

2017

Lived Experiences of Secondary Victims During the Parole Process: A Phenomenological Approach

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Jessica Millimen

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

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MS, Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2012

BS, Ashland University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2017

Abstract

Secondary victims of traumatic violent crimes are subject to continuing the process of fighting for the loved ones they have lost. Once the offender is incarcerated, such victims may still have to face the process of parole if the offender has been granted a possibility of parole after years served. There is a gap in the literature and a need for research in the area of lived experiences for secondary victims as they progress through the parole process. For this study, a phenomenological study was utilized with 10 secondary victim participants. Participants were interviewed questions via telephone and the data were clustered and then thematically analyzed, revealing that participants had feelings of fear, depression, and being forgotten. The participants also stated a lack of aid and knowledge during the parole process and expressed their experiences of difficulty during the parole process. The study found a need for victim aid and resources. The study has positive social implication through research examining the need for victim aid and education for the criminal justice system.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Little is known about the experiences of victims as they progress through the criminal justice process. Victims' and secondary victims' experiences related to notification of the crime, crime investigation, and prosecution of the offender are relatively well documented. In contrast, the literature on victim experiences after the offender has been incarcerated is minimal, according to my review of the literature. The previous research focuses on primary victims. In particular, there has been a lack of research concerning secondary victims and their experiences during the parole process. The parole process is initiated when the offender is up for parole, which is deemed by a judge. The process includes a hearing in which the offender and victim state their cases for release or further incarceration in front of a board.

The loss of a loved one due to crime is a traumatic experience for many individuals. For victims' family members and friends, the parole process can remind them of the crime and lead them to become involved once again in the criminal justice process. The process keeps the crime at the forefront, rather than the victims being able to move on with their lives. Research is needed regarding secondary victims' roles and experiences with the parole phase of the criminal justice process. There is little to no research on the effects of the parole process on victims. On a broader level, as Pemberton, Winkel, and Groenhuijsen (2008) stated, there is a need for greater understanding of emotional restoration, as victim's progress through the criminal justice system.

By creating and reading the victim impact statement, crime victims can present more than just their factual testimony in the courts and during the parole process. The victim impact statement is a statement that is read by the victim to the offender detailing the victim's feelings and wishes in regard to the crime. In a study of victim impact statements and sentencing transcripts, Englebrecht (2012) examined the rules that regulate victim participation in the criminal justice system as well as how victims engage in the criminal justice process. Englebrecht scrutinized victim participation through the lens of rules and regulations as well as from the perspective of criminal justice workers. Secondary victims were included in the study but were grouped together with primary victims. Englebrecht suggested that there is a lack of research on the experiences of some of the victims who participate in the criminal justice system.

Miller (2014) also examined the use of the victim impact statement. Focusing specifically on victims of sexual assault, Miller found that victim impact statements helped victims with the coping process by giving them a voice in front of the offender. Authors of another study concerning the benefit of face-to-face meetings with the offender officers of the court (Sherman et al., 2005) indicated that such meetings enable victims to regain control and satisfaction through restorative justice.

Victims can have a plethora of effects when engaging with the criminal justice system. O'Brien (2010) discussed crime victimization and the psychological trauma that can affect those who experience crime. According to O'Brien, suicide and substance abuse are more prevalent among crime victims than in the general public. Further, O'Brien observed that, even though there are multiple victim services in many

jurisdictions, only 46% of violent crimes are reported, suggesting that these services are underused. Parsons and Bergin (2010) examined the positive and negative impact of criminal justice involvement for victims. They concluded that there is a need for further work and research in the areas of restorative justice, victim impact statements, victim services, and victim advocates.

Proponents of *restorative justice* advocate repairing the harm done to victims through mediation and victim empowerment (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011). Restorative justice illustrates a need for victim services and for making victims' experiences within the criminal justice system positive. Mechanisms of restorative justice expand victims' rights and provide alternatives to existing policy and practice, by giving the victim's aid and choices as they progress through the system (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011). Choi et al. (2011) stated that in order for restorative justice to be implemented by the criminal justice system, it is necessary to understand the importance of the interpersonal dimension of crime and the roles of the people who are involved (Choi et al., 2011). Restorative justice allows victims to have an active role in the criminal justice system.

In analyzing the 20th century victims' rights movement in the United States, Caplan (2010) described a shift from meeting the needs of inmates to responding to those of victims. In recent years, victims within the United States, have gained increasingly prominent roles in the parole process (Caplan, 2010). Caplan offered recommendations for paroling authorities to preserve their function in the criminal justice system while maintaining justice for victims.

Violent crime not only affects the victim, but the friends and family of the victim. The friends and family of homicide victims endure the death of a loved one and may endure a trial and, subsequently, the parole process. Research shows the shift in the criminal justice system towards victim's rights, yet there is a lack of data on secondary victim's experiences during the parole process, based on the literature review (Caplan, 2010). In this study, I sought to contribute knowledge regarding secondary victims and their experiences of the parole process.

Problem Statement

Researchers have identified several important phenomena experienced by primary and secondary victims in the criminal justice process. Many victims are searching for closure and a time to address the offender. Caplan (2010) found that the opportunity to provide input during parole review hearings did not guarantee victims satisfaction with the outcome. At the same time, researchers have indicated that the establishment of victims' rights has helped victims to adapt more easily to the criminal justice system (Caplan, 2010). In this way, victims' rights have made it easier for victims to express their emotions to courts and parole boards, thereby giving victims a voice (Verdun-Jones & Tijerino, 2004).

The need for victim aid and research was apparent in the literature review. There is a significant gap in the literature on secondary victims or the families of victims. Secondary victims have been included in previous studies, but they have been included with primary victims (Englebrecht, 2012). In addition to the paucity of research focusing specifically on secondary victims, Englebrecht (2012) suggested that there is a lack of

research on how victims may be further victimized within the criminal justice system. Due to lack of aid and knowledge, victims can feel lost and vulnerable, thus creating more victimization. This lack of knowledge has contributed to a lack of aid for victims during the criminal justice process. Due to the lack of research on secondary victims, there is a lack of aid provided for the victims (Englebrecht, 2012).

Scholars have also addressed how making a victim impact statement during the parole process can not only help victims cope but also can have a direct correlation with relational caring (Miller, 2014). The time spent writing down the victim's feelings can benefit the victim by getting their thoughts down on paper. In terms of relational care, the act of writing the impact statement can be considered therapeutic. Revictimization and exposure to secondary trauma are experiences that victims may encounter when interacting with the criminal justice system (Miller, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the lived experiences of families of victims of violent crimes as they progress through the parole process. This research may aid secondary victims in obtaining support and aid during the postsentencing process by making the criminal justice system more knowledgeable on the need for victim aid. Other implications include enabling others within the criminal justice system to understand the importance of engaging victims in the process and making the process as comfortable and smooth as possible for families in order to decrease secondary trauma and revictimization.

Research Questions

I sought to answer two research questions:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process?

RQ2. What aid do secondary victims receive from the criminal justice system during the parole process?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

Theories of secondary trauma and revictimization have been the basis for most of the literature in the criminal justice field of study. Restorative justice theory is the framework for this research endeavor. Restorative justice theorists identified social engagement as the key component of the effort to create motivational environments that nurture bonds of belonging (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The framework identified violence in a context of understanding what happened and listening to the needs of those affected by the violence (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). This framework is ideal, I believe, for understanding and documenting the lived experiences of secondary victims. The framework identifies the need for victim aid, reconciliation, and compassion.

Restorative justice theory is based on resolution and reparation of harm (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). In the parole process, secondary victims have the opportunity to be heard as well as to find resolution or closure concerning an act of violence committed by the offender against one of their family members. Restorative justice theorists tend to focus on the satisfaction of the victim when interacting with the offender or in an arena concerning the offender (Borton, 2009). The theory relies on victim participation, and

the proposed outcome is closure and satisfaction for the victim (Borton, 2009).

Armstrong (2012) found that restorative justice can improve victim satisfaction during the criminal justice process.

Nature of the Study

The study is a qualitative phenomenological study. The data was gathered through participant interviews. Phenomenological research was the most appropriate approach for this study because I wanted to examine individuals lived experiences. The participants in the study all have a shared lived experience in that they have been involved in the parole process and have tragically lost a loved one after the tragic loss of a loved one at the hands of an offender. The prolonged process of conducting interviews allowed me to develop patterns and relationships.

I anticipated a pool of 10-15 participants will consent to participate in the study. From the pool of participants, if 10-15 participants completed the study, saturation will be met. The study examined their experiences from a phenomenological perspective. The phenomenon investigated is the experience of secondary victims during the parole process. The participants of this study were recruited from Parents of Murdered Children. All the participants were secondary victims who have lost a family member to homicide. Their participation in this study are voluntary.

Each participant completed a structured interview. The structured interviews were used to collect data on the lived experiences of secondary victims. The data from the structured interviews was coded and analyzed.

Phenomenological data analysis will be applied to data in relation to the research questions. Significant statements and themes will be identified in the data, following Creswell's (2009) recommendations. These themes and statements will then be used to write descriptions of what the participants experienced and the context in which the participants experienced the phenomenon. From the experiences and themes, an overall description of common experiences will be presented and analyzed.

Definitions

Parole hearings: Hearings heard post sentencing. Once the offender is incarcerated and has met the minimum sentence, the offender is put up for a parole hearing to determine if the offender has been rehabilitated and should be released (United States Department of Justice, 2015).

Restorative justice: The collaboration and theory that attempts to accomplish justice and restoration for the victim, offender, and the community (Paul & Borton, 2013).

Revictimization: The term used when a victim of a crime feels that he or she is once again a victim of a crime (United States Department of Justice, 2015).

Secondary victim: A victim of a crime who does not experience the crime or violent assault firsthand. Usually defined as a family member or friend of the primary victim.

Vicarious trauma: Distress and the shifts in cognitive schemas that follow a secondary exposure to traumatic material or event (Aparicion, Michalopoulos, & Unick, 2013).

Victim impact statement: A statement that allows the victim to communicate their experience and emotion through written or oral form (Parsons & Bergin, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

There were a few limitations to my research. The study focused on secondary victims of homicide. Secondary victims of other crimes were not included in the study, which means that it was not possible to generalize the data to all victims. The participant pool was small, with only 10 participants, once again limiting the generalizability of data.

The phenomenological approach will require all participants to have experienced the phenomenon in question; thus, there will be a common understanding among participants (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological approach also requires that the researcher bracket any personal assumptions being brought into the study. It was necessary for me to implement bracketing and to set aside my own understanding during the research and the coding of data.

Significance

Upon reviewing the literature, I concluded that there is minimal research on the lived experiences of secondary victims, especially as they work through the criminal justice process. The study is unique, as it gave secondary victims a means of expressing how they experienced the postsentencing phases of the criminal justice process. A focus on the experience of secondary victims in the criminal justice system could be beneficial. The information could aid criminal justice officials in finding avenues to make the interaction between secondary victims and criminal justice officials efficient and productive, which in turn could prove beneficial to both parties. Victims could

experience less distress, and the criminal justice system could gain their full cooperation. Secondary victims could thus help in the apprehension, prosecution, and incarceration of offenders.

Research on the experiences of secondary victims could aid those in the criminal justice system as well as other secondary victims. The reported data from this study will lend a voice to these victims. Knowledge from the study could lead to more victim advocacy and training for victims' advocates on what to look for when addressing revictimization and trauma. Society as a whole may benefit from this study, as its conclusions may benefit future victims' families and lead to the provision of more victim services during the parole process. If they are able to attain improved well being, secondary victims could continue to fulfill their various roles (e.g., at work and within family) more consistently.

Summary

The parole process can be difficult for secondary victims. The process occurs after sentencing and usually many years after the initial court proceedings relevant to the crime. Secondary victims can choose to engage in the parole process. The literature is virtually nonexistent on secondary victims and their experience with the parole process and the aid they receive. The study examined the lived experiences of secondary victims as they progress through the parole process.

The lack of literature in the area indicates the need for research on secondary victims and their interactions with the parole process. Chapter 2 contains a review of literature pertinent to the study. I examine victim input, homicide victims' interaction

with the criminal justice system, and mental health problems experienced by secondary victims.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Homicide affects many individuals who surround the victim. For these secondary victims, the difficulty of enduring the loss of a loved one may be exacerbated by taking part in the processes of the court system. If the offender is sentenced to time in prison, there is often the possibility of parole. When the offender becomes eligible for parole, secondary victims of the crime may feel as though they have been thrust back in time to when their loved one was taken from them, after years of knowing that the person who committed the crime was behind bars. Secondary victims often attend parole hearings and write victim impact statements in an effort to keep offenders behind bars for the remainder of their sentences.

