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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctor of Education Program

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The Lived Experience of African American Juvenile Parole and Probation Officers in the Pacific Northwest

Andre J. Lockett

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

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Concordia University–Portland

2020

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and better understand the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. I conducted semistructured interviews with four African American juvenile parole and probation officers using a transcendental phenomenological framework. This framework was further supported and guided by social identity theory, critical race theory, and person–organization fit theory. Through detailed semistructured interviews, field notes, and artifacts; honest and thought-provoking insight was gathered about the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers. Furthermore, interview data was coded and analyzed using ATLAS.ti (2020) and during the analysis process, three themes and six subthemes emerged, capturing the essence of the four coresearchers' lived experiences. These three themes and subthemes uncovered the desire to better support youth and hold them accountable as essential motivating factors for African American juvenile parole and probation officer career choice. Additionally, experiences of unpredictable schedules, and navigating two social identities—African Americans and the juvenile justice system—were explored. African American juvenile parole and probation officers want cultural representation at the management level, experience discrimination, and want more support—for themselves and African American youth—through more equitable practices, better recruitment strategies, and inclusive work environments.

Keywords: African American, juvenile parole and probation officer, phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, social identity, person–organization fit, juvenile justice system

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. This research study would not have been possible without the love, compassion, and guidance from my mother and father. Your sacrifice and putting your children's need before your own can never be repaid. However, I strive to achieve and be the best man I can be in an attempt to show you it was worth it.

I dedicate this dissertation to my siblings. Each of you in one way or another has shown the individual strength to overcome the many challenges you have faced. It was witnessing your strength through seemingly insurmountable trials and tribulations that gave me the courage to persevere on the days I got weary.

I dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful wife and daughter. During my time at Concordia, I was blessed with an intelligent and beautiful baby girl. You two have filled me with so much joy and gratitude. You make me a better person and I and am very fortunate to be able to come home to you each and every night. I could not have completed my research without your love and support. To my loving wife, thank you for pushing me to keep going on those nights I was ready to give up.

I dedicate this dissertation to all my previous instructors and professors. Thank you for your sustained support, even during times in my life when I lacked maturity and wherewithal to recognize the potential you saw in me. The guidance, patience, and accountability you had with me is something I will always hold dear to my heart. I thank you for believing in me, even in moments when I did not believe in myself.

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I would like to give my sincerest gratitude to my faculty chair, Dr. Marty Bullis, who guided and challenged me to conduct a scientifically significant study to which I have passion. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Jerry McGuire and Dr. Derrick Tennial, whose endless support, guidance, and very thought-provoking feedback was invaluable to this research study. Your commitment to challenging my thoughts and asking more of me is something I will forever keep with me and hold dear to my heart.

I would also like to thank the African American juvenile parole and probation officers who served as participants in this study. Your willingness to share your lived experiences in such intricate detail is very much appreciated. Your commitment to youth in the juvenile system is inspiring, and without your expertise, this research project could not have been completed. GOD Bless.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to explore the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. As will be illustrated in the literature review of this study, previous research has been conducted relating to this topic; specifically, the experience of African American law enforcement officers. However, the experiences of African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers have garnered few prior research studies.

African Americans employed by the criminal justice system must balance two different identities whose communities offer widely contrasting views of each other (Faller, 2019). Statistically, African Americans are overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Novak, 2012), and hold a negative perception of law enforcement due to perceived biased criminal statistical analysis and racially biased policing practices such as racial profiling and unwarranted use of deadly force on their community members (Brunson & Gau, 2015). There is minimal prior research about the experiences of African Americans who pursue careers within the juvenile justice system where the perception from their community is negative, and the statistical overrepresentation of youth in that system is high. Most of the literature that exists on the topic mentioned above are qualitative and explore experiences of police officers, and quantitative related, revealing demographical criminal statistics. The research community has not substantively examined the experiences of African Americans whose careers within the juvenile justice system garner an apparent conflicting identity duality as African Americans and as juvenile justice parole and probation officers. In the next section, I will review the background on this topic, which will provide more context for the reader.

Background and Context

Previous studies on role identity conflict of African American law enforcement officers have sought to explain the conflict that African American law enforcement officers experience as an outcome of being members of two groups who have historically been opposed to each other (Perlow, 2008). For example, in a study by Paul and Birzer (2017) there was an exploration into the experiences of African American law enforcement officers who themselves had been racially profiled. Using a purposive sampling method of academic literature and other news resources to conduct a literary ethnography—which is a methodology that claims books, scholarly articles, biographies, and news reports can provide evidence of a social or historical phenomenon—Paul and Birzer (2017) analyzed hundreds of journal, articles, books, and government reports on the racial profiling of African American law enforcement officers. This analysis revealed four major themes of African American law enforcement officers' racial profiling experiences. When off duty and confronted by other officers there is: (a) a disbelief by the other officers that they are in fact "brothers in blue," (b) a belief by the other officers that the car they are pulled over in is not owned by them, or they possess it illegally, (c) African American officer belief that they were pulled over for being perceived as being in the wrong neighborhood, and (d) an overly aggressive tone and behavioral demeanor used by the other officers making the stop (Paul & Birzer, 2017). These results reveal a constant balancing act African American law enforcement officers face as they seek to uphold the law while also being subjected to abuse of authority by other law enforcement officers.

There have been further studies that examine the identity duality that exists for African American law enforcement officers. For example, in a study by Burns (1997), there was an examination of female African American law enforcement officer's self-perception of their role

in law enforcement. This phenomenological study included 15 female African American law enforcement officers from a sprawling urban midwestern city in the U.S. All of these officers were employed for a minimum of 5 years and ranged in age from theirs 20s to their 60s (Burns, 1997). The findings from this study revealed the following officer perceptions: (a) racism in law enforcement culture, (b) harassment, (c) social seclusion and minimal opportunities for promotions, (d) tokenism, (e) a limited number of role models, (f) altruism, (g) African American identity, and (h) being marginalized. These findings were all discovered to be elements of the self-perception of the female law enforcement's identity. Burns (1997) stated, "These themes relate to race, gender, and occupation and may contribute to the restricted role that African American women are allowed to play in law enforcement" (pp. 6−7). The findings from this study reference the significant challenges African American law enforcement officers face while attempting to perform their job duties.

In the literature review of this study, I will present similar research studies that focus on quantitative demographical criminal statistics and qualitative studies with an emphasis on law enforcement officers' experiences. There is a need to further explore the experiences of juvenile justice parole and probations officers who face this seemingly conflicting dual identity as African Americans and juvenile parole and probation officers. The prior research that examines this phenomenon has been minimal. This study sought to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. In the next section, I provide a brief review of the conceptual framework that guided this phenomenological research study.

Conceptual framework. This study sought to expand the qualitative body of literature on this study's topic, which focused on the lived experiences of juvenile justice parole and

probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The conceptual framework used in this study incorporates social identity theory (SIT), critical race theory (CRT), and person−organization fit (P−O fit) theory in order to explore how social identity, race, and social order play a part in one's determining organizational fit with an employer. These theories and their interrelation are explained in greater detail within Chapter 2. In the next section, I provide a more detailed review of the problem this study will examine.

Statement of the problem. The statistically disproportionate number of African Americans negatively impacted by the criminal justice system and the resulting negative perception of the criminal justice system by the African American community are well-documented (Novak, 2012). P−O fit theory suggests that for long-term employee satisfaction, a person's value system must align with an organization's culture and value system (Westerman, 1997). Even given the negative perception by the African American community of the criminal justice system, members of this community continue to seek long-term employment within the juvenile justice system. This career choice seems to run contrary to what P–O fit theory and SIT suggests would be the case. Previous research has inadequately addressed why African Americans pursue long-term careers within the juvenile justice system, given the marginalization of youth from their community by that system.

There is existent literature that examines multiple components of the juvenile justice system. However, much of this literature does not have a focus on juvenile probation officer experiences and how they describe their motivations for pursuing and persisting in roles as juvenile parole and probation officers. For example, a study by Muhammad (2016) examined the impact of social attitudes and cultural competence on juvenile probation officer decision making. In this study 21 juvenile probation officers—15 being African American—were given a decision-

making questionnaire to evaluate to the cultural influences that informed their decision making, and social attitudes about race and gender in the scope of their job duties. According to Muhammad (2016), probation officers' age and years of experience as probation officers influenced their decision-making and cultural competence when working with youth and families. Muhammad (2016) stated, "the lack of understanding and clarity about probation officers' decision making and approaches can undermine system change, thus supporting the need for additional research that examines probation officer decision-making" (p. 2). The findings from this study reveal a need to further investigate the experiences of African American juvenile probation officers.

Understanding all the components that drive African American juvenile probation officer decision-making is crucial because it directly impacts the long-term outcomes of juvenile offenders. Juvenile probation officers are responsible for performing youth assessments, coordinating treatment, and recommending sanctions to judges. According to Muhammad (2016), juvenile probation officers are critical decision-makers for the youths who are on their caseloads and the youths' families. In a study by Brown (2003), nine African American juvenile probation officers' worldviews about youth crime prevention were explored. Mentoring programs, positive cultural relationships with probation officers, and training for African American parents were all discovered as strategies to reduce youth crime. Brown (2003) stated, "the role that African American male juvenile probation officers play in the lives of young African American juvenile offenders has not been extensively explored" (p. 3). Brown (2003) recommended further research was needed that explores the experiences and relationships between African American juvenile probation officers and African American youth offenders.

Juvenile probation officer's day-to-day experiences can be stressful. According to Greenwood (2016), there have been very few research studies that explore stressful experiences of juvenile probation officers. Using a survey methodology, Greenwood (2016) conducted a study that explored the job stress experiences of 291 juvenile probation officers across the state of Texas. Race and ethnicity were the only variables discovered in the data analysis to have significant effects on the relationships between job stress and stress-related outcomes. According to Greenwood (2016), further research is recommended to explore the stress-related experiences of juvenile probation officers and their need for reliable social support systems to avoid burnout. As shown in the section above, previous literature relating to the experiences of juvenile probation officers recommends further research about the topic. This research sought to add to this body of literature by exploring the lived experiences of African Americans who had chosen to pursue and persist as juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest.

Research Question

The central research question and subquestions that guided this phenomenological research study are as follows:

Research Question

RQ. What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following three subquestions assisted in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question:

Subquestions

SQ1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system?

SQ2. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities?

SQ3. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities?

Significance of the study. This study has scholarly literature supporting it and practical significance. Based on an intensive literature search, I concluded that there is no one individual theory that sufficiently explores race, social group characteristic duality, and employee–organizational fit. Additionally, no individual theory utilizes African American social group identity, the juvenile parole and probation officer social group identity, an employee's years of service, and lived experience to analyze how their P–O fit is determined. Therefore, this study presents an original conceptual framework model based on the integration of SIT, CRT, and P–O fit theory, which supported an exploration into the lived experience of African Americans who pursue and persist in juvenile justice careers in the Pacific Northwest. The integrative conceptual framework employed in this study has not been previously used to explore the topics associated with other research studies.

This study is also methodologically significant. Previous studies have used quantitative methods to generalize African American and other ethnicity crime rates and to explore the experiences of African American police officers (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Indeed, according to the research by Miner-Romanoff (2012), few qualitative research studies have explored the lived experiences of people from the African American community who choose careers within the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there is practical significance to this study. The findings will provide opportunities to further awareness of African American experiences and perspectives relating to the employment of this demographic in the juvenile justice system in the

Pacific Northwest. This study's findings may be of practical interest to Pacific Northwest legislators, educators, and other executives in the juvenile justice system in the Pacific Northwest.

Scope of study. Whereas there are various areas in the criminal justice system to examine African American experiences and the impact they have, the scope of this study is restricted to African Americans in the Pacific Northwest who work in the juvenile justice system. This study explored the experiences of African Americans who are members of both the African American racial group and the juvenile justice system social group, through the theoretical lens of SIT, CRT, and P–O fit theory. In the next section, I will provide a definition of terms used throughout this study to offer readers more context and familiarity.

Table 1

Terms and Definitions

Terms	Definitions
Experience	This term is defined as a study's participant choices, options, and how they influence one's perception of knowledge (Given, 2008).
Criminal justice system	This term is defined at the U.S. set of agencies and procedures established by governments to regulate crime prevention and enforce penalties on those who violate laws ("Criminal justice", n.d.).
Juvenile justice system	This term is defined as the U.S. subset of the criminal justice system that holds minors ages 12–25 accountable for criminal offenses. In the Pacific Northwest where the study was conducted, any young person that commits an adult offense before they turn 18 and convicted, remains in juvenile custody until their sentence expires or they reach the age of 25, which at that point they are transferred to an adult institution.

(continued)

Terms	Definitions
Motivation	This term is defined as the needs, interests, and that which drives an individual (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012). This study will use this definition in the context of how prior lived experience plays a role in the motivation behind African American career choice.
Participant/coresearcher	This term is defined as the individuals in this research study and other referenced studies that provided the necessary data that is analyzed.
Juvenile justice parole and probation officer	This term is defined as an individual who works in the juvenile justice system supervising youth ages 12–25.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

I made certain assumptions in exploring the central phenomenon. Vogt, as cited in Wargo, (2015) defined assumption as, "(a) A statement that is presumed to be true, often only temporarily or for a specific purpose, such as building a theory; (b) The conditions under which statistical techniques yield valid results" (para. 1). This research study had the following assumptions based on the definition above: (a) the chosen participant's prior lived experience had influenced their motivation to choose and persist in the juvenile justice field, and (b) the responses provided by the juvenile justice parole and probation officer participants were an honest and accurate representation of their lived experiences. I chose a phenomenological design because I believed this research methodology would provide in-depth and information rich data on the experiences of the participants while learning if and how they influenced the motivation behind the chosen career of the participants of this study. However, I recognized to conduct a phenomenological investigation properly; there are fundamental assumptions a researcher must make as it relates to the phenomenon. According to van Kamm (as cited in Moreno, 2002), phenomenology research enlists the three following assumptions:

> (a) the phenomenon being investigated is relatively ordinary, and thus, commonly experienced by individuals; (b) common human experience is basically identical; and (c) this basically identical human experience can be expressed under the same label. The first supposition requires that the processes or events of interest be reasonably widespread within the settings that a researcher investigates. (p. 1762)

These three assumptions are a fundamental aspect of this research design. They were a significant component that drove the findings, which arose from the data collection and analysis processes.

Another assumption that I made—and grounded from a theoretical perspective—are the participants in this study navigated two social groups, which offer historically and racially driven contrasting views of each other (Novak, 2012). This assumption is supported by existing literature that demonstrates that African Americans in law enforcement routinely navigates this identity duality (Faller, 2019). Furthermore, these methodological and theoretical assumptions were conditions through which I conducted participant sampling to explore the central phenomenon of this study. I used Seidman's (2013) phenomenological interview design to collect data. I assured participant confidentiality throughout the data collection and analysis process through well-established research techniques that I will explain in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this study.

Limitations

There are a number of limiting factors to this phenomenological study. Simon (2011) described limitations as potential weaknesses in a study, and that are out of the control of the researcher (p. 2). Among the limitations of this study are the small number of participants. The sampling size limitation existed because of the small pool of African American juvenile justice

parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest who met the requirements for years of service in the juvenile justice field to be eligible for participation. I will note that phenomenological studies typically have smaller sample sizes. Smaller sampling size provides an individual researcher the opportunity to have more in-depth dialogue with participants to obtain rich and thick data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study's findings are limited to the participants' shared reality of the phenomenon being studied. Moreno (2002) stated, "No matter the phenomenon being investigated, the conclusions derived by the researcher apply only to that aspect of reality that was perceived by all participants and mutually identified by both parties" (p. 1765). Phenomenological researchers in the social sciences have traditionally not attempted to generalize results due to the small sizes and the need for participant characteristic similarities within the context of a phenomenon (Moreno, 2002). However, theories developed from this type of research can be transferred to other studies with similar topics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

As the researcher, I am another limitation of this study. Since I conducted a transcendental phenomenological study, I remained extremely cognizant of my assumptions, biases, presuppositions, and perceptions. I also remained consistently self-reflective in an attempt to safeguard the data collection and analysis process from my previous assumptions about the phenomenon. I worked diligently to conduct a scientifically sound data analysis process that ensured the participants of this study had opportunities to convey their lived experiences and were represented accurately. I sought to exhibit credible, trustworthy, and valid research processes by using the following: (a) phenomenological reduction; (b) triangulation of data (i.e., multiple semistructured interviews, field notes, and artifacts); (c) rich and thick descriptions that were gathered during the interview process, and (d) member checking to give participants an opportunity to review my transcription of their interviews for accuracy.

Delimitations

Simon (2011) defined delimitation as the characteristics of a study that limit its boundaries and restrict the scope. The following delimitations were used for this research study: the number of participants in this study were delimited to four. I followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) recommended 3−10 participant range for a phenomenological study. This range allows a phenomenological researcher to have in-depth dialogue with participants that will provide rich and thick data to strengthen the credibility of the results. Another limitation was participant eligibility. To be eligible, participant ethnicity was African American, and these individuals worked as juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The justification for this delimitation was driven by the existing literature that is referenced in Chapter 2. This literature focuses on the experiences of African American law enforcement officers and provides elaboration on the need to explore other areas of the criminal justice system—for this study, the juvenile justice system. The scope of years worked were those who have been employed in the juvenile justice system for 5 years or less and those who are tenured and have worked for 15 years or more. The reason for this variance was to discover the essence of shared experiences amongst these specific years of employment ranges. Additionally, each participant met the minimum education requirement of holding at least a 4-year bachelor's degree to become juvenile parole and probation officers with the agency in the Pacific Northwest where I conducted this study.

Summary and Scope of Study

This study consists of five chapters. The *Introduction* is comprised of an overview of the study, problem statement, significance of the study, research questions, the scope of the study, and a definition of terms. The *Literature Review* incorporates a review of existing literature that

relates to this study, as well as reviews previously used methodological designs, means of data collection, data analysis, and provides an overall justification to persist with this study. The *Methodology* offers a description of the study's sample, the methods to be used for data analysis and the methods to be used to collect data. The *Data Analysis* will provide an assessment of the data collected, and the final chapter, *Conclusion,* includes a summary of the study, the results from the data analysis, a discussion about the findings, and suggestions for future research. In the next chapter, I will present a literature review of prior research studies that possess similar elements to the phenomenon of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the problem, provides the conceptual framework, a review of methodological literature, an analysis of methodological issues, and a critique of previous literature for similar research topics. Furthermore, this chapter provides a review of the empirical literature in three areas: (a) African American representation in the criminal justice/juvenile justice system, (b) African American perception of the criminal justice system, and (c) the experiences of African Americans working in the criminal justice system. Since minimal previous research has examined the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers, this study attempts to contribute to the literature by providing an understanding of this topic from a theoretical lens.

This chapter provides a review of the literature that is significant for understanding how African Americans describe their experiences as employees within the criminal justice system. Indeed, this literature review is organized to provide the reader with a broad overview of research that examines African Americans who are employed within the criminal/juvenile justice system's lived experiences. Due to the lack of research about juvenile parole and probation officers' experiences, a significant amount of research will focus on African American law enforcement experiences. The literature review will demonstrate the necessity for further qualitative studies to supplement the current large-scale quantitative studies that provide statistical data on the level of representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system but lacks the understanding of how this demographic describe their lived experiences involving the criminal/juvenile justice system.

Problem Statement

There is an overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system. This disproportionate amount of contact has resulted in the African American community developing a negative perception of the criminal justice system (Novak, 2012). P−O fit theory asserts that for long-term career fulfilment, an individual must have value system and organizational culture alignment with their employer (Westerman, 1997). Despite the negative perception of the criminal justice system by the African American community, people from this community choose careers within this system. This career choice seems to present opposing values system characteristics which P–O fit theory suggests needs alignment for career satisfaction. This research study explored the experiences of African Americans who have chosen to pursue and persist in juvenile justice careers.

Background Context

Juvenile parole and probation officers play a significant role within the juvenile justice system. According to Hockenberry and Puzzanchera (2017), "In 2017, probation was ordered in 69% of adjudicated runaway cases, 60% of truancy cases, 28% of curfew violations, 72% of ungovernability cases, and 51% of cases involving liquor law violations" (p. 93). Furthermore, 60% of youth offender interactions with the juvenile justice system are with their probation officers as a part of their court-ordered community supervision (Snyder & Sickmund, as cited in Schwalbe & Maschi, 2009). Despite the significant roles juvenile probation officers play in youth offenders' lives, the development of effective practices for probation officers and youth community supervision needs more consistency (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2009). Muhammad (2016) stated, "Minimal research has been conducted to investigate probation officers' decision making

and their strategies and approaches to individual youth on probation" (p. 2). Juvenile probation officers make decisions that impact youth in custody and community-based placement locations.

The literature reviewed in this chapter will show the level of overrepresentation of African Americans within the criminal justice system—including African American youth within the juvenile justice system. Juvenile probation officers' decisions have a long-lasting effect on the youth they serve. It is essential to understand what parts of their work and professional experiences influence these decisions that so significantly impact the youth. Muhammad (2016) stated, "It is important to understand whether social attitudes and cultural factors are related to officers' decision making with regard to working with juveniles in a cross-cultural context" (p. 2). Most people perceive a probation officer's job to be people-centered, mentally taxing, and ultimately quite stressful (Slate, Wells, & Johnson, 2003). However, despite this perspective, minimal research studies have focused on the professional and personal experiences of probation officers (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001). This research study explored the experiences of African American juvenile probation officers in the Pacific Northwest and understand how they describe the motivations behind their career decisions. In the next section, I will identify the research criteria that guided my search for literature reviewed in this chapter.

Literary Research Criteria

There was an extensive review of literature for this research study. The central problem to be explored is the lived experience of juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Key search terms used are as followed:

1. Employee motivation
2. Employee engagement
3. Criminal justice system

4. Juvenile justice system

5. African American Police Officer's experiences

6. African American juvenile parole and probation officer's experiences

7. Law enforcement culture

8. SIT

9. CRT

10. P–O fit theory

11. Crime demographic statistics

12. Cultural influence on decision-making

Once these key terms were decided upon, numerous online databases and libraries were used to find literature about them. The primary means used to find literature was a Pacific Northwest public library, Concordia University−Portland's online and on campus library, Google Scholar, and Concordia University−Portland's previously completed dissertation online database. I used internet blogs from academic practitioners, newspapers, and government publications to strengthen the literature found from other scholarly and peer-reviewed articles. Additionally, I attempted to find literature published within the previous 10 years. However, some of the literature reviewed was not necessarily the most current but provides an in-depth understanding that strengthens the reviewed and more recently published literature.

