researcher to fully disclose any assumptions, beliefs, and biases about the phenomenon and/or participants prior to conducting the study because a lack thereof may lead to discrimination (Karagiozis, 2018). Researchers should incorporate reflexive activities within their role (Collins & Stockton, 2022. Using audio materials and a journal may help to record reflections and ideas about any connections between the researcher and participants (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Aside from being reflexive and professional, the researcher should possess several other qualities during the research process. The researcher should be observant, engage in active listening, possess genuineness and responsibility, show sensitivity, and provide acceptance for the participants' perspectives that they are sharing (Karagiozis, 2018). The setting between the researcher and participant may be intimidating because of a consent form, recording device, and the overall knowledge of being a part of research (Collins & Stockton, 2022); therefore, as the researcher I possessed the quality of compassion to make the communication as comfortable as possible. As the researcher, I observed each participant in an auditory manner and was sure to document any hesitancy in responses.

Methodology

The methodology for this study followed a qualitative phenomenological method.

The criteria to participate in the study included the participants being at least 21 years of age, a probation or pre-trial officer currently employed by the State of Tennessee or Mississippi Federal Probation for at least one year, and a probation or pre-trial officer who supervised a Black woman with at least one child under the age of 18. The study was conducted in Mississippi, and I recruited willing participants through criterion and snowball sampling strategies. Both of these strategies are purposive in nature, and purposive sampling aligns with the research purpose of gathering rich and informative data about the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Criterion based sampling uses specified criteria for recruiting, and snowball sampling became useful when participants who met the study criteria recommended other participants for the study (Burkholder et al., 2016). Phenomenological studies usually consist of 10 or fewer interviews (Moser and Korstjens, 2018); therefore, I planned to utilize both strategies to recruit 10 participants or fewer to interview for the study. Phenomenological studies focus on gathering the depth of participants' perspectives and lived experiences; therefore, a large sample size does not guarantee a better understanding or generalization of the research study's phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Instrumentation

Phenomenological research studies use the researcher as the primary key instrument for the study (Burkholder et al., 2016; Collins & Stockton, 2022; Karagiozis, 2018). A requirement for a phenomenological qualitative research study is that the research is the key instrument and refrains from using instruments developed by others (Cypress, 2015). I was the instrument for this study, and data was collected by

conducting individual semi-structured interviews with the participants via Zoom.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures for qualitative research include interviews, focus

groups, and observations that are rigorous and repetitive in nature (Cypress, 2015).

Phenomenological studies require direct communication with participants; therefore,

interviews are utilized often with the most common data collection method being semi-

structured interviews (Burkholder et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews contain a

preconstructed guide that is useful for including probing questions (Burkholder et al.,

2016), and semi-structured interviews are optimal for open-ended dialogue and allow the

interviewee to be as interactive as possible in his or her engagement (Williams et al.,

2020). The purpose of a qualitative interview is to remain focused on the participants'

responses so as to thoroughly explore their values and experiences (Collins & Stockton,

2022). Phenomenology digs deep into a phenomenon while using the participants' words

which is why gathering depth from a smaller number of participants is better than

obtaining shallow information from a large group of people (Burkholder et al., 2016).

The interaction between the researcher and the participant becomes personal, and this is

why it is crucial for the researcher to develop rapport with the participant so as to create a

sense of comfort and sensitivity (Karagiozis, 2018). Each participant will view the

phenomenon differently and this is what places emphasis on the aspect of individuality.

A data collection protocol must be developed so that data obtained is accurate and

thorough as possible (Burkholder et al., 2016). After completing the recruitment

procedures, a set of interview questions were asked within the individual semi-structured

Zoom interview setting so that my full attention was expressed to the participant. The interview questions that were asked are listed in Appendix A. Individual interviews were conducted instead of focus groups because I wanted the participant to be as comfortable as possible during our interaction. It is possible that a focus group would have provided opportunity for one or several individuals to shy away from answering a particular question, and this would have created a hindrance to gathering depth. The participant was advised that the interview setting would be a quiet space where there would be no distractions and the natural lived experience of the phenomenon would not be disturbed. The internet and other modes of technology may be used to collect data (Burkholder et al., 2016). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the personal nature of the study, interviews were conducted via Zoom; however, the video setting within the application was disabled. The voice settings allowed for the participant and me to hear each other without being in the same space. Data saturation is reached once no new themes or categories emerge from the data collection (Cypress, 2015).

Data Analysis Plan

Following data collection, data analysis occurred and it involved reviewing the collected data, organizing and identifying patterns, and synthesizing common themes (Burkholder et al., 2016). Since this study followed a descriptive phenomenological nature, the participants' responses were categorized into themes to identify commonalities about the phenomenon. In phenomenology studies, the data is transcribed verbatim (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Therefore, my auditory field notes and interview audio recordings were typed out in full to accurately depict the interview experience. The

notes and transcripts were saved on separate thumb drives, stored inside of my secure

home office, and will be destroyed after 5 years. After transcription took place, I allowed

each participant to review his or her transcript to ensure that the data represented accurate

feelings and experiences. This process is referred to as member checking and will be

explained in further detail within the trustworthiness section. After member checking,

data was coded manually and by using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 14. A

code in qualitative research is a word or short phrase that symbolizes a larger group of

textual language or visual data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding allowed me to visually observe

the similarities and differences within the collected data and make sense of the

participants' lived experiences.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a very significant element in qualitative research. In

phenomenological studies, researchers look for trustworthiness (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to observe the lived experiences of participants

and interpret them to gain a better understanding and develop context (Amin et al., 2020).