The experiences of victims during the criminal justice process are documented to some degree. Many of the studies that have been conducted on victims of crime have involved primary victims and their experiences during criminal proceedings. In reviewing literature on this topic, I found minimal research in the area of secondary victims and their experiences as they progress through the parole process. In the study, I addressed this gap in this literature by exploring the effects of revictimization, fear of recidivism, and engagement in the criminal justice system on secondary victims specifically. In this chapter, I review research relevant to victim studies and demonstrate the lack of research in the area of secondary victims.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was completed using a variety of search databases in order to produce a list of relevant literature. The databases used for searches included PsycINFO, PsycArticles, ProQuest, Walden University Theses and Dissertations, and Google Scholar. The use of Walden University Library databases was helpful in identifying sources and determining whether these sources were available from other universities. The keywords used for general searches of databases were *victims*, *secondary*, *parole*, *experience*, *PTSD*, *impact*, and *homicide*. I combined keywords to narrow my searches by using the Boolean operators *and*, *or*, and *not*. The following review of literature reflects the information gathered through these searches. I found no articles that directly addressed the lived experiences of secondary victims as they progressed through the parole process.

Conceptual Foundation

Restorative justice is a theory and philosophy that addresses the criminal justice system from a pro-victim perspective. Proponents of restorative justice seek to expand victims' rights as well as highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships that develop during the criminal justice process after a crime is committed (Choi et al., 2011). The framework of restorative justice was derived from the reintegrative theory of shaming, which was brought to the forefront by Braithwaite in the late 1980s (Choi et al., 2011). Reintegrative shaming, though the starting point for restorative justice, differs in the fact that restorative justice theory has a narrower focus on relationships and interactions between courts, offenders, and victims (Choi et al., 2011).

After a crime is committed, victims often want to seek justice, sometimes by any means necessary (Paul & Borton, 2013). Advocates of restorative justice seek to dissuade victims from focusing on revenge and to emphasize victims' needs and experiences (Paul & Borton, 2013). The experiences of a victim can be so intense immediately after a crime that the victim becomes passionate about finding justice. Such victims may attend each day of the offender's trial, speak to officers and detectives frequently, and then show up to parole hearings when the offender is set to be heard by the parole board. The experience of completing a victim impact statement can cause a victim to feel overwhelmed, alienated, and/or betrayed; victims in this situation may even feel as though they have no rights (Paul & Borton, 2013). Many times, the work of restorative justice is done through a facilitator in order to have the victim feel as though he or she has a voice and is making a difference. Paul and Borton (2013) contend that restorative justice can be an alternative way of handling the repercussions of crime (Paul & Borton, 2013).

Research in the area of restorative justice theory has shown that restorative justice can improve victim satisfaction and reduce offender recidivism (Armstrong, 2012). When a secondary victim interacts with facilitators of justice (and sometimes with the offender), the victim may benefit, in that he or she may have the sense of assuming an active role in pursuing justice for a lost loved one. In a study that included semistructured interviews with primary victims, researchers found that victims were highly satisfied with a restorative justice approach (Armstrong, 2012). Likewise, the

opportunity to interact with others and make decisions in the justice system can improve the overall experience of a secondary victim.

Review of the Literature

An act of violence, especially when it results in death, can have far-reaching effects on people close to the primary victim. The experiences of secondary victims can be especially difficult during the parole process for the offender. The literature review addressed victims' interaction with the criminal justice system and the effects of a violent crime on secondary victims. The literature is pertinent to the study, in that it indicates the need for further research into secondary victims and the effects of crime on their mental health and lives.

Parole Process in the United States

The parole process in the United States is based on the number of years served and the terms of the sentencing. At the federal level, prisoners who are serving less than 30 years receive an initial parole hearing within the first 120 days of their sentence through an application process; it adheres to their sentencing guidelines (United States Department of Justice, 2015). The hearings are then held every 18 to 24 months to determine if the original parole release is prudent or should be revisited at a later date (CITE).

A parole hearing is a hearing held before a parole board and includes the offender of the crime. The hearing determines whether the offender should be released in the community under parole supervision or remain incarcerated (United States Department of Justice, 2015). Only inmates eligible for parole come before a parole board for a hearing.

Inmates who are up for parole may never be released back into the community before their complete sentence is finished due to the decision of the parole board (United States Department of Justice, 2015). When an offender is notified of a parole hearing, the victim, or next of kin, is also contacted through mail or e-mail in regard to the upcoming parole hearing (United States Department of Justice, 2015). Only victims, next of kin, an immediate family are allowed to attend parole hearings (United States Department of Justice, 2015). Victims can also identify one support person to attend the hearing with the victim (United States Department of Justice, 2015). However, the support person cannot be designated to speak on the victim's behalf (United States Department of Justice, 2015).

Persons wanting to attend the parole hearing are able to contact the victim support program, which will set up the time when the victim may come to the hearing. The victim or whomever is attending the hearing is able to submit a written or audio statement. The victim may also submit an oral statement at the hearing (United States Department of Justice, 2015). In reviewing the literature, I was not able to determine how many family members use the parole process or victims' services.

Victim Services

During the criminal trial process, victims and their families have access to a victim advocate and services. The victim advocate helps the family navigate through the process of the criminal justice system. The advocate will appear at the court hearings and explain the legal process to the victim's family.

Once the offender has been sentenced and incarcerated the victim's family may sign up for victim notification within the state the offender was sentenced. In the state of Ohio, the Victim Notification or VINE system allows the victim to sign up to be notified when the offender is up for parole, release or transfer to another facility (Ohio Attorney General, 2015). The problem exists for families when they are unaware of the need to sign up for notification of parole or release. Texas also has a similar program, as do most of the states. In Texas, the victim or the victim's family is notified of the upcoming parole hearing. Texas law allows the victim, guardian of the victim, or a close relative of the victim to either appear in person or submit a written letter about the offense, the feelings towards the offender, and the effect of the offense on the victim or family (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, n.d).

California is also similar to the above listed states. Each state defines who is able to attend the hearings. California also requires a victim to request to be notified of any upcoming parole hearings. The request is made in writing or by phones communication to the office of victim services. California allows the relation of spouse, child, parent, sibling, or grandparent of the victim (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, n.d.). The aforementioned policies and procedures are common among the states with little variation.

Victim Input and Participation

Secondary victims may engage in the parole process in order to seek justice and closure. A victim's family members may also want to make sure that the offender does

not harm anyone else if released. While secondary victims may generally have good intentions in coming to parole hearings and giving statements, the impact of the statements is unknown. Studies have been conducted to determine whether their input has an impact on parole decisions.

In a study conducted with data from the New Jersey State Parole Board, Caplan (2010) found that verbal input by a victim had a greater effect on parole release decisions than written input by a victim. The study included data retrieved from a sample of 820 adult inmates (Caplan, 2010). There has been a growing trend toward the inclusion of victims and consideration of victims' rights in the criminal justice process; however, it has been found that victim interaction in the parole process (whether positive or negative) does not have a significant impact on parole decisions (Caplan, 2010).

In the United States, over 90% of parole boards accept victim or nonvictim statements in the parole process. These boards are advised to take victims' or nonvictims' statements into consideration when making decisions (Caplan, 2010). Only a few studies have examined the impact of statements by victims or nonvictims. In one such study, Caplan (2010) found that in the cases examined, less than 12% of the victims provided input for the parole hearing (Caplan, 2010). Lack of knowledge about the system and fear of revictimization may be reasons for lack of involvement. The review of the literature did not reveal reasoning for lack of involvement in the parole process.

Victim impact statements are used not only in the courtroom at the time of trial, but also in the parole process. These statements can be made verbally during the parole review process or can be written in letter form. The victim impact statement is designed

to retell the story of the crime in the eyes of the victim or secondary victim, and it includes the harm the crime has caused the victim and/or secondary victim. In most states the specific states Victim Services aids in guiding victims on what to include in victim impact statement (see Appendix E). The statement varies in length in each state, but most states suggest the same elements that need to be included in the statement. The victim impact statement is considered the most significant step taken in the victims' rights movement (Miller, 2014).

Miller (2014) conducted a study involving 35 participants, 11 of whom were victims of violent sexual assault. The victims had completed victim impact statements. The findings indicated that the victims of sexual assault had completed their victim impact statements mostly to prevent the offender from harming someone else (Miller, 2014). The idea that they could attain a sense of justice through the statement was a motivator for the women. The women also stated that being involved in the process and writing the victim impact statement meant showing their children and families that they did not want the crime to impact them as well. Additionally, they indicated that they did not want their children to see them upset on a daily basis (Miller, 2014).

A need for closure and pride are among the reasons that victims and their loved ones may participate in the process of putting away an offender. The victim suffers trauma not only at the time of the incident, but also during the criminal justice process. Victim input and impact statements may aid the victim in identifying the details of the crime, in addition to serving as means of closure and cathartic writing. The victim may also want to see some sort of remorse from the offender (Miller, 2014).

Victim impact statements are used during the sentencing phase and the parole-hearing phase in the United States. Many scholars believe that the victim impact statement is designed to elicit a response from the offender, thus eliciting a response from the court. In a study determining the effect of the victim impact statement, the researcher found that of six read-aloud victim statements for six separate cases, only one elicited a response from the offender (Booth, 2013). The offenders in the cases studied seemed highly unresponsive. Research does indicate that the courtroom and the postsentencing period are not conducive to offender remorse (Booth, 2013). Even though there was not a large observable display of remorse, the victims who were interviewed did not specify that they had been looking for remorse when writing their victim impact statement. The victims stated that an apology given during the sentencing phase would be delivered too soon (Booth, 2013). The victim impact statement in these cases seemed to function more as a process for the victims to go through emotionally in order to have their voices heard in a court of law.

The victims' rights movement in the United States has been a large motivator for victim participation. The use of the victim impact statement during the sentencing and postsentencing phases of the criminal justice process has integrated the victim into the procedure. With laws that require the criminal justice system to notify victims of upcoming hearings and significant events, the impact statement has given victims a voice in the process (Englebrecht, 2012). Researchers have set out to determine whether victim participation and impact statements are essential and influential in the criminal justice process.

In a study examining 23 secondary victims of homicide, Englebrecht (2012) conducted structured interviews to determine the impact of victim participation. All of the secondary victims were able to be present with the offender face to face, but only in a public courtroom during the sentencing phase. The victims all expressed frustration with trivial rules in the courtroom in regard to how and when the victim impact statement was read (Englebrecht, 2012). The participants in the study felt that some of the rules in the courtroom, New York in this study, were unnecessary. The judge in the courtroom has discretion of who is allowed to speak, but the general rule is one impact statement and a defined victim as deemed by the judge is allowed to give the statement. The victims in the study also felt they should be allowed to sit down face to face with the offender post-sentencing (Englebrecht, 2012).

Englebrecht (2012) recommended less of a disjoint between the victims and the criminal justice system. A victim's expectations of input and participation should be met by the criminal justice system. This can be done by following through with promises made to the victim of participation by the actors in the criminal justice system. The author also stated more research in the area of victim's needs and expectations needs to be completed (Englebrecht, 2012).

The study also found that around one-third of the families would have been willing to sit down with the offender face to face after the sentence was handed down by the judge (Englebrecht, 2012). Many of the victims stated that they had wanted to sit down after sentencing with the offender to ask direct questions in the hope of obtaining some answers. The families also stated that the reason they would have liked to face the

offender after sentencing was that they wanted to ask questions that were restricted during courtroom time (Englebrecht, 2012).

Englebrecht (2012) also found that participation gave victims a restored feeling of ownership of the loved ones whom they had lost (p. 177). Through the implementation of victims' rights measures, the justice system has given victims a chance to regain control over situations that may otherwise feel completely out of control.

The inclusion of victim impact statements is a complex issue. Though they are designed to offer victims closure and a voice, some victims remain frustrated and disenchanted after making a statement (Englebrecht, 2012). Victims hope to gain a sense of closure and peace once they have confronted the offender and participated in the criminal justice process. Many times, however, these expectations are not met, and victims end up frustrated with the system, lacking any feeling of closure (Englebrecht, 2012).

The parole process, though complete after sentencing, is an area in which victim input and inclusion have been implemented. The literature is lacking in the area of the parole process and the structure of hearings for offenders. There is a lack of information regarding victims' rights during this time and whether any aid is provided to secondary victims who are entitled to attend parole board hearings or give victim impact statements.