Conceptual Framework

In order to understanding the experiences of people who would choose a career in a system that has statistically and historically discriminated against their community, a researcher must investigate the lives of those individuals. The perception of law enforcement by the African American community categorizes law enforcement as having prejudiced policing practices, as

well as engaging in incessant racial profiling, and prone to using excessive and deadly force on people from their communities (Brunson & Gau, 2015). Indeed, it is imperative to understand the experiences of African Americans who have chosen a career in a field that has subjected their communities to a multitude of behaviors that equate to abuse of power by a more dominant culture. The following conceptual framework guided the examination of this phenomenon.

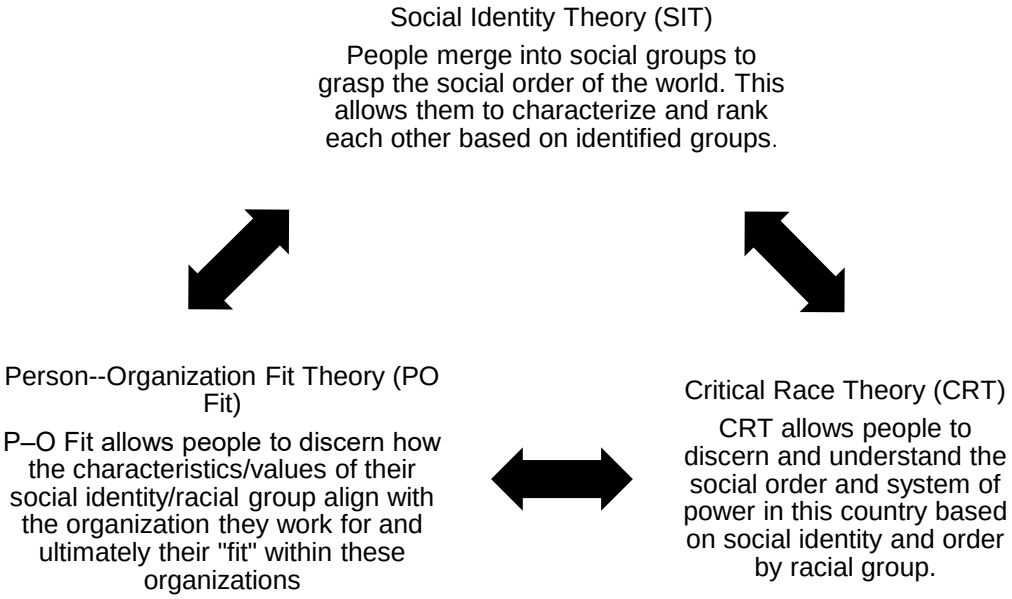

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Social Identity Theory (SIT)

According to Vinney (2018), SIT was fully developed in the late 1970s by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. Furthermore, SIT describes the cerebral procedures related to how one's social identity influences internal group behavior. Vinney (2018) suggested SIT ascended from early research in Henri Tajfel's career, which studied the way perception-based methods resulted in social stereotypes and prejudice. Understanding the groups to which people identify themselves, gives a framework into how they can interpret their P–O fit within any organization they have an

interest. Social-identity theory suggests that the groups a person belongs to establishes a level of that person's concept of self (Turner & Tajfel, 1986).

SIT focuses on a three-process approach to gaining understanding about what the theory communicates. The first process emphasizes social categorization. Social categorization permits people to place others in specific roles to comprehend and classify them (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). The method of social categorization allows people to be defined based on the foundation of the groups to which they belong. People tend to define one another based on social categories more so than by individual character traits (Vinney, 2018). Social categorization permits people to reject those who do not fit within the social category to which they identify, which allows roles to be differentiated and status to be emphasized (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Indeed, the results of social categorization are people that embrace those from their category while rejecting those of different social categories and separate groups (Vinney, 2018).

The second process in SIT is social identification. This is the intrinsic assessment phase of SIT, where people determine how much to develop the traits of their categorized groups (Greene, 2018). The research of Vinney (2018) suggested that socially identifying with a group emphasizes the need for people to conduct themselves the way they think other group associates would behave. A person's social identity can be the product of a relationship the person maintains with an employer, workout group, people within the same socioeconomic status, race, and any other organization where specific characteristics allow differentiation from other groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Furthermore, these categorical distinctions of the in-group permit a division to develop with all who do not align with the in-group's distinctions (Hamamura, 2017). In this process of differentiation, people become passionately devoted to their group membership and invest emotionally in the group's identity (Vinney, 2018).

The third process of SIT is social comparison. Social comparison permits one group to place itself in a more constructive realm while placing others in a derogatory and undesirable one (Greene, 2018). This favoritism towards a person's in-group easily allows prejudice to develop for out-groups. In 2017, Hamamura emphasized how being comparative this way can be hugely detrimental because in-groups typically attempt to grow their self-image by emphasizing the harmful characteristics of those in out-groups. Social comparison is a derivative of racial bias and prejudice beliefs (Turner & Tajfel, 1986).

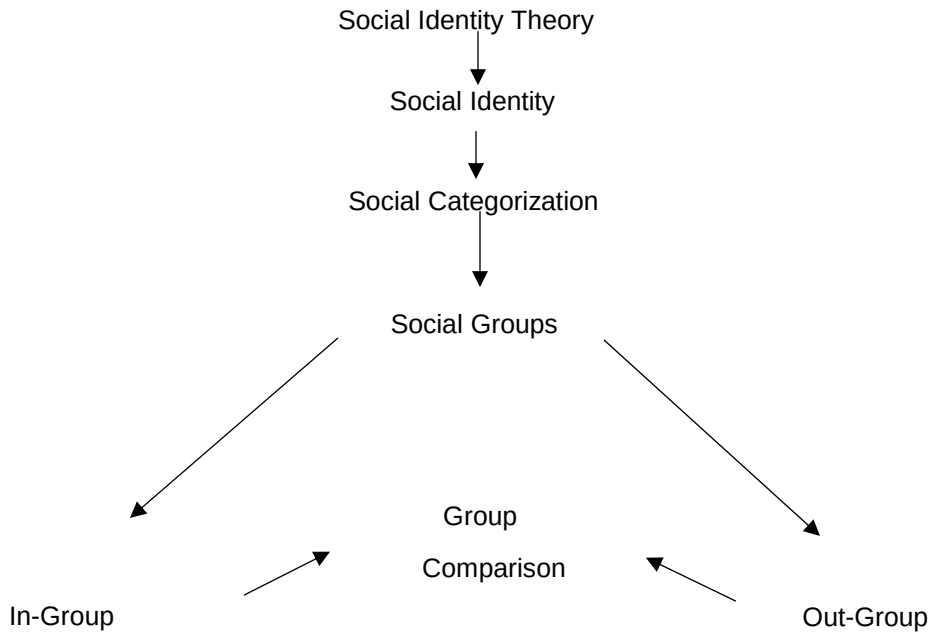

Figure 2. Social identity theory.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Developed in the 1970s, CRT stemmed from Derrick Bell and other law practitioners recognizing that critical legal studies failed to recognize the impact race had on laws and the legal system. Sustained displeasure with the failing critical legal studies ideology, numerous lawyers withdrew from this group and created CRT in 1989, which first gained traction in

American law schools that sought to unite issues about oppression, and racism to address racial authority disparity across the country (Martinez, 2014). Indeed, CRT arose as the civil rights movement began to fade. This new theory was a means to understand and assess the developing ideology of institutional racism with American citizens who appeared weary of hearing and speaking about race relations (Delgado, Harris, & Stenfacic, 2001).

The civil rights movement emphasized systematic racial gains for African Americans, while CRT encourages the directive to include the equality theory, and the unbiased principles of the constitution when discussing and interpreting the law (Delgado et al., 2001). The framework of CRT outlines the premise that American laws and the dominant White cultural social order are formed to preserve White privilege, systemic power, and a financial hierarchy that allows Whites to remain at the top of the political, legal and social systems in the U.S. These entities support the direct and indirect mistreatment of people of color, social disdain of their culture, and a climate of overall abuse of people of color (Bitz, 2004). In this study, I examined a subset of African Americans—that is, a sample of African American juvenile justice system employees in the Pacific Northwest—to explore their experiences and understand their social identity as it pertains to their work in the juvenile justice system where Whites hold the majority of executive-level positions and hold the decision-making power (Highsmith, 1996). As asserted in Figure 3, CRT strengthens the ideology that systems like the criminal justice system have historically infused African Americans with beliefs that they are less valuable than persons in the White in-group. I worked in this study to understand the experiences African Americans who chose to work as employees within a system that: (a) reflects opposing cultural characteristics than the African American community, (b) supports the marginalization of African American youth, and

(c) systematically uses power to oppress members of African American communities (Highsmith, 1996).

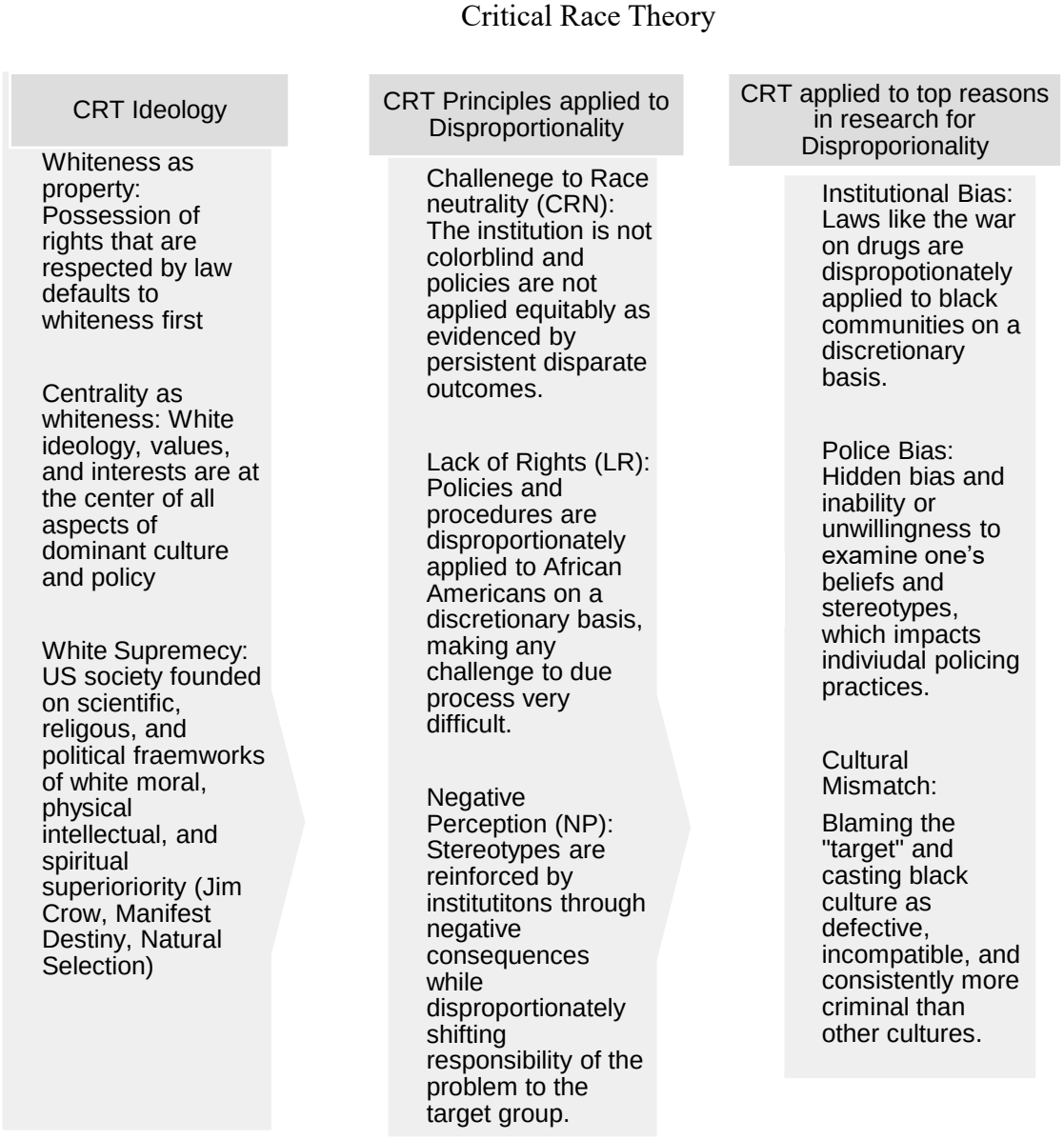

Figure 3. CRT Model. Adapted from "Applied Critical Race Theory Models: Solution Focused Reframe," by M. Payne, 2019, Retrieved from (https://www.slideshare.net/macheop/crt-model83-solution-focused-11699223). Copyright [2011] by M. Payne.

Person–Organization Fit Theory (P–O fit)

Person−organization fit theory encompasses the scope of compatibility between organizations and the people employed there (Kristof, 1996). Furthermore, P–O fit is a developing subset that expands upon the ideology of P–O fit to include organizational function and culture. P–O fit assumes that every employee pursues achievement, sustainment, and congruent ethics with a precise environmental element—that is, the person's current organizational employer (Westerman, 1997). P–O fit occurs when the employee displays the aptitude to meet the employer workload demand, and the organization fulfils the employee's values, goals, and interests (Kristoff, 1996). Indeed, the intrinsic values a person holds are characteristics to which they establish their organizational fit (Sutarjo, 2011). Additionally, the fit a person has with an organization correlates with the level in which the organization and the person's character, goals, and ethics align (van Vianen, De Pater, & Van Dijk, 2007).

A potential employee assessing value similarity during the recruitment and interview process to develop perceptions of fit can potentially allow them to remove themselves from the job selection process if there is a perceived misalignment between their value system and that of the potential employer (Morley, 2007). P−O fit was a useful theoretical approach as I attempted to explore the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers and understand if their value system aligned with their juvenile justice employer's ethical makeup, to distinguish if there was a fit. Furthermore, the P–O fit theory outlines what the positive outcomes are for having the appropriate person−organizational values system alignment.

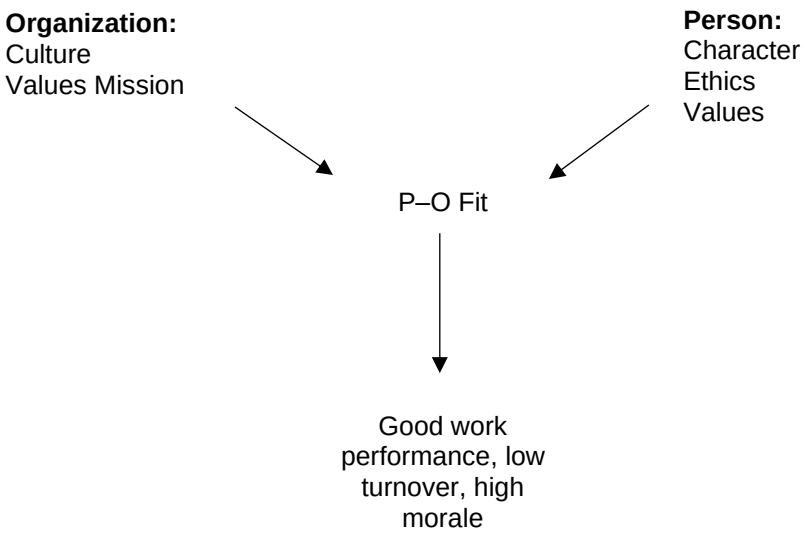

Figure 4. P-O fit theory.

Critical Concepts

I will emphasize three concepts that will help the reader further understand the theories used in this study: African American social identity, juvenile parole and probation social identity, and what the results are when these two in-groups integrate within the context of career choice. I sought to understand what components of African American prior experiences motivated them to pursue careers with a social group—juvenile justice system—that has defining characteristics that are mainly opposing of their respective groups. In-group preference can yield undesirable consequences, from bias and stereotypical labels to institutional racism and sexism (Vinney, 2018). In the review of research literature below, I present previous studies about African American police experiences to examine the level in which law enforcement in-group preference has negatively impacted the perceptions of how African American police describes their experiences on the job.

Review of Research Literature

Overrepresentation and Systemic Injustice

Inequitable racial representation in the criminal justice system is well-documented (Novak, 2012). All over the world, different countries have penal systems that incarcerate an inequitable number of minority men and women (Bosworth, 2000). Indeed, in the U.S. African Americans are 5.1 times more likely than White people to be imprisoned in the criminal justice system (Nellis, 2016). Furthermore, African American men are imprisoned in state prisons and federally, at six times the frequency of White men (Carson, 2014). African Americans are only 13% of America's population but account for 40% of the country's prisoner population (Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). One in three Black men are imprisoned while only one in 17 White males face imprisonment in the American prison system (Bonczar, 2003). Bolton and Feagin (2004) asserted, "In this still-racist United States, Black Americans get an education, secure a job, and raise a family while facing a lifetime of individual and institutionalized discrimination that is created and maintained by large numbers of White Americans, in towns and cities across the United States" (p. 6). To further add context to this assertion, one in six Hispanic males will face imprisonment, and for females born after 2001, 5.6% of African Americans will face prison, compared to 2.2% of Hispanic females, and 0.9% of White females (Bonczar, 2003).

There were 1,217 deadly law enforcement shootings entered in the federal database for 2010–2012 (Gabrielson, Jones, & Sagara, 2014). This resulted in a fatality rate of 31.17 per 1,000,000 for African American males ages 15–19, while the corresponding fatality rate for White males ages 15–19 was 1.47 per 1,000,000. More than one additional Caucasian male fatality at the hands of law enforcement per week would need to occur to equal the number of

African American male fatalities in the U.S. (Gabrielson et al., 2014). In the 2015 FBI Supplementary Homicide Report, 31.8% of individuals shot by the law enforcement were African American, a percentage of more than 2.5 times the 13.2% of African Americans in the general population (Mullainathan, 2015)

Criminal acts that garner the most notoriety from news outlets, policy advisors, and politicians are often crimes such as homicide, theft, and rape. These are the exact crimes for which African Americans are detained at a disproportionately high rate (Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 2014). Furthermore, biased data analysis and unjust accounts of inner-city violent crimes have led to the development of biased policing procedures and agendas in law enforcement agencies across the country (Braga & Brunson, 2015). Previous studies have revealed that most crimes committed in the Black community are not violent crimes. In fact, a 2009 study of all African American state inmates by the National Corrections Reporting Program found that 64% of all African American committed crimes are nonviolent offenses ("Culture", n.d.). These statistics are further explained in Table 2 ("Culture", n.d.).

Table 2

Black Prisoner Percentages by Offense

Offense	Black Inmates	All Inmates
Drug	21.1%	17.8%
Robbery	18.9%	13.6%
Property/a	15.2%	19.2%
Murder/b	14.4%	13.1%
Assault	10%	10.1%
Public-order/c	8%	8.9%
Rape	3.9%	5%
Other sexual assault	3.9%	7.3%
Other violent	2.7%	2.9%
Manslaughter	1.1%	1.2%
Other/unspecified/d	0.8%	1%
Total	100%	100%

Note. Estimated percentage of sentenced prisoners under state jurisdiction, by offense, December 31, 2009. a/ includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, fraud, and others; b/ includes non-negligent manslaughter c/ includes weapons, drunk driving, court offenses, commercialized vice, morals; d/ includes juvenile offense and other unspecified categories. Black crime statistics. Reprinted from "Culture." (n.d.).

Pacific Northwest African American criminal justice. The focus of this study is on the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest, so understanding the data on African Americans in the criminal justice system can strengthen the context of participant experiences who are employed by the criminal justice system. African Americans account for only 1.8% of the state's population where this study took place, yet they make up 9% of the inmate population. For every 1,000 African American inhabitants, roughly 21 are in the prison system (Parks, 2016). In this state's most populous county, African Americans are four times more likely than Whites to be detained for minor drug offenses, 2.6 times more likely to be arrested for prostitution connected crimes, and eight times more likely to be arrested for robbery (Schrag, 2017). White persons are also 4.2 times less likely to be referred to the

district attorney's office for a case review and 4.1 times less likely to have a case accepted for prosecution than African Americans. In one of the largest counties in the state, African American residents comprise of roughly 5% of the population but comprise of 27% of the inmate population (Parks, 2016).

African American juveniles. The prior section highlighted the disproportionate representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system, and in this next section, I review juvenile justice statistics for further context concerning the representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system. According to Michaels (2017), in the U.S. juvenile justice system, African Americans are just as likely to experience overrepresentation and marginalization as they are in the adult system. Indeed, African American youth are five times as likely to be detained as their White counterparts (Michaels, 2017). The national African American youth detainment rate is 433 per 100,000, but only 86 per 100,000 for their White counterparts. The racial disproportion amongst incarcerated Black and White youth has risen over 20% since 2001 ("Black Children," 2017). Furthermore, African American youth account for only 16% of the total youth population in America, yet total 44% of the total youth detained in America (Michaels, 2017).

In 2011, in the state where this study was conducted White youth ages 10–17 accounted for 72 court referrals for every 1000 out of that age demographic. That number increased to 183 per 1000, for African American youth (Feyerherm, 2012). There is a statute in Pacific Northwest state where this study was conducted that determined mandatory minimum sentences for juvenile offenders charged with certain violent crimes. The measure applies to all youth who are 15 or older, convicted of specific crimes, and requires that they are tried as adults. The sentencing judge in a case under this statute cannot give a sentence lesser than what is predetermined

("Measure" n.d.). According to an article by Weiber (2019), this statute took the oversight from judges and gave it to prosecutors, who now can determine whether to charge a youth under this statute. Additionally, youth charged under this law are not eligible for early release. Furthermore, once a youth is convicted, a sentence cannot be reduced for good behavior. There have been over 1200 youth offenders sentenced under this measure since its inception (Weiber, 2019). Additionally, White youth are charged three times less frequently than African American youth under this statute (Phillips-Robbins & Scissors, 2018).