Trustworthiness may be threatened by researcher biases, lack of in-depth participant

experiences of the phenomenon, and not reaching data saturation (Burkholder et al.,

2016). Phenomenological research studies must ensure quality, and strategies within the

four sub-categories of trustworthiness aid in its establishment. These sub-categories

include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the reader's confidence that the results of a study are presented

accurately (Ellis, 2019). While it may seem difficult, trustworthiness can be established in qualitative studies, and triangulation and member checking are two strategies that may be useful in this process (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ellis, 2019; Kornbluh, 2015). Member checking is a strategy that allows research participants to review copies of transcripts and verify that their true meanings and experiences are expressed accurately (Burkholder et al., 2016). This strategy has several advantages which include allowing the researcher to detect personal biases, supporting the researcher's ethical obligation to accurately present study data, and allowing the researcher to gather additional information (Kornbluh, 2015). Triangulation helps to strengthen a study's credibility by allowing the researcher to view research questions from more than one perspective (Ellis, 2019). The data collection methods of interviewing and auditory observation that I used in this study are categorized as methodological triangulation and defined as between-method triangulation (Ellis, 2019), which means using more than one method to strengthen a limitation found in a specific method. For example, a direct response from a participant may be aided by pauses observed by me during the interaction.

Transferability

Qualitative research focuses on transferability rather than generalizability (Burkholder et al., 2016). To establish transferability in qualitative research, thick contextual descriptions of the research setting, participants and their quotes, and other important data allow the reader to transfer the results to their own context (Amin et al., 2020). During the data collection process, I documented specifics of the setting and asked probing questions to gather as much detail and depth as possible.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is data stability over time (Ellis, 2019). Dependability is what ensures quality in the data collection protocols so that they may be replicated and obtain similar results. Like credibility, triangulation may be used to achieve dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative studies may be achieved by maintaining a trail of how data was collected and analyzed (Ellis, 2019). This trail may include the original interview recordings, the writing of the verbatim transcript, and the software used for thematic analysis and coding. Giving readers the ability to confirm how results were obtained is not only a subset of trustworthiness but ethical as well.

Ethical Procedures

Researchers have a responsibility to conduct ethical studies. In qualitative studies, ethical considerations are of upmost significance because of the in-depth and personal nature of the research process (Arifin, 2018; Cypress, 2015). Most researchers consider themselves to be ethical; however, ethics is not a one size fits all definition. Nevertheless, the researcher must ensure that there is no harm done to the participants and that the benefits of the study outweigh the risks. The proposed research topic was of a sensitive nature and answers provided by participants were sensitive as well. Probation and pre-trial officers work in a professional setting; therefore, any risks from participation should be kept to a minimum to not jeopardize their career. The researcher must ensure that participants' identities remain confidential; therefore, I asked participants to not input

their name prior to beginning the Zoom meeting. Rather, I added pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. and they were used during data collection, data analysis, and the writing of results. Aside from confidentiality, anonymity is important to establish as well so there is no visual evidence that a participant was involved in the study. This was the rationale for disabling the Zoom video setting. To aid in the ethical procedures, I built rapport with the participants so that the overall interaction was as open and honest as possible. Input from the participants helps with the researcher's ethical responsibility of accurately portraying their lived experiences (Kornbluh, 2015). Researchers may intentionally or unintentionally engage in the ethical conflict of deception or misrepresentation during a study by not fully believing the role they are playing (Collins & Stockton, 2022). I let the participants know my role as the researcher and was transparent about the study's goal.

Informed Consent

Any researcher should be sensitive and respectful to the participants (Karagiozis, 2018). Informed consent was established for this study by providing potential participants with a full explanation of the study's purpose, data collection methods, and data analysis via email. Any risks and benefits for the study were addressed, and potential participants were advised that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary and that they could have withdrawn from the study at any time. Within the informed consent, participants were asked if they were okay with being audio recorded, and I ensured them that their participation was confidential.

Summary

Qualitative research is a personal research method designed to gather in-depth information from participants. Researchers must be sure that there is alignment among the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions before deciding to engage in qualitative research. Chapter 3 discussed this study's methodology with emphasis being placed on the phenomenological research design and rationale, role of the researcher, instrumentation, data collection method, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 discusses the study's results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children. The following three research questions were used to guide this research study:

- RQ 1: How do probation and pre-trial officers perceive how maternal incarceration impacts Black children?

- RQ 2: What strategies do probation and pre-trial officers implement to mitigate recidivism and increase positive reentry?

- RQ 3: What themes emerge from the probation and pre-trial officers' responses regarding criminal involvement in children as a result of maternal incarceration?

These research questions were answered by using individual semi-structured interviews, which I included interview questions aligned to answer the research questions. This chapter discusses the results from the study as well as the setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The setting for my research study took place over the Zoom video conferencing application. Participants were asked to ensure a level of quietness and privacy, and this privacy may have occurred while inside their work offices, vehicles, or homes. I conducted the Zoom interviews in the privacy of my home office with the door closed. Since I interviewed probation and pre-trial officers, I scheduled interviews during the

weekday evening hours between 5:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. and weekend hours. This was done to not interfere with the officers' daily tasks of meeting with clients and/or completing paperwork.

Demographics

For this qualitative phenomenological study, the demographics that were recorded included whether the participant was a probation or pre-trial officer, where the participant was employed, and the length of employment. Although the study investigated the issue of systemic racism within the criminal justice system, gender and race were excluded because I wanted to maintain a strict level of confidentiality for each participant. Since probation and pre-trial officers work closely with one another on the state and federal levels, I wanted any methods of identifying who participated in the research to be minimized. Of the participants, three were employed by Mississippi Federal Probation and three were employed by the State of Tennessee. The average length of employment for the participants was nine years. Table 1 shows the participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Place of Employment	Occupation	Years of Experience
P1	Mississippi Federal Probation	Probation Officer	24
P2	Mississippi Federal Probation	Pretrial Officer	7
P3	Mississippi Federal Probation	Probation Officer	4
P4	State of Tennessee	Probation Officer	10
P5	State of Tennessee	Probation Officer	5
P6	State of Tennessee	Probation Officer	8

Data Collection

After I obtained IRB approval (approval #11-04-22-1030675), I began recruiting

participants by posting my recruitment flyer inside of the local Mississippi Department of

Corrections probation and parole office, emailing the Mississippi Federal Probation and

Alabama Parole & Pardons offices, and calling human resource departments for the states

of Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas probation and parole offices. The data collection

process began after I received emails from two interested participants who were

employed by the State of Mississippi and a phone call from one interested participant

who was employed by the State of Alabama. After I answered questions and described

the study in more detail, I emailed a copy of the consent form to each of the three

potential participants. I received consent via email from all three participants within the

allotted 7 days, and their interviews were scheduled. However, each of the three potential

participants called and stated that they were no longer able to participant.