The victims' rights movement has not only given victims a voice in the courtroom during the trial and sentencing phases, but also had an impact on the parole process or post sentencing phase. The parole process has shifted from meeting the needs of inmates to meeting the needs of the families and victims of the inmates who are up for parole

(Caplan, 2012). The victims' rights movement has made great strides for victims and their families but may have caused victims to believe that they would have enough influence on the system to ensure that rulings would always be in their favor.

Research has shown that the actual impact of victim interaction and inclusion during the parole process is unclear (Caplan, 2012). The parole process was established to evaluate issues related to risk and recidivism for the offender. This process can be in direct conflict with the victim's interests and feelings (Caplan, 2012). If a victim's sole purpose in attending a parole hearing or submitting a victim impact statement is to achieve revenge, the victim's involvement will run counter to the purpose for which the parole process was designed. This conflict can cause problems for both the parole board and the victim seeking justice.

Research indicates specific measures need to be taken in order to quell conflict between parole board officers and victims. These measures include risk-prediction measures and actuarial guidelines for parole release (Caplan, 2012). Victims do not want to feel ignored by the parole board. Thus, their input should be taken into consideration, but it must not overshadow the role of the parole board. Caplan (2012) suggested that overreaching victims' rights movements and unfulfilled promises to victims have caused feelings of disillusionment for victims (p.68).

The victims' rights movement will not be changing in the near future. Research indicates that if this is the case, parole boards need to determine the amount of weight victim impact statements should have in the process (Caplan, 2012). This determination requires the establishment of some sort of guideline for each prison.

Caplan (2012) found that the amount of victim input received by parole boards is surprisingly minimal in relation to the number of offenders who are up for parole (p. 69). In a study of 805 cases, only 12% of the victims provided input at the parole hearing (Caplan, 2012). The research further indicated that the group of victims who did provide input to the parole hearing was unique (Caplan, 2012). The possibility of failing and/or getting negative feedback could be a factor in lack of victim input.

Victims may fear retribution or offender recidivism at any stage of the criminal justice process, even the parole stage. Lack of victim input in the parole process could be a consequence of such fear. Within the criminal justice system, measures have been taken to alleviate victims' fears. For instance, civil protection orders have been offered as a means of securing greater victim participation. These orders have been implemented to offer safety to the victim and thus increase the likelihood of the victim participating in the process (Wright & Johnson, 2012). The implementation of such "safety nets" for victims encourages their participation. Early interaction and engagement with victims increase their likelihood of remaining engaged throughout the criminal justice process (Peterson, 2013).

Legal interventions to provide victims with a safety net in exchange for interaction with the criminal justice process have been shown to yield positive, therapeutic outcomes for victims (Wright & Johnson, 2012). Victims' engagement in the criminal justice system is important not only for the system, but also for the victim and the victim's family.

In a study of 106 women who were victims of domestic violence, researchers found that the use of a civil protection order improved their likelihood of engaging with the criminal justice process and even proved to be therapeutic (Wright & Johnson, 2012). This legal structure made the women feel safer and more in control of outcomes.

The choice of whether to engage in the criminal justice system is affected by uncertainty and fear for many victims. Sometimes, a reluctant victim of violent crime must be subpoenaed to a hearing (Peterson, 2013). If a victim refuses to participate in the process, the prosecutor must rely on evidence to win the case. Research indicates that victim-centered prosecution tends to yield better outcomes for victims of violent crime than evidence-based prosecution does (Peterson, 2013). If a victim engages in the prosecution of the offender early in the process, there is evidence that the outcome for the victim will be more positive.

Empowering victims through the criminal justice process may increase the likelihood of victim participation within the courtroom. In Brooklyn, New York, a program called the Early Victim Engagement (EVE) project contacts victims of domestic violence immediately after a defendant is arraigned by telephone. Project staff then provides the victim with case information, the defendant's release status, information regarding protection orders and how they are used, and safety planning assistance (Peterson, 2013). Programs like these, along with civil protection orders, make victims feel that they are part of the process and are helping to put offenders behind bars. Thus, they empower victims in a situation where their power has been taken from them.

Programs' early engagement of victims is beneficial to the criminal justice process. Peterson (2013) suggested that programs that provide financial assistance, childcare, and emotional care for victims would be beneficial to both victims and the criminal justice system (p. 479). Peterson further stated that this victim-empowerment and engagement technique can provide positive victim outcomes, regardless of the outcome of the case (Peterson, 2013).

Several programs have been implemented in the criminal justice system for victims of crime. During court proceedings and hearings, victim advocates play a major role in getting victims through the process and helping them cope with testifying. In my review of the literature, I found several articles referencing aid for victims of crime during the prosecution and sentencing of offenders. In a vast search, I could not find literature about victim aid in the parole process, or whether there is a victim program specifically geared toward the parole process. In the proposed study, I will examine any aid available to secondary victims as they progress through the parole process.

Homicide Victims and Interaction With the Criminal Justice System

Secondary victims of homicide suffer an array of emotions and loss. Victims also experience feelings of revictimization and at times suffer from mental health issues. In this study research will examine the lived experiences of secondary victims as they progress through the parole process. The victim participants will be secondary victims, or family members, of a homicide victim. The literature speaks to many of the mental health problems those families of homicide victims experience. The following articles

highlight the situations the families are in and how they cope with the some of the issues that adhere to secondary victims of homicide victims.

Homicide as a crime has received many studies and articles to discover the crime itself and the motivation for the crime. Victims 'families who experience the loss of a loved one tend not to receive as much attention from academic research. Due to the increase in the criminal justice's system for victim involvement there is new interest in victims and how they respond to devastation. Research seeks to discover the impact on victims and their opinion of how the justice system works for them and for society as a whole.

When a homicide occurs, it leaves a path of destruction through families and friends of the victim. The loss of a loved one changes the lives of family members. The criminal justice system and its handling of a homicide case can also impact the experience of the families of homicide victims. As mentioned before, the victim's rights movement has lent a voice to the victims of homicide victims in the courtroom. There is little research on the impact of victim engagement in the criminal justice system wither helps or hinders the victim's mental health.

Research on families of homicide victims has shown that families experience psychological trauma after the traumatic incident. This psychological trauma can include posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (Englebrecht, Mason, & Adams, 2014). There is also evidence that suggests that secondary victims are a unique group of people. Unlike primary victims they do not experience the violence first hand. This difference

has led research to question if secondary victims handle grief and involvement in the criminal justice system differently than primary victims (Englebrecht et al., 2014).

Englebrecht et al. (2014) conducted a study with families of homicide victims and their experiences with the criminal justice system. The study included 18 families who had experienced losing a loved one to homicide. The findings of the study were that families of homicide victims found many factors in the criminal justice system that influenced the impact on the families. The first finding was a lack of compassion on the part of the initial contact with the criminal justice system. The families felt that there was a lack of empathy and compassion during the initial stages of the investigation, including notification of the crime (Englebrecht et al., 2014).

The second finding for homicide families was a struggle for control. Many of the interviewed families showed discouragement with the criminal justice system. They felt they were not part of plea deals and also felt as if prosecutors were not letting them have much say in the outcome of the trial (Englebrecht et al., 2014). Victims many times felt helpless with trying to seek justice. The victims also stated that they felt their victim impact statement would mean more than it did in court. They were disappointed when the offender showed no remorse to their words because many of them had hoped the statement would make an actual impact on the defendant (Englebrecht et al., 2014).

Conflicting goals also seemed to be a factor for the victims. Many of the families stated they thought their role would be more significant throughout the criminal justice process. Many of the families voiced concern and dismay over the amount of rights the defendant received and the spotlight that was put on those rights (Englebrecht et al.,

2014). The families felt that in general it seemed the criminal justice system was not looking out for their interests, but for several other interests.

The last factor that was integral in the feelings of the families was the devaluation of life. The families stated that one of the most challenging aspects of the criminal proceedings was listening to the sentences of the offender (Engelbrecht et al., 2014). The feelings of despair and resentment were pronounced at this level. Many families felt that a plea bargain was a way for the defendant to get off easy. They also felt that some offenders would receive more severe sentences for the crime of homicide and some lesser, which they found confusing and frustrating (Engelbrecht et al., 2014).

Many families in the aforementioned study expressed displeasure with the inclusion of the criminal justice system. The families felt discouraged and frustrated at the outcome of many of the cases. The families really wanted to experience more control over the situation because they felt such a loss of control in the loss of their loved one (Engelbrecht et al., 2014). The final finding of the study indicated that the criminal justice system might serve to further increase the feelings of grief and harm. Thus, causing the families to be victimized by the system that was designed to protect them from harm (Engelbrecht et al., 2014).

Homicide Victims and Mental Health

Homicide creates a devastating effect on the families and the hope is that the criminal justice system is well equipped to handle the needs of the victims and include the victims as they progress through the process. As stated before, the criminal justice system is moving toward a trend of victim involvement. Homicide victim's lives are

forever altered after the crime. Families of victims are thrust into a sudden traumatic situation and are left to deal with a plethora of people they have never met, organizations they have never belonged too, and the apprehension of becoming a part of a criminal justice process (Aldrich & Kallivayalil, 2013).

Many of the families use the word devastation to describe how they are feeling after their loved one has been a victim of homicide (Morrall, Hazelton, & Shackleton, 2011). Many of the families express the feelings of traumatic loss through despair, grief, hopelessness, and depression. Secondary victims tend to experience more anguish following the traumatic loss (Morrall et al., 2011).

Bereavement is considered a natural response to a loss. In the case of secondary victims of traumatic loss this can manifest into severe bereavement and post-traumatic stress disorder (Morrall et al., 2011). Secondary victims experience a great sense of loss that is exacerbated by knowing their loved one was taken from them in a violent way. The victims report having insomnia, guilt about being happy, feelings of insecurity, and anxiety about memories of the loved one lost (Morrall et al., 2011). The author also indicated further studies should be completed on the effects of crime for secondary victims.

Mental health issues are prevalent in surviving victims and their families. One of the disorders that seem prevalent with homicide victim's families is posttraumatic stress disorder or PTSD. A study examined the posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms of family members of homicide victims. The participants included 268 homicide survivors. The study looked at symptoms of PTSD and whether or not the survivors of homicide

victims experienced any of the three symptoms of PTSD (Zinow, Rheingold, Byczkiewicz, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2011). The study found that of all the victims who responded 39% of them experienced all three symptoms and 30% met the criteria for two of the symptoms (Zinow et al., 2011).

The three symptoms defined in the study were re-experiencing the event, avoidance and emotional numbing, and hyperarousal (Zinow et al., 2011). The study also indicated that secondary victims are twice as likely to meet the criteria for PTSD than nonsurvivors (Zinow et al., 2011). The trauma of the event and then the need to relive the event through the criminal justice process can exacerbate these symptoms and further mental health issues. As aforementioned the experience of losing a loved one is intensified for the surviving family members due to the violent way they lost their loved one.

The study also found that homicide survivors are more at risk for PTSD in comparison to other violence victims. This could be impacted by the interaction with the media and the criminal justice system. Survivors often have the stressors of engaging the criminal justice system and talking to the media in regard to the loss of their loved one (Zinow et al., 2011). The authors of the study also mention the need for further research in the area of secondary victims and PTSD.

In a similar study researchers sampled 54 African-American survivors of homicide. The study examined support of the victims, support network, family versus non-family support, and complicated grief and PTSD (Burke, Neimeyer, & McDevitt-Murphy, 2010). The study found that the African-American homicide survivors

struggled with high levels of psychological distress on many levels. They also found that African American survivors had higher social support than Caucasians examined in other studies (Burke et al., 2010).

Research has also shown that a higher level of social support does not seem to affect the outcome of the survivor's experience in either direction (Burke et al., 2010). The trauma of losing a loved one caused complicated grief and symptoms of PTSD. The study found that in its sample just knowing there would be someone to talk to be sufficient for a positive feeling by the victim (Burke et al., 2010). Mental health and support are a consistent issue for secondary victims. With 5 million adults in the USA who have lost an immediate family member, there is a large population of secondary victims in our country (Morrall, Hazelton, & Shackleton, 2013).

Research on secondary victims of homicide has shown that the individuals experience a wide array of mental health symptoms (Rheingold, Zinzow, Hawkins, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2011). In a study conducted with adolescents who had experienced a loss through homicide researchers examined mental health outcomes after the traumatic loss. The study examined 3,614 adolescents completed telephone interviews and answered questions in regard to homicide survivorship and mental health outcomes. The study found that adolescents who are secondary victims are at much higher risk for mental health issues and the authors also stressed the need for further attention needed to aid these victims (Rheingold et al., 2011).