In addition, White youth are detained and placed in juvenile facilities in eight out of every 100 criminally delinquent cases, compared to 17 out of every 100 for African Americans (Feyerherm, 2012). Due to the disparities that exist in the juvenile system as a result of this measure, as of April 2019, the Pacific Northwest state's senate where this study took place, passed a bill to reform this statute. According to Weiber (2015), this bill will give judge's the authority to decide if youth ages 15–18 should be charged as an adult for violent crimes that fall under this statute. This data is significant because of the context it provides on the experience of African Americans within the juvenile justice system.

African American perception of criminal justice system. A recent Pew Research Center survey found nine out of 10 African Americans stated African Americans are typically treated more unjustly by the criminal justice system than their White counterparts (Gramlich, 2019). Furthermore, African American perceive there is more bias in the criminal justice system than any other establishment (Anderson, 2014). Another recent survey conducted by PEW Research Center discovered seven in 10 African Americans feel that African Americans in their communities were more unfairly treated by law enforcement and the court system than Whites (Anderson, 2014). African Americans are also more likely than Whites to have detailed

disparaging narratives concerning officer conduct, especially about interactions within their community (Gramlich, 2019).

A study conducted by Taylor (2010) utilized in-person interviews of 15 African American males ages 18 and over in Los Angeles, California to collect data and explore the experiences African American males have with law enforcement encounters. Despite 90% of the participants' last interaction with law enforcement being only a minor traffic or window tint violation, 11 out of 15 participants had a very negative perception of law enforcement in Los Angeles (Taylor, 2010). Furthermore, none of the participants described having a constructive interaction with Los Angeles law enforcement (Taylor, 2010). This coincides with a 2013 PEW Research Center survey of over 4300 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia that found nearly one quarter of the African American males aged 18–34 surveyed stated they had been unjustly treated by law enforcement within the past month (Anderson, 2014).

The behavior of law enforcement when confronting perceived concerns in a low-income minority community changes when confronting potential criminal actions in White middle-class neighborhoods (Brunson & Miller, 2006). Over 82% of African Americans believe law enforcement in their communities are more likely to use lethal force against their people than Whites. This is compared to 66% of African Americans living in non-African American majority communities (Swanson, 2016). Probable justifications for this are individual encounters with law enforcement, observation of police brutality/abuse of power, or word-of-mouth communications from friends and family about a physical encounter they had with law enforcement. This leads to individuals bound by these contexts to form negative perceptions about law enforcement (Jones-Brown, 2000). A study conducted by Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, and Knight (2011) of 561 African

American youth ages 14–18 from the juvenile court system in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Phoenix, Arizona, discovered that African American youth living in low-income communities—who have not explored their ethnic social group characteristics, compared to those who have had opportunities to learn and explore their cultural identity—believed nearly all law enforcement contact arises from unjust racial profiling, and unwarranted arrests (Lee, Steinberg, Piquero, & Knight, 2011).

Previous research has explored the distrust of law enforcement in African American communities (Newport, 2014). In fact, a 2017 Gallup poll found 61% of Whites have confidence in law enforcement officers, while only 30% of African Americans hold that same confidence. (Norman, 2017). Gallup polls are conducted by telephone interview using a random sampling method with over 1000 adults age 18 or older living in all 50 American states and the District of Columbia. The sample in this poll included a quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within a region (Norman, 2017).

Next, I gathered data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics about African American perceptions of law enforcement. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005), nearly 30% of African Americans believed their experiences with law enforcement officers were not necessary and that an irrational level of force was used. The perceived excessive amount of patrolling is a major contributing factor of community members' lack of trust toward law enforcement. The absence of law enforcement creating an environment where people are made to feel safe, and the apathetic responses to criminal behavior have also been found to contribute to the lack of trust (Warren, 2010).

One of the largest surveys ever completed on the topic of police relations with African American communities was by the Pew Research Center in 2017. The 2017 survey consisted of a nationally representative sample of nearly 8,000 law enforcement officers from departments with at least 100 officers. The results revealed that African American law enforcement officers believe the criminal justice system needs improvements to grant equal rights to African Americans (Morin, Parker, Stepler, & Mercer, 2017). Sixty-nine percent of the African Americans officers held this belief compared to only 6% of White officers (Morin et al., 2017). Additionally, 69% of the African American officers believed that protests that follow a deadly encounter between law enforcement and African American citizens are motivated to some extent by the desire to hold law enforcement accountable, compared to 27% of White officers (Morin et al., 2017). Furthermore, 57% of African American officers believe deadly encounters between African Americans and law enforcement demonstrates signs of a more significant problem with the system, compared to 27% of White officers (Morin et al., 2017).

African American law enforcement workers' experiences. There are over 100,000 African American law enforcement officers employed across the U.S. This accounts for 13.8% of the police force across the country ("Police officer", n.d.). According to Wilson, Wilson, and Thou (2015), this percentage reflects larger cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta having a larger African American police officer presence. Nearly half the law enforcement offices across the country employ 10 African American Officers or fewer (Wilson et al., 2015). With the total African American population in the U.S. currently at 13%, nearly half the police department offices across the country employ a limited number of African Americans. Addtionally, the total prison population for African Americans is 40%, so a need

exists to examine African American law enforcement officers' perception of their jobs and their lived experiences (Wilson et al., 2015; Guerino et al., 2012).

Indeed, previous research has focused on the experience of African Americans who choose law enforcement as a profession. For example, Dulaney (1996) discovered African American law enforcement officers of both genders across the U.S. choose their careers for one of three motives: (a) they want to implement culturally sensitive rules while improving the structure of the system from within, (b) career stability, and (c) never losing their identity as an African American first and a law enforcement officer second. They have confidence that in the role of a law enforcement officer, they can be the bridge between African Americans and White people. With Dulaney's (1996) research being 23 years old, I sought more recent studies to further examine the experiences of African American law enforcement officers, and according to a study conducted by Wilson et al. (2015), over 70% of African American law enforcement officers felt racial profiling was disregarded by their agencies. Wilson et al.'s, (2015) study consisted of over 100 African American police officers representing both genders across the northeastern part of the U.S. Another study conducted by Greene (2018) found that 92% of the African American law enforcement officer participants supported the premise that African Americans are racially profiled more than other ethnicities. The same percentage of participants reported themselves as having been racially profiled by law enforcement at some point in their lives. Greene's (2015) study consisted of both male and female African American officers from three counties in the state of Missouri. In the present research, I sought to understand if African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest have similar experiences and motivations as the participants in Dulaney's (1996), Wilson et al.'s (2015), and Greene's (2018) research.

In the book, *Black in Blue: African-American Police Officers and Racism*, Bolton and Feagin (2004) explored the accounts of 50 African American law enforcement officers of both male and female gender in 16 different agencies across the southeastern and southwestern regions of the U.S. When describing their experiences, the officers in this study frequently used the term "we" throughout the conversations. Bolton and Feagin (2004) said:

> Twenty-two of these officers explicitly discuss their experiences with White police officers while they were growing up. These often negative experiences have contributed to their understanding of the racialized place of African Americans in the United States, and of the relationship between Black Americans and a frequently racist criminal justice system. (p. 36)

Law enforcement culture typically consists of a pressurized atmosphere where the expectation for minority officers to conform to White officer determined cultural norms are very high (Bolton & Feagin, 2004). As some African American officers conform, and some do not, this leads to poor interracial relations among many African American law enforcement officers. Bolton and Feagin (2004) claimed:

> Highly conforming Black officers guard their position from other Black officers and often hold back on critiques of discriminatory White officers and department policies. In this way, racial oppression is translated so that it also affects some interpersonal relationships even among Black officers' themselves. (pp. 114–115)

Twenty-five of the 50 officers communicated blatant and direct interactions where White people used racist statements when referencing them or other African Americans (Bolton & Feagin, 2004). There was a comfort level to White officer's use of racist jokes. According to Bolton and Feagin (2004), "numerous White officers are comfortable with racist talk, if

nowadays mostly out of the hearing of Black officers. They do not seem to care that their joking hurts Black officers" (p. 101). The accounts presented by Bolton and Feagin (2004) provided evidence of the culture of racism that exists in law enforcement agencies in the southeastern and southwestern regions of the U.S. Indeed, African American law enforcement officers must routinely endure these conditions while performing their job duties.

In this study, I sought to understand the lived experience of African Americans who choose careers within the juvenile justice system. Understanding the statistical data involving the overrepresentation of African American adults and juveniles in the criminal system offers a background context of the inequitable treatment by the criminal justice system of the participants of this study's communities. Furthermore, this is especially significant when exploring the lived experience of the participants of this study, as the data reviewed highlights a broad range of experiences African Americans face as civilians and when employed as police officers within the criminal justice system. I sought to explore the lived experiences of African Americans who choose careers within the juvenile justice system. The next section highlights how I defined motivation because subquestion 1 of this study sought to understand the participants' described experiences that motivated them to pursue juvenile justice careers.

Employee Motivation

There are numerous ways for one to define motivation (Riedle, 2015). The word is a derivative of the word *motive*, and is defined as the needs, interests, and ultimately that which drives an individual (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012). Although this is the explicit definition that was used in the context of this study, there are many influences that drive the definition. Chaudhary and Sharma (2012) stated, "An individual's motivation is influenced by biological, intellectual, social, and emotional factors. Motivation is multifaceted" (p. 30). This study used

the term in the context of understanding how the participants in this study described their experiences and whether any aspects of these experiences described motivating factors for their career choice. Chaudhary and Sharma (2012) referenced a three-step process for employee motivation that guided how motivation was used in this study: (a) the employee feels valued and appreciated, (b) there is an incentive for the employee to want to meet the job's requirements, and (c) goal attainment and fulfilment. According to a study by Salary (2019), the factors that motivate an individual's career choice, workplace behavior, and retention can be work fulfillment, success, employee collaboration, financial benefits, and perceived respect from the organization's leadership. This study sought to explore the Pacific Northwest's African American juvenile parole and probation officer's experiences and discern if there are similarities in career and employment motivations.

In the next section, I present a methodological review of research designs employed in past studies that have a similar research focus as this present study. The review provides a framework for a multileveled approach to understanding the past studies' theoretical frameworks, research designs, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Additionally, after this review I had the knowledge to determine the best course of action for the data collection and data analysis method that should be used in my study. Following this review of methodological issues, I will highlight methodological issues I was cognizant of as the study progressed.

Review of Methodological Literature

In this section, I provide a review of the research designs that were most prevalent in the literature as I researched this specific topic. I will provide a summary and review of qualitative and quantitative studies that explore and investigate employee motivation, engagement, and

other related research subject matters. Furthermore, I will also review the phenomenological research design through the context of research studies with similar phenomena.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research emphasizes understanding a research problem by taking a person-centered approach where the study's participants are given a voice (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). The purpose of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of the social reality of study participants within the realm of a specific research problem from the people that live it and experience it (McLeod, 2017). This research approach is used to gain an understanding of an individual's principles, experiences, opinions, actions, decisions, and connections (Pathak et al., 2013). There are multiple methods for qualitative researchers to use to explore how individuals witness their realities and subsequently, how they behave and make decisions within these realities (McLeod, 2017). The next subsections provide a summary and review of the following qualitative research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) case study, and (c) grounded theory.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is referred to as an educational qualitative research design and is the study of the lived experience of human beings (Creswell, 2018; van Manen & Adams, 2010). This research method is a means to investigate the way a set of people experience the world. A phenomenological researcher's focus is on interpreting the social and psychological phenomena based on the individuals involved (Kruger, 1999). Phenomenology—deriving from the Greek term φαινόμενον, phainómenon—has many meanings, one being "apparition or manifestation" (Litchman, 2006). Phenomenology can be defined as the explanation of being and mindfulness based off an observable phenomenon (Litchman, 2006). The central purpose of phenomenology is to condense the lived experiences of people within a phenomenon to an account of a universal essence, which allows researchers to classify the phenomenon (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) described *essence* as the central underlying meaning of participant experiences. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research methodology that is used to study a phenomenon based on a group of individual's lived experience, so using a phenomenological design to answer research questions about the essence of a study's participant lived experiences is most appropriate (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, Simon and Goes (2011) referenced that phenomenological study research questions typically take similar forms of the following questions, "(a) What are the lived experiences of (a group) around (a specific phenomenon) or (b) What is the meaning and structures that are drawn from the lived experience of (a specific phenomenon) by (people experiencing the phenomenon)" (p. 2). Phenomenological studies usually include in-person discussions with the participants to directly capture information to discern and classify the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological research of employee motivation. A doctoral level phenomenological study conducted by Solomon (2013) sought to understand the phenomenon of African Americans being near the highest percentage of civil service workers in the U.S. while being severely underrepresented in upper management roles. The study analyzed the motivation and achievement tactics of African Americans who held jobs in upper level leadership of the government (Solomon, 2013). Previous research of this topic focused on quantitative research designs which lacked understanding of the lived experience of African Americans in these upper level positions, what their motivations are, and ultimately what had led to their effective integration (Choi, 2011). The results of this phenomenological research disclosed that African Americans in upper level leadership roles were motivated by their persistence, religious beliefs, and having a mentor to guide them through difficult times. The success strategies discovered

from this study included working extremely hard, being mentored by the right person, and interacting with as many people as possible (Solomon, 2013).

Another phenomenological study by Edwards-Lankford (2018) focused on the motivational factors of African American females to pursue entrepreneurship after leaving a corporate environment. The study examined the lived experience of the participants to understand and classify the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits that impacted their choice to change careers and focus on entrepreneurship (Edwards-Lankford, 2018). Using a purposive sampling method, Edwards-Lankford (2018) interviewed 12 African American female entrepreneurs and after the data analysis, concluded both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influenced their motivation to change careers. These factors include inspiring their communities, and relatives. The participants also concluded the lack of control over their work time heavily influenced their desire to change careers (Edwards-Lankford, 2018).

In another phenomenological study, Goodman (2016) sought to understand how the lived experiences of African Americans influence the formulation of perceptions of African American law enforcement officers as a result of their interactions with officers. Using a purposive sampling method, Goodrum (2016) interviewed 12 African Americans over the age of 18, consisting of both female and male participants. Thematic coding was used to discover that the majority of the participants' perceptions of African American law enforcement officers were shaped as an outcome of direct negative interactions with law enforcement (Goodrum, 2016). This study's findings also showed how the participants felt that there is a benefit with having African Americans being in law enforcement, due to perceived cultural familiarity. However, the participants also thought there is a lack of consistency with African American officers in building relationships with members of their communities, which impacts how perceptions of all

African American officers are formed (Goodrum, 2016). Eleven of the 12 interviewed participants expressed how African American officers felt that White police officers are not empathetic towards African Americans (Goodrum, 2016).

The three phenomenological studies presented in this section sought to understand the lived experience of African Americans. Understanding a population's experience, and how they interpret the world around them are insights gathered from reviewing these phenomenological studies. In the next section, I will review similar topics through the lens of a case study to assess the advantages of this methodological design.

Case study research on employee motivation. The case study methodology permits the researcher close data examination within a bound context (Zainal, 2007). Yin (2003) suggested a case study methodology should be considered when doing the following:

> (a) when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 4)

Case studies are designed to discover and, as a research method, examine a current real-life phenomenon through a comprehensive contextual analysis of a limited quantity of events, circumstances, and the relationship they have with each other (Zainal, 2007). Once a researcher has decided to use case study as their research design, it is paramount to next determine the *type* of case study to be implemented (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study types include: (a) *explanatory*, which is used to seek the answer to a question that attempts to clarify the assumed causal relations in real-life interventions that are too multifaceted for the survey or experimental

methods; (b) *exploratory*, which is used to discover circumstances where the intervention being assessed has no distinct set of outcomes; (c) *descriptive*, which is used to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it happened; and (d) *multiple case*, which is used to examine the differences between multiple cases in order to establish similarities and differences across cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In a multiple case study design by Basham (2013), there was an exploration of the motivation strategies used by African American general officers in the U.S Army. The researcher in this study chose this research design because the focus was not on the individual but on the motivational factors of African American general officers who were able to progress up the Army promotion system (Basham, 2013). Using a sample size of 20 African American general officers, phone interviews were conducted as a data collection method. Basham's (2013) findings revealed the challenge of taking on hard jobs, having peak performance in each job, and developing positive relationships with peers and superior officers were motivational factors that helped the participants navigate the promotion system in the U.S. Army (Basham, 2013).

A single descriptive case study by Nandi (2019) sought to understand what aspects of the probation officer role impacts their work engagement levels. Using employee engagement, job demands, and job resources as the phenomena to be understood, the researcher used surveys, in-person interviews, and conducted observations as data collection methods (Nandi, 2019). Twenty probation officers were interviewed and surveyed in a district in the state of Colorado. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, and the results discovered employee engagement levels are impacted by coworker rapport building, direct manager relationship, and organizational culture in its entirety (Nandi, 2019). Additionally, employee motivation was also impacted by the emotional stress of hearing significant trauma-stories, meeting contradictory court requirements,

and attending to the variety of the public's needs as employees in people-centered public service agencies (Nandi, 2019).

An exploratory case study by Banh (2017) explored the motivation levels of engineers with 15 or more years of experience working for aerospace companies in southern California. Using a snowball sampling method to recruit participants for the study, data was collected through in person and phone interviews from 18 engineers with at least an undergraduate education (Banh, 2017). The results revealed having new and challenging assignments, support from leadership, a positive company culture, open communication, and opportunity to demonstrate skills all influence the motivational levels of the engineer participants in this study (Banh, 2017). According to Banh's (2017) findings, organizational leaders' abilities to provide the opportunities above were highly important to improving the motivation levels of the participants in Banh's (2017) case study. The preceding reviews provided an examination of three different case study approaches that sought to explore, describe, and understand their employee motivation/engagement related topics.

The knowledge gathered about the benefits of performing this type of study was informative to the analysis of the approach used in this study. The sampling methods, data collection methods, and findings were useful because as I pursued research on a similar topic, the myriad of ways past methodological designs were used to discover their findings, broadened my perspective as I sought to establish the design of this study. In the next section, I provide a review of grounded theory design and assess its advantages and disadvantages.

Grounded theory. The grounded theory methodology was first introduced in the 1967 book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* authored by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. This book is considered by many sociology researchers to be a response to the concerns of the

positivistic methodological designs in sociology (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). A primary point of interest for the book's creation was to offer a "legitimate" design for doing qualitative research (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). During the era of the book's creation, much of theory development for a research study was completed before collecting and analyzing data. Glaser and Strauss argued for an alternate method, one that encompassed theory development in a way that is connected to the data collection and analysis process. This was the foundation for the introduction of grounded theory (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Grounded theory provides an organized yet flexible guideline for data collection and analysis for theory development, which includes conceptualizations of important problems that individuals experience (Ivascu, Izvercian, & Potra, 2016). Consisting of constant comparative analysis, grounded theory encompasses what is called "iteration," which is the researcher entering in and out of the data collection and analysis process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This analysis process permits the researcher to begin theory development, followed by the theoretical sampling of participants relating to the research questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Grounded theory research on employee motivation. A grounded theory study by Ivascu et al. (2016) sought to examine the variables for job motivation and satisfaction in the Romanian job market for public and private sector employees. According to Ivascu et al. (2016), the following questions were the guide to their theoretical sampling:

> (a) Which are the specific variables that influence job satisfaction (in the Romanian private and public sector), (b) What is the employee's motivation for choosing and keeping a job, and (c) How can human resource management impact an organization? (p. 87)

This theoretical sample consisted of seven workers from the public sector and seven from the private sector—a total of six males and eight females—with an age range between 27 and 47, and work experience between 2 and 16 years (Ivascu et al., 2016). The findings revealed a distinction between public and private sector job motivation. Despite fewer promotional opportunities, public sector employees were dedicated to their respective fields. In contrast, private sector employees were motivated by material gains and willing to change roles for higher wages (Ivascu et al., 2016). Using interviews as a data collection method, there were ultimately six critical variables discovered to be influential to job satisfaction: (a) disturbing factors, (b) employee motivation, (c) social interaction, (d) individual employee characteristics, (e) organizational culture, and (f) employee organizational perception (Ivascu et al., 2016).

Another grounded theory study by Rivers (2018), focused on the motivations of millennials to job hop or stay with an organization. According to River (2018) the following research questions guided the development of generational theory used in the study and the theoretical sample, "(a) how do the millennials' describe their decision-making process to job-hop, and (b) how do millennials' describe their decision-making process to stay with an organization" (p. 10)? The theoretical sample consisted of 13 participants—five females and eight males—who ranged from age 21 to 36 years of age. The participants were employed in several different career fields and who lived and came from multiple different cities across the southern region of the U.S. (Rivers, 2018). Using interviews as a data collection method and a constant comparative analysis to assess the data, River's (2018) findings revealed the millennials were motivated to job hop when they were dissatisfied with their jobs and felt they had no other choice. Furthermore, professional development, and finding their long-term career purpose was both motivating factors to job hop. Comparing these dissatisfied factors to leave with the

satisfied factors that led them to stay, the results discovered salary, positive organizational culture, a flexible work schedule, and good benefits as motivating factors that led to them staying with their organizations (Rivers, 2018).

Luarca's (2017) grounded theory study explored employee and organizational related factors that affect employee vision inspiration (EVI), which is the employee's motivation to help achieve an organization's vision. Guided by the following research questions, "(a) what organizational factors affect EVI, (b) what employee-related factors affect EVI, (c) how do these factors interrelate to influence EVI, (d) what is the effect of EVI on employee performance, and (e) what is the effect of EVI on employee satisfaction," 14 employees of an unspecified organization were interviewed and constituted a theoretical sample (Luarca, 2017, p. 7). Using a comparative analysis method to assess data, Luarca (2017) developed a theory based on EVI that asserted employees and organizations must share similar values and leaders must create a strong vision to inspire their employees using this shared values system as a baseline to create a shared organizational vision. Furthermore, this study's findings revealed that organizational leaders must act as motivators to their employees to enhance satisfaction and commitment, which increases employee confidence in the organization and positively impacts EVI (Luarca, 2017).