I then contacted Mississippi Federal Probation and was able to speak with a

potential participant. Upon explaining my study in further detail and providing informed

consent, the interview was scheduled. Upon completion of this interview, I encouraged

the participant to share and/or guide other potential participants to my recruitment flyer.

This snowball recruiting led to a total of three additional individuals who were employed

by Mississippi Federal Probation who emailed or called with interest in participating,

three participants being emailed consent forms, and two individuals participating in the

interview process. Additional recruitment via telephone and email led to three additional

individuals employed by the State of Tennessee to consent to being participants in the

study. These individuals were emailed consent forms and interviewed, which led to a

total of six total participants for the study. All interviews were conducted between May

2023 and January 2024.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I established rapport with the participant by informing them that their participation in the study was strictly confidential and ensuring that they were comfortable with proceeding. I made sure to reiterate that they could refuse to answer a question and/or stop the interview at any time without penalty. A formal introduction (Appendix B) was provided verbally prior to any questions being asked. Although a sense of normalcy with face-to-face interactions had begun to reoccur since the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted via Zoom for a more confidential and safer environment. The semi-structured interview included eight questions (Appendix A); however, probing questions were asked to gauge more in-depth responses. During the Zoom interviews, the participants' video camera was disabled so only verbal responses were recorded. An additional audio recorder was used as a back-up method for each interview. I informed each participant that I would be taking notes during the interview, and I ensured each participant that the note taking would not interfere with the quality of the interview. Each interview was conducted within 25-40 minutes. The target number of participants was 10 or until I reached data saturation, and data saturation was reached after interviewing six participants.

I transcribed each interview manually and by utilizing the dictation option in Microsoft Word. For the manual transcription, I listened to each interview twice for two reasons: (a) to ensure that it was typed verbatim and (b) to gather as much in-depth information as possible in comparison with my notes. I utilized the back-up audio recording to initiate the dictation method in a separate Word document so that both

transcriptions could be compared to locate any discrepancies. I then conducted member checks by emailing each participant a copy of the verbatim transcript from his or her interview. A 3-day response was requested, and if the participant indicated that there were no discrepancies, no changes needed to be made, or no response was received within the requested time, I assumed the accuracy of the transcript and proceeded with data analysis. No participants indicated that their transcript was inaccurate. After all transcriptions were deemed accurate, I proceeded with data analysis.

Data Analysis

After the data collection process, I first conducted data analysis manually before using the qualitative data software NVivo 14. I began data analysis by printing the transcriptions, reading the transcriptions, and highlighting words and phrases from the transcriptions. This was done so that I could properly develop codes. A total of six interviews were transcribed and coded, and similarly to the data collection process, each transcription was read at least twice to find keywords and phrases to create the codes. A code is a short phrase or word that symbolizes a larger group of language (Saldaña, 2016); therefore, keywords and phrases were highlighted from each transcription so that I could group them together. From the codes, I developed categories and themes from the interview transcriptions and my notes. I found several similarities and differences between the interview transcriptions, and this is what led to developing my main themes. A total of 40 codes, eight categories, and six themes developed from the data, but the themes were used to answer the three research questions.

After I manually developed codes, categories, and themes, I utilized the

qualitative data analysis software NVivo 14 to develop codes, categories, and themes. By utilizing this software, I was able to compare and contrast the themes I developed manually. Certain codes and categories were either eliminated or combined further to develop themes. Upon developing themes, I emailed each participant interpretations of their collected data. As with the interview transcript, I requested a response within 3 days that stated if any further information needed to be added; however, this was separate from member checking, so if no response was received, I assumed the interpretations were accurate and they were included in the final analysis.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

A crucial component of qualitative research is trustworthiness. Readers must have the ability to trust a study's results with the possibility of potentially replicating them. In essence, qualitative research relies heavily on the element of trustworthiness because of its personal nature. Researcher biases, the absence of data saturation, and a lack of in-depth participant experiences of the phenomenon are all common threats to trustworthiness (Burkholder et al., 2016); however, trustworthiness can be demonstrated in a study, and I established it through the subcategories of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are discussed in the following sections.

Credibility

Although difficult, establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies can be achieved by utilizing the strategies of member checking and triangulation (Burkholder et al., 2016; Ellis, 2019; Kornbluh, 2015). For this study, I ensured credibility by remaining ethical, conducting member checks, and using triangulation between data derived from

the participant interviews and my auditory observations. I remained ethical during data collection by being transparent about the study's goal, collecting informed consent from participants prior to data collection, and avoiding researcher bias. I wanted to ensure that information I obtained from each participant was strictly based on their perceptions of the phenomenon instead of preconceived notions. During member checking, I allowed each participant to review his or her interview transcript for accuracy. Although no participant stated that their transcript was inaccurate, the option to tell me was available. The option for the participant to ask me to delete any words or phrases from their interview was available as well. Since each participant experienced the research phenomenon differently, there were no correct answers. Aside from member checking, I used between-method triangulation to demonstrate credibility. This method is using more than one method to strengthen a weakness in another method (Ellis, 2019); therefore, because the visual capabilities of the Zoom application was disabled, I relied on the participant pauses observed to aid their direct responses.