The study also found that even though secondary adult victims were at risk for mental health issues, adolescents were at greater risk for alcohol use, depressions, and

substance abuse. The authors also found that PTSD symptoms were higher in homicide survivors, but did not conclude that PTSD was a predicted outcome. PTSD was found to be more prevalent for homicide survivors over non-victims (Rheingold et al., 2011). The authors also stated the need for further research on secondary victims and the affect the crime has on them at report and through the process.

Criminal Justice Involvement and Mental Health

Victims not only experience trauma during the time of the crime, but the crime leaves a path of persistent emotional problems. Interaction with the criminal justice system is a necessity of many victims yet there is danger of creating more mental health issues. The initial response of law enforcement can determine a positive or negative experience for the victim with the criminal justice system. In a review of literature authors examined the impact of criminal justice system involvement and a victim's mental health. The research found that most criminal justice agencies were poorly equipped to handle the mental health needs of victims (Parsons & Bergin, 2010).

In similar research, authors found that even with the victim's rights movement progress forward, there is still a need for the criminal justice system to understand the mental health needs of victims of violent crime (Morrall et al., 2013). Unfortunately, there are many times victims believe in an unattainable outcome. According to Victims of Crime Assistance League in South Wales victims are frustrated with the fact that they are led to believe in one outcome and the opposite outcome usually occurs (Morrall et al., 2013).

Primary and secondary victims of violent crime tend to become the most disappointed and frustrated during the criminal justice process. Evidence suggests that because of the lack of help in the criminal justice system, there is the possibility for further mental distress as the victims go through the long criminal justice process. One mother of a homicide victim stated it was like mental torture being a witness in front of her child's killer (Morall et al., 2013).

Vicarious trauma is also worth noting for families of victims. Though the literature addresses first responders and mental health professionals, victim's families are also subjected to revisiting trauma. Vicarious trauma is similar in presentation to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The individual re-experiences of the trauma and feelings of avoidance and depression (Aparicio et al., 2013).

Continually exposing an individual to trauma also affects an individual's cognitive schema. Researchers found that cognitive shifts happened in a social worker's frame of reference. These shifts included disturbances in spirituality, worldview, self-perception, psychological needs, and identity (Aparicio et al., 2013). Secondary victims are introduced to the initial trauma when losing their loved one. The initial trauma is followed by a courtroom trial, and then the parole process introduces the trauma again. In emergency personnel studies suggest that individuals who are exposed to trauma frequently report more dissociative symptoms and psychological distress (Setti & Argentero, 2012). These findings could also be linked to secondary victims who are frequently exposed to a critical incident or trauma.

Overall victims experience mental health issues in the initial findings of losing a loved one in a violent matter, but the experience with the criminal justice system can have both positive and negative impact on the victim. Evidence of disappointed victims because of sentencing have been linked to causing more emotional distress for the victim (Parsons & Bergin, 2010). The authors stress the need for more research into the victim's experience with the criminal justice system and how that interaction impacts their mental health.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature reviewed examined the process of victim input and impact in the criminal justice system. There are also articles that examine mental health concerns when engaging in the criminal justice system and agencies in the criminal justice system. Secondary victims of homicide were also explored. The literature examined the impact the criminal justice has on the survivors and the overall mental health implications of losing a loved one to violent crime. The process of parole and its role in the criminal justice process was also examined.

In each of the articles reviewed the authors stressed the need for more research in the realm of secondary victims. There is a gap in the literature in reference to victims of violent crime, especially secondary victims and the post-sentencing phase of the criminal justice process. There is a need for research in the area of impact on secondary victims in the post-sentencing phase. The research is also non-existent on the amount of help or support, if any for victims during this post-sentencing phase. The need to understand the

experience of secondary victims during the parole process would begin research into a much need area on secondary victims.

Chapter 3 will address the research methods of the proposed study. The chapter will examine the research methodology and design. It will also explain data collection and analysis along with participant tools.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of secondary victims as they engage with the parole process. As the literature review expressed, there is a lack of research on secondary victims and their experience with the postsentencing phase of the criminal justice system. Englebrecht (2012) also suggested that there is a lack of research on the victimization of victims who participate in the United States criminal justice system. This lack of knowledge has led to a lack of aid for victims during the process (Englebrecht, 2012). In conducting my study, I sought to fill the gap in the research and lay groundwork for further research.

Research Design and Rationale

The design of the study will be qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is a means of exploring the meaning in which individuals ascribe to a certain social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative design is used for inquiry that tends to focus on the individual. A study examining experiences of individuals lends to using a qualitative approach. A quantitative approach in this area of study would not be as effective as interviewing with a qualitative approach.

This study implemented a phenomenological research strategy. Phenomenological research was designed to examine the core of human experiences in relation to a shared phenomenon as described by the participants. Phenomenological research examines the shared experience and then through data collection identifies the essence of the shared experiences (Creswell, 2013). In the research study, the secondary

victims all share the experience of losing an immediate family member to homicide. The participants also all have engaged with the parole process and attended parole board hearings.

Other methods of qualitative inquiry were considered. Grounded theory was ruled out due to the general inquiry of a process (see Creswell, 2009). Grounded theory also uses multiple stages of data collection (Creswell, 2009). Grounded theory did not fit the strategy of inquiry due to the multiple stages of inquiry and the lack of examination and inquiry into the experience of the victim. Biography was also ruled out because I sought to identify themes from more than one individual.

The final method of inquiry that was considered was case study inquiry. A case study looks at an in-depth program or activity and looks at the area of study over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). Once again, since the research is looking at the phenomenon of secondary victims of homicide and their interaction, it was deemed appropriate to use phenomenological inquiry. The case study would have been appropriate if the research was looking at one program in depth.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process?

RQ1: What aid do secondary victims experience from the criminal justice system while in the parole process?

Participants of the Study

The participants in the study consisted of 10 individuals who have lost a loved one due to homicide. In selecting a sample size for phenomenological studies, it is recommended to have between 5 and 25 participants due to theme saturation (Creswell, 2009). The participants all have endured the same phenomenon, so a larger number of participants could result in theme redundancy. The participants also must have interacted with the parole process and have interacted during a hearing for the offender. The participants volunteered to participate in the study. The volunteers were contacted through an organization called Parents of Murdered Children. Adults over the age of 18 and of any gender can volunteer. The only criteria required of the participants was that they had lost a family member to homicide and had interacted with the parole process.

The participants all have been involved with Parents of Murdered Children and have gone through the experience of attending parole hearings for the offender of their loved one's homicide. Parents of Murdered Children was founded in 1978 in Cincinnati, Ohio, after Robert and Charlotte Hullinger lost their daughter Lisa to homicide (Parents of Murdered Children (Parents of Murdered Children, 2016). I administered semistructured interviews to participants after obtaining their consent.

Ethical Considerations

The participants in the study volunteered to be a part of the study and were free to choose if they want to participate in the study. The participants were not at risk or harm participating in the study. If a participant expresses concern or feels any distress, the participant could stop at any time and was given a list of local mental health services in

the area. Each participant signed a consent form before engaging in the research, and the confidentiality of the participants will be assured. The data and any information collected during interviews and coding will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home.

Procedures

The procedure for the research study included the recruitment of participants, informing participants, collecting and analyzing data, and validating the findings. The participants will be contacted via mail with a letter of intent of the research study. The participants will be recruited through Parents of Murdered Children and letters were sent out to all participants matching the criteria. The participants who wanted to volunteer for the study responded.

Once the participants have volunteered, I will set up three separate interviews. The first interview built rapport and asked questions about the crime and the experiences with the criminal justice system. The first interview also informed the participant of the study and the purpose of the study. The second interview identified in-depth experiences during the parole process. This interview specified through questions the experience of the actual parole hearing and determine if any aid or advocacy was given to the secondary victims during this phase. The last interview verified with the participant that all the information was documented correctly and determine if any additional information needed to be added. The last interview was an information setting for the participant. This was the time for the participant to verify data that I have collected.

The interviews will be semistructured and administered, via telephone. Each interview will be recorded. The recorded interviews will then be transcribed verbatim.

The recorded interviews, now documented, were then coded and analyzed. The interviews, once transcribed, were sent to the participants for review. Participants could add any information, or delete any information they felt necessary.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data that is collected through structured interviews and will be coded. I will be using phenomenological data analysis by building on data from the research questions and interview questions. The collected data will highlight significant statements and themes (Creswell, 2009). These themes and statements will then be used to write descriptions of what the participants experienced and the context in which the participants experienced the phenomenon. From the experiences and themes a description of the overall common experiences will be analyzed and reported.

The interview transcripts will all be read in their entirety in order to gain an understanding of each experience. All interviews will be analyzed by highlighting the significant statements that pertain to their experience with the parole process. The highlighting of the significant statements is called horizontalization. The significant statements will then be placed in clusters so meaning in order to develop themes from the collected data (Creswell, 2013).

Once the clusters of meaning and significant statements are coded a description of what the participants experienced will be written. Once completed, the researcher will complete an essence description, or a description of the underlying structure of the experience (Creswell, 2013). This underlying structure will be presented in findings of

the research. The optimal outcome is that the reader would understand what the participants experienced during the parole process.

Trustworthiness

The proposed research will be verified through a series of steps. Creswell (2013) suggests in order to verify or validate the findings the researcher must focus on the eight strategies of validation. The eight proposed strategies include prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick description, and external audits. These methods of verification are often termed trustworthiness in a study.

Dependability

The researcher will use fellow graduate students at Walden University who are well versed in qualitative research to perform a peer review of the research. The peer review will consist of each student reading the transcripts and the findings in their entirety. This will provide an external check of the information that is disseminated from the research (Creswell, 2013). The two selected members will be one female and one male in order to keep a gender balance.

Confirmability

The researcher will also clarify any researcher bias. This will be done from the outset of the research and will clarify any experiences or biases that could shape the researcher's interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher in the proposed study has experience with the criminal justice system as a law enforcement officer for 8 years. The researcher is familiar with the working of the criminal justice process up until

sentencing procedures. The researcher does not have experience with the parole process. The researcher has made several arrests dealing with offenders who committed violent crimes, and has come in contact with many victims of violent crimes. The researcher is aware of these experiences and will use bracketing accordingly.

Credibility

Member checking will also be utilized in order to verify data collection and findings. This technique is important in order to establish credibility (Creswell, 2013). The participants will be given a copy of their transcripts, interpretations, and conclusions in order to verify if they are accurate and credible. The participants will have to opportunity to notify the researcher if any information is incorrect.

Transferability

The final form of verification is having a rich and thick description. The purpose of a detailed and thick description is to allow the reader to be able to transfer the information to other settings and determine if the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics (Creswell, 2013). The proposed research will have verbatim transcripts and the researcher will provide detailed descriptions of the essence of the experience allowing a contextual and descriptive setting.

Summary

The proposed research will be completed with a qualitative approach. The phenomenological approach is the most appropriate research design for the study. The participants will volunteer for the study and all ethical considerations will be met.

Chapter 4 will address the findings and data interpretation of the completed data collection and interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of secondary victims as they engage in the parole process. The current study addressed the type of aid, if any, that secondary victims received during the parole process. I sought to explore the actual lived experience that each secondary victim had as they progressed through the criminal justice system from the crime to the parole process. Secondary victims within this study were defined as any victim who had a familial or close friendship relationship with the primary victim. I was motivated to understand my study because little research has been conducted in this area, based on my review of the literature. I wanted to gain an in-depth understanding of secondary victims and their thoughts and reflections on the parole process.

In order to address the research questions, I used a qualitative approach. Specifically, I conducted a case study phenomenological inquiry to address the actual lived experiences of secondary victims. The interview questions were developed to provide understanding and give secondary victims a voice regarding their experiences with the parole process after the death of their loved one. In Chapter 4, I discuss the means of data collection, the setting in which collection took place, and the demographics of participants. I also discuss the methodology used to analyze the data and the process in which I found themes throughout the interviews. Chapter 4 addresses the themes and answers to the research questions that are the basis of the study.

The purpose of this study was to determine the lived experiences of families of victims of violent crimes as they progress through the parole process. This research may aid secondary victims in obtaining support and aid during the post sentencing process. The research may also enable others within the criminal justice system to understand the importance of engaging victims in the process and making the process as comfortable and smooth as possible for families in order to decrease secondary trauma and revictimization.

Setting

The study implemented a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach utilized a phenomenological case study in order to address the research questions. The research questions were, as follows: (a) What are the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process? and (b) What aid do secondary victims receive from the criminal justice system during the parole process?