A grounded study conducted by Kahn (1990) sought to explain the psychological circumstances in which people engage and disengage in the workplace. Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance" and personal disengagement as, "the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Additionally, Kahn used these

definitions to map the study participants' conditions of experience that influenced their personal engagement in the workplace levels. There were two studies to explore this topic. In the first, data was collected from 16 out of 22 summer camp counselors—nine men and seven women—from a camp in the West Indies. These summer camps were attended by 100 affluent families' children from American and Western European backgrounds. The researchers used the data collection instruments of observation, document analysis, self-reflection, and interviews (Kahn, 1990). The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 35 and on average, had worked there for two and a half summers (Kahn, 1990). The second study, used in-person interviews, to collect data from 16 of 45 members—10 men and six women—of an architecture firm located in the northeastern region of the U.S. (Kahn, 1990). Furthermore, these participants were all White middle-class or upper-middle-class individuals between the ages of 24 and 54 with an average age of 34.3 years and a 5.8-year average of being employed by the firm (Kahn, 1990).

Using a three-phase data analysis approach, Kahn (1990) discovered there are multiple levels of influential factors—individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup and organizational—that form people's personal engagement and disengagement. Additionally, at the intersection of these influences are where employee choices to engage or disengage during work performances are made. Kahn (1990) discovered it is in these moments of intersection that the multitude of factors listed above are significant in employee perceived P–O fit.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a type of empirical investigation that is used to examine a research problem by collecting numerical data that can be analyzed through rational and mathematical techniques (DeFranzo, 2011; Surbhi, 2018). It is used when a researcher seeks to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables to determine if one

influences the other (Robinson, 2016). Indeed, it is a research design that uses mathematical and computational analysis techniques to examine variables (Surbhi, 2018). In the subsections below, I provide a review of selected quantitative research studies.

Comparative. Using a comparative research design, a study by Shaw (2007) examined the motivational factors of Eligibility Workers and Technicians to pursue public sector careers in two southern California organizations. Ninety-two eligibility workers from a Los Angeles (LA) public organization and 35 eligibility technicians from a Riverside public organization were survey eligible because their employer—a public sector agency—and job title fit within the Shaw's (2007) sampling criteria. Of the 92 employees eligible for survey participation in the LA-based public agency, 66 completed the survey, which is a 71% survey response rate. Thirty-three of the 35 Riverside public agency eligible employees completed the survey, which is a 94% response rate. According to Shaw (2007), these percentages met her desired 60%–70% response rate to strengthen the validity of the results. Numerous data analysis techniques were used on the collected data, including a descriptive analysis of frequency, and Pearson product-moment correlation.

According to Shaw (2007), The LA-based organization's ANOVA data revealed outcomes for the comparisons of age to public service years of employment, with an *F* value of 1.142 and compared to the critical value of 2.93; subsequent results revealed no significant difference. The comparison of age to gender results were attained in a frequency value of .480 and compared to the same critical value of 2.93. This resulted in no significance (Shaw, 2007).

According to Shaw (2007), The Riverside organization's ANOVA data revealed outcomes for the same variables as the LA based organization. For the comparisons of age to public service employment years, an *F* value of 9.956 was compared to the critical value of 2.75,

which resulted in a significant difference between age and public service years of employment, which ultimately means the age range of employees in the public sector varies (Shaw, 2007). The comparison of age to gender with an *F* value of 8.633 and compared to the critical value of 2.75 also revealed outcomes that suggest a significant difference between age and gender. The results from this analysis suggested there is a difference in the age range of those who work in the public sector, and how these age ranges vary by gender (Shaw, 2007). The results of this study outline the public sector as a viable career option for those who seek career stability, great benefits, and value salary on some level (Shaw, 2007).

Nonexperimental. In a nonexperimental quantitative study by Robinson (2016), there was an examination of the differences in employee motivation and unity based on their supervisor demonstrating servant or non-servant leadership. Using nonprobability and purposive sampling, the sample size of 155 total study participants was formalized through calculated G*power 3.1.9.2 (Faul, Edrfelder, Land, & Buchner, 2009, as cited in Robinson, 2016). These participants were U.S. employees that ranged in age from 25 to 65 and were found through the use of social media platforms. According to Robinson (2016), no specific organization was pinpointed because servant leadership can be infused into any organization. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) analysis and discriminant analysis were used to explore the data collected from an online survey. This survey encompassed questions about servant leadership, dynamics of a team, group unity, and an instrument to measure employee motivation (Robinson, 2016). The MANOVA results revealed there is a significant difference between survey participants who believed they had a servant leader as a supervisor and those who believed they had a non-servant leader supervisor (Robinson, 2016). Furthermore, employee

motivation and group unity were significantly higher for participants who believed they had a servant leader supervisor. According to Robinson, (2016):

> Examination of each individual dependent variable showed that there was a statistically significant difference between members of a servant leader group (M = 4.31, SD = 0.53) versus a non-servant leader group (M = 3.77, SD = 0.65), $F(1, 156) = 24.69$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta 2 = .14$. (p. 60)

The discriminate analysis discovered group unity provided more of a contribution to predicting servant leadership than employee motivation (Robinson, 2016).

The studies I have reviewed in this section highlight the research designs, data collection and analysis methods of different methodologies. Developing a strong methodological framework requires a baseline of understanding of the different designs that have been used in similar studies. This assisted me as I identified the most appropriate design for my research topic. Furthermore, developing a good research idea begins with selecting a topic, problem or area of interest, and within that, a paradigm (Mason, 1996). A paradigm is a person's thinking patterns. It is the act of submitting to a certain viewpoint (Stanage, 1987). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described it as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (p. 157). A researcher's methodology is based on the epistemology, which guides the research study of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). While very important, the researcher should not be constrained by their epistemology. However, the researcher's research design must guide her or his readers understanding of how data was attained (Long, 2014). The methodology exemplifies philosophical assumptions and also directs the selection of research methods (Long, 2014). This study utilized the following data collection and analysis processes to better understand the phenomenon: (a) semistructured interviews, field notes, and artifacts were used to gather data;

(b) a thorough analysis of these data sources was completed using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti (2020); and (c) a gained understanding of the essence emerged from the described experiences of the participants. The data collection and analysis process will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this study. The next section explains the rationale for the chosen methodology for this research study.

Chosen Methodology Justification

According to Miner-Romanoff (2012), criminal justice related studies have typically focused on quantitative research designs because they reveal statistics and facts that display specific crime data amongst the variety of demographics within a population that politicians and law enforcement can use to create policies and legislation. In fact, only between 5% and 10% of published articles in criminal justice journals are based on qualitative research designs (Copes, Sandberg, & Tewksbury, 2015). However, qualitative research designs offer opportunities in the field of the criminal justice system to learn meaningful information that exists beyond quantitative demographical criminal statistics (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

Phenomenology can be particularly useful in crime research studies because researchers can examine individual experiences throughout the myriad of possible topics within crime studies to understand decision-making and any changes to criminal thinking (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). A researcher guided by a phenomenological design recognizes that in crime research, counting survey responses and analyzing criminal statistics alone cannot offer a valid rationale on why people make criminal decisions (Manning & Raphael, 2012). Due to the lack of previous qualitative designs relating to similar research topics as this study, and the central problem that I used to explore the lived experience of African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers, a phenomenological approach was the chosen methodology.

Review of Methodological Issues

There are numerous methodical issues that apply to the significant amount of qualitative research designs used to cover similar topics to this research study's phenomenon. The first is the nature in which findings are generalized are not as objective as when using quantitative research designs. Sampling for qualitative studies and the recollection of participant experiences may look very different from study to study, which prevents the researcher's ability to generalize results. However, although results cannot be generalized, qualitative research findings do have transferability. According to "Transferability in Qualitative Research" (n.d.):

> Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. It is important to note that you as the researcher cannot prove that the research study's findings will be applicable. Instead, your job as the researcher is to provide the evidence that it could be applicable. (para.1)

It is up to the reader to discern and judge the transferability of the findings of a qualitative research study ("Transferability in Qualitative Research, n.d.).

Another methodological issue is the researcher's ability to provide validation measures in these types of studies. This difficulty arises because it is hard to assess the level of honesty that participants in these studies will use when describing their experiences. These studies not only depend on the honesty of the participants but are they are also reliant on the coresearchers' abilities to recall memories of their experiences that relate to the topic. Therefore, the level of reliability and transferability in these studies is reliant on honest and frank dialogue from the participants and data triangulation by the researcher.

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized that another methodological issue is the skill level of the qualitative researcher, which can impact the strength of a particular study. Bradley (1993) described *understanding* as the knowledge and awareness a researcher develops throughout a research process. The level of growth a researcher gains with interviewing and data analysis over this process is associated by with the degree of success a study will have Creswell and Poth (2018).

Researcher bias is a methodological issue that had the propensity to influence the course of the qualitative studies as well. Many researchers have attempted to ensure credibility by what Merriam (2009) described as accurately capturing the participant's reality and communicating this reality appropriately. Providing rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon for readers to determine the degree their situations resemble the findings of qualitative research also improves qualitative credibility (Merriam, 2009).

Synthesis of Research Findings

As I have shown in the review of literature above, there is a large body of prior research related to the experiences of African Americans and their overrepresentation related to the criminal justice system (Greene, 2018). The review also indicates that some research relating to African American experiences and employee motivation has been completed. In fact, the qualitative studies in this literature review do well at examining their specific phenomena. However, very few of the studies located during the extensive literature search process focused on the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers. Understanding the statistical data of African American representation in the criminal justice and juvenile justice system provides much needed background knowledge to assist in the exploration of the experiences of African Americans who choose careers in the juvenile justice system.

However, there is a need to further explore juvenile parole and probation officer's experiences to understand this phenomenon more thoroughly.

The constructed conceptual framework in this study above helped guide the research, whose design and methods are outlined in the next chapter. SIT assisted the researcher in understanding how people merge into social groups to grasp the social order of the world, which allows characterization and ranking of each other based on identified groups. CRT assisted the researcher with understanding how social order and the system of power in the U.S. is based on the characteristics of social groups and how racial comparing within these groups define the country's hierarchical social order. P–O fit theory helped describe how the characteristics of the social group's persons belong to impact organizational and employment decisions and ultimately "fit" within these organizations. This study sought to understand the life experience of African Americans who pursue and persist in a career within the juvenile justice system.

African American Overrepresentation and Systemic Injustice

Much of the literature found while researching for this subtopic of the review were based on quantitative research designs. For example, a study done by Carson (2014) found African American males have higher incarceration rates than all other races for every age group in the study. In this study, African American males were 3.8 to 10.5 times more likely in each age group than White males to be incarcerated (Carson, 2014). Carson's study (2014) utilized surveys and prison counts of every inmate 17 or older in prisons across the U.S. with a sentence of more than 1 year, who were under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional officials. While quantitative studies like this one are highly important and allow for generalized findings, these studies are limited in their ability to provide a close understanding of the role the lived experiences of the African American play in individual life choices—for instance, the specific

career choice individuals or members of their family chooses to pursue. Furthermore, the qualitative research design literature investigated in this chapter mostly recommended that future studies gain further understanding and perspective about African American experiences relating to the criminal justice system (Greene, 2018).

African American Perception of Criminal Justice System

Quantitative data discovered through the literature review above revealed a very negative perception of the criminal justice system in the African American community. For example, a 2019 Pew Research Center survey consisting of nearly 1500 American participants across all 50 states with a 95% confidence level discovered 87% of African Americans believe African Americans are treated less fairly than White people by the criminal justice system compared to 61% of White people when asked the same question (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2019). Indeed, African American perceptions of the criminal justice system are associate with the experience they have with the system, the criminal narrative the media paints, and the biased criminal statistical data that is often used to justify the overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system (Braga & Brunson. 2015). A 2016 survey by the Cato Institute with over 2100 U.S. participants over the age of 18 with a 95% confidence level found 68% of White people have a favorable view of law enforcement compared to 40% of African Americans (Ekins, 2016). Additionally, 73% of African Americans feel law enforcement are too quick to use lethal force, compared to 35% of White persons (Ekins, 2016). While these quantitative studies reveal vital information about the perceptions African American have of the criminal justice system, they minimally describe how these perceptions factor into their motivations for career choice. Continued qualitative studies seeking to explore the impact and level of significance this data has on the lived experience of the African American community is

necessary to uncover the realities of their world. I next sought to understand if the statistics of African Americans in the criminal justice system and the perception of that system from African Americans align with the experiences of African Americans currently working within that system.

African American Criminal Justice Workers' Experiences

As quantitative data in the previous section revealed the unequitable treatment of African Americans by the criminal justice system and the negative perceptions African Americans have developed for said system, a review of multiple qualitative studies revealed contradictory findings for African Americans working in the criminal justice system. For example, a 2008 study by Perlow discovered the more integrated African American officers are into the subculture of their law enforcement social group, the less connected they feel to African American communities. Additionally, African Americans officers who have conformed to the ideology of *Brothers in Blue* as opposed to their African American identity and have adopted the norms and values of law enforcement leads to a disconnect between themselves and the people of their communities (Perlow, 2008). This study's findings run contrary to Dulaney's (1996) study's discovery of African American law enforcement officers career choice motivations being to not lose their identity as an African American first and a law enforcement officer second. I sought to collect data from African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest to discern if their lived experiences have similar patterns of conforming and disconnection.

Critique of Previous Research

SIT suggests that the groups a person identifies with influence their perception of themselves. Additionally, being cognizant of the characteristics of the social groups with which

one identifies gives insight into how group comparisons are made (Vinney, 2018). According to Highsmith (1996) CRT asserts that White people are the dominant social group in the U.S. with controlling interest in the political and legal systems across the country, which leads to comparisons of other racial groups. These comparisons promote stereotypes and other narratives that place the White social group on the moral high ground. This comparison leads to non-White racial groups having to decide whether to conform to the characteristics of White social groups or reject them.

P–O fit theory suggests that for a person to be happy with their career and perform well, there must be an ethical and value system alignment with that person and their organization (Kristof, 1996). Previous studies such as the 2008 study by Perlow, whose findings revealed that the more African American officers conformed to the dominant social group (i.e., law enforcement), then the less connected they were to African American communities. This understanding provides more profound insight into how conforming to a social group's characteristics to enable and strengthen P–O fit, potentially creates a level of detachment from other social groups (Perlow, 2008).

Much of the research relating to this topic fails to provide a clear understating on the lived experience of African Americans who pursue and persist in careers within the juvenile justice system. For example, and according to a research study by Muhammad (2016), "Minimal research has been conducted to investigate probation officers' decision making and their strategies and approaches to individual youth on probation" (p. 2). This research study sought to extend the research of this research topic within the context of African American juvenile parole and probation officer lived experiences.

Incidentally, past researchers have seemingly grouped all areas of criminal justice work. However, there are significant differences in police, adult parole and probation, adult corrections, juvenile parole and probation, and juvenile corrections practices. There is also a myriad of specializations within these fields that work with the same demographic but typically unbeknownst to those who do not work in the particular systems. For example, in the juvenile justice system in the Pacific Northwest where this study was conducted there are mental health counselors, culturally responsive mentors, residential program coordinators, foster care certifiers, policy analysts, and many other roles that work with juvenile offenders that present opportunities for future studies. Significant research has been completed with focuses on law enforcement, employee motivation, and statistical analysis of factors influencing and affecting African Americans in the criminal justice system. However, there is limited qualitative research about the experiences of African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers who work very closely with these youth and their families while in close custody and when out in the community. Previous studies have also failed to provide research that garners a better understanding of the significance of these experiences on their motivations to choose and persist in careers within the juvenile justice system. In fact, according to O'Donnell and Stephens (2001), few research studies have focused on the professional and personal experiences of probation officers. This gap in literature presents a clear opportunity for current and future researchers to provide much needed research in the field. The focus of this study was to enhance this body of knowledge by examining the prior lived experience of one of the type of careers within the juvenile justice system—parole and probation officers.

Chapter 2 Summary

Discussion

To holistically understand the lived experience of African Americans who pursue and persist in careers in juvenile justice, there must be a keen understanding of the level their communities are overrepresented in this system. In this literature review I have provided the reader with African American criminal statistics, the perceptions their communities have developed as a result of their experiences, and the experiences of African Americans currently working in the criminal justice system. While existing literature provides an analysis of African American criminal statistics and other variables that influence African American's perception of the criminal justice system, there have been minimal qualitative studies that examine the lived experiences of African Americans who choose careers as juvenile parole and probation officers. As a result of this discovery, an examination into this area was necessary.

This literature review has provided detail of the overrepresentation of African American in both the criminal and juvenile justice system (Novak, 2012). According to the research by Brunson and Gau (2015), this high level of overrepresentation has resulted in high levels of law enforcement distrust and perceived injustice in the African American community. Existing literature has also examined African American law enforcement who navigates two cultures and identities that have historically opposed each other (Dulaney, 1996). Results of research studies that have examined African law enforcement motivations for pursing and pursuing careers have discovered a belief of bridging the existing gap between the two social groups—African Americans and the criminal justice system (Dulaney, 1996).

I noticed a common theme as I reviewed existing literature about African American law enforcement experiences. This theme was African American law enforcement officer awareness

of the direct differences in how the African American community and law enforcement view each other (Dulaney, 1996; Bolton & Feigen, 2004). Based on this constant narrative, SIT was one of three chosen theories for the conceptual framework that guided this research study. The ideology of SIT emphasizes how preferencing the social groups we belong to can lead to the development of stereotypes and other negative characteristics of people who sit outside our respective groups (Hamamura, 2017). CRT was developed based on the idea of White culture being the dominant entity within the political and legal structures of America (Highsmith, 1996). Based on the results from the literature above, which revealed the high level of overrepresentation of African Americans in both the adult and juvenile system, CRT was the second theory chosen for the conceptual framework that guided this study. P−O fit theory was developed to explain how employees reach professional fulfilment when their values, ethics, and organizational characteristics align with their employers (Kristof, 1996). P−O fit theory was the third and final theory chosen for my conceptual framework because the ideology of this theory suggests employee fulfilment rests on individual and organizational characteristic alignment. Even with the negative perspective of the juvenile justice system by the African American community, members continue to seek long-term employment as juvenile probation officers. This career choice seems to conflict with what P–O fit theory suggests would be the case. Herein lies the gap this research study sought to fill. There is existing literature—which was examined above—that focuses on the experiences of African American law enforcement officers, and the stresses of the day-to-day experiences of juvenile probation officer decision-making. However, minimal prior research has been conducted that explores how African Americans describe their lived experiences as juvenile probation officers. Recommendations for continued research of

African American experiences within the criminal/juvenile justice system was a common narrative throughout the reviewed literature above.

Methodology

This phenomenological research study explored the lived experience of African American juvenile probation officers. Based on the existing literature's recommendation for future studies with a focus on juvenile probation officer decision making and overall lack of research about these demographics' experiences, there is a need to fill this gap in the body of juvenile justice literature. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is a research methodology that is used to study a phenomenon based on a group of individual's lived experiences. I used a phenomenological research design to answer this study's research questions about the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers. The research by Muhammad (2016) examined the significance of the social attitudes and cultural competence of juvenile probation officer's decision making. The findings from this research study yielded results that included age and experience as factors that impacted the cultural competence of the officers studied and the decisions they made. This phenomenological research study sought to further elaborate on how juvenile probation officers describe their experiences and decision making. The findings from this research study strengthen the understanding of how impactful juvenile probation officer's experience and decision making is on the youth on their caseload's lives (Muhammad, 2016). In the next chapter, I review of the data collection procedures and instruments, the data analysis process, and the target population for this research study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the problem I sought to understand, the subsequent developed central research question and subquestions that directed me to the phenomenological research design used in this study. Additionally, I explain the purpose of this research method to provide the reader with clarity on why this methodology was chosen. This chapter also describes this study's coresearchers, outlines the chosen sampling method, data collection procedures, instruments, and data analysis process. Lastly, I discuss the limitations, delimitations, and the validation process for this phenomenological research study.

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences of African American juvenile probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The central problem to be understood in this study is the apparent identity duality of African American juvenile parole and probation officers. Both the African American social group and the criminal justice social group have historically had opposing views of each other (Novak, 2012). I explored the lived experiences of this demographic to understand their choice of career that lies within a system where the perception from their community members is negative, and statistically, youth from their communities are overrepresented. Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology designed to study the lived experience of human beings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology focuses on describing a phenomenon based on the lived experiences of a group of individuals to understand the universal essence of said phenomenon. In a phenomenological study, the contributing participants from which data is collected are referred to as coresearchers. Given (2008) stated:

> Participants as co-researchers refers to a participatory method of research that situates participants as joint contributors and investigators to the findings of a research project. This qualitative research approach validates and privileges the experiences of participants, making them experts and therefore co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering and interpreting data. (p. 600)

From this point forward in this research study, the participants will be referred to as *coresearchers*.

According to Miner-Romanoff (2012), phenomenology can be a useful tool to better understand criminal justice related research studies by exploring individual experiences throughout the vast array of possible topics within the subject matter. I used a phenomenological methodology for this research study to explore Pacific Northwest African American juvenile parole and probation officers' experiences. This study allowed the coresearchers to have a voice and describe their prior lived experiences in their own words. Subsequently, themes were developed and analyzed to gain a new understanding of a subset of the criminal justice system—juvenile justice—that has been the focus of limited prior qualitative research studies. I guided the coresearchers in this study through an exploration of their perceptions of their juvenile parole officer identity, African American identity, their prior lived experiences that led to the development of these perceptions, and ultimately what parts of their experiences motivated them to pursue careers in the juvenile justice system. In the next section, you will find a more in-depth history of the phenomenology research methodology.