Transferability

Qualitative research focuses on transferability rather than generalizability (Burkholder et al., 2016). Also, qualitative research allows the researcher to observe and interpret the lived experiences of the participants to gain a better understanding and develop context (Amin et al., 2020). For my research study, I ensured that the derived data could be transferred to a similar population by being descriptive of the research setting, asking probing questions during the interviews to gather depth, utilizing participant quotes, and reaching data saturation.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is data stability over time (Ellis, 2019). Dependability is what ensures quality in the data collection protocols so that they may be replicated and obtain similar results. I demonstrated dependability in this study by utilizing a repetitive data collection method. Each of the six interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in the same manner. I also ensured dependability by utilizing the between-method triangulation also used to establish credibility.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative studies may be achieved by maintaining a trail of how data was collected and analyzed (Ellis, 2019). Similar to dependability, the same manner was done for each participant interview. I ensured confirmability by listening to each interview at least twice to gauge meaning and understanding, utilizing two recording methods for participant interviews, manually transcribing the participant interview, utilizing Microsoft dictation to transcribe the participant interviews, comparing both transcript documents to ensure that they were typed verbatim, saving all participant interview recordings and transcripts to thumb drives, and utilizing manual coding techniques along with data analysis software. Giving readers the ability to confirm how results were obtained is not only a subset of trustworthiness but ethical as well.

Results

The first step of data analysis involved coding. I began with manual in vivo coding which means that I used the data to derive my codes. I wanted to ensure that I found as many similarities and differences during the manual coding process so that

categorizing them to develop themes would be simple. While reading each transcript, I made sure to highlight repeated words and any phrases that surprised me. During in vivo coding, similar codes were developed into categories by grouping them together before grouping said categories into themes. From the six transcribed interviews, 40 codes enabled me to create eight categories which then allowed me to create six themes that answered the three research questions. The three themes: (a) maternal incarceration creates a double jeopardy, (b) maternal incarceration creates heartbreak and confusion, and (c) maternal incarceration builds resiliency helped to answer RQ1: How do probation and pre-trial officers perceive how maternal incarceration impacts Black children, the two themes: (a) the desire to help, and (b) the extension of grace helps increase positive reentry helped to answer RQ2: What strategies do probation and pre-trial officers implement to mitigate recidivism and increase positive reentry, and one theme: (a) maternal incarceration creates a criminal cycle in children emerged that helped to answer RQ3: What themes emerge from the probation and pre-trial officers' responses regarding criminal involvement in children as a result of maternal incarceration. Figure 1 shows a word cloud for RQ1.

Figure 1

RQ1 Word Cloud
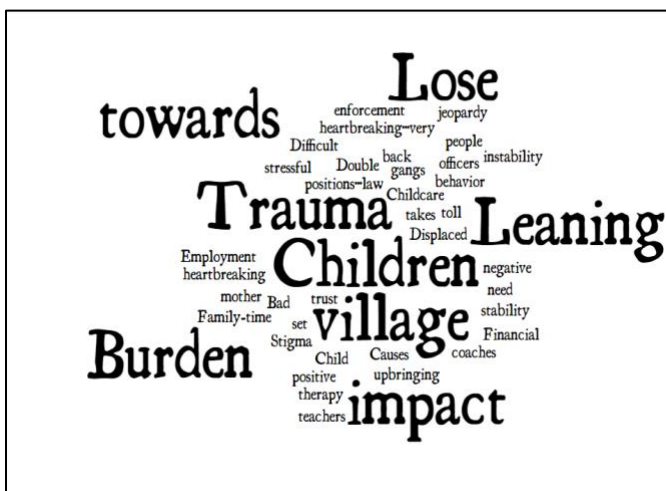
Maternal Incarceration Creates a Double Jeopardy

In the data collected, participants provided their definitions of systemic racism and perceptions of maternal incarceration. I first gathered codes from the data that helped to answer how the participants perceived maternal incarceration for Black mothers. I then combined these perceptions with the systemic racism definitions, and this is what allowed me to discern how the participants felt about the children of these Black women who fall under community supervision. As employees of the criminal justice system, their perceptions of each phenomenon varied; however, participants repeatedly emphasized that maternal incarceration for Black mothers creates a burden, instability, and overall long lasting negative consequences for not only the mother but their child or children.

One burden of maternal incarceration is that children are left to raise themselves after their mother becomes incarcerated. Participant 1 mentioned "I know it's hard…for the mothers but it's kind of double jeopardy for the unborn child or children" and "they're [children] pretty much raising themselves". The incarceration then creates another burden of raising said children on other family members and friends. Participant

5 noted how when a mother becomes incarcerated "their [mother] children have been placed with someone else." This burden is then intensified if the mother has no spouse. Participant 4 stated "single mothers you know you're having to depend on neighbors, family, friends to care for your children." Of the family members that are left to raise the children, grandparents are often first in line before siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Participant 1 believed that grandparents received the majority of the burden. For example, they stated "mainly it's the grandparents that I see that it's a burden on".

In alignment with double jeopardy, Participant 3 stated that maternal incarceration "puts them [mothers] back…it's already hard being a Black female…now with that [incarceration] over their head it puts them in a tough situation as far as…childcare." Participant 3 also mentioned how "dealing with the person you are dealing with the whole family unit" and Participant 4 stated "it [incarceration] takes a toll on not only the client but their children." Aside from the burden, the double jeopardy of maternal incarceration includes instability. When a mother becomes incarcerated, her life is rearranged; therefore, the life of any children that are under her care will be rearranged as well. Participant 6 stated "just because their mom is in this position they've sort of had to uproot their lift too…change schools or whatever" and Participant 4 mentioned "oftentimes they're [children] you know changing schools so they don't have any stability." Lastly, children are impacted by maternal incarceration in the aspect of the incarceration creating long lasting negative consequences. Participant 4 specifically mentioned "they [mothers] don't understand how their actions have long lasting consequences for their children." Two specific negative consequences that stemmed from

the data included lack of trust and family time. With regard to trust, Participant 3 elaborated on how children lose trust in law enforcement officers because they often witness the maternal incarceration from the beginning stages. Participant 3 stated "they [children] witness the take down of it…the jail part the arrest part things that you know a child shouldn't be witnessing happening to their mother… which causes them not to trust people in positions." Participant 2 even mentioned the experience of the child or children by stating "they're going to get to see what it's like for their parents to be on supervision." Another long-lasting negative consequence that stems from maternal incarceration is family time. While reading and coding the interview transcriptions, this consequence jumped out at me and made me realize how much family and freedom are often taken for granted. The double jeopardy of the mother and child being separated from one another is even further extended to the mother and child not being able to spend quality time with one another during the community supervision. Participant 2 mentioned that a condition of Mississippi Federal Probation is that the client cannot travel outside of the state without permission. They specifically quoted "so these women are not able to just take their children on vacation…that could be something that affects their children." From the data, these examples of long-lasting consequences are thought to lead to feelings of trauma and displacement.