Demographics

The participant pool was comprised of 10 individuals who were located throughout the United States. The participants were from five different states and were located in the Midwestern, west, east, and southeastern regions of the United States. The participants ranged in age from 40 to 82 years of age. They consisted of eight women and two men. Of the female participants, one was African American, one was Hispanic, and six were Caucasian. Of the two males, both were of Caucasian ethnicity. All participants indicated that they had lost a loved one to homicide and had engaged in the parole process during their criminal justice experience.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment was completed once I obtained IRB approval through Walden University. My IRB approval code was 08-12-16-0461749. Once approval was obtained, I reached out to Parents of Murdered Children to obtain cooperation with recruiting possible participants. Parents of Murdered Children was founded in 1978 in Cincinnati, Ohio, after Robert and Charlotte Hullinger lost their daughter to homicide (CITE). The organization now aids victims' families in understanding the process of the criminal justice system (POMC.org, 2015). Once contact was made with Parents of Murdered Children, I sent an invitation letter via e-mail to my contact with the organization. The organization then sent out the e-mails to members of the group who were possible participants. If interested in participating, these individuals then contacted the organization and expressed that they would like to voluntarily participate in the study.

In order to obtain data saturation, I posited a participant pool of 10 to 15 participants. Parents of Murdered Children sent 10 invitation e-mails, and all 10 requested to volunteer in the study. The 10 voluntary participants all completed the structured interviews that were geared toward the demographic and qualifying criteria of the participants. All participants had to meet certain criteria. The participants needed to be above the age of 18 and had to have lost a family member to homicide.

Data Collection

Once the participants declared their interest to volunteer in the study, I sent them a consent form via e-mail. The consent form was sent via e-mail with instructions to read

the form in its entirety, sign it, and send it back to me via fax, e-mail, or mail. The interviews were conducted via telephone due to the various geographical locations of the participants. Once the consent form was signed, I scheduled interviews that were convenient for the participant., in accordance with their specified date and preferred time. All interview questions were identical for each participant. Participants were notified that they controlled the length of time the interviews lasted. The participant could answer questions in the manner they felt most appropriately addressed the question. As a result, interviews ran between 24-59 minutes.

Each interview was recorded with the participant's consent. The recorded interview was then transcribed for data analysis and participant review. All recorded audio was stored in a locked file in my office in which I was the only one who held the key. The recordings of the transcripts were then sent to the participants to review for accuracy. If the participants had any additional information to add or correct a statement they had made, they had the ability to add and/or correct information. Once the transcripts were reviewed, they were used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The reports for analysis were derived from interviews with semi-structured questions. The interviews were semi structured questions that allowed for the participant to elaborate. There were three categories of interview questions in which the participant could complete all three at the same time if desired. All participants elected to complete the questions during one phone conversation. The interviews consisted of 14 interview questions and were categorized by the following: a) Introduction and family history b)

The crime and the parole process and c) Additional information and follow-up. The questions were the same for each participant and purposely put into a format that facilitated analysis of apparent themes, themes that could be derived from the shared experience of each of the participants.

In order to ascertain themes from the interviews, I read each interview several times in order to familiarize myself with the interview and the participant's answers. Creswell (2013) identifies the need to repeatedly read over interviews in order to familiarize oneself with the answers and to start seeing themes in the interview. I also began to highlight key words and phrases that pertained to the participant's direct experience with the crime and the parole process. Once these key words and phrases were highlighted, I again reviewed all the transcripts to formulate a system of clustering all the meanings that seemed to be common among all the participants. Once I found common meanings and words among the participants' responses, themes began to reveal themselves. The participants' answers and the commonality of the answers between each participant was the basis for the themes created.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

The research was verified through a series of steps. Creswell (2013) suggests to verify or validate the findings the researcher must focus on eight strategies of validation. I utilized the strategies and included prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer-review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and

thick description, and external audits. These methods of verification are often termed trustworthiness in a study.

Dependability

I ensured that the study could be replicated if another interviewer asked the same questions of the participants. The questions and themes derived from the questions were done with a rich detailed description so that another researcher could easily identify the themes and trends in the participants' answers. The process of reading the transcripts several times and coding significant statements also provided dependability.

Confirmability

In order to assure confirmability, I also clarified any researcher bias. This was done from the outset of the research as I clarified any experiences or biases that could shape my interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2013). I have experience with the criminal justice system as a law enforcement officer for eight years. I am very familiar with the working of the criminal justice process up until sentencing procedures. I do not have experience with the parole process or any post sentencing procedures. I also have never attended or witnessed a parole hearing. I do not know any parole hearing officers through my work as a law enforcement officer. As a police officer, I had made several arrests dealing with offenders who committed violent crimes, and have come in contact with many victims of violent crimes. I was aware of these experiences and used bracketing accordingly.

Credibility

In order to maintain a credible outcome, I used a healthy participant pool of 10 participants in order to meet theme saturation. Member checking was utilized to verify the data collection and findings. This technique was important to establish credibility (Creswell, 2013). The participants were given a copy of their transcripts, interpretations, and conclusions to verify if they were accurate and credible. The participants also had the opportunity to notify the researcher if any information was incorrect. The participants were also able to add any information that they felt was pertinent to their experience with the criminal justice system.

Transferability

The final form of verification was having a rich and thick description. The purpose of a detailed and thick description is to allow the reader to be able to transfer the information to other settings and determine if the findings can be transferred because of shared characteristics (Creswell, 2013). The use of the thick and rich descriptions in this study allow the consumer to identify the themes and understand that the themes relate to the experience of secondary victims in the parole process. The goal of the study was to identify the unique themes within this phenomenon and not to generalize the findings. The study provides a consideration of the concept of the experience the victims had as they progressed through the stages of the criminal justice system, most importantly the parole process. The reader will be able to identify the themes and understand the themes in the experiences of the secondary victims.

Results

The structured interviews allowed the participants to give an insight into the phenomenon of the parole process after losing a loved one to homicide. The first research question addressed the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process. In order to delve into this question, several interview questions were asked. These questions looked at the a) secondary victims' background b) relationship to primary victim c) description of crime and d) notification of crime. The following is the results to these areas of inquiries.

Family Background

All the participants gave a quick description of their family background and ethnicity. This just gave the study a baseline for the demographics of the study. Females made up 80% of the participant pool and 70 % of the participant pool were Caucasian. Participants were from different parts of the country and some had moved from the area of the initial crime.

Relationship to Primary Victim

To ascertain the nature of relationship to the victim the participants were all asked how they were related to the victim. This set the background for how the secondary victims were tied to the victim of homicide. This question gives the reader an insight into the actual relationship and emotional tie to the person who was violently murdered. It adds depth to understanding of the experiences each of the secondary victim's engagement. Of the ten participants, five were the parents of the murdered victim. One

participant was the spouse of the victim, two participants were siblings to the victim, one participant was the aunt to the victim and one participant was the uncle to the victim. All participants were very expressive in their relationship to the victim. A common occurrence in each interview was that the participants would become emotional when stating their relationship to the victim. The participants all stressed the close relationship they had with the primary victim.

Description of Crime

Each participant gave a lengthy description of the crime committed against their loved one. This was an important aspect of the research because it showed the beginnings of the emotional experience each of the participants would endure. The crime itself would be the initial start to the secondary victim's interaction with the criminal justice system, more importantly the interaction with the parole process. It is important to note that the participants were chosen to be part of the study because of the crime committed against their loved one. This was purposefully done because the crime of homicide in this case would ensure an interaction with the secondary victims and the parole process. The following is a summary of the description of the crime for each of the participants.

Participant #1 and #2 are married and both stated in their interviews that they lost their only son to homicide. This is a summary of the description of the crime that they both stated in their interview.

Participant #1 and #2

Participant #1 and #2 both stated they lost their son to an act of homicide. Their son was invited to accompany acquaintances of his on a plane ride. The acquaintance was getting his pilot's license and stated to the victim that his instructor would be accompanying them on the flight. The victim did not know that the instructor was really a friend of the acquaintance that was there to kill the victim. The victim was strangled from behind while in flight. The victim was then thrown from the plane into the ocean. The victim's body was never found.

Participant #3

Participant #3 stated that the victim was her son. Her son was going to a local hip hop performance to perform for the local people in town. Her son had traveled to a city nearby his home town for the performance with his siblings. After the performance, the victim was going outside through a hallway and accidentally bumped shoulders with another man. Words were exchanged and the victim continued towards his vehicle. The victim and his brothers were getting ready to leave the area when a group of 25 to 30 people came out of the building and surrounded the victim and his brother. The participant's son was beat up by a group of people and then the offender obtained a knife from one of the people in the crowd. He grabbed the victim and stabbed him in the stomach. The victim passed away the next morning in the hospital.

Participant #4 and #5

Participant #4 and #5 are married and both described the crime in their own separate interview. The victim was the niece of both the participants, but both stated she

was like a daughter to them. Their niece had been married to her husband for two months. They were newlyweds. On Christmas Eve, the victim was strangled by her new husband and placed in garbage bags. The offender then put her in the trunk of the car and dropped her body off at a remote location. The body was eventually found by the participant's son during the search of a remote area.

Participant #6

The victim of this crime was the brother of the participant. The victim was a recovering alcoholic and had been in a violent relationship. The victim sought out counseling and started to go to a counselor to deal with his issues. The counselor stated she knew a girl he should start dating. The girl was also a patient of the counselor. The victim and the girl moved in together within two weeks of meeting. The participant stated that both the girlfriend and her brother were both suffering from mental health issues. The two immediately started to have relationship issues. The victim kicked the girlfriend out and she left town. She met two men to whom she told that the victim had been abusive to her and her daughter. She also stated that she wanted her belongings back. The two men then went to the victim's house and shot him through the window as he was cooking dinner. The men had been paid a small sum of money to complete the crime. The victim was later found in his house by the participant's son.

Participant #7

The participant stated that the victim, who was her only son, worked as a security guard at the time of his murder. The victim had gone to a building to retrieve a jacket. As he approached the building, some kids were breaking into a car and he followed them

for a few blocks then lost them. The kids came back and parked behind the building. One of the kids came around the building and started a conversation with the victim. As he was talking and looking away, another man struck the victim in the temple with a blunt object. The victim fell to the ground and the offenders continually beat him. The victim died due to the injuries he sustained in the beating.

Participant #8

The participant stated that the victims of the crime included both her sister and brother-in-law. Both victims were living on a military base at the time of their death. The participant requested that the name of military base be omitted. The brother in law was a military officer. On the night of the crime, a man came to the home of the victims and claimed that he needed help and that his car had broken down. The officer then reached for the phone to call the military police per protocol. As he was dialing the phone, the offender stabbed him twice in the back. The noise of the attack led to the participant's sister coming from the bedroom from where she was sleeping due to the late hour of night. The female victim came out and found the attacker still in the house. The female victim attempted to fight off the attacker and was stabbed 8 times as a result. The female victim was also sexually assaulted as she lay their dying. Both male and female victims died from the wounds sustained in the attack.

Participant #9

The participant stated she was the spouse of the victim. The victim was home in his trailer with his wife. The participant woke and walked down the hallway and found a stranger pressed up against the wall trying to avoid detection. The participant's husband

was still in bed and heard his wife scream. He came running down the hallway and confronted the intruder. The victim told the intruder to leave their home immediately. There was a physical altercation and the victim collapsed in the hallway. The participant grabbed two knives and gave one to her husband and kept one for herself for protection. The intruder stabbed the victim several times before leaving the house. The victim died because of the injuries sustained in the altercation.

Participant #10

The participant stated she is the mother of the victim. The victim was her third child and was living in another state at the time of the crime. The victim had been married to his wife for 10 years and they shared 4 children together. The wife decided to hire a hitman to kill her husband for insurance money. The hitman was a friend of the couple and later found to be the lover of the wife. On the day of the crime, the offender came to the house. The victim and the offender had a couple beers together. The victim then fell asleep on the floor. As the victim slept, the offender went to his vehicle and retrieved a crow bar and a change of clothes. The offender entered the home and beat the victim to death with the crow bar. The offender then showered and changed his clothes. The offender left the home and left the victim in the home where he died because of the injuries sustained in the beating.

Notification of the Crime

Each participant when interviewed for the study, was asked about the crime and then asked how they were notified of the crime. One of the participants was with the victim at the time of death. The other nine victims were not physically present when the

crime occurred. Most of the participants were notified by law enforcement officers. Two of the participants had family members discover the victims' bodies while searching for their missing loved one. Two of the participants (who are married to one another) also reported their child missing and hired a private investigator who found that their son had been a victim of homicide. Some of the participants were notified via telephone due to the fact that they were in another state when the crime occurred.

From this point forward in the interviews common key words and themes started to present themselves. The participants were asked about their first interaction with law enforcement and the criminal justice system at the time of the crime. This question elicited a positive vs. negative cluster or code. The participants either described a positive interaction or negative interaction with law enforcement at the beginning stages of the crime.