Historical background of phenomenological research. In the seminal work, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (Kant, 1781, as cited in Padilla-Diaz, 2015) used the word *phenomena* to distinguish objects as things as they appear. Furthermore, the word is defined as a philosophical

means to explain one's conscious recollection of lived experiences based on the analysis of an evident phenomenon (Litchman, 2006). In the social sciences, the central purpose of phenomenological research is to analyze a group of individuals' accounts of lived experience within the bound context of a particular phenomenon and then to discover a universal essence through the analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Padilla-Diaz (2015) described mathematician and philosopher Edmond Husserl as the "greatest figure of phenomenology" (p. 102). Husserl suggested phenomenology was an experimental methodology founded on the exploration of lived experiences within a phenomenon where a pure essence of these lived experiences would emerge (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). According to Nellickappilly (n.d.):

> Husserl conceived phenomenology in three important ways. Firstly, it was conceived as the science of sciences, which endeavoured to discover the basis of consciousness. In the second view, phenomenology was conceived as a first philosophy and therefore, it is coextensive with philosophy, as traditionally it was the latter which had been enjoying the status of first philosophy. The third conception of phenomenology is the most important one, where it is conceived as a transcendental idealism. This view conceives the transcendental ego as the source of all meaning. (p. 2)

Husserl's focused intent on consciousness and people's perceptions refers to the examination and identification of the underlying components of consciousness which exceed the intent to understanding the reality from a single individual's perspective (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Nellickappilly (n.d.) described Husserl's viewpoint on phenomenology as the reflection of conscious human experiences through the lens of how they see these experiences. Furthermore, Husserl's stance on phenomenology establishes the ideology of understanding an

individual's mental states as a pivotal means of exploring a phenomenon. Indeed, this understanding further informs a person to how beliefs are shaped and how individuals interpret the world around them (Tassone, 2017). The essential component of phenomenology is to study a phenomenon through the lens of multiple conscious experiences and discover a universal essence (Nellickappilly, n.d.).

Moustakas (as cited in Simon & Goes, 2011) described the heuristic process of a phenomenological researcher as the following:

1. *Immersion*, which is when the researcher is fully engaged with the experiences of the participants in a phenomenon.
2. *Incubation*, which is when the researcher recognizes the value of mindfulness and is engaged more passively with the data collection. Incubation is a retreat of sorts from the concentrated engagement of the previous stage. This allows deeper comprehension of the data gathered from the concentrated engagement and a better understanding of the tacit knowledge obtained.
3. *Illumination*, which is when there is a discovery of a deeper meaning that develops as an outcome from the concentrated engagement of the previous steps.
4. *Explication*, which is a reflection to further examine the knowledge that has emerged, and what is possibly means.
5. C*reative synthesis*, which is the process of merging all of the knowledge from these shared lived experiences to form an essence.

According to Padilla-Diaz, (2015), Husserl suggested when using this qualitative design, a person should institute, *epoché*, which is a term of Greek origin, meaning *doubt* and is also described as *bracketing*. This bracketing process suggests a researcher suppresses judgments and

the role of researcher itself as it relates to the lived experiences of the phenomenon being researched. This suppression is a means to safeguard objectivity during the data analysis process in a phenomenological research study (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Although this was difficult, I used well established practices, including phenomenological reduction, reflexivity, and external auditing to strengthen the credibility of this study. These practices will be described in greater detail below. The objective of this study was to explore the experiences of new and tenured African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest and discover the essence of these experiences.

Miner-Romanoff (2012) has suggested this methodology can advance the understanding of the myriad of research topics possible within the criminal justice system just as quantitative demographical criminal statistics. According to Miner-Romanoff (2012), the phenomenological methodology is decidedly underutilized in crime research studies, and the results of conducting criminal justice phenomenological research can offer multilayered heuristic data. The general reasoning behind the excessive use of quantitative methodologies in crime research is the societal and political desire to have statistics and facts that display specific crime data amongst the variety of demographics within a population. However, there is significance and value from phenomenological research that can provide a better understanding of the lived experience that sits behind the statistics of community members. Using phenomenological research would permit politicians and law enforcement to have a multitiered perspective as they create legislation, which using only quantitative data cannot provide (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). I used this research methodology to understand the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Using this methodology, the coresearchers described experiences shed light on their motivation to pursue and persist in careers in the juvenile justice

system. In the next section, the reader will be introduced to the research questions that guided the data collection and analysis process of this study.

Research Question

The central research question and sub questions that will guide this phenomenological research study are as follows:

Research Question

RQ. What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following three subquestions assisted in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question:

Subquestions

SQ1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system?

SQ2. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities?

SQ3. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities?

Research Population and Sampling Method

Research Population

The coresearchers in this study were African American individuals who were currently employed by the juvenile justice system in the Pacific Northwest as parole and probations officers. The focal point of this study's phenomenon required each coresearcher to be African American and have experience working in the Pacific Northwest's state where this study was

conducted juvenile justice system. Therefore, each coresearcher was approached as an individual contributor and received a high level of respect for their juvenile parole and probation officer identity, African American identity, and any other representations of themselves within the context of their careers in juvenile justice. Each coresearcher was allowed to voice their lived experience as it relates to the research phenomenon and research subquestions in this study. In the next section, I will present a review of the process I undertook to obtain approval from the Pacific Northwest juvenile justice agency used in this study and my recruitment methods.

Recruitment and Approval

To find the desired number of coresearchers that met the criteria for this study, I contacted a Pacific Northwestern state's leading agency for juvenile corrections, parole and probation, and residential placements for adjudicated youth. This agency's research manager gave me written approval to recruit. As a former juvenile parole and probation officer, I had access to this network of professionals through my professional connections that other phenomenological researchers may not have had. During the approval process for my primary site, I also sought approval with a Pacific Northwest county juvenile department—with a high population of African Americans citizens based on recent census reports—to recruit potential coresearchers for this study as a backup. However, this juvenile department was ultimately not used for recruitment because written approval was received from the initial recruitment site. The coresearchers in this study chose to participate voluntarily. There was no imbalance of power because I had no hierarchal authority over any of the coresearchers in this study.

I began recruitment by requesting permission from the necessary departments from the agencies listed above to seek permission to contact African Americans that they employ. As a current juvenile justice employee of a Pacific Northwest agency for adjudicated youth, I

contacted African American juvenile parole and probation officers by phone, email, and in person once the necessary approvals were received. The email consisted of information describing the purpose of this study, the criteria for being an eligible coresearcher, a declaration of coresearcher confidentiality, and the data collection process. After the initial email, I made phone contact, and then met with each potential coresearcher in person to further explain the research project. Those that agreed to participate, signed the consent form. Six African American juvenile parole and probation officers were initially recruited, and four chose to participate. One of the two who chose not to participate was less than 6 months into his career as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He felt he did not have enough time in his career to offer any valuable information and ultimately opted not to participate. The second had over 30 years of experience in his career, was in the process of retiring, and chose not to participate as he felt he did not have the time nor energy to reflect on his many years of experience. Each individual who agreed to be a voluntary coresearcher signed an informed consent form and was informed their valuable input would be the primary base of information for the concluded findings of this study.

Informed consent. I created an informed consent form for coresearchers, which was reviewed and approved by my dissertation chair and other committee members. Additionally, the informed consent form was considered and approved by Concordia University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This form included my contact information, a brief explanation of the study's purpose and the research design. Additionally, this form also included the role the coresearchers played in this study and their rights to withdraw. The next section will describe the instrument used to collect data for this research study.

Sampling Method

The coresearchers in this study were not randomly selected. There was an identification and engagement process for six coresearchers using the purposive sampling method. This type of nonprobability sampling method is dependent upon the judgment of the researcher when deciding on potential coresearchers of a research study ("Purposive sampling," n.d.). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested the number of phenomenology study coresearchers range between 3 and 10. The range of coresearchers chosen for this study offered opportunities to become deeply involved with the collected data. Connolly (2010) stated, "In phenomenology, sample sizes are often relatively small and purposeful. The phenomenon is studied in fewer people but in more depth than would be possible in a survey or other type of research" (p. 127). To provide rich and thick data, the coresearchers of this study met the following criteria: (a) identify as African American, (b) work as juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest, (c) work in the juvenile justice system 5 years or fewer, or (d) work in the juvenile justice system 15 years or more. The purpose of this variance in years worked is to find the essence of shared experiences from African American employees who are new to working in the juvenile justice system and those who have a tenured background of work working in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, this year employment range offered a full picture of the life narrative of the coresearchers across time. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the selection of coresearchers in a research study significantly affects the trustworthiness and credibility of a researcher's work. Additionally, for the Pacific Northwest agency where this study was conducted, the minimum education requirement for juvenile justice parole and probations officers is a 4-year bachelor's degree. All the coresearchers in this study met this minimum educational requirement.

Intensive sampling. Intensive sampling is a subgroup of purposive sampling in which Patton (1990) describes as, "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely)" (p. 171). Intensive sampling, along the same line as heuristic research, "draws explicitly on the intense personal experiences of the researcher" (Patton, 1990, p. 171). For this study, using my personal and professional experience to find African Americans who have been immersed in a Pacific Northwestern state's juvenile justice system provided intense knowledge gatherings about this study's phenomena. This sampling method encompasses the researcher having previous knowledge about a phenomenon and is based on significant amounts of researcher judgment (Patton, 1990, p. 172).

Pros and cons of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling offers numerous advantages as a data collection method, but it is not without its disadvantages (Ayres, 2019). Some significant advantages include the ability to target specific demographics to obtain precise data about a phenomenon, and it also offers a low margin of error. Ayres (2019) stated, "Researchers achieve a lower margin of error using the purposive sampling approach because the information they collect comes straight from the source. Each person has identifiable characteristics that place them into the same demographic. You're not pulling a random sample" (para. 16). However, according to Ayres (2019), there are significant disadvantages to this sampling method as well. These disadvantages include purposive sampling being prone to researcher bias, it is a futile method when seeking to study large populations, and it is challenging for the reader to assess the reliability of the researcher conducting purposive sampling in a study (Ayres, 2019). I used evidence-based techniques such as phenomenological reduction, member checking, and reflexivity to increase the reliability and credibility of the data collected in this study.

Instrumentation

Data Sources

As the researcher who conducted the data collection and analysis process of this study, I was the primary instrument because all information gathered from coresearchers flowed through me to the reader. According to Fox, Hunn, and Mathers (1998), semistructured interviews often use open-ended questions and offers an environment where new insights can be discussed as the result of coresearcher responses to the researcher's questions. Traditional structured interviews are typically more rigid and potentially limits the range of coresearcher responses. Fox et al. (1998) stated:

> Semistructured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further. In a semistructured interview, the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee. (p. 2)

To gain an understanding of the lived experience of the coresearchers of this study, semistructured interviews were more suited for the data collection process and was the chosen method. Each coresearcher engaged in three in depth 45–60-minute interviews that provided enough rich and thick descriptions to answer my research questions. Coresearchers engaged in one-to-one in-person interviews that delved into their experiences relating their African American identity, juvenile parole and probation officer identity, and any other experiences that

shed light on their motivation to pursue and persist in careers in juvenile justice. This multiquestion interview process was audio recorded for future transcription that took place in the data analysis process outlined in the next chapter. I actively listened and observed nonverbal behavior to ensure I was cognizant of any significant expressions of importance around key experiences noted by the coresearchers. Throughout these three phased semistructured interview processes, data was collected relating to the lived experience of the coresearchers, and the impact these experiences had on their career decisions.

I used the phenomenological interview design developed by Seidman (2013) which encompasses a three-interview series that permits coresearchers and interviewer to explore their lived experiences, place it in the context of the phenomenon, and reflect on the discovered essence. This interview method makes each coresearcher the focal point and through experience reflection, meaning that relates to the phenomenon is made from it (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) stated, "The goal of the researchers' using a phenomenological approach to interviewing would be to come as close as possible to understanding the true "is" of our participants' experience from their subjective point of view" (p. 17). Throughout each set of three interviews, data from each coresearcher was collected that is reflective on prior life history, professional, and cultural experiences to provide context around the meaning of these experiences as it relates to the phenomenon of this study.

The first interview established the context needed to understand each coresearcher's value system development by exploring the historical narrative of each coresearcher's upbringing. This context is significant because subquestion 1 of this research study was established to understand how each coresearcher's value system aligns with their perception of the value system of the juvenile justice agency in which they work. In this interview, I sought to

examine the tacit details of how each coresearcher views the overall values system of the agency in which they work and not just the agency's official and explicit core values (see Appendix B). The second interview focused on exploring the intricate details of each coresearcher's process of becoming and being a juvenile justice parole and probation officer (see Appendix C). The goal was to ask for opinions but to find details about their experiences, which establishes their opinions (Seidman, 2013). According to Seidman (2013):

> During the time we are awake and actually engaged in our lives, we see and hear things at about a rate of one per second. So in an 8-hour day, we are involved in perhaps 30,000 events. In this second interview, then, our task is to strive, however incompletely, to reconstruct the myriad details of our participants' experiences in the area we are studying. (p. 22)

The third interview consisted of coresearcher reflection about the experiences described in the previous two meetings to understand the meaning of these experiences, how they ultimately view themselves as juvenile justice parole and probation officers, and if the previously described experiences provide understanding on their motivation to pursue and persist in juvenile justice careers (see Appendix D).

This interview process allowed a natural progression of detail that helps advance the conversation from interview to interview (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) emphasized how this three-interview series should provide intricate details about how the described aspects of each coresearcher's life has led them to the phenomena I sought to understand. To strengthen trustworthiness, dependability and restrain my bias, phenomenological reduction and member checking were used during the data collection and analysis of this study. The next section will describe the secondary data source that were used in this study.

Secondary Data Sources

I used field notes as the secondary source of data collection for this research study. These field notes were based on what I observed, heard, and experienced as I conducted interviews and were written soon after each interview's completion. Field notes provided rich and thick context about the setting the interviews took place, descriptions of each coresearcher, and the working relationship I had with them (Lauderdale & Philippi, 2017). Through a reflective journal that was written at each interview's conclusion, I described my behaviors and reactions to critical points made during interviews. According to ("Qualitative inquiry," n.d.):

> As an active participant in the social settings you explore, your own behavior, words, relationships with others, assumptions, and physical presence in relation to all else you are describing should be made apparent in your notes to help you and others understand how you have helped create the information you collected and conclusions you reached. (para. 7)

According to Lauderdale and Philippi, (2017), field notes assist in building rich and thick descriptions of the context of a study, more specifically, the interview data collection process, that captures valuable contextual data. Lauderdale and Phillippi (2017) stated:

> Comprehensive fieldnotes, especially those that include critical reflection, can be useful in guiding future data collection efforts in the current study. They create a record of the study unfolding over time and are exceedingly valuable in analysis. When digitized and well organized, they can be searched by keyword and reorganized by topic, time frame, or participant. (p. 383)

Furthermore, field notes should align with the conceptual framework and methodology of a study. This alignment assists the reader with understanding how a researcher defines the

knowledge obtained in a study and the values placed on the variety of data sources used (Lauderdale & Phillippi, 2017).

Artifacts. In this study, each coresearcher received an informal and voluntary request to offer any additional forms of data relating to this study's topic. This could have included but not limited to personal items, items they use as juvenile justice parole and probation officers, self-reflections or any other means to support their accounts of their experiences relating to the research topic. I observed artifacts provided by a coresearcher and asked questions about it to draw the coresearcher's meaning as it relates to the study's phenomenon. Any information that came from this data source was kept secured—along with the other interview transcripts—on a password protected computer and was only utilized as a single component of a well-rounded exploration into coresearcher experiences.

External audit. There was an external audit to examine my data collection and analysis process. According to Bowen (2009), data triangulation offers a convergence of information from numerous sources that strengthen credibility. I used an external audit to examine the three sources of data collection to increase the credibility of this study. As this study concluded, I asked someone who is unacquainted with this research study to examine my rationale, accuracy, data collection methods, data coding, and drawn conclusions. This external auditor assessed my findings for credibility and trustworthiness. Miller (1997) stated, "The purpose of the audit is twofold: to examine the *process* and the *product* of the inquiry. The former addresses the dependability of the study, and the latter addresses the confirmability of the study" (p. 7).

According to Miller (1997), during this auditing process, the auditor will discern whether a researcher's methodology is well documented, the rationale for the study is clearly presented, data properly represents the lived experiences described by the coresearchers, and conclusions

are fair, reasonable, and supported by the data. A researcher should leave an audit trail, which is a road map for an auditor to examine a study's data analysis methods. Miller (1997) said, "Documentation is critical because the integrity of the findings is rooted in the data themselves. The record links the findings to the data sources and provides a chain of evidence that is open to inspection and confirmation by outside reviewers" (p. 8). I sought an external audit to strengthen the credibility in this phenomenological research study.

According to van Manen (2016), to sufficiently analyze data phenomenologically, a precursor of having the appropriate "experimental material" is necessary (p. 297). Van Manen (2016) stated, "If the material lacks experiential detail, concreteness, vividness, and lived-throughness, then the analysis will fail for lack of substance." (p. 297). A researcher who corroborates discoveries across multiple data sources lessens the impact of researcher bias that may exist in a study (Bowen, 2009). Semistructured interviews, field notes, artifacts, and having an audit completed were the means to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness.

Identification of Attributes

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of African Americans who work in a Pacific Northwest juvenile justice system as parole and probation officers. A phenomenological research methodology was chosen to gain clarity on this research topic. Based on the topic of my phenomenon, the following three criteria were used as descriptors for this research study: (a) ethnicity, (b) location/employer, and (c) years of employment.

The two primary attributes that defined this study are ethnicity and location/employer. These two attributes were chosen primarily because they are essential in examining the lived experience of African American motivation to pursue and persist in juvenile justice careers in the Pacific Northwest. The seemingly contrasting social in-group characteristics and the level of

overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal justice system provides an intriguing contrast to be explored. P–O fit theory suggests a person's value system must align with an organization's culture and value system for long-term career happiness (Westerman, 1997). The career choice of African Americans to work in this system seems to run contrary to what P–O fit theory and SIT suggests should be the case. As I explored the prior lived experience of the coresearchers I gained an understanding of why this is the case. This understanding will be further explored in chapters 4 and 5. Lastly, years of service was chosen to explore the variance of years worked—primarily those 5 years or newer, and those 15 years or longer—of African Americans employed within the Pacific Northwest's juvenile justice system where this study was conducted to find the essence of their shared experiences. All three of these attributes were discussed with this study's coresearchers to create a holistic understanding of their experiences as African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest.

Data Analysis

I conducted a phenomenological research study to explore the lived experiences of African Americans who have careers in juvenile justice as parole and probation officers. This study was reliant on a series of audio recorded and transcribed interviews, field notes, and artifacts. These three data sources were used to triangulate data, provide rich and thick descriptions of coresearcher experiences and discover the essence from these experiences. It is important to note that in this phenomenological study, I was not suggesting a hypothesis that I then supported through evidence, but instead I sought to describe this study's coresearchers lived reality as it related to the central phenomenon in a manner that could be thoroughly understood in a wide-ranging manner other research designs could not provide. In the next section, I will

describe the methods I used to conduct the data analysis and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Phenomenological Reduction

According to Dowling (2007), reduction entails the researcher attempting to meet the phenomenon of a study unbiased and judgement free so that the phenomenon impartially shows itself, so it can be exactly described and understood. I attempted reduction by bracketing and practicing reflexivity during the data collection and analysis process. A researcher must clearly make his or her biases, prejudices, and presuppositions known to effectively bracket (Dowling, 2007). Fink (1970) referenced phenomenological reduction as three egos: "the ego which is preoccupied with the world," described by him as "I, the human being," the transcendental ego, and the "onlooker" who conducts bracketing (pp. 115–116). The "I" represents the researcher and the assumptions that follow about a phenomenon into a study, the transcendental ego which represents what Applebaum (2013) described as "a non-personal mode of consciousness," and the transcendental onlooker, which describes the consciousness level of the researcher that has reached transcendental subjectivity and that performs bracketing.

Transcendental subjectivity is when preconceived perceptions of a researcher's reality and consciousness as a part of that reality have been bracketed, and the researcher reaches what Gupta (1998) describes as a, "purified consciousness" (p. 154). Applebaum (2013) said, "the transcendental dimension of subjectivity is always already present, and only stands out when the empirical mode has been bracketed" (para. 11). This level of bracketing was used to ensure I was practicing reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process. According to Elliott and Timulak (2005) when in the analysis phase of a phenomenological study, a researcher must remain flexible and sustain a high level of critical self-reflection of the analysis methods used

and the emerging discoveries from this analysis (p. 152). I incorporated a reflective journal in each of my field notes to sustain reflexivity and continual critical self-reflection.

Interview Audio Recordings

A digital voice recording device was used to record each 45–60-minute in person interviews to capture the coresearchers lived experience stories in its entirety. Each interview was transcribed after is completion, promptly erased after transcription, and pseudonyms were given to each coresearcher for confidentiality. Broome (2011) described these initial raw data interview recordings as "naïve descriptions." According to Broome (2011):

> The naïve description is the first-person account of the experience as it was lived and understood by the participant in his or her everyday common sense mode of understanding. Since no other person can co-experience the subjective psychological perspective of any lived-experience with the participant, the best and only "record" of such an experience exists (admittedly, only in part) within the memory of him or her who experienced it from the subjective position. (p. 9)

After the recording of these raw interview naïve descriptions, the next phase of the data analysis process ensued. This process included an in-depth read over of the interview transcripts and incorporated member checking to ensure coresearcher stories were accurate and described in verbatim. Elliott and Timulak (2005) stated, "During this initial reading, insights and understandings begin to emerge and are written down as memos. This is a kind of pre-analysis that can influence future steps of the analysis because the first relevancies start to unfold" (p. 153). Indeed, field notes were maintained to assist in the development and organization of the initial meaning units, codes, and emergent themes. Furthermore, these field notes also served as a tool for continual critical self-reflection throughout the previously mentioned process.

Coding

Open coding was the first step in my coding process and allowed me to read over the collected data several times and begin to create meaning units, which are patterns of coresearcher words that can be formalized into a code. Elliott and Timulak (2005) said:

> Meaning units are usually parts of the data that even if standing out of the context, would communicate sufficient information to provide a piece of meaning to the reader. The length of the meaning unit depends on the judgement of the researcher, who must assess how different lengths of meaning unit will affect the further steps of the analysis and who also should adopt a meaning unit size that is appropriate to their cognitive style and the data at hand. Generally, the longer the meaning unit is the bigger number (variety) of meanings it contains but the clearer its contextual meaning will be. (p. 153)

These meaning units are what I used to further my analysis of how the coresearchers drew meaning from their lived experience as African American juvenile parole and probation officers and not from objective interpretations of their behavior. It is in this step that data was first re-articulated in a way that expresses coresearcher meanings but in manageable portions for further analysis. Broome (2011) said, “The stream of experience in consciousness has “landmarks” in a way that is analogous to how we see the windings, rapids, and falls in a water stream” (p. 12). As I read through the naive descriptions, I sought to take note of when a shift in meaning occurs, which are the “landmarks” or meaning variations in the raw data. It is important to note that these meaning units were derived purely from what emerged from the coresearcher data and was firmly based on the conceptual framework of this study.