Maternal Incarceration Creates Heartbreak and Confusion

From the data collected, in addition to the concept of double jeopardy participants emphasized that heartbreak, confusion, and feelings of abandonment are ways children are impacted by maternal incarceration. When asked about their perception of maternal

incarceration and how the children are left to deal with the situation, Participant 1 focused on how "it's a missing link." When asked to describe and explain the missing link, Participant 1 mentioned that there is an age and communication gap between the child and the grandparents who are usually left to raise them. The missing link is the connection and nurture between the child and their mother that causes heartbreak. Participant 2 stated that the impact of maternal incarceration on children was difficult and "Also, so heartbreaking…very heartbreaking." When I asked Participant 2 to elaborate on why they chose to say maternal incarceration was heartbreaking they first mentioned how younger children are often clueless to the maternal incarceration procedure and situation. Participant 2 stated "they [mothers] can't shield them from all of it [incarceration] and some of the things that affect the mothers would indirectly affect the children."

Participant 4 added to this same belief when they mentioned how "the child is not going to understand what is happening to their mother they just know mommy is in trouble." Participant 2 then mentioned how it can be heartbreaking to see a mother return from probation and not be welcomed by her children. In a situation where a mother's son rejected her after being raised by other family members, Participant 2 stated "honestly he just didn't trust or like he didn't trust her to mother him." Participant 4 also added to the confusion component. They mentioned how "it [incarceration] leaves a lot of questions for the child or feeling like they're being abandoned." Several participants also explained how the feelings of abandonment and confusion do not quickly dissipate upon the mother's reentry. Participant 5 emphasized this when they stated "I feel that [separation trauma] is carried with the child for quite a long time.

Maternal Incarceration Builds Resiliency

Although not as prevalent as the negative impacts, two participants did mention how maternal incarceration can have a positive impact on children. When asked how maternal incarceration may impact the child or children of the incarcerated mother, Participant 1 stated how aside from gangs, "pros would be leaning toward coaches or teachers to kind of stand in as a father and mother figure" while Participant 5 explained how some children whose parents were incarcerated are now their adult probationers. Participant 5 mentioned how they believe this particular adult probationer is set to turn their life around because "their [probationer] parents were on the cycle and that they don't want to continue to stay in that cycle themselves because they don't want their children to be that way." The two themes that helped to answer RQ2 are discussed next. Figure 2 shows a word cloud for RQ2.

Figure 2

RQ2 Word Cloud

The Desire to Help

When asked about the strategies to help reduce recidivism and increase positive reentry in their Black female probationers who are mothers, the word help appeared several times throughout the collected data. Also, the words counseling and counselor were repeated throughout the interviews. Each participant emphasized how being a probation or pre-trial officer is not all about the rules and regulations, but also about being a person the probationer can talk to. Participant 6 stated "I just always try to be that person for them." Participant 1 quoted "We serve as counselors too. Because I don't want to build up a wall where…my people that I supervise think that they can't come to me with a problem…I've always been the kind to be approachable". Participant 2 quoted "counseling them when they need it concerning family situations, relationship situations," and Participant 3 quoted "I'm a social worker with a badge and a gun."

In alignment with the desire to help theme, Participant 5 indicated that they always let their probationers know that "I'm in their circle," and Participant 4 stated "I just try to you know keep them through it. I'm just trying to just be a vessel to help them get through probation." Participant 4 also mentioned "so my goal is not to send you back to jail it's to keep you in the community as long as you can to take care of your family". Each participant mentioned how they helped their clients with finding employment, finding housing, and getting information about substance abuse and mental health treatment; however, Participant 3 stated "whatever I know I give it to them". When asked if they would go into further detail on this, Participant 3 mentioned that if they knew about school drives, clothing drives, and even educational opportunities they were letting

their probationers know. Said participant also added that if they felt the client would

benefit from the opportunity they would tell them whether they [client] asked or not.

Some participants even added how their need and desire to help was extended beyond the

client's required probation term. During the interview with Participant 5, they mentioned

how one of their female clients likes the accountability that the probation office provides

so they come and report although their probation has been terminated. In response to this

situation, Participant 5 stated "we are never going to turn anybody away." Participant 6

added to the desire to help beyond the probation term by mentioning "when they get done

with probation just because they're done doesn't mean I'm done my door is always

open."

The Extension of Grace Helps Increase Positive Reentry

During the interviews, when I asked participants to describe strategies used to

reduce recidivism and increase positive reentry, I found a particular situation told by

Participant 2 to be very interesting. Participant 2 explained how the key to reducing

recidivism is to treat each case individually. Participant 2 spoke on a situation where a

Black female probationer was going through medical issues, so prison was not for her.

Participant 2 went on to say that "extending her grace you know concerning her situation

and not you know not treating her like everybody else because she wasn't like everybody

else." Participant 1 also discussed how "it's different approaches to supervising people."

Monitoring each client and treating them as an individual rather than using a blanket

method was emphasized by Participant 1 as well. Participant 6 added "I always try to get

a snapshot of everybody's life." Participant 6 elaborated on how in order to get the client

to have a successful reentry, they as the probation officer must first understand the client's issues and the areas where help is most needed. Participant 6 mentioned "you're doing AB and C we haven't done anything besides meet the requirements of the court". Simply meeting the requirements of the court was not the only thing Participant 6 was concerned with. They wanted their clients to not only meet those requirements but also thrive in the community and not recidivate using the tools placed in their lives while they were on probation.