Interaction with Criminal Justice System

The thematic label was derived from two questions. The first question asked the participants to describe their first interaction with the criminal justice system pertaining to the crime, with a follow-up question asking about their experience with the criminal justice system in regard to the crime before the parole process. These questions were asked with the intent of getting a preliminary gauge on their experience with the early stages of the criminal justice system. Upon my review of the transcripts I found that the participants deemed the interaction in a positive light, or a negative light in regard to treatment or empathy by the criminal justice system. Under the thematic label the two subheadings of positive interaction and negative interaction took shape.

Positive Interaction

Of the participants 8 of the 10 had a positive initial experience with law enforcement and the criminal justice system prior to the parole process. Some of the quotes below are from participants in regard to their experience with the criminal justice system after the notification of the crime.

Participant #3 stated “the police were awesome, we are friends with the police in town, so they were absolutely awesome. The detectives were very sympathetic to us and I didn’t have any complaints with them.” Participant #4 and #7 stated that the interaction was very favorable.

Participant #6 stated “the police were very nice. The sheriff even called me to tell me that they had got the guy. We became friends and he would call me and keep me updated.”

Participants #8 and #10 stated that their experiences were both good initially. Participant #9 stated that the experience was good with the criminal justice system.

Negative interaction

Only 2 of the participants stated they had a negative initial reaction with the criminal justice system. It should be noted that the two participants were the parents of the same victim. They each stated they had their own personal negative experience with law enforcement initially after they tried to notify law enforcement of the crime.

Participant #1 summarized the initial involvement. The participant called the police department to report her son, who was an adult, missing. The officer taking the report stated that her son was probably on a mountain top with someone’s wife and not to worry

about it. The participant further divulged that he thought his statement was funny and the participant did not think it was funny.

Participant #2 echoed participant #1's sentiment in regard to the first interaction with law enforcement. Participant #2 stated that the officer told the participant that the victim was probably off on some mountaintop with someone else's wife. Participant #2 stated "that infuriated us but it was early in the process and we knew that if we were going to track down our son we were going to have to do it ourselves."

The majority of participants had a positive first interaction and experience with law enforcement and the criminal justice system before the start of the parole process. The themes derived from the experience were positive and negative. The positive interaction was based on key words such as friendly, sympathetic, and nice. The negative interaction was due to the secondary victims not being taken seriously when reporting their loved one as missing.

Parole Process

Participants were asked questions about a) first involvement with the parole process b) notification of offender's parole hearing c) aid during the parole process d) first experience with the parole process and e) how the parole process affected the participant and the participant's family. These questions geared toward the actual parole process created themes in the shared phenomenon. Once again, the transcripts were reviewed several times and key words were then coded and put into clusters. Once these clusters were determined themes were derived from the clusters and key words.

Notification of Parole Hearing

After a crime of violence is committed the offender is arrested and the victim is then subjected to a criminal trial where the judge issues a sentence. In this study, all the offenders of the crimes were given a sentence with the possibility of parole after a certain number of years which is also determined by the judge. All participants were notified of the offender's parole hearing in some manner.

Via Mail

Of the 10 participants, 7 of them found out about their offender's parole hearing via mail. The hearing date and time was sent by the parole board in their state to the participants regarding when they could attend.

Via Phone

Of the 10 participants, 2 were notified via phone. These participants also stated they had a close relationship with their court appointed victims advocate during the criminal trial. The advocate notified them via phone of the first parole hearing.

Self-initiated

Only one of the participants was not notified by any means. Participant #9 called on her own to find out when the offender would be up for parole and when a hearing would be held. It should be noted that this crime was the oldest of all participants interviewed, so the rules of notifying victims at that particular time may have been different than the rules now in states.

Victim Aid During the Parole Process

Once the victims had been notified of the parole hearing date, the next interview question addressed the availability of victim aid that was provided to each participant during the impending parole process. This question addressed if there was a victim advocate assigned during the parole process by the criminal justice system, for the sole purpose of working with the victim post-sentencing. This is separate from the advocate that was assigned to the secondary victim during the criminal trial of the offender. This question identified participants who received aid during the process and participants who did not receive aid during the process.

Received Aid

Of the 10 participants, only 4 of the participants received some form of aid given to them by the criminal justice system explicitly for the parole process. The following are statements made by the participants in regard to the aid they received.

Participant #3 stated she had received victim aid. The participant gave the following statement:

“Yes, there was a woman that called me to go through all the information and let me know what they had to do. They had to run a check on everyone to make sure they were OK to go to a parole hearing. She called me and if I had any questions. I called her. She was nice enough, I mean I didn’t have a relationship with her like I did with my victim advocate through the trials.”

Participant #4 also stated that aid was received in the form of a person they could contact any questions. The participant stated:

“They gave me a name of a person that I could ask questions and I did ask a few questions. When we went to the hearing there was a person from the parole board that was supposed to be our quote unquote advocate.”

Participant #6 that a victim advocate was assigned and went to the hearing with the participant. The participant stated:

“Yes, I had someone, and actually she went to the hearing with me.”

Participant #7 stated that she also had aid during the parole process. The participant stated the following:

“Molly was someone who helped with the process. She’s the head of the victim’s crime office.” The victim only stated that Molly would answer questions for the participant but did not elaborate extent of Molly’s involvement.

Did Not Receive Aid

Of the 10 participants 6 of them did not receive aid during the parole process. Most of the participants stated that they did not receive aid during the parole process. Of those participants, only one expanded on the lack of aid. Participant #2 stated:

“I was the only advocate I ever had in my life.”

First Experience with Parole Hearing

The first experience with the parole hearing elicited different keywords and clusters that formed a common theme throughout the interviews. The participants all stated that the first experience was very difficult.

Difficult

The key word difficult was used in many of the participants interviews. The participants stated that the first parole hearing was “difficult” and “very hard.” Participants also cited that it was difficult because of all the preparation for the parole hearing. Many of the victims gathered newspaper articles, transcripts, and documents pertaining to the crime and trial. The gathering of documents for many of the participants was a method of trying to convey to the parole board and offender the impact the crime had on the participants. The participants in many cases were allowed to present these documents at the parole hearing. Participants also stated that it was “very emotional.” The participants stated that the hearing was difficult because it brought everything up from the crime and the original trial.

Fear

Another word that seemed to repeat itself throughout the interviews was fear. For all of the participants, this was their first experience with the parole process. The participants had not been through another parole process with another victim. One participant stated that the parole process “scared the devil out” of her. Most of the fear came from the unknown of the hearing. A majority of the participants complained that they were not well prepared for the parole process and what to expect from the hearing. This led to many of the participants being afraid of what they were walking into and whether or not they were prepared for the hearing.

The theme of fear also surfaced when participants addressed the release of the offender. Several of the participants expressed fear when they thought of the probability

of their offender being released from prison. Participants feared the offender could kill someone else's loved one or could come after them in retaliation.

Forgotten

Participants stated they felt as if they were forgotten after the initial criminal trial for the offender. A participant stated that the lack of information that was given to them after the trial made them feel as if they were forgotten. The participant stated they felt that the criminal justice system felt the case was over once the offender was sentenced. Many of the participants stated they felt forgotten by the criminal justice system because the case was considered over once the offender was incarcerated. Participants expressed that the parole process kept the case fresh in the minds of the participants. They felt they still were active in the case because of the parole process.

Lack of Information and Rules

Over half the participants stated there was a complete lack of information given to them to prepare for their first parole hearing. Participants stated this included some of the rules that they were given before the parole process. One participant was not able to have a friend who witnessed the death of the victim come to the parole hearing. The rule in the participant's state only allowed for immediate family members. Another participant stated that her children's spouses were not allowed to attend the hearing. One participant was not allowed to go to the initial parole hearing due to the fact that it was on a military base. It should be noted that each prison has its own set of rules regarding the parole process. This can be confusing for the victims because they have heard of other states rules and wonder

why they cannot have the same rules across the board. Some prisons only allow family members and some prisons only allow one person to read a victim impact statement.

The participants stated they felt it was important for them to have the support system they needed at the parole hearing. Participants stated that they were given a list of people who could attend the hearing prior to the hearing. Another complaint by participants was the lack of information on the victim impact statements. Several participants stated that some of the people who came with them to the parole hearing were not allowed to read victim impact statements.

Financial and Transportation Burdens

An overwhelming theme and sentiment in this section was the burden of finances and transportation on the individuals. Each participant was required to travel to the parole hearing at their own expense. This included participants who had to travel hours or travel from out-of-state because of the placement of the offender after sentencing. One participant stated it was hard to travel because the participant was in an electric scooter. She stated that it made travel more difficult and expensive.

Two of the participants stressed the hardship of travel and finances when two of the hearings were cancelled. The participants had traveled to the prison on the correct date and time they were given via mail. Upon their arrival, the participants were informed that they cancelled the parole board hearings for that day. The participants felt this lack of acknowledgement for their time and emotions caused undue stress and hurt.

Effects of the Parole Process

During the interview process with the participants I asked specifically how the process affected the participant and their family members. This question was difficult for many of the participants as it elicited an emotional response due to the fact that the parole process was a direct result of the death of a loved one. For this portion of the interview, themes of stress, sadness, grief, and depression were prevalent. I feel it is best expressed with the words from each participant.

Participant #1:

“It affected me like I think it would any mother to be face-to-face with their son’s killer. I did not want my daughter to go, as a matter of fact when she found out he was up for parole,

she went into premature labor. Because of the premature birth, he developed a vein in his brain that did not develop properly, this ultimately led to his death at the age of 17. I feel that he died because my daughter went into premature labor.”

Participant #2

“Well, the fact that it took place in 9 years when he was sentenced to 25 years to life bothered the hell out of me. It pointed out to me the failings of the criminal justice system that the victims are subjected too.”

Participant #3

“The parole process in general to me and my family is very traumatic because it has been 9 years in April and we’ve learned to reengage with life and to move forward and not to have closure because there is no such thing. You have to relive

everything, not just little bits and pieces that come back, but the entire thing during the parole process. You want to project that to the parole board. You want them to know what this man has done. That is difficult. To publicly share your pain with this man in the room is difficult. I don't want him to know my feelings...to share in that is tough."

Participant #4

"It's just horrible because every two years it just rips us open again. Then we have to go to through the same thing...not only what happened but we also have to face the prospect that he's going to walk. I mean there is a chance that he gets out and has a normal life, and by the way he has a daughter that he conceived in prison during a conjugal visit. He was married twice in prison. So, we have the prospect of him getting out and leading a normal life and let's face it our daughter is where she is and will be there for eternity."

Participant #5

"Having to do this every two years is a lot of stress...a tremendous amount of stress. My husband and I put in a lot of work. He does the writing and I do the transcribing. We throw things back and forth to prepare. It really is a lot of stress."

Participant #6

"It's just a never-ending thing. This certain individual was always in trouble so he was transferred to every prison in the state of Missouri. Getting the calls that he was transferred was good but was also a kick in the stomach because it brings

everything up again. We were told he would be released in a year and actually he will be released and free in two days.”

Participant #7

“To me I think it is not necessary for the victim’s family because it makes us have to relive it over and over. You get yourself back to semi normal then have parole hit you in the next year and your back. I have to go to the doctor to get something to help me through it and I don’t think that’s fair either. It’s always an emotional thing.

Participant #8

“Well it’s put a deep schism in some of us. I had a sister who emailed us to apologize to me that she can deal with it anymore. Some of them are just totally shut down. It has caused some terrible depression. You can’t get away from it in our mind.”

Participant #9

“Well I didn’t know who to ask or think about asking where he was incarcerated and I didn’t learn too much about the legal system. But this whole journey has been difficult and enlightening in more ways than one.”

Participant #10

“Oh, it really tears you up because you relive everything. This last one was worse because this is the man who beat my son so viciously. I wanted to talk because I had a poster of newspaper articles and pictures of my son. One of the pictures was of my son in his coffin with his head in panty hose because of how bad his head

was beat in. I said this is all I have left of my son and it's not fair." I want him to have the maximum amount of time. It won't bring my son back but at least I will feel like some justice is done."

The recurring theme in the answers given by the participants to this specific question was stress and trauma created by the process. All the participants mentioned having to relive the crime and loss of their loved one. Some participants mentioned feeling depressed, with one participant mentioning the need for medical intervention to get through the time of the parole hearing. Each of the participants stressed the dislike for the reoccurring parole hearings. In some states, the offender is up for parole every two years. Participants stated it was hard to finally get back to normal life and then receive a letter in the mail that the offender was back up for parole. Those who had been through several parole hearings stated that this caused feelings of anxiety and sadness because it brought the crime back to the forefront of their minds.