These meaning units allowed a way to articulate coresearcher meanings in manageable fragments for further analysis and to formalize codes. Furthermore, ATLAS.ti (2020) was the

primary software used to formalize codes—which are more specific categorizations that reflects meaning units from each coresearcher. Each coresearcher interview transcript elicited specific meaning units that were used to create codes specific to this research study's phenomenon. Lastly, codes were clustered into themes that reflected the commonalities of the coresearchers and related to the topic of each interview. Essential coresearcher interview dialogue was used as a documented effort to ensure the themes developed are directly traced back to the data collected from coresearchers.

Limitations of the Research Design

A phenomenological study offers significant opportunities for a researcher to provide rich and thick descriptions of the lived experiences of a selected population for a research study, but it is not without its limitations. The findings from this research study may provide insight into a subset of the criminal justice system—juvenile justice for which minimal prior research exists that relates to employment in the system, but the findings in a qualitative study like this one traditionally may not be generalized for similar populations. This is a limitation because the findings may be constricted to the essence of the individual coresearchers' experiences.

Another limitation to the phenomenology research design is the process to conduct the study can be time intensive and laborious (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research design typically includes large amounts of interview data that needs to be properly analyzed. Furthermore, Rudestam and Newton (2015) assert that the responsibility to convince the phenomenological study audience that the results are credible lies with the researcher. Patton (2002) mentioned how it is in the data collection and analysis phase that the researcher must due their diligence to communicate the data accurately in a way that answers the research questions.

Patton (2002) argued this lack of direct validity and reliability testing for phenomenological studies is a limitation of the design.

A major aspect of phenomenological research is for coresearchers to have experiences with the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). A fundamental limitation of the phenomenological research design is it assumes there are components of the human experience that is identical and can be labeled the same under one essence (van Kamm, 1966, as cited in Moreno, 2002) Based on this fundamental premise of the research design; validity is limited to the extent coresearchers experience the same phenomenon (Moreno, 2002). Husserl's development of phenomenology is driven by the idea that the existence of reality can be unveiled to the essential component of the human experience. Moreno (2002) stated, "No matter the phenomenon being investigated, the conclusions derived by the researcher apply only to that aspect of reality that was perceived by all coresearchers and mutually identified by both parties" (p. 1765). The findings from this research design can only be generalized to conditions that substantially share the characteristics of the demographic and setting of the phenomenon being studied (Moreno, 2002). In the next section, I will address how I controlled my bias within this research study.

Bias

Based on the qualitative descriptive aspects of phenomenology, a researcher must be self-reflective and be aware of biases that could influence lived experience descriptions provided by a study's coresearchers (van Manen, 2016). However, Seidman (2013) mentioned, at times, researcher experiences may connect with a study's coresearchers. Subjective components of a researcher—values and beliefs—are significant to them understanding how reality is formed and should be recognized as a core component of a research study (Hewitt, 2007). As a researcher

self-reflects, detects, and acknowledges bias, the value of a study can be enhanced by the commonality shared with the coresearchers in a study (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992). As an African American juvenile justice professional for a Pacific Northwest state agency and an instrument of data collection for this study, I am a limitation, and I had to recognize and acknowledge the bias I brought to the paradigm of this study. Caricativo, Molintas, Sanchez, and Palaganas (2017) stated:

> The researcher's positionality/ies does not exist independently of the research process nor does it completely determine the latter. Instead, this must be seen as a dialogue—challenging perspectives and assumptions both about the social world and of the researcher him/herself. This enriches the research process and its outcomes. (p. 427)

I applied phenomenological reduction and the practice of reflexivity to safeguard the authentic responses of the coresearchers by writing field notes and reflective journals after each interview. According to Caricativo et al. (2017), reflexivity is a self-awareness process in which constant reflection on values and understanding how background, bias and assumption influence qualitative research.

Delimitations of the Research Design

The delimitations of this study included African Americans with a minimum of a 4-year bachelor's degree and who are employed by a Pacific Northwest juvenile justice agency as parole and probation officers. Additionally, these African Americans were employed by a juvenile justice agency for 5 years or less, and 15 years or more. These delimitations were chosen because I sought to understand the aspects of African Americans juvenile justice parole and probation officer's experiences that were career choice motivating factors.

Trustworthiness

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the trustworthiness of a study is predicated on the accuracy of the findings, which is derived from the perception developed by the coresearchers, the researcher and the reader. The trustworthiness of this study was strengthened through the triangulation of the data collection process, along with other dependability and credibility measures taken that are reviewed below. Triangulation enables cross-validation of data across a minimum of three different sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The three different data sources used in this study were semistructured interviews, field notes, and artifacts. According to Moreno (2002), trustworthy phenomenological research findings rest on the identifiable commonality of the shared experiences of coresearchers and a researcher's ability to bracket their bias. Moreno (2002) stated, "By striving to apply the epoché principles during his/her analysis and grounding the horizonalization and imaginative variation on the participants narratives, the researcher can be reasonably confident that his/her findings will resonate with the essence of the original experiences" (pp. 1764–1765). Through the data collection instruments, phenomenological reduction, member checking, and the external auditing process, I anticipated collecting sufficient data with rich and thick detail.

Credibility and Dependability

This study established credibility and dependability using five different measures, and they are as follows:

1. *Member checking*, which is a process of each coresearchers having the opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure there are no misinterpretations or inaccuracies and increase the trustworthiness of the findings (Birt, Campbell, Cavers, Scott, & Walter, 2016).

2. *Rich and thick descriptions*, which are intricate details about coresearcher experiences that will be transcribed through detailed interview questions and engaging in active listening and nonverbal observation of each coresearcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
3. *Reflexivity*, which is the researcher being conscious of any biased interference in the data collection process. Caricativo et al. (2017) said, "Through reflexivity, we become aware of our contribution to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process" (p. 427).
4. *Researcher commonality*, which refers to the comfort of familiarity the coresearchers will share with me, given that I am an African American juvenile justice professional for a Pacific Northwest juvenile justice agency. This increases the likelihood of honest and authentic interview question responses (Simon, n.d.).
5. *External audit,* which is a person independent of the researcher examining my research process, data collection, analysis, and findings to strengthen credibility and find any weaknesses in the data collection and analysis process (Miller, 1997).

The trustworthiness of the data analysis process was also dependent on my level of integrity throughout the interviews, writing field notes, reflective journals, and audio transcription. Additionally, I used a well-established professional qualitative data analysis software for the data manipulation and analysis process, which increases the credibility of the results.

Expected Findings

This study focused on African Americans employed in a Pacific Northwest juvenile justice system. Based on the information the few prior research studies relating to this research study provided, I expected an increased understanding of the prior experiences of African Americans that influence their motivations to work in the juvenile justice system and a discovery

of experience similarities of African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers and African American police officers. Furthermore, I expected the results from this research study would fill a gap in the existing literature by bringing new information through a phenomenological lens on how the motivations of African Americans to pursue and persists in juvenile justice careers is connected to prior lived experience. However, as a phenomenological researcher, I was not bound by these expectations and openly accepted findings that might have run contrary. The results of this study may provide a more profound understanding of African American identity and how it relates to employment in the juvenile justice field.

Ethical Issues

The coresearchers in this study were informed that their ethnicity and career choice placed them as eligible to participate in this study. I did not anticipate any ethical concerns around African American juvenile justice workers sharing how their lived experience motivated them to pursue careers in juvenile justice. I was fully dedicated to safeguarding coresearchers from risk and distress at any point during the interview process. The means of how I assured confidentiality will be addressed in the next section.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

I conducted this study as a novice researcher and doctoral candidate of Concordia University–Portland. This research study focused on African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers—a group of which I am a former member and hold cultural and professional interest. I embarked on my journey as an African American juvenile justice professional with a strong belief that it is essential to understanding the experiences of this demographic of juvenile parole and probation officers. The inspiration for this research did not rise to prove or disprove a theory, nor to highlight one ethnicity of juvenile justice parole and

probation officer over another regarding the characteristics of an effective juvenile justice professional. However, I do hold a stance that the field of juvenile justice, and the adjudicated youth within it, are benefitted by having employees that culturally represent them. Bolton and Feagin (2004) stated:

> Persistent ideology of racism within police agencies often impacts Whites' willingness to recruit Blacks as well as their ability to do so successfully. Agencies have representative numbers of Black officers only to the extent that they design appropriate recruiting strategies to attract them and provide career paths with advancement. (p. 119)

Therefore, this research study sought to enhance the perspective—from the coresearchers described prior experiences—on what is needed to recruit and retain African American employees in the juvenile justice system—where there is an overrepresentation of African American youth (Michaels, 2017).

I did not receive any financial compensation, nor did I attempt to coerce individuals to participate in this study. I held no authority over the coresearchers in this study. To establish and sustain trust with coresearchers, I was very cognizant of confidentiality. Confidentiality was reached by (a) protecting the coresearcher's identity and (b) ensuring data was locked and secured when the laptop used for the data analysis section of this study was not in use. Additionally, coresearcher signatures were the only distinguishable individual characteristics on the informed consent forms. No other distinct characteristics were directly included in any reports. Furthermore, no negative impact came from individuals participating in this study.

Researcher's Position

This study was designed to enhance the body of literature about the experiences of juvenile justice parole and probations officers, primarily African Americans. I recognize my

statements, and data analysis findings do not embody the perspective of all African American juvenile justice parole and probation officers. However, they were developed using a well-established research methodology and conceptual framework. Furthermore, data were collected using well-thought-out interview questions and was analyzed extensively as I instituted phenomenological reduction, bracketing, and reflexivity to control my bias within this process. I maintained a trusting and collaborative partnership with each coresearcher, and the audio recordings of interviews were deleted after the transcription of each was completed. The data collected in this study were appropriately used to further understand the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers.

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, I described the purpose of the study, the research methodology, the target population and sampling method, the data sources, the attributes, the data analysis process and the limitations of this study. I also described the phenomenology research methodology that was used in this study to explore the lived experience of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. According to the research conducted by Michael and Raphael (2012), a phenomenological researcher conducting a study related to the criminal justice system will gather insights that counting survey responses and analyzing criminal statistics alone cannot offer. These insights are important because of the significance of the decisions that people employed within the juvenile justice system make that impact youth and their family's lives (Muhammad 2016). I conducted three interviews with each coresearcher that were between 30–55 minutes in length. Seidman (2013) stated, "phenomenological theory leads to an emphasis on exploring the meaning of people's experiences in the context of their lives" (p. 20). In these three semistructured interviews with each coresearcher, I gathered the described accounts of their

experiences in the context of their lives as juvenile parole and probation officers. I was the primary data collection instrument as all the coresearcher experience description flowed through my recording and transcription process. Semistructured interviews were a data source, along with field notes with a reflective journal, and artifacts.

Chapter 3 also explained the strategies I took to maintain trustworthiness and to conduct an ethical data collection and analysis process. Some of these strategies included member checking, phenomenological reduction, reflexivity, and ensuring rich and thick descriptions of the coresearcher's experiences. Bracketing is essential for a phenomenological researcher to be confident that drawn conclusions accurately communicated the essence of the coresearchers shared realities as it relates to the phenomenon being studied (Moreno, 2002). The purpose of these strategies is to establish and sustain credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability. I had the utmost respect for the previous literature that supports this study, and this respect reinforced the integrity and reliability of the phenomenological approach used in this study. Furthermore, I also expect that this research study will serve as a foundational piece upon which future research might extend the literature on African American juvenile parole and probation officers, and other inimitable juvenile justice system groups. In the next chapter, I will further describe the target population of this study and provide the analysis of the collected data.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter will provide a sample description, further review of the research methodology, collected data and a summary of the data analysis findings. The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to explore the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. These described experiences were analyzed through numerous phases of coding using ATLAS.ti (2020). These codes were then used to develop emergent themes that will be presented in this chapter. The following research question and subquestions guided this research study:

Research Question

RQ. What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following three subquestions assisted in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question:

Subquestions

SQ1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system?

SQ2. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities?

SQ3. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities?

In part, I was motivated to pursue this research study due to my previous experiences as an African American juvenile parole and probation officer. I found myself continually navigating two social groups—juvenile justice and African American—while at times questioning my self-

identity. It was through this moral dilemma that I sought qualitative research that explored the experiences of African American juvenile probation officers to discern if others had similar experiences. I discovered this topic had few prior research studies. The framework of this phenomenological research study was developed and communicated in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. For example, Chapter 1 introduced the groundwork of the identity duality of African Americans who work within the criminal/juvenile justice system. In Chapter 2, I provided a review of literature that demonstrated the level of overrepresentation of African Americans in the criminal/juvenile justice system, the perception African Americans have of the criminal justice system, the experiences of African Americans who work within the criminal justice system, and an assessment of SIT, CRT, and P–O fit theory.

The reviewed literature in Chapter 2 informed me of the need and purpose to conduct this research study. This study will enhance the substantial lack of exploration and understanding of African American juvenile parole and probation officer's experiences. I chose a transcendental phenomenological methodology to support the exploration of African American juvenile probation officer experiences and to capture the essence of the detail described by the coresearchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on this groundwork, Chapter 3 delineated the purposive sampling method used, presented a comprehensive overview of transcendental phenomenology, described the research design, data collection and data analysis procedures, and protocols established to protect the data and coresearchers.

In this chapter, I will present the findings uncovered from the data collection process. Additionally, I employed Seidman's (2013) phenomenological interview approach to compile data. This approach included the coresearchers engaging in three individually separate interviews that focused on life background (Interview 1), present lived experiences (Interview 2), and

reflection and making meaning (Interview 3). According to Seidman (2013), a phenomenological researcher must carefully balance offering open-ended questions so coresearchers can share their lived realities and then at the opportune time, asking difficult questions that will uncover the essence of the coresearchers' lived experiences. I employed this approach with my data collection efforts.

Description of the Sample

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the recommended sample size for conducting phenomenological research is between 3 and 10. This sample size allows an in-depth investigation into coresearchers' experiences and supports the ability of the researcher to collect data that is rich and thick in description. According to Ponterotto (2006):

> Thick description accurately describes observed social actions and assigns purpose and intentionality to these actions, by way of the researcher's understanding and clear description of the context under which the social actions took place. Thick description captures the thoughts and feelings of participants as well as the often complex web of relationships among them. Thick description leads to thick interpretation, which in turns leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves, and for the report's intended readership. (p. 543)

I sought to collect rich and thick data through the semistructured interview process, assessment and discussion of coresearcher artifacts, and using field notes during the data collection process.

The lived experiences of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers who fell into one of two experience levels: 5 years or less of experience, and more than 15 years of experience, served as the coresearchers in this study. This employment range was chosen to understand the shared realities of newer African American juvenile parole and probation officers

and more tenured officers. According to Seidman (2013), “The goal of researchers’ using a phenomenological approach to interviewing would be to come as close as possible to understanding the true “is” of our participants’ experiences from their subjective realities” (p. 17). Through the data collection and analysis process, I sought to understand the described motivations for becoming a juvenile parole and probation officer, and if this motivation changes over the life of a career. Through a phenomenological lens, these coresearchers’ shared realities will broaden the literature on the experiences of an important demographic of juvenile parole and probation officer.

The following are descriptions of each coresearcher in this study. These descriptions are designed for the reader to cultivate a deeper understanding of the coresearcher’s experiences, and ultimately the essence of these experiences. I assigned each African American juvenile parole and probation officer coresearcher a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. Moving forward within this chapter, I will refer to each coresearcher by the following pseudonyms: Frederick, Lester, Gerald, and Anthony.

Portraitures of the Four Coresearchers

Frederick. Frederick was raised in the Southern region of the United States. The city he grew up in was a large urban area that consisted of predominantly African American residents. The high school he attended was also comprised of predominantly African American students. However, the administration and staff were principally White. This school environment aligns with CRT’s ideology of White values and interests being the central and dominant component of culture and policy (Payne, 2019). Frederick recalled, “It was a White school with predominantly Black students, White principals, majority White teachers, with some Black teachers.” During the conversation, Frederick proceeded to describe the racial division in some his classes, “You

could always see the divide where certain classes were versus Black students and White students." It was in his high school that he began to realize he could be a change agent in his community. He referenced a social group he became a part of that focused on personal development and community improvement:

> I think for me; just when I started in high school, I was a part of this thing called the [name redacted]. We met every Thursday, the expectation was ties, and we really sat down and talk about what was going on in the community. Also, what was happening at the school because there was a lot of racial tension and turmoil going on, at that time, at my school.

The leader and coordinator of this group, a former midwestern state police officer, was one of his initial inspirations to pursue a career in juvenile justice. He was raised in a two-parent household. His father was a healthcare professional and his mother was a paralegal. Despite living in a predominantly African America city, he lived in a neighborhood amongst mostly White neighbors and referenced negative experiences with law enforcement due to living in a neighborhood with a mostly White demographic. He reminisced:

> There was a lot of things going on where Blacks were getting profiled just coming out at night. I lived in a White neighborhood, and I'll get stopped. "Where do you stay? Where do you live?" "Right down the street, man." So, it was a lot of profiling, and so it was a lot of, I would say for my family, a lot of negative views. It was negative just cause of the neighborhood we lived in. Sometimes the police was called on us for having parties at the house with neighbors, so it was a lot of the underlying racism that was going on.

He has been employed as a juvenile parole and probation officer for 5 years or less and had previously worked in the nonprofit sector, mental health, and educational fields. It was in his

jobs before becoming a juvenile parole and probation officer that he gained an understanding about the juvenile justice system. It was also in these past jobs he began working with at-risk youth, many in the Department of Human Services and a juvenile justice agency custody. He referenced his time in the nonprofit sector as "residential" and had interactions with youth and parole officers while employed there. Frederick stated, "You see the kid after they've had their visits and then kind of laugh and mock their PO [Parole Officer] thinking they got away with certain things, and I used to always be like, "Man, if I was your PO, things would a little different." It was in these experiences, and others like them, that provided the motivation to pursue a career in juvenile justice**.** These motivational factors will be further explored later in this chapter.

Gerald. Gerald was raised in the Pacific Northwest and grew up in an urban and diverse environment. Gerald recalled, "I had a lot of different cultures in our neighborhood." He referenced the high school he attended as being very diverse. Gerald was raised in a two-parent household and it was in this household that he learned his views on the criminal justice system and law enforcement. He stated:

> My parents always taught us to respect our elders, the police officers, and all that stuff, just because the environments that we were in. . . . I never really understood it as a young person. It was just more of my parents always, "You've got to . . . Don't do this, don't do that. It's harder for us." But as we grew older, I started to understand a lot more. Black people just have to be more aware about certain things. I realize that now as an adult and working in this field.

He mentioned how as far back as he can remember he has always had a heart for helping people and his father was a driving force behind that mentality. "My dad was in the educational field, so

he had a passion for working with youth." Gerald has been employed as a juvenile parole and probation officer for 5 years or less and the major component behind Gerald's pursuit of a career in juvenile justice was his employment prior to becoming a juvenile parole and probation officer. He referenced working in residential programs, which are organizations that provide living arrangements for youth to receive treatment over a certain period of time, and for the Department of Human service prior to his career in juvenile justice. "I started in residential. As I stated before, just saw a lot of POs coming in and checking in with the youth. I was like, "I think that's cool." He continued to describe how his interactions with POs while working in residential motivated him to pursue a job as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He recollected:

> Then just looking, talking to the POs that were coming to the program and asking them kind of what do they do, how can I get into this field. Just I think more helping youth and their families individually was something that I really felt I would be good at.

Gerald also noted how important it is for African American youth in the juvenile system to have positive African American role models. He stated:

> I also thought, just being an African American, I think it's good to have good role models for these youth that we work with. Because there's nothing wrong with being an athlete, or an artist, or any of that stuff, but I think it's good to have positive role models in an authority professional that they can see like, "Hey, everybody's not bad in this position," we want to sit and help you.

It was in his experiences working in residential programs and the connections with PO's through those jobs that his interest for being a juvenile parole and probation officer surfaced.

Lester. Lester was raised in the eastern region of the United States. He grew up in the country around primarily White neighbors but lived within a short drive of numerous

predominantly African American cities. Lester recollected, “My neighborhood was primarily Caucasian. Both my mother and father did very well for our family, myself as an only child. I found that [we] were the only Black family in the neighborhood for 15 years.” He attended a vocational high school in the “country” and had a “mixed” demographic. He reminisced:

> My high school was mixed. It was a vocational high school, and, in some cases, we had students that had to travel over 45 minutes to get to school, out in the county in the country. And so, a vocational technical high school was recognition where I graduated with over 750 students for high school graduation.

Lester has a lineage of family members who have worked in the criminal justice field and spoke very proudly of his family’s history in the field. He stated:

> Both my mother and father were both from law enforcement. My father was the third sheriff in my town. My mother worked in prison. My grandfather was the dietician in the prison. Every day, in my home, it was all I heard . . . was about law enforcement, about doing the right thing, about the juvenile system, the laws, and anything that was appropriate, upstanding, and promising, addressing law enforcement.

Lester’s family connection to the field of criminal justice was the driving force behind his motivation to pursuit of a career in juvenile justice. After working other jobs such as roofing and seeing the wear and tear it puts on one physically, he eventually made the decision to seek a career in criminal justice. Lester said:

> I came to my mother and father with my head down, cause I said I didn’t want to be like them. And when I said, can I get a job with you all? They said, “Well of course you can, but you got to start at the other institution because we’re not going to have people speaking about nepotism.” So, I was able to train and start at an institution away from my

> mother and grandfather approximately 85 miles away. And I worked there for 5 years until I transferred down to where my parents were, in the area where my parents were. And then I continued to work from there.