Maternal Incarceration Creates a Criminal Cycle in Children

From the codes and categories found in the data collected, themes for how maternal incarceration affected children and the strategies to reduce recidivism and increase positive reentry emerged with ease. Nevertheless, codes, categories, and themes for how probation and pre-trial officers perceived criminal involvement in the children were scarce. During the coding process, Participant 1 mentioned how children often turn to gangs which is deviant and criminal in nature and Participant 6 spoke about how a criminal cycle can be expected from children whose mothers are incarcerated. Specifically, Participant 1 mentioned how in their years of experience several children of Black mothers on federal probation turn to the negative impacts such as gangs for friendship and support. Participant 1 quoted "they lean toward… the gang…which would be a con." With regard to the expectation of criminal behavior, Participant 6 added "it's sort of one of those things too that they'll just say well this is what my mom's going through and this is what I'm going to have to go through and it'll just sort of classify them or kind of group them into thinking maybe they're less than someone else because of

what they see."

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methods of data collection and data analysis. The setting of my interviews, demographics of participants, and evidence of trustworthiness were also included. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants, with data collection being done manually. After reviewing interview transcriptions and auditory notes, data analysis was conducted manually and by utilizing the qualitative data software NVivo 14. Six themes were developed to answer the three research questions. The three themes: (a) maternal incarceration creates a double jeopardy, (b) maternal incarceration creates heartbreak and confusion, and (c) maternal incarceration builds resiliency helped to answer RQ1, the two themes: (a) the desire to help and (b) the extension of grace helps increase positive reentry helped to answer RQ2, and one (1) theme: (a) maternal incarceration creates a criminal cycle in children helped to answer RQ3. Tables, graphics, and direct quotes from participants were provided to support the results. In Chapter 5, the interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to better understand probation and pre-trial officers' perceptions of how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacts Black children. For this study, I sought to address the limited literature that discussed the maternal incarceration phenomenon from the perspectives of probation or pre-trial officers. For this study, I recruited six willing participants through criterion and snowball sampling. The data were collected via individual semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. The interview consisted of eight questions and lasted approximately 25-40 minutes. While six themes emerged to help answer the three research questions, key findings that stemmed from the data suggested that (a) probation and pre-trial officers enjoyed their job because they were given the opportunity to help their clients and (b) probation and pre-trial officers believed maternal incarceration was unfair and caused detrimental consequences.

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provided its background and nature, problem and purpose statements, definitions, limitations, assumptions, and significance. Chapter 2 provided the literature review that highlighted critical race theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework, maternal incarceration, children of incarcerated parents, probation, recidivism, and reentry. Chapter 3 provided the overall methodology for the study while highlighting the role of the researcher, data collection and analysis plans, and ethical procedures. Chapter 4 provided the setting, participant demographics, data collection methods, data analysis, and results. By using the literature review and results presented in Chapters 2 and 4, respectively, this chapter will provide a detailed

interpretation of the findings, review the limitations of the study, provide

recommendations for future research, and give practical and theoretical implications.

Interpretations of the Findings

The results from this phenomenological study helped me to better understand the

perspectives of probation and pre-trial officers regarding the mass incarceration of Black

women, maternal incarceration, and how the incarceration of Black mothers impacts

Black children. By utilizing a phenomenological approach, I was able to understand the

lived experiences of how the participants viewed their clients, the clients' family, and the

clients' children. The combination of the themes and key findings from the data offered a

plethora of information to be interpreted. The results of the study were interpreted and

compared using the peer-reviewed literature discussed in Chapter 2.

Summary of Themes

Maternal Incarceration Impact on Black Children

When participants were asked to describe how the maternal incarceration of Black

women may impact the incarcerated mother's Black child, the negative impacts

outweighed the positives. While the themes for this study highlighted maternal

incarceration as being a double jeopardy and having a heartbreaking and confusing

impact on a Black child, additional interpretations of findings revealed how the

participants' descriptions of negative impacts complemented the negative impacts

discussed in the scholarly literature. These descriptions were based on each participants'

perceptions of maternal incarceration and systemic racism definitions. Participants

mentioned how child-rearing, instability, lack of trust, family time, gang involvement,

and the expectation of criminality were negative impacts maternal incarceration create. Several of the negative impacts that the participants mentioned aligned with the negative impacts mentioned in Chapter 2. For example, the research noted how a mother's absence changes caregiving arrangements for her Black children, which then leads to a decrease in supervision and increases in deviant activity (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016). Children are left to deal with the instability of finding supervision since mothers are more likely than fathers to reside with their children prior to incarceration (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2019). Overall, research has shown that the mother-child bond is important to a child's development, and several of the participants in the study elaborated on how the child or children will be affected by the mother's absence regardless of the length of separation.

Participants also stated how Black children are indirectly impacted by maternal incarceration. One participant specifically mentioned how children may be indirectly affected due to a financial strain the incarcerated mother is experiencing, and another participant mentioned how many of her Black female probationers suffer with substance abuse. This participant believed that the substance abuse caused an indirect impact to the children because the resources that could be given to the children were being misappropriated to enable the mother's addiction. Both of these particular participants' insights align with the research stating how parental incarceration creates exposure to economic and family challenges (Kjellstrand et al., 2018; Sobba et al., 2017). Another participant explained how the maternal incarceration creates a domino effect of burdens on the incarcerated mother's family and children. These burdens are often defined as a child being shunned by their peers because they discovered that the child has an

incarcerated parent. This rejection will not be forgotten by the child or the peers and will often remain with them well into adulthood. This aligns with the research stating how parental incarceration is not considered normal in a child's life (Zhang & Flynn, 2015).