Participants Feelings Toward the Parole Process

During the interview process, the participants were asked if they had anything to add to the interview regarding the parole process and any information that they wanted to add to the interview in general. These questions elicited several answers regarding change to the parole process and the treatment of offenders versus the treatment of victims.

Changes to Parole Process

Participants voiced their concern with the parole process and its lack of empathy for the rights of the victims. Several of the participants stated they felt it was unfair that

the offender could be up for parole every year or two. The participants felt that if given a lengthy sentence there should not be a need to revisit parole every 2 to 5 years. Two of the participants also stated that if there is a parole hearing scheduled it should be held. In two of the participants experience their offender had their parole hearing cancelled at the last minute for unknown reasons. The participants stressed the fact that the death of a loved one is a lifelong experience and the parole hearings every few years just make that lifelong experience even more difficult. The looming thought of release is also over their heads always. Two of the participants attended seven parole hearings.

Several participants stated that the rules about victim impact statements need changed. The participants stated that those close to the victim, even non-family members should be able to give a statement at the parole hearing. The participants felt that the crime affected more than just family member and the offender should be subjected to any victim impact statement of any person who was impacted by their crime.

Offender Treatment vs Victim Treatment

A theme that was derived from keywords and clustering was the treatment of the offender versus the treatment of victims. Participants voiced their concern about the amount of money the criminal justice system spends taking care of murderers. The participants were dismayed that the killer of their loved one was treated well with education, sports, and counseling. Participants felt that offenders were treated well, which would not be a deterrent to some in society when it came to incarceration.

Many participants also felt a lack of voice for secondary victims in the parole process. One participant stated that there are many rights for offenders outlined in the

constitution, but there is a lack of rights for secondary victims. Another participant cited need for protection during the hearing. The participant cited an incident where a victim was leaving after a hearing and was approached in the parking lot by the attorney for the offender. The victim was then threatened by the attorney. The participant never reported the incident.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided information regarding the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process. Participants in the study provided information about their loved one, the description of the crime, and how they were notified about the crime. The background information for each of these topics set the tone for the participant's involvement in the parole process. Each participant stated they had lost a loved one to homicide and had been intimately involved with the criminal justice system from time of crime to the parole process. The notification of crime was found to be completed by law enforcement officials for all participants excluding one in which the participant was with the victim at the time of death.

The participants also discussed their initial experience with the criminal justice system before their involvement with the parole process. Most the participants initially had a positive experience with law enforcement after the crime. The participants stressed in each interview that the officers that responded to the crime and the detectives that conducted further investigation on the crime were empathetic, kind, and attentive. Some participants had the experience of the original officers and detectives continually checking on the victims as they progressed through the entire process. A few of the

participants reported they had become friends with the law enforcement officers. The two participants that shared a negative experience with law enforcement reported their main complaint was that they did not feel like they were listened to by law enforcement and remarks made upon reporting their son missing were inappropriate.

The chapter also detailed the participants' first experience with the parole process and the method in which they were notified about the parole hearings. The first research question addressed the secondary victims experience through the process. The participants all became involved in the parole process because the offender of the crime was sentenced by a judge having a possibility of parole. Participants then explained how they were notified of the offender's first parole hearing. This presented three different ways of presentation; via mail, via telephone, and one self-initiation.

The chapter also outlined the availability of aid during the parole process. The second research question addressed if aid was given during the parole process. Over half the participants did not receive aid during the parole process. Participants stated that the lack of aid made the process more difficult and most participants had no idea what to expect going into the process. The participants that did receive aid stated that aid came mostly in the form of a person who was there to answer any questions before going to the parole hearing. This person available to the participants before the hearing. Of the participants who received aid, only one of the participants had an actual advocate who attended the parole hearing.

The chapter also outlined the first parole hearing, effects of the parole process, and additional information that the participants felt was important. The participants

stated the difficulty of the first parole hearing and the lack of information they received. Many of the participants also stated their frustration with the rules of the parole hearing. Another concern stated by the participants was both the financial burden and the burden of traveling to and from parole hearings.

Participants also shared their experience with the parole process and the effects it had on themselves and their families. These effects ranged from reliving the crime, stress, trauma, and depression. Each of the participants stated the parole process was very difficult. The main theme among the difficulty was the reoccurrence of parole hearings every 2 to 5 years.

The final results of the study were the collection of answers that pertained to information the participants felt were important to add to the study. The participants cited the need for change to the parole system and the criminal justice system. Participants voiced their concern for the lack of rights of victims and the specialized treatment of offenders. The participants also stated their displeasure with the reoccurring parole hearings that are held within a relatively short time period.

The experiences of the secondary victims elicited many responses and themes within the questions. In Chapter 5, I will interpret these findings and discuss the experiences of the victims, including aid. Chapter 5 will also discuss the recommendations, limitations and social implications of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of secondary victims as they progress through the parole process. The research conducted a structured interview with questions that were designed to gain an understanding of the experiences the victims engaged in during the parole process. The lack of research and lack of voice for secondary victims led to the need for the study.

Phenomenological research was the most appropriate design for this study because I wanted to examine individuals lived experiences. The participants in the study all have a shared lived experience in that they were involved in the parole process and had lost a loved one at the hands of an offender. The length of time and numerous questions in the interviews allowed me to develop patterns and relationships in the data.

The study was developed to gain an understanding of secondary victims' experience and access to aid while going through the parole process. A collection of rich and detailed data was derived from interview questions that helped me to answer the research questions. The research questions for the study were, as follows:

RQ1. What are the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process?

RQ2. What aid do secondary victims receive from the criminal justice system during the parole process?

In order to answer these research questions, I gathered a pool of participants who had lost a loved one to homicide and had experienced the parole system post sentencing.

The interviews were qualitative in order to adhere to the phenomenological research. Upon completion of interviews, transcripts were created for each participant. I read each transcript five separate times in order to familiarize myself with the research and find key words. The significant statements were highlighted. This process is referred to as horizontalization (Creswell, 2013). Once these significant statements were identified, they were placed in clusters of meaning. From the clusters of meaning, I identified key themes. These themes were then described with a rich textural description. I also used a structural description which described the shared phenomenon of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Participants answers were organized into clusters of (a) family background, (b) relationship to primary victim, (c) description of the crime, (d) notification of crime, (e) interaction with criminal justice system, (f) parole process/notification/aid, (g) effect of parole process, and (h) additional Information. Rich and thick descriptions in each of these areas led me to identify themes and data findings. An analysis of the findings identified the answers to the research questions.

The participants explained their initial experience with the criminal justice system before their involvement with the parole process. Most the participants said they had a positive experience with law enforcement after the initial crime. The participants stressed in each interview that the officers that responded to the crime and the detectives that followed up on the crime were empathetic and attentive. A few of the participants reported they had become friends with the law enforcement officers. Only two of the

participants stated they had a negative experience with law enforcement. The two participants were married and the parents of the same victim.

The participants reported the difficulty of the first parole hearing and the lack of information they received prior to the hearing. They also expressed their frustration with the rules of the parole hearing. Another concern stated by the participants was the financial burden and the burden of traveling to and from parole hearings. Several of the participants had attended more than one parole hearing, all at their own expense.

Participants also shared their experience with the parole process and the effects it had on themselves and their families. These effects ranged from reliving the crime to stress, trauma, and depression. Each of the participants said that the parole process had been very difficult for them. The main theme among the difficulty was the reoccurrence of parole hearings every 2 to 5 years. At the federal level, prisoners who are serving less than 30 years receive an initial parole hearing within the first 120 days through an application process which adheres to their sentencing guidelines (United States Department of Justice, 2015). The federal hearings are then held every 18 to 24 months to determine if the original parole release is prudent or should be revisited at a later date (Department of Justice, 2015).

Interpretation of Findings

In order to completely address the research questions, I posed the following questions to participants during the structured interviews:

1. Please tell me your family background and race.
2. Can you describe how you are related to the victim?

3. Can you describe the crime?
4. How were you notified of the crime?
5. Can you describe your first interaction with the criminal justice system pertaining to the crime?
6. How was your experience with the criminal justice system in regard to this crime before the parole process?
7. How did you first become involved in the parole process?
8. Were you notified of the offender's parole hearing?
9. Were you given any aid, e.g. victim advocacy, from the criminal justice system?
10. Tell me about your first experience with the parole process and hearing.
11. How did the parole process affect you and your family?
12. Is there any information you would like to add about the parole process?
13. Is there anything you would like to add to your interview thus far?
14. After reviewing the transcripts, is there any information you would like changed, or is not sound?

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of secondary victims during the parole process? Many of the studies that have been conducted on victims of crime have involved primary victims and their experiences during criminal proceedings. There has been a paucity of research in the area of secondary victims and their experiences as they progress through the parole process. Participants all shared in the

same phenomenon of losing a loved one to homicide. All reported they had engaged in the parole process because of the crime.

A victim's expectations of input and participation should be met by the criminal justice system. Englebrecht (2012) recommended less of a disjoint between the victims and the criminal justice system. This can be done by following through with promises made to the victim of participation by the actors in the criminal justice system. The author also stated more research in the area of victim's needs and expectations needs to be completed (Englebrecht, 2012). My study also found that participants felt that their expectations and needs had not been met through the parole process.

Lack of information and Rules

Over half the participants stated there was a complete lack of information given to them to prepare for their first parole hearing. Participants stated this included some of the rules that they were given before the parole process. One participant was not allowed to go to the initial parole hearing because it was held on a military base. It should be noted that each prison has its own set of rules regarding the parole process. This proved confusing for the victims because they have heard of other states rules and wondered why they cannot have the same rules across the board.

The participants stated they felt it was important for them to have the support system they needed at the parole hearing. Participants complained about the lack of information on the victim impact statements. Several participants stated that some of the people who came with them to the parole hearing were not allowed to read victim impact

statements. Participants stated this made their experience more difficult during the parole hearing.

Participants also stated this led to more burdens being placed on the actual secondary victims. Participants referenced the lack of information led to financial and transportation burdens. The participants felt they were not prepared enough for the parole hearing because of lack of information or that they were not notified when a hearing was cancelled until they arrived at the prison. These factors added to a report of a negative experience with the parole system.

Mental Health Effects on Participants and Family

Research has shown that the actual impact of victim interaction and inclusion during the parole process is unclear (Caplan, 2012). The parole process was established to evaluate issues related to risk and recidivism for the offender. This process can be in direct conflict with the victim's interests and feelings (Caplan, 2012). The participants in the study stated that they felt that justice was not being served when the offender was up for parole every 2 to 5 years. Participants stressed words of fear, difficulty, and stress in relation to questions asked in order to answer research question number one.

The recurring theme in the answers given by the participants to this specific question was stress and trauma created by the process. All the participants mentioned having to relive the crime and loss of their loved one. Some participants mentioned feeling depressed, with one participant mentioning the need for medication management to cope at the time of the parole hearing. Each of the participants stressed the dislike for the reoccurring parole hearings. In some states the offender is up for parole every 2 years.

Participants stated it was hard to finally get back to normal life and then receive a letter in the mail that the offender was back up for parole.

Overall victims experience mental health issues in the initial findings of losing a loved one in a violent matter, but the experience with the criminal justice system can have both positive and negative impact on the victim. Evidence of disappointed victims because of sentencing has been linked to causing more emotional distress for the victim (Parsons & Bergin, 2010). The interaction with the criminal justice system in this study played an important role in how participants described their experience with the parole process. While most of the participants had a positive experience initially, all the participants stated the negative interactions they did encounter caused more difficulty dealing with the aftermath of the crime.

Many of the families in a previous study used the word devastation to describe how they felt after their loved one was a victim of homicide (Morrall, Hazelton, & Shackleton, 2011). Many of the families expressed the feelings of traumatic loss through difficulty, grief, fear and depression. Secondary victims tend to experience more anguish following the traumatic loss (Morrall et al., 2011). These same sentiments rang true for participants in this study. The participants all reported feelings of stress and depression. Research on secondary victims of homicide has shown that the individuals experience a wide array of mental health symptoms (Rheingold, Zinzow, Hawkins, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 2011). Keywords of fear, difficulty, depression, stress, trauma, and reliving a nightmare were all used by the participants in this study.

Additional Information About Experience

Several of the participants stated they felt it was unfair that the offender could be up for parole in short increments of time. The participants felt that if given a lengthy sentence there should not be a need to revisit parole every 2 to 5 years. The participants stressed the fact that the death of a loved one is a lifelong experience and the parole hearings every few years just make that lifelong experience even more difficult. The possibility of parole is always on the mind of the participants.