Lester has been a juvenile parole and probation officer for over 25 years and referenced a frustration with seeing young people failing and lacking resources as motivations for his career choice. He stated, "I got tired of seeing our young people, young adults, continuing to fail. So, to pursue a position in juvenile justice, would give me an opportunity to work with those persons in the community setting." These motivating influences will be further explored later in this chapter.

Anthony. Anthony was raised on the West coast and grew up in a large urban city. He referenced how his city was large and the neighborhood themselves often felt like miniature cities. He stated, "It was really like these inner pockets of little cities within a bigger city. All of them having their own unique style and way of life." Anthony went to a very large high school and mentioned the school lacked the needed financial resources. He stated:

> My high school was huge and largely underfunded. It was bad man. I think we had like 30-plus students in a class in some of them. Lower middle class and poverty was the neighborhood I grew up in. Lot of stereotypical stuff. Drugs, gangs, violence.

He also grew up with his mother and father in the household. He was taught to distrust law enforcement at a young age. Anthony recollected, "Me and my sisters and brothers were taught that police were people to avoid at all cost and that if you find yourself arrested for anything, you will pretty much be screwed by the system." Anthony did not have anyone that inspired him to become a juvenile parole and probation officer. "No one ever inspired me to be in this field. Like I said, my family don't view the system in the greatest light, so they were not necessarily thrilled

with my job after college." Anthony mentioned that his father was extremely upset that he took a position in corrections after college. He said:

> My dad was pissed. It was like I did something personal to him. I think he felt like I sold out and would be helping lock Black boys up and the rest of my family kind of fell in line and gave that same type of energy. They would say passive aggressive comments like "you put any new Black kids in hands cuffs today."

He did mention how his family has eased their stance now that they have more insight into all he does to help support youth. When asked what specifically motivated him to become a juvenile parole and probation officer, he stated, "My motivation has always been to help kids make better decisions." Anthony has a strong desire to support adjudicated youth improve their life outcomes and this seems to be his strongest motivational factor. Anthony has been a juvenile parole and probation officer for over 20 years. He recollected:

> I think growing up the way I did and having the mentality I had about police really shaped my mindset about wanting to do something about how messed up the system was and not just avoid it. Working in the system now, I can tell you it still has its flaws and a lot of the concerns my family has about bias treatment, is not off based. You really just develop thick skin and stick to your belief that you are in this job for the right reasons and want to help these kids develop and make better decisions. I am motivated by the ability to be a direct access change maker for the lives of the youth on my caseload and their families.

Anthony's motivation to be a positive influence in youth lives will be further investigated later in this chapter. A brief overview of the coresearchers in this study is in Table 3.

Table 3

A Brief Overview of the Coresearchers

Participant	Years as a PO	Region Born
Lester	Over 20	East Coast
Frederick	Under 5	South
Anthony	Over 20	West Coast
Gerald	Under 5	Pacific Northwest

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Transcendental phenomenology was the research designed used in this study. This design emphasizes the descriptions of a phenomenon based on the lived experiences of a group of individuals to understand the essence of the described phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of this chosen design was to study and explore the lived experiences of African Americans juvenile justice parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, this design was selected because it of its propensity to explore and understand the shared experience of a set of individuals within a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I conducted data analysis with a framework that aligns with Moustakas' (1994) adaptation of van Kaams' (1959, 1966) phenomenological data analysis method. This method consisted of the following four phase process: (a) data gathering (semistructured interviews, artifacts, and field notes), (b) interview transcription, (c) raw data analysis and coding, and (d) the development of themes consistent with the research questions and subquestions. Details of each of these phases will be discussed below. Moustakas (1994) stated, "In phenomenological studies, the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection" (p. 47). I selected phenomenology for this research study because it best fits the phenomenon and research question, which sought to

explore the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest.

Data saturation. A purposive sampling method was used to recruit and select coresearchers for this research study. I am a former African American juvenile parole and probation officer and currently employed with a juvenile justice agency in an analyst role. My connection with the juvenile justice system offered an opportunity to ensure the four coresearchers of this study met the following criteria: (a) identify as African American, (b) work as a juvenile justice parole and/or probation officers in the Pacific Northwest, (c) work in the juvenile justice system 5 years or fewer, or (d) work in the juvenile justice system 15 years or more. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) the number of coresearchers in a phenomenological study should range between three and 10. For this study, six individuals responded to the initial recruitment inquiry, and four coresearchers completed the study. All six responded to the initial email inquiry. After meeting in person, two chose not to participate. One of those two was less than six months into his career as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He felt he did not have enough time in his career to offer any valuable information and ultimately opted not to participate. The second had over 30 years of experience, was in the process of retiring, and chose not to participate as he felt he did not have the time or energy to reflect on his many years of experience.

The number of coresearchers chosen for this study offered opportunities to become deeply involved with the data collection process. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), saturation is reached in a qualitative study when new information from interviews fail to develop new information. I used the interview protocol in this study as a tool to assess saturation. The

questions on the protocol had enough detail to provide sufficient data to support the phenomenon of this research study.

Four Phase Data Analysis Process

Data gathering. Three different methods of data collection were used in this research study. They are as follows: semistructured interviews, artifacts, and field notes. Although three different means of data collection were used, semistructured interviews were the primary data collection source. This is because the interview setting offered opportunities to ask very specific questions about critical points relating to the phenomenon. Furthermore, these interviews presented opportunities to ask clarifying questions and probe for more detail when needed. These interviews were conducted in neutral and private spaces where the coresearchers' felt comfortable to speak openly about their lived experiences. Each coresearcher met with me for three separate interviews and an interview protocol was used during each session (see Appendices B–D). Each coresearcher was asked a total of 28 questions spread out over the three interviews. Interview 1 focused on prior lived experience that led to the coresearcher's motivation to be a juvenile parole and probation officer. Interview 2 focused on current lived experience as an African American juvenile parole and probation officer in the Pacific Northwest and Interview 3 focused on self-reflection and meaning making.

Artifacts. During the recruitment and scheduling process, coresearchers were asked to bring an artifact that would reflect their personal identity, professional identity, or both. This item could include but was not limited to personal items, items they use as juvenile justice parole and probation officers, self-reflection items, or any other means to support their accounts of their experiences relating to the research topic. Three out of the four coresearchers chose to bring an artifact. Each artifact was either personalized to each individual coresearcher or was a primary

tool used in their job duties. Each artifact provided an opportunity for me and the coresearcher to converse about its significance to the research phenomenon. The coresearcher who chose not to bring an artifact felt his experience over a long tenured career could provide more than enough information and detail, so an artifact was not necessary. These artifacts are listed in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Artifacts Each Coresearcher Brought to Interview One

Coresearcher	Artifact Description
Frederick	Fraternity Plaque
Lester	Chose Not to Bring an Item
Gerald	Handcuffs and Work Badge
Anthony	Necklace

Frederick. The coresearcher Frederick chose to bring a plaque with the letters of his fraternity because he felt his fraternity represents a major part of his African American identity. Additionally, the mentality he has as a juvenile parole and probation officer is fundamentally what his fraternity stands for—service to mankind, achievement, and so on. Frederick stated:

> I chose this because my fraternity was founded on an all-White campus, by 10 distinguished young African American men at a time when racism was really high. It embodies hard work, perseverance, and all that they had to endure to be relevant. And some of the objectives they created for the fraternity is what I envision for myself and bring, as a parole officer. I mean like hard work. Not giving up when times are hard, focus on achieving and being your best self, and being of service to your fellow man. All things I try to embody as an African American man and a Black PO [Parole Officer].

Frederick's description of his artifact was indicative of his beliefs about navigating his African American and juvenile justice system identity. The navigation of this identity duality will be further explored later in this chapter.

Gerald. The coresearcher Gerald chose to bring his officer badge and handcuffs as an artifact. When further describing his artifact, he referenced how each item represents a level of "authority" and signified he was a juvenile parole and probation officer. He indicated:

> I would say it's just a part of my job. I think it's a small part of my job. In this profession, I mean, everywhere you go, a lot of places they're going to want to see a badge. Kind of when they see that logo of my agency, they kind of know what you do and then was like. "This person is a PO." They're here supervising the kids. And they know that we have a lot of authority over some kids that we work with.

When asked how families of all the different ethnicities he works with responds to seeing him with his badge and handcuffs, he gave a specific example of working with African American Families. Gerald recollected:

> I think I have several families right now where they think I'm the bad person. I have an African American family that I have their kid in a program to support him and they literally think I'm still the bad person. I try my best to explain, "hey, this is what your child is doing or, this is what your niece or nephew was doing. I'm not the bad person." I'm just trying to get your family member on board; But they automatically just assume, "You're with them [The juvenile justice system]. You're on their side. You're not trying to look out for us and try to help us out."

I will further explore how Gerald navigates the benefits and challenges of being an African American juvenile parole and probation officer when working with African American families later in this chapter.

Anthony. The coresearcher Anthony brought a necklace that was given to him by his father as an artifact. Anthony chose this artifact because of the significance it represents for him as an African American man that works for a subset of the criminal justice system-juvenile justice. He reminisced:

> My dad gave this to me a while ago when I was a teenager. He got it from a friend who he says was a member of the Black Panther Party. He told me the guy was murdered by Klan cops in the 60s, in Mississippi. I thought about it when you told me what you were interviewing me about. I ain't seen it in years and being real, it took me forever to find it I brought it because of the double edge sword it represents for me. Here I am working in the very system that would hire people that could commit and act like that. But, but, and this is important. I think one of the reasons why I chose this career and especially to pursue being in probation is to pursue bettering minority communities and further developing the relationship with Black people particularly, and I would say bettering the relationship with Black people and the juvenile justice system. I think to some degree, this was what the Black Panthers wanted. To make lives better for Black people. While I don't want to only do that. I would be lying if I said I do not feel certain extra obligations to help Black kids not reach the adult system. To me this chain, you called it a necklace which is a little too feminine hahahaha, but this chain represents growth in the way Blacks can have an impact on their communities.

Each of the coresearchers artifacts were used to describe details about how they navigate an apparent social identity duality. There will be a further investigation into the coresearchers' experiences navigating their African American identity and their juvenile justice identity later in this chapter. Furthermore, each artifact and the coresearchers' descriptions were factors in my development of codes and themes that will also be further explored in this chapter. These artifact descriptions served as a second component of my data collection and was used to triangulate data in the analysis process.

Field notes. I wrote thorough field notes at the conclusion of each interview. Each interview was digitally recorded, promptly transcribed, and then erased. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) field notes provide more substance and offer additional methodological thoroughness for a qualitative study. Indeed, field notes were used as my third method of data collection. Each field note also had a self-reflection component where reflexivity was practiced, and I consistently wrestled with my bias relating to the phenomenon of this study. Additionally, field notes were used as a tool to assist with code development and to formalize emergent themes. Coresearcher nonverbal behavior, mood, time of day, and other subtle nuances that could strengthen my understanding of their described experiences were all reflected in my field notes and used in the analysis process. To reaffirm, I also wrestled with my bias by consistently writing a self-reflective journal in field notes, which described my physical and emotional responses to the lived experiences of the coresearchers. Field notes served as my third data collection source and used to triangulate data and increase trustworthiness of my findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interview transcription. The second phase of this data analysis process was to get each interview transcribed after the interviews were conducted. Each interview was digitally recorded

and promptly uploaded from the digital recorder to a password protected computer. Rev.com, a trusted online transcription service was used to convert the audio files into electronic word documents. I read the transcriptions numerous times to immerse myself in the coresearcher descriptions before open coding began. After listening to the audio recordings and having them transcribed into word documents, all digital audio recorded interviews were deleted. The coresearchers were then given interview transcription copies to review as a password protected Google document. Two of the coresearchers made grammatical changes to their raw interview transcripts and returned them to me as a Google protected document. The other two researchers read them and responded by phone informing me of approval. Once this member checking process was complete, I began the data analysis and coding process.

Data analysis and coding. The third and perhaps most important phase of this process included reading and rereading the interview transcriptions to create meaning units, formalize codes, develop themes, and uncover the essence of the coresearchers' experiences. According to Moustakas (1994), the bracketing of bias is an essential first step in this process. This process is defined as resisting the urge to place judgment and distancing one's self from the ordinary and typical way of perceiving coresearcher descriptions. Setting aside any preconceived beliefs and judgements about the phenomenon was an important component in the analysis phase of my study. I often referred to my field notes to use as a tool to wrestle with my bias throughout this process. The first cycle of coding consisted of reading and rereading each interview transcript and open coding using ATLAS.ti (2020). After a thorough immersion into the coresearcher interview transcript data, meaning units were captured which highlighted specific interview dialogue as it related to this study's phenomenon. There were 195 quotations captured from all the interview transcripts. The second cycle of coding focused on formalizing codes, which are

more specific categorizations that reflects meaning units from each coresearcher. Thirty-two codes were formulized based on the meaning units developed from all the raw coresearcher interview transcripts. Of these 32 codes, only the ones that derived from meaning units from all the coresearchers were used for theme development.

Theme development. After code formulization, I conducted the final process of data analysis. According to Saldaña (2008), this theme development process involves mining the data for meaning relating to the phenomenon of this research study. Themes were developed using four techniques defined by Ryan (n.d.):

> (1) an analysis of words (word repetitions, key-indigenous terms, and key-words-in contexts); (2) a careful reading of larger blocks of texts (compare and contrast, social science queries, and searching for missing information); (3) an intentional analysis of linguistic features (metaphors, transitions, connectors); and (4) the physical manipulation of texts (unmarked texts, pawing, and cut and sort procedures). (para. 3)

Utilizing codes developed from meaning units, I constructed themes that related to each interview's topic. The first interviews focused on prior lived experience that led to the motivation of the coresearchers to pursue careers as juvenile parole and probation officers. The second interview explored the current lived experience of the coresearchers as African American juvenile parole and probation officers and the third and final interview focused on making meaning from previously described lived experiences. Examples of some of the codes used to develop themes included the following: trust and rapport building, colleague support, cultural representation, juvenile system frustrations, "Not a lot of African Americans as a probation and parole officer" (in vivo code), and misalignment of personal upbringing and perception of the system. Three themes were identified from codes and were indicative of the coresearchers'

shared lived experiences relating to this research study's phenomenon. Field notes and the artifact descriptions were also important tools used to develop themes. Every theme developed reflects raw interview dialogue and nonverbal communication that were referenced in field notes. For example, each coresearcher had an innate physical response when describing their experiences navigating being African American and working in the juvenile justice system. One coresearcher had tears in his eyes, another repeatedly slammed his hand on the table, and another consistently and assertively pointed to his work phone when describing anything relating to working with African American families. Three themes emerged from the data analysis process and subsequently broken into an additional six subthemes, which were developed from the formularized codes, meaning units (raw interview data), field notes, and artifacts. The themes and subthemes are listed below in Table 5.

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subtheme One	Subtheme Two
Support and accountability	Frustrations with the system	Negative perception/experiences with the criminal justice system.
Erratic/varied schedule	Youth and community safety	Trust and rapport building
Navigating identity duality	Culture representation	Perception awareness

The Essence

I recognized the essence of the coresearchers' experiences as it emerged and aligned with the themes and subthemes discovered in the data analysis process. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in the social sciences, the central purpose of phenomenological research is to analyze a group of individuals' accounts of lived experience within the bound context of a particular phenomenon and then to discover the essence of these experiences through the

analysis process. Indeed, as the themes and subthemes developed from the detailed descriptions of the four coresearchers' lived experiences as African American juvenile parole and probation officers, the essence of these experiences also emerged. Bound by the context of being African American and working as a juvenile parole and/or probation officer in the Pacific Northwest for 5 years or less and 15 years or more, the following essence emerged from the coresearchers described experiences: (a) the experience of working with youth in the juvenile system in previous jobs, witnessing and experiencing inadequacies in the juvenile system were motivating factors to pursue careers as juvenile parole and probation officers, (b) the experience of having to meet the demands of an unpredictable schedule to exceed unequitable work performance standards, and (c) the experience of navigating the positive and negatives of having African American cultural responsibility and juvenile justice responsibility as African American juvenile parole and probation officers, while ultimately being a positive cultural influence. The interconnectedness of the themes and subthemes with the emergent essence are depicted in Figure 5.

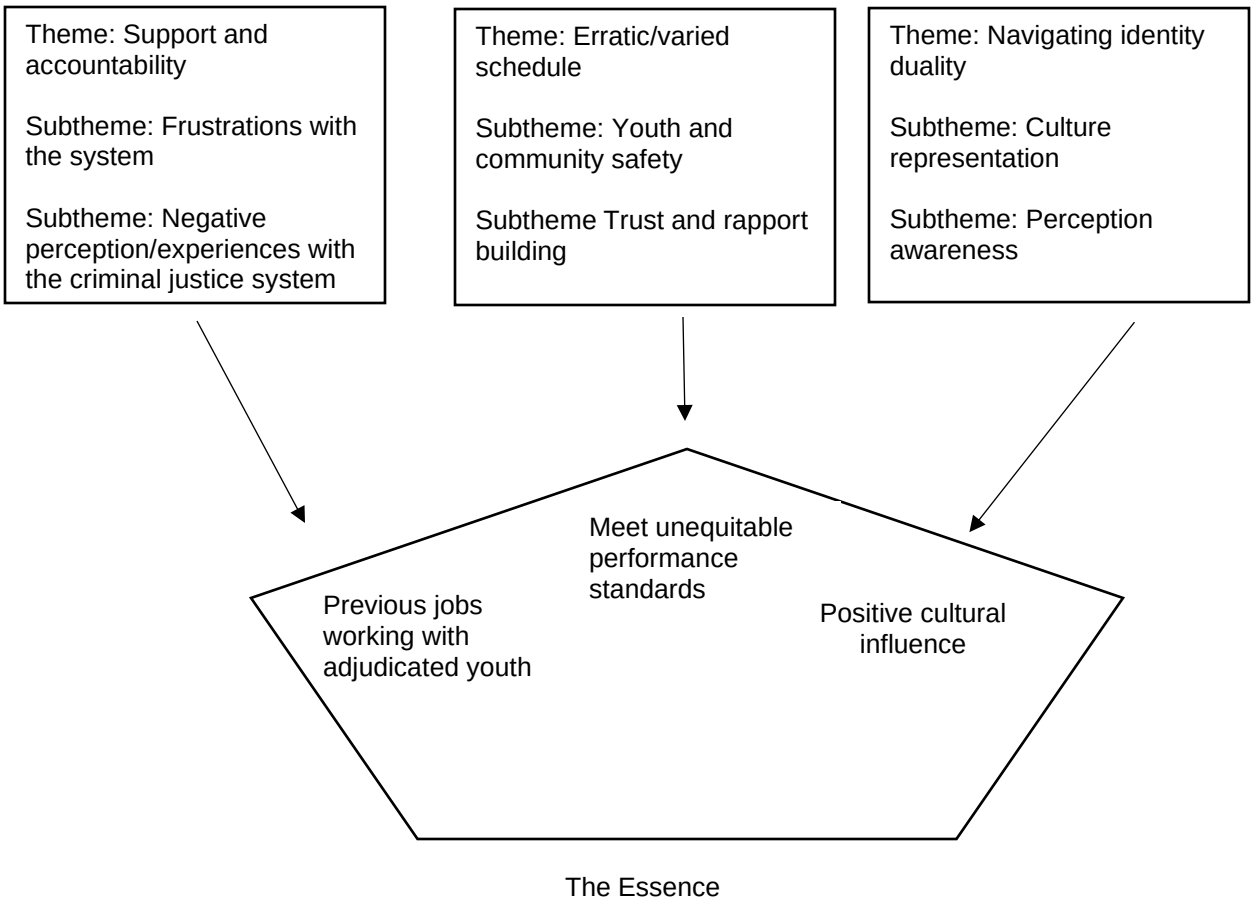

Figure 5. Theme and essence interconnectedness.

Summary of the Findings

This transcendental phenomenological study sought to explore and understand the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. After interview and field note data were gathered and transcribed, meaning units were developed. Next, I conducting open coding using ATLAS.ti (2020). One hundred ninety-five quotations (i.e., meaning units) were revealed from all the interview transcripts during the open coding process. Thirty-two codes were formulized using these meaning units. Lastly, three principal themes and six related subthemes emerged. These themes and subthemes are introduced below and include detailed descriptions of each coresearcher's lived experience relating to the phenomenon of this study.

Theme 1: Support and Accountability

In this phenomenological study, support and accountability for youth in the juvenile system was an emerging theme amongst the discussion with all the coresearchers. Each of the four coresearchers shared specific experiences about how the desire to support youth in the juvenile system and/or hold them more accountable was at the forefront of their motivations to pursue careers as juvenile parole and probations officers. Confirming this sentiment, Frederick stated:

> When I worked residential programs and had interactions with caseworkers and probation officers. And I always kind of. . . . You see the kid after they've had their visits and then kind of laugh and mock their PO thinking they got away with certain things, and I used to always be like, "Man, if I was your PO, things would a little different." Because then I saw the resources that they need. So I always looked at it a different aspect, even in education, because you see the kids and you see the ones where they were acting up, and you're trying to get ahold of PO's and you're like, "No response." It would be frustrating. I knew if I ever became a PO, I would be someone people could depend on.

When further speaking about his previous career before being a juvenile parole and probation officer and the demographic of youth he worked with, Frederick asserted:

> Young men that were DHS and juvenile system, so it was combination of both. And so, I kind of learned a lot and also kind of gave me a lot of my insight because I was still young. And so just, for my knowledge and seeing and looking at the history and where they've came from and also try to help them change, "They'll grow up in this messed environment because you grew up in there don't mean you need to stay in this." And I try to give them a different outlet. "Let's better yourself and be better than this. Your mom or

> dad's gone," or "Dad's on drugs or dad's incarcerated. What could you do to better yourself? You're the oldest of your siblings, get your degree. The actions you are taking . . . your siblings are seeing that and they're trying to emulate that, right?"

Gerald also had previous residential program experience with a similar youth demographic. He said,

> I started in residential. As I stated before, just saw a lot of POs coming in and checking in with the youth. I was like, "I think that's cool. You can just go in, check in with your guys, and take them out to lunch. That looks fun. They probably make decent money." Then so I was always just kind of interested in that.