The scholarly literature is limited but not absent in the aspect of children coping with parental incarceration; however, this study brought attention to the resiliency that children as well as adults develop due to maternal incarceration. One participant particularly spoke about the resiliency of one Black female probationer, and this complemented the literature presented in Chapter 2. This participant stated how this particular Black female probationer wanted to do better because her parents were in the criminal justice cycle, but she does not want her child to become victim to the cycle. Another participant stated how a positive aspect to maternal incarceration is that children will lean toward coaches and teachers to fill the mother or father role. This aligns with researchers who determined that adolescents would replace the parental role of the incarcerated parents with another individual (Johnson & Easterling, 2015).

Mitigating Recidivism

Reducing recidivism and creating a positive atmosphere for reentry was a focus for the participants. Participants wanted their Black female clients to complete their probationary periods and continue to thrive in their communities. Several participants stated how they wanted to help their clients by providing resources and treatment. One participant mentioned how they spoke encouraging words to their Black female clients and repeatedly let them know that they were in their circle. In Chapter 4, it was mentioned how the words counselor, help, and helping were stated a lot by the

participants. The term recovery also appeared prevalent throughout the interviews, and this aligns with the participants' attitude about positive reentry. Participants reiterated how being a probation or pre-trial officer is more than strictly abiding by the rules, but more about seeking out the needs of the clients because no two clients are the same. By getting to know why the Black female probationer is on probation, the participants stated they had a better chance of connecting with the client.

Key Findings

The first key finding was that the participants enjoyed their job as probation and pre-trial officers. The second part of the first interview question asked what led the participant to become employed in corrections. All answers included how there was an interest in either criminal justice, community corrections, or some form of law enforcement. One participant stated that being a probation officer is a hidden gem, especially for those who do not want to become law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officers are given the task to protect and serve, and from this study I gained the knowledge that probation and pre-trial officers perform the same duty. Because the participants enjoyed their jobs, helping their clients became easier. Several participants chose the career because it gave them a purpose to have impactful relationships with those in need. One participant specifically spoke about how they really loved helping people and their previous career in juvenile justice prevented them from helping in a full capacity. Another participant stated how aside from making sure their clients stayed compliant with the court order, they wanted to go above and beyond when they offered resources and treatment. Other participants demonstrated how much they cared about

their clients and the job by stating how they were flexible in the reporting hours so the clients could go to work and not be penalized.

The second key finding of participants believing maternal incarceration was unfair and caused detrimental consequences stemmed from the interview questions that asked how many Black female probationers who were mothers they supervised, their definitions of systemic racism, perceptions of maternal incarceration, and the challenges Black women face while under supervision that differ from the challenges other racial and ethnic groups may face. In this study, participants explained how a large portion of their caseloads were Black women who were mothers. One participant stated that their caseload of Black women who were mothers ranged from 55% to 60%. This complements what the scholarly literature states about how Black women are the fastest-growing population in jails, prisons, and community supervision. The mass incarceration of women has led to maternal incarceration which then leads to more Black women who are mothers being on community supervision. The scholarly literature in Chapter 2 also highlighted how community supervision for Black women has become a blatant form of systemic racism.

When participants were asked to provide their definitions of systemic racism, the answers were intriguing. While some participants did not hesitate to provide an answer, a few participants gave long verbal pauses before answering which led me to believe that they were thinking deeply about the answer they wanted to give. One participant stated that defining systemic racism was tough because they knew what it was but found it difficult to put into words. Nevertheless, answers from the participants included the terms

rules, regulations, race, policy, procedures, statutes, laws, target, Black people, Black communities, oppressed, barrier, ethnic, background, mass incarceration, injustice, sentence disparity, racism, disadvantage, unfair practices, and prejudging. These terms aligned with the definitions for the theoretical framework CRT that this study was based on. As discussed in Chapter 2, CRT is based upon the tenet that racism is a permanent fixation which upholds white supremacy within institutions such as education and criminal justice (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). Blacks are seen as being lower in society, and this bleeds over to how Black females are becoming incarcerated at a higher rate.

Maternal incarceration for Black women was perceived by all participants to be difficult. One participant stated how things in life are different and more difficult for Black women in general. Another participant noted how being a Black female is already hard and then it becomes exaggerated once the female becomes placed on supervision. The participants specifically spoke about the unfairness of maternal incarceration for single Black mothers because their counterparts are often married or in relationships. Participants stressed how their single Black female clients find it hard to maintain employment due to having little to no support with regards to childcare. The responsibilities that fall on single Black mothers who are fighting criminal cases creates the detrimental consequences that cause them to continue to fall behind. For example, one participant stated how many of the Black female clients lack a higher education. This aligns with the research that asserted how women who return to disadvantaged communities are faced with many obstacles that include educational attainment (Malcome et al., 2019). This leads to the average Black female probationer not

understanding what they are getting themselves into once they enter the criminal justice system. This lack of understanding not only causes confusion, frustration, and anger, but also creates situations where the female is left to make decisions that affect her probation status. These negative decisions often involve the child or children of the incarcerated mother, and one participant mentioned how this may occur because on probation or not, the client is still a mother and being a mother is one of the hardest jobs a woman will have. Other situations that hinder an incarcerated mother range from not reporting to driving with suspended licenses in order to get to work or to get their children to school.

Participants mentioned other reasons why they found maternal incarceration to be unfair. One participant specifically mentioned how many of the Black women they supervise are on probation because of a drug or financial crime. This aligns with the scholarly literature that states how the War on Drugs specifically targets minority women (Martin, 2017; Mears & Siennick, 2016; Simmons, 2018; Williams et al., 2020). One participant mentioned that maternal incarceration is unfair because their Black female probationers do not get to have emotions and feelings like their counterparts. This aligns with the literature that states how the criminal justice system has given negative stereotypes such as "angry Black woman" to Black women (Simmons, 2018). Another participant spoke on the fact that they knew that an unfair barrier exists within the criminal justice system between Blacks and Whites. Said participant realized how the resources and legal representation are different, and another participant recognized how it is not as easy for the Black female probationers to continue with life after probation as it is for the White female probationers. Another participant recognized how the criminal

justice system is broken, but also provided insight on how with the right questions asked solutions can be presented that will not only break cycles but make the system be used for good rather than evil.