The participants stressed their dismay with the criminal justice system because of the amount of times parole is offered to a person who had killed their loved one. One participant even experienced her offender being let go on a technicality because of a wrong charge. The offender was not technically charged with conspiracy, which was found by the defense attorney. The offender was immediately released from prison. The wrong doing on the part of the criminal justice system led to more stress on the part of the secondary victim. Prior research also voiced concern and dismay over the amount of rights the defendant received and the emphasis on those rights (Englebrecht et al., 2014). This same sentiment was evident in my research as well. The participants felt that the offender's rights were more important than their rights.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What aid do secondary victims receive from the criminal justice system during the parole process? During the criminal trial process, victims and their families have access to a victim advocate and services. The victim advocate helps the family navigate through the process of the criminal justice system.

The advocate will appear at the court hearings and explain the legal process to the victim's family. This does not carry over to the parole process. During the criminal trial, a victim advocate is available for the secondary victims; secondary victims are not promised this during the parole process. This was a main complaint of all participants involved, including those who did receive some form of aid during the process.

Received Aid

Of the 10 participants only 4 of the participants received some form of aid by the criminal justice system when dealing with the parole process. This form of aid was contact person with whom the participants could call and ask questions. In only one case did the victim advocate attend a hearing with the participant.

Did Not Receive Aid

Of the 10 participants 6 did not receive any aid. The participants that did not receive aid did not expand on the lack of the aid in the direct question regarding aid, but did address it in later parts of the interview. Evidence suggests that because of the lack of help in the criminal justice system, there is the possibility for further mental distress as the victims go through the long criminal justice process (Morall et al., 2013).

Participants stating the fear of the unknown caused the participant more stress while preparing for the impending parole hearing.

One participant also stated she felt like the people involved with the process did not want to deal with the secondary victims. The participant stated she had been asked to give her statement through the mail. The participant stated she would like to give her impact statement in person. Upon arrival, the contact person at the prison stated she

wasted her time driving all the way to the prison and giving her statement, she should have done it by mail. This lack of empathy and aid made the experience harder for the participant. Many of the participants felt lost after the criminal trial. They felt that once the trial was over the aid from the criminal justice system had ceased. One participant stated that they felt forgotten about after the trial by the criminal justice system. The participant felt that the system saw the offender as sentenced, so it was over. Many of the participants voiced that for them this was a lifelong sentence and experience.

Participants also stated that the lack of aid led to a fear that the offender would be freed. As one participant stated, “there is no such thing as closure when you have the possibility of the offender being freed.” Participants also stated the fear that comes with the prospect of the offender being freed. One participant stated that if their offender could kill their loved one, who is to say they would not kill again or come after them. Some of the participants spoke of the fear of retaliation because of the parole hearings. Having someone walk them through the process could help quell these fears.

The lack of knowledge about the hearing and results gave the participants free reign to anticipate the worst-case scenario before the parole hearing. Some of the participants did not understand their rights at the parole hearing. Many complained that they were under the impression that anyone who knew the victim and was impacted by the death could speak, but this was not the case. A major complaint of most participants was the fact that only specific people were allowed to attend and an even smaller number of people were allowed to read a victim impact statement. Participants voiced their concern with the parole process and its lack of initiative for the rights of the victims.

Limitations of the Study

There were a few limitations to the proposed research. The study focused on secondary victims of homicide. Secondary victims of other crimes will not be included in the study, which means that it will not be possible to generalize the data to all victims. Though the participants are only those who are related to victims of homicide, it ensured that the participants would have engaged in the parole process. The participant pool was small, with only 10 participants, once again limiting the data. Though the participant pool is small, the size was enough to meet theme saturation. Future research may consider using a larger participant pool if possible in a quantitative study.

The phenomenological approach required all participants to have experienced the phenomenon in question; thus, there was a common understanding among participants (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological approach also required that the researcher bracket any personal assumptions being brought into the study. I was a law enforcement officer for 8 years. I was involved in many arrests of offenders and worked with victims' families during some of my arrests. This interaction was only during the arrest phase and some of the criminal trial. I have never worked with secondary victims during the parole process. I also have never worked with anyone involved in the parole process nor have I attended a parole hearing. It was necessary for me to implement bracketing and to set aside my own understanding during the research and the coding of data.

Another limitation to the study was the means by which interviews were held. Interviews were conducted over the telephone. Conducting the interview over the telephone limits the researcher to only derive audio cues from the participants, this

includes tone of speech, inflection and language used. Facial expressions cannot be gauged while conducting the interview over the phone. The use of telephone interviews was necessary in this study because the participants were geographically dispersed throughout the United States. Though facial expressions were not seen in this study, the manner of the material and questions allowed for the participants to assert emotional reaction over the phone. This emotional reaction and sentiment was detected by the interviewer.

Recommendations

While conducting the initial phases of this study, I realized a need for recommendations in this field of research. The recommendations revolve mostly around the need for more research on secondary victims and victim rights in the parole process. The first recommendation is the need for more research in the field of secondary victims. Upon completing a literature review on the subject, a paucity of research was apparent that dealt with only secondary victims. Secondary victims lack a voice in the academic arena. Much research has been compiled on the effects of crime on primary victims and the effects of the criminal justice system, including trial on primary victims have been lost in this process.

Secondary victims in this study felt that throughout the process they lacked a voice. The participants felt the offender was receiving better care through the criminal justice system than the participants were receiving. This leads to my second recommendation. This study showed a need for more victim aid during post sentencing and the parole process. There is a need for education through the criminal justice system

in regard to the needs of secondary victims as they progress through the initial trial and post-sentencing. Victim advocates specifically appointed for post-sentencing would also be beneficial to secondary victims. Knowledgeable advocates who are well versed in the parole process could aid secondary victims in preparing for the parole process and possible outcomes of the process. Keeping secondary victims informed of hearing dates and expectations would be beneficial. This understanding and aid could quell the fear of the unknown for victims and possibly reduce stress. Many of the secondary victims felt lost after the criminal trial. More research needs to be conducted focusing on the availability of aid to secondary victims. This research should concentrate on not only federal prison rules but also the rules and regulations for each state, as they are different. A handbook for each state that is given to secondary victims after sentencing would benefit both the victims and the criminal justice system.

The third recommendation is a follow-up for the need for aid. More research needs to be completed on the effect the parole process has on the mental health of the secondary victims. The participants in this study all commented on mental health issues and symptoms they have experienced since the time of death of their loved one. Some of the participants even sought medication management during the parole hearings. Research on families of homicide victims has shown that families experience psychological trauma after the traumatic incident. This psychological trauma can include posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (Englebrecht, Mason, & Adams, 2014). Previous studies have identified mental health issues with victims. This is an area of research that needs to be addressed in order for the criminal justice system to implement

programs in which secondary victims can receive aid. Financial support for travel and mental health counseling for secondary victims implemented by state would be beneficial to secondary victims.

My recommendation for future research would be to continue to research the needs of secondary victims. The participants in this study were eager to participate so that they could share their experience. Future research should attempt to obtain a large participant pool and discover more experiences and needs of secondary victims in a quantitative study. Further qualitative research in areas of coping mechanisms and posttraumatic stress would be beneficial to this area of study.

Implications

The current research can have a positive impact on social change. The lack of research on secondary victims is a disservice not only to the victims, but also to the criminal justice system. Secondary victims have a right to be heard and need to share their experiences. This research could aid victims in sharing their experiences and helping other victims that are going through the parole process. Society as a whole can benefit from hearing the experiences and experiences of the secondary victims.

The information could aid criminal justice officials in finding avenues to make the interaction between secondary victims and criminal justice officials efficient and productive, which in turn could prove beneficial to both parties. Victims could experience less distress, and the criminal justice system could gain their full cooperation. Secondary victims could thus help in the apprehension, prosecution, and incarceration of offenders. The implementation of aid for secondary victims post-sentencing could also

benefit both the criminal justice system and the secondary victim. The more prepared the secondary victim is the smoother the parole process can go, thus creating a better environment and outcome for both parties. This can be accomplished through education, preparation, and aid for the families.

This information could also help with ideas of restorative justice. This concept can help victims face the offender and have some control of the situation. The victims can feel they have a voice in the experience and some input on the outcome of the experience. Restorative justice theory is based on resolution and reparation of harm (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). *Restorative justice* is a philosophy or theory whose proponents advocate repairing the harm done to victims through mediation and victim empowerment. Restorative justice identifies a need for victim services and for making victims' experiences within the criminal justice system positive. Mechanisms of restorative justice expand victims' rights and provide alternatives to existing policy and practice (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011). The participants would benefit from a restorative approach as it concentrates on victim aid and understanding. It also gives the victim the power they are seeking an attempt to give the victim satisfaction or closure on their case. Understanding the experiences of secondary victims during the parole process can help with more implementation of restorative justice. Bringing an understanding of victims to both other victims and the criminal justice community is a positive social change.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of secondary victims as they progressed through the parole process.

During this research process, it became apparent that secondary victims yearned to be heard. The participants were eager to tell their story and give both themselves and their loved one a voice. There is a need for more research in the area of impact on secondary victims in the post-sentencing phase. The research prior to this study was essentially non-existent regarding the amount of help or support, if any for victims during this post-sentencing phase. The need to understand the experience of secondary victims during the parole process is important for secondary victims and the criminal justice system.

The participants in this study stated their willingness to tell what had happened to their loved one and their experience of what occurred in the parole process in order to help other secondary victims. The participants stated the process was arduous and led to many years of difficulty and uncertainty. The participants outlined their need for victim aid and their dismay with many of the rules of the parole process. Themes presented themselves as outline in the research that connected all the participants who had shared in the experience.

The participants further stated the need for change within the criminal justice system when it came to victim's rights versus the rights of the offender. Many of the participants disagreed that offenders should be eligible for parole every 2 to 5 years. The repetition of parole added to the effects the crime and the process had on each participant. The participants all shared the effects that the parole system had on them and their families.

Homicide affected all the participants in this study. The subsequent result of losing their loved one to homicide was the parole process. The participants in this study

shared their experiences with not only losing their loved one, but also the act of reliving it every time they engaged in the parole process. The participants all wanted justice for their loved one and with that they wanted their voice heard when it came to the parole process.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol (Interview No. 1)

Date: _____

Location _____

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Interview #1

1. Please tell me your family background and race.
2. Can you describe how you are related to the victim?
3. Can you describe the crime?
4. How were you notified of the crime?
5. Can you describe your first interaction with the criminal justice system pertaining to this crime?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol (Interview No. 2)

Date: _____

Location _____

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Interview #2

1. How was your experience with the criminal justice system in regard to this crime before the parole process?
2. How did you first become involved in the parole process?
3. Were you notified of the offender's parole hearing?
4. Were you given any aid (e.g., victim advocacy) from the criminal justice system?
5. Tell me about your first experience with the parole process and hearing.
6. How did the parole process affect you and your family?
7. Is there any information you would like to add about the parole process?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol (Interview No. 3)

Date: _____

Location _____

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Interview #3

1. Is there anything you would like to add to your interviews thus far?
2. After reviewing the transcripts, is there any information you would like changed, or is not sound?

Appendix D: Victim Impact Statement

This content was retrieved from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, n.d.).

What should I include in my statement?

Only you know how to best describe the effects this crime has had on you and those close to you. We realize it may be difficult to describe in words how this crime has affected you. To assist you with your thoughts and feelings, it is recommended you write an impact statement on paper.

If you would like to share the emotional and mental impact you may consider:

- How life has changed for you and those close to you.
- How your ability to relate to others has changed.
- Any counseling or other support you have obtained.
- Fees incurred for counseling or therapy for you and your family.
- Certain details of the crime and the offender's actions you want the panel to know.

If you or your family members were injured you may wish to describe:

- The specific physical injuries you or members of your family have suffered.
- How long your injuries lasted or how long you expect them to last.
- Any medical treatment you have received or expect to receive in the future and the medical expenses you have incurred.
- Your inability to work and lost wages.

Do I have to make a victim impact statement?

It's your choice whether you make a victim impact statement. However, no one knows better than you how this crime has changed your life. It is very important for you to help the panel members understand all of the ways this crime has affected you and those close to you. Whether or not you choose to submit a victim impact statement is a decision made by you and your family. It is a voluntary right that you have as a victim of crime. If you choose not to attend a hearing but would like your impact statement considered, you can mail or fax your statement to the Classification and Parole Representative (C&PR) office at the institution.

You can also submit an audio or video statement (with transcript), appear via video conference at the DA's office, or have someone speak on your behalf.