Limitations of the Study

I discussed the possible limitations for this study in Chapter 1; however, I discovered three limitations during this study that I will expand upon. The first limitation was the difficulty in recruiting participants. While I reached data saturation at six, my goal was to interview at least 10 participants. Although the study was conducted in Mississippi, finding willing participants who were employed in the probation, pre-trial, or parole field by the State of Mississippi was challenging. To remedy this limitation, I recruited participants on the Mississippi Federal Probation level. Also, to keep the study aligned within the southern region of the United States where the incarceration of Black females is elevated, I attempted to recruit participants in Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas. Nevertheless, willing participants were only recruited from the State of Tennessee. Recruitment issues led to the second limitation which was only interviewing participants who supervised Black female mothers for misdemeanor offenses. If participants supervised Black female mothers for felony offenses there would have been additional information that resulted in alignment with the scholarly literature. The third limitation came with the usage of the Zoom. I interviewed each participant individually using the platform; however, to increase the comfort of the interview and maintain confidentiality, the video capability was disabled. Due to the video being disabled, I was unable to view the participants and their specific body language when they were

answering particular questions. While I was able to hear pauses and hesitancy, not having the ability to view body language created a barrier. Using the limitations of this study as a foundational reference, recommendations for future research is discussed next.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations for future research that stemmed from the limitations and results of this study. The first recommendation is to conduct a study that has parole officers as participants. This will mitigate the limitation of this study only having participants who supervised Black women on misdemeanor probation. Since parole is extended to individuals who have been formerly incarcerated for felony offenses, parole officers are likely to supervise Black women who are on parole rather than probation. The second recommendation is to conduct a study in person. This study was conducted via Zoom initially due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, once restrictions began to relax, in-person interviews were an option. However, to maintain consistency with the study, Zoom was utilized for each interview. By utilizing in-person interviews, the researcher will have the ability to notate body language and gestures that this study was unable to capture due to the disabling of the Zoom video. A third recommendation is to utilize probation or parole officers who are employed by the State of Mississippi. This study was unable to recruit willing participants who fit this criterion; however, future research may be more successful. By recruiting probation or parole officers who are employed on the Mississippi state level, information can be gained that lacked in this study since only information on the Mississippi federal level was ascertained.

Implications

Practical Implications

This research study provided results that are necessary and important for the criminal justice system. There was a lack of information missing from the scholarly literature that asked how probation and pre-trial officers felt about the maternal incarceration of Black women. Also, there was a lack of information that used a phenomenological approach to help answer how probation and pre-trial officers perceived systemic racism, the maternal incarceration of Black women, and how the maternal incarceration of Black women impacted Black children. The implications from this study will help to promote social change because the participants recognized the racism within the system. The information from this study can be used by probation and pre-trial offices to help mitigate the negative impact maternal incarceration has on children. Although certain policies are in place that keep women who are mothers in the community instead of incarcerated, there are new policies and programs that can be established to keep the Black woman out of the criminal justice system for good. Although participants spoke on how they mitigate recidivism and promote a positive reentry for their Black female probationers, it is simply not enough if the children are bearing witness to the criminal justice cycle.

Theoretical Implications

CRT was utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. CRT was appropriately applied because of the increase in the maternal incarceration rate of Black women. The criminal justice system and its legal facets were designed to hinder Blacks in

every aspect, and this includes community supervision. The participants in the study understood this hindrance and other barriers based upon their perceptions and answers to the questions involving how Black female probationers suffer from different challenges in relation to their counterparts who are also on probation. The unfairness and difficulty of the maternal incarceration of and for Black women who are mothers was expressed throughout each interview.

Conclusion

The United States leads the world in incarceration rates, and the majority of those incarcerated are parents (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2019). Aside from the parental incarceration rates, a separate phenomenon of female incarceration has grown (Goodwin, 2020). The incarceration rate for Black women has increased over the last several decades. This increase has been attributed to systemic racisms, biases, and CRT within the criminal justice system on which this study was based. Along with this increase, comes the increase of Black children with incarcerated mothers. This study utilized a phenomenological approach to delve into the lived experiences of probation and pre-trial officers employed by Mississippi Federal Probation and the state of Tennessee who supervised Black females who were mothers. Chapter 5 discussed the interpretations of the findings, limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, practical implications, and theoretical implications. A summary of the themes discussed in Chapter 4 was provided along with two key findings that included how the participants thoroughly enjoyed their jobs but recognized how maternal incarceration is unfair, difficult, and causes detrimental consequences. Recommendations for future research

included utilizing in-person interviews, parole officers as study participants, and

participants employed by the state of Mississippi was mentioned. Gaining insight from

the lived experiences of probation and pre-trial officers who supervise Black women who

are mothers will create positive social change within the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please describe your role as a probation or pre-trial officer. What led you to become employed in Corrections?

2. How long have you been serving in your role?

3. Of your probationers, approximately how many Black women who are mothers do you supervise?

4. Describe your perception of maternal incarceration. What is this perception based on?

5. What is your definition of systemic racism? As an employee of the criminal justice system, what challenges do you perceive Black women to have while under community supervision that differ from challenges other racial/ethnic groups may face?

6. Based on your perceptions of maternal incarceration and systemic racism, describe how the maternal incarceration of Black women may impact the incarcerated mother's Black child?

7. What strategies do you implement or have you implemented to reduce recidivism in your Black female probationers?

8. Is there anything else you would like to add or share with me?

Appendix B: Interview Introduction

Hello participant. I would like to thank you for taking the time to conduct this interview with me. The interview will take approximately 25-40 minutes, but I would like to reiterate that if you need to take a break or would like to stop the interview you may do so at any time. I would also like to reiterate that the interview will be kept strictly confidential. I will be taking notes during the interview, however, please do not think that I am not paying attention to your responses. I just want to ensure that I am getting as much information as possible from your responses. I am asking that you be as open and honest with me and speak as clearly as possible. Also, the interview is being recorded for transcribing purposes. Do you have any questions? If not, I will begin the recording.