Gerald referenced having conversations with PO's about helping youth during his previous jobs as motivation to pursue being a juvenile parole and probation officer as well. He claimed,

> Then just looking, talking to the POs that were coming to the program and asking them kind of what do they do, how can I get into this field. Just, I think more helping youth and their families individual[ly] was something that I really felt I would be good at.

Lester worked numerous odd jobs such as "roofing" prior to taking a job in the "institution" but it was his work in the state correctional institution that motivated him to pursue a career as a juvenile parole and probation officer and to support juvenile youth. Lester argued:

> I got tired of seeing our young people, young adults, continuing to fail. And as I mentioned in the question prior this one before, I saw that there was a way for people to be successful coming out of state institution, even though they continue to come back into jail saying that "I had no other choice, there was nothing for me to receive or to have or any arrest" or those kinds of things. And I saw it different. So, to pursue a position in

> juvenile justice, would give me an opportunity to work with those persons in the community setting.

Anthony also referenced starting his career with the criminal justice system in the state institution and having a heart for helping youth succeed as the motivation to be a juvenile parole and probation officer. He said:

> I got hired as a juvenile correction officer, I kind of just stuck around, did not rub people the wrong way and was able to get promoted into the role I am in now eventually. My motivation has always been to help kids make better decisions. Now at this point in my career, I do not think there is a better field where kids need support making better decisions.

As each coresearcher gave descriptions of their experiences navigating their desire to provide youth support and more accountability, there was consistent messages of being frustrated with certain components of the juvenile system. I will explore these frustrations in the next section.

Subtheme 1: Frustration With the System

A subtheme that connects to the theme of youth support and accountability that the coresearchers spoke strongly on was frustrations with the system as it relates to its handling of youth in the juvenile system. Frederick acknowledged frustrations with POs when he was working in residential programs and in the education field prior to his pursuit of a juvenile justice career. He admitted:

> It was really frustrating because like I said, in residential there is very little you can do, and from an education standpoint, we try to hold these kids accountable, but when you could do so much, but it's really the PO that has the power to say, "Hey, you know you can get locked up for doing this or that." And then I didn't even realize that it was a little

bit more than that. But that kind of inspired me to say, “Okay, maybe I need a different lens. I’ve done the residential, I’ve done the education. Now I’m seeing a lot of these young men getting caught up in the system and wanting to be a difference in talking, maybe mold or shape some of these young men to help them avoid going further into the adult corrections.

Gerald referenced experiences of frustration he has witnessed working with youth in the juvenile system as well. He asserted:

> I think sometimes, say a White kid does a certain crime and Black kid does the same crime. If that Caucasian kid is able to articulate why they should remain in the community, their parents are able to do that. They’re involved in the process. Coming to court hearings, coming to a meeting. Whatever it might be. It appears to me that family and that youth always gets to get another chance in the community where if, a Black family comes in and is not able to articulate things correctly or maybe not the best presenter or they don’t have the same financial resources or their attire or how they appear is not great. They will not get the same outcome as the White kid.

Gerald also mentioned frustrations with the lack of structure and accountability for youth in the system at times. Gerald indicated:

> I would say being in this field, a lot of what I see right now is rehabilitation services and treatments and stuff and not on strict consequences for making bad choices. I don’t think there’s nothing wrong with that. I just think that sometimes if you don’t have a good foundation as a kid, it’s going to be very difficult for you to go back and fix that as you get older.

Lester discussed frustrations he has experienced over his more than 20 years as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He believed, “There’s a lot of moral issues and a lot of grace and other ways of thinking that don’t match as our policies and procedures”. Additionally, Anthony discussed his dissatisfaction with the disparity in what the juvenile justice system communicates to the public and what they actually do. Anthony claimed:

> I think the policies and the philosophies are one thing and the people who are supposed to be doing them are a vastly different thing sometimes. So that can be frustrating. Like if we are really about what we say we are about everyone should be held to that standard. I do not think the juvenile system I work for aligns in practice with my value system. I care about people. I care about doing what is right and best even when it is difficult. I would say in general the system I work for puts on a public façade. Management cares more about making their jobs easier than holding their people accountable to the same standard they hold POs and other employees that work directly with staff in some capacity.

During these conversations each coresearcher described their experiences with providing youth support and accountability, and while doing so expressed their frustrations with the juvenile system. While articulating criminal justice system frustrations, each coresearcher also described negative experiences/perceptions with the criminal justice system. These negative experiences/perceptions will be further investigated in the next section.

Subtheme 2: Negative Perception/Experiences With the Criminal Justice System

A second subtheme that aligned with the coresearchers’ desires to support juvenile youth and hold them more accountable was each coresearcher having negative experiences/perceptions with the justice system, which motivated them to be change agents**.** Frederick spoke about

specific experiences growing up in the southern city where he was raised and how it impacted his view of the criminal justice system. Frederick said:

> There was a lot of things going on where Blacks were getting profiled just coming out at night. I lived in a White neighborhood, and I'll get stopped. "Where do you stay? Where do you live?" "Right down the street, man." So, it was a lot of profiling, and so it was a lot of, I would say for my family, a lot of negative views. It was negative just cause of the neighborhood we lived in. Sometimes the police was called on us for having parties at the house with neighbors, so it was a lot of the underlying racism that was going on.

Gerald discussed his beliefs on youth entering the juvenile justice system without self-motivation and referenced how navigating the system becomes more difficult for youth without this intrinsic trait. He stated, "I think the further you get down into the system, I think the harder it's going to be for youth if they don't have that self-motivation, especially if they don't have a good support system". Gerald also referenced how his parents taught him the justice system will treat him differently. He asserted:

> My parents always taught us, my brother and I, to respect authorities and basically always told us as an African American, it was harder for us. My parents always taught us to respect our elders, the police officers, and all that stuff, just because the environments that we were in. I never really understood it as a young person. It was just more of my parents always, "You've got to. . . Don't do this, don't do that. It's harder for us." But as we grew older, I started to understand a lot more. Black people just have to be more aware about certain things. I realize that now as an adult and working in this field.

Lester was raised in a family of multigenerational criminal justice workers and was taught to hold the system in high regard. Lester stated:

> My mother and father were both from law enforcement. My father was the third sheriff in my town. My mother worked in prison. My grandfather was the dietician in the prison. Every day, in my home, it was all I heard was about law enforcement, about doing the right thing, about the juvenile system, the laws, and anything that was appropriate, upstanding, and promising, addressing law enforcement.

Despite being proud of his family's commitment to their careers in the criminal justice system, Lester mentioned he still witnessed people viewing and treating his family negatively because of their chosen careers. He contended, "My parents were even recognized as martyrs within our neighborhood because of what they stood for and because . . . to law and law enforcement." Lester was raised in a family that held the criminal justice system in high regard and saw the negative experiences his parents had to endure because of it. In contrast, Anthony was raised to view the criminal justice system in a completely different context. Anthony said, "Me and my sisters and brothers were taught that police were people to avoid at all cost and that if you find yourself arrested for anything, you will pretty much be screwed by the system." He went on to give a very specific account of an experience his father endured with law enforcement that would shape his view of the system throughout his childhood. He recollected:

> I remember my mom telling about this time my dad and her were driving and got pulled over. My dad got frustrated with the cop for some reason and told him to give him his damn ticket so he can be on his way. My mom said there was an exchange of words and ultimately my dad was told to get out of the car and the next thing she remembers is him being thrown on the back of the car and put in handcuffs. He got charged with resisting arrest and something else I can't remember. Luckily, she said they let her drive the car home though. I think experiences like that are what created almost like this fear of police

> that my parents had and ultimately taught us. When I think about it, I cannot think of anybody in my family that has ever said they had a positive experience with police. I think just being raised around people that have had messed up experiences with police taught us that they were out to get us and to avoid them at all cost as best you can.

Anthony went on to speak directly about being a change agent in the justice system and how his taught negative perception help shaped that belief. He asserted, "I think growing up the way I did and having the mentality I had about police really shaped my mindset about wanting to do something about how messed up the system was and not just avoid it."

The interview data above allowed me to affirm that each coresearcher had a passion for supporting youth in the juvenile system and holding more accountable. Each coresearcher described frustrations he had with the system and past experiences relating to the system that were motivating factors to support changing the system and improving young people's lives. However, doing the day-to-day work of a juvenile parole officer requires navigating different experiences each day. The unpredictable nature of their schedules will be discussed in the next section.

Theme 2: Erratic/Varied Schedule

No day being quite the same was an emerging theme as the coresearchers gave countless examples of the unpredictable nature of their schedules. Each coresearcher described how managing the chaotic nature of their schedule is a fundamental part of being an African American juvenile parole and probation officer. Furthermore, having pressure to meet the demands of their capricious schedules due to what they believe are unequitable work performance standards is the driving force behind this emergent theme.

During the discussions about what some of the demands looks like, Frederick stated:

> In an 8-hour day, I think it starts off with the unknown. Because we get in the office. You get some email, kids and programs, kids not doing well. Or you get some type of notification and the parole kids you have in the community have some type of police contact. Or you have kids that are in the back of detention waiting for court hearings or you got a kid maybe on warrant status got picked up. Then you have got to set up a revocation hearing. Or you got some pre-commit youth that may have a court hearing that you got to attend or put referrals out for programs to get them placed in residential. You're constantly always on the move.

Frederick went on the discuss how each day he is required to critically think around the decisions that he makes that impacts youth lives. He claimed:

> There's a lot of thinking and thought processing throughout the day about what's going on with your youth. What's your next move? Because it's like a game of chess. Kids on warrant status I need to make sure I run by his house. Call the parents see if they've seen him. You got kids who are pre commits. You got to make sure you put referrals out for residential programs. That means calling programs, seeing where things are at, talking to program managers and all that. You got court stuff coming up. It really is nonstop.

Gerald echoed Frederick's sentiment. He mentioned how unpredictable an African American juvenile parole and probation officer's schedule is. Gerald stated:

> I will say no day is the same. I try to plan out my schedule but planning in this job can be pretty difficult, but we're required to see our kids every 30 days, we're participating in treatment planning meetings. Almost kind of like reviews, we're seeing how kids are doing in their treatment. We have to travel to see kids. We travel a lot, we drive a lot. Phone calls, emails, putting out fires at programs, putting out fires with family members,

writing court reports. Collaborating with community partners, paperwork, writing case notes. No day is the same. So, I feel like that's a pretty hard question because we are kind of all over the place.

Lester also referenced the multitude of possible experiences over the course of a day. He said:

> I work with young people and young adults. I head, guide, and lead them through life's experiences. Develop, create, assist, adapt, put them in school, hold them accountable and teach them. And my experiences through all of those things as a PO, here in this state and other states are one sided, partial, and poorly influenced.

Anthony discussed the pressures of having such a wide-ranging list of duties as an African American juvenile parole and probation officer as well. He stated:

> Over an 8-hour day what am I doing . . . hahahaha man in this job no one day is the same. There are certain things in this job that you are doing but they are scrambled up and change at any given moment. For example, over the course of a day I could have court, go to residential programs to check in on kids, go to kid's homes, schools and all that. The first thing I do when I get to my office most days are check emails though. Even though I have my phone connected to my hip with my email on it. There are usually programs, and other stakeholders in the kids' lives hitting me up asking for information about the kid. After I do that, I usually plan my day out if I haven't already. Like I said I could have court, I could have a treatment plan meeting with a kid at a program, I could have to respond to crisis wherever a kid maybe.

Anthony went into more detail about what he sees, feels and experiences throughout a day as well. He asserted:

> I am seeing the emotions and motives of everyone I am in front for each kid I am with at any given moment. In court, attorneys, and the kid's families are focused on the kids having the least consequence as possible and are very treatment focused. For example, and I won't put a name to it and will generalize. A kid could have beat up a person on the bus and stolen their cell phone. The attorney and the kid's family might argue the kid need impulse control or anger management, drug and alcohol treatment and all that. I am seeing the emotions and motives of everyone I am in front for each kid I am with at any given moment. In court, attorneys, and the kid's families are focused on the kids having the least consequence as possible and are very treatment focused. While the prosecutor might wholeheartedly focus on the level of danger this kid presents to the community if he can beat up random strangers on the bus for his cell phone. Both sides have points. A lot of times if this is a kid, I have had on my load previously and have been working with him, the judge will usually want a more reasonable assessment and recommendation from me.

Anthony proceeded to share the emotions he feels and his mindset about decision making in these moments. He recollected:

> As far as emotions go, I work in the people businessman. People that a lot of time are in some type of emotional state. I feel that. I experience that. I have to not discount that and still make a rational decision a lot of time very, very fast. Do I make right decisions all the time? Of course not, but I own my mistakes and I think families and the kids appreciate that. One of the reasons I love this gig is the variety in what a day could look like. I am rarely every sitting at a desk all day. Except when I have to get some case notes

or update case plans on a kid done. Otherwise, I am out in the field meeting and connecting. It is pretty cool.

Each discussion with the four coresearchers emphasized how extensive a day's schedule can be. As each coresearcher discussed their varied schedules, youth needs being met, and community safety was an emerging subtheme within their descriptions about a day's accounts.

Subtheme 1: Youth Needs Met and Community Safety

The desire to see youth needs met and/or keeping the community safe was articulated in each of coresearchers' descriptions about what a great day as a juvenile parole and probation officer resembled. When asked to describe details of a great day, Frederick referenced community safety as a priority. He asserted:

> I would say what makes it great, if I had a kid on warrant status and he gets picked up in a timely fashion and not get picked up with any type of new charges. Or you don't see them on the news for any type of violence. Because one part of our jobs is about community safety. It's kind of that, I know this kid's a dangerous kid. This is a kid that carries guns and I want to make sure he's off the streets. Because he might've had contact or there might be some investigation where he might've been involved in a shooting or something. A good day if he's picked up without any injuries or fatalities.

Gerald referenced the youth on his caseload's needs being met in the discussion. Gerald indicated,

> A great day on the job is by helping to put a kid in the right place for success. Just helping somebody. I would not necessarily say, Oh, I didn't get a phone call. A kid got kicked out or whatever. I would just saying a great day is knowing that you maybe put a

seed in a kid's mind or in a family member of a kid's mind that, hey, this is what I got to do to be successful in the community.

Lester resonated with Gerald's desire for youth needs being met. When asked to describe a great day as a juvenile parole and probation officer, he expressed,

> Positive reports with my kiddos in the education area. Such as that they were able to, to get the tutoring that they needed, that the program that I refer them to accepted them, and I know that they'll get their needs met. That I have an awesome day planned for the next day to put some more clients in some successful environments. And that the success rate of a client is looking good.

When asked the same question, Anthony combined both youth needs being met and community safety in his response. He outlined:

> A great day would be no revocation hearings, no calls about kids about to get kicked out of programs, no calls on new charges, or anyone has gotten hurt for sure. If I could just make my rounds and go check in on guys in a more supportive role while they work their way through treatment that would be ideal. The other day I was able to go to a program and play game of HORSE (basketball) with a kid. He was telling me about how well he was doing. While asking me to put his girlfriend on his call list, hahahah. But seriously it was a great day. Also, when you are able to just be out and connecting with kids and families who are not in crisis, you do not have to deal with the bureaucracy of knowing you work for a juvenile justice agency. You know? You are like a mentor just checking in rather than the compliance driving PO that they know is going to deliver news they don't want to here. You need those days sometimes.

Subtheme 2: Trust and Rapport Building

A second subtheme that developed from the interview discussions about the erratic nature of juvenile parole and probation officer schedules was the need for people in this job to establish professional relationships with youth and families. Each coresearcher mentioned how problem solving is a major component of their daily schedules and without the ability to build rapport, there is a limit on effectiveness. Gerald referenced an encounter he recently had with a young man on his caseload that he built a solid foundation of trust with as an example of strong rapport. He explained:

> Sometimes for example, I'm thinking of one specific kid, he's got paroled out maybe two or three months ago and he was, I put them in a residential placement. He felt that the placement wasn't working well for him and he respectfully said, "Hey, I don't think this is working for me, can we try to find something else." And this kid who I honestly thought was going to struggle is doing really well and he just recently went on a first home visit. I mean, he hasn't been home for nearly two years. His mom sent me pictures of, she was able to cook for her son for the first time in a long time. And she just said, "Thank you so much. You have really helped out a lot." That was great.

Frederick echoed Gerald's sentiment and mentioned being able to communicate with families in a way they understand. He stated:

> It's really kind of explaining to them so they have understanding. First of all, I have to have trust anyway. A lot of families. And not because they see me just working as in the system but also see me that I am working for their kid or whatever. And I'm not just here to get a paycheck. There's a lot of abuse you get from families. Initially was like, "You just here for a paycheck, you don't care about my kid." And this and that. I'm like, it's

not that I don't care for about him." It's like, "Look, I'm trying to put your young man in this good situation." "I am trying to get him not to end up in corrections" You know . . . . . do all we can then to keep him out of the system.

Lester openly discussed the way he builds trust and rapport with youth and families on his caseload. He asserted,

> Open door policy, willingness, caring, concern, open to listen, upstanding questions, have an understanding, invitation, thankful. Thankful and families and youth are thankful for being cared for. Appearing as though I am always accessible.

Anthony referenced the difference with working with White and Black families in the discussion about trust and rapport building. He insisted:

> You know, working with youth and families can vary man as well. You just really never know. I have some White kids and families respond to me better than Black youth and families. I would say in general there is more work required to understand each other. I mean like the cultural connection with Black families help in establishing rapport but is not there when building that rapport with other races. That is not necessarily a bad thing though. It just requires more work on my part to understand the youth and family. I pride myself on being able to work with any kid.

The described experiences involving the erratic schedule of African American juvenile parole officers made it transparent that their jobs require relationship building skills and the fortitude to hold youth accountability to keep the community safe. A significant point I used to develop the theme and subthemes in this section while also referencing in my field notes was how each coresearcher felt more obligated than their White colleagues to be responsive to each day's demands and unpredictable nature due to inequitable standards amongst White and African

American juvenile parole and probation officers. Additionally, there was internalized pressure to be a positive African American representative of the juvenile justice system to African American families. This dual identity navigation will be explored further in the next section.

Theme 3: Navigating Identity Duality

> "Working with my colleagues, being a Black PO, there is a different standard."
>
> —Frederick

African Americans whose occupations are within the criminal justice system must balance two different identities whose communities offer largely contrasting views of each other (Faller, 2019). This assertion was further explored with each coresearcher. Gerald referenced how being an African American juvenile parole officer and navigating working within that system presents its frustrations when working with Black families. When discussing Black youth accountability, Gerald stated:

> The more frustrating part about that is that the family blames the system and when I hold the kid accountable, I am just a Black sellout apart of that system. I know they're mad at me, but I'm just the worker. So, I mean, I've been cussed out, everything, people call my supervisor.

Frederick referenced the challenges of being held to a different "standard" than his colleague's numerous times and having to be mindful of his Black identity while navigating his juvenile justice work. He asserted:

> If I yell at my kids, it'd be a different standard. So, I have to be aware of how I am interacting with people. And then you looking at as far as when you out in your community. It is still a difference because you feel you can't really be yourself because . . . some Black people trip over us doing what we do. Can't change people

though. But I also have to wear a different lens when I'm here as a juvenile parole officer. Because if I was to be myself outside of that, it'd be a different story. And so I got to be cognitive, my surroundings, how I approach and move.

Lester mentioned how he reminisces on the values his parents taught him about navigating the justice system as a Black employee. He asserted, "I always consider myself walking on eggshells and glass shards. I had to reflect back on my mother and father. They carry the level of professionalism, community respect, love, and some other stuff that I continue to try to grab at." He proceeded to discuss how he must act "outstandingly" navigating his work in the juvenile system as an African American. Lester claimed:

> There's a separation of being Black and working in this work but, and I use the "but" in there to say that I have to conduct myself outstandingly all the way across the board no matter what, because that gets me to be able to do to things in my other positions and my other things, and be recognized as an even keel person.

Anthony offered a specific example about being an African American working in the juvenile system. He explained, "I have had a judge assume I was a parent instead of the PO in court for example. You can tell some people just have not experienced seeing Black people in certain roles like the one I am in." Anthony further discussed how his Black identity helps define his juvenile justice identity. He claimed:

> I think the cultural identity of African Americans are so strong that it really helps with building that initial relationship and it helps you sustain it over time if you are strong with relationship building in general. If you are not good at building rapport though, the cultural connection may get you in the door but long term it won't help at all. Matter of fact, that is usually when words like *sell out* and *Uncle Tom* are thrown at you. With all

> that said though, my blackness helps shape my juvenile justice identity. They are one in the same and my blackness is a part of my work identity. I really feel like a hybrid.
>
> I can work with African American families but can also connect in any juvenile justice environment just as well. It does not always look like sunshine and rainbows, but it is necessary. Being a Black PO and interacting with the Black community can be very challenging. If I am being honest, I try not to tell Black folks what I do because of the cultural stigma around it. I don't want people telling me I am a sellout or anything like that. It's tough man. Black people don't care about where your heart is if they know you work for a system in their eyes that locked their friend or family member up.

As each coresearcher discussed how they navigate being an African American and being a juvenile parole and probation officer, the significance of being a positive African American justice system representative was consistently communicated. This cultural representation will be further explored in the next section.

Subtheme 1: Cultural Representation

When discussing if the coresearchers thought there is a difference in their African American identity and juvenile justice identity, an emerging subtheme of the need for African American representation in the work they do consistently surfaced. Gerald mentioned the need for African American youth in the juvenile system to have "good role models." He said, "just being an African American, I think it's good to have good role models for these youth that we work with." He further explained:

> Because there's nothing wrong with being an athlete, or an artist, or any of that stuff, but I think it's good to have positive role models in an authority professional that they can see like, "Hey, everybody's not bad in this position," we want to sit and help you.

When discussing whether his African American identity positively or negatively supports his ability to be an effective juvenile parole and probation officer, Frederick stated:

> I would say positively, because the young men that I worked with are kids of color. Right. Because I think I can hopefully have some type of relationship that they can relate to, but also give my experiences, right. I think it's easier to navigate, for me, as a Black man, that the young men will kind of listen, opposed to with some of my White colleagues, right.

Lester referenced a recent example of a "counterpart" offering their gratitude for having an African American PO working on a particular case. He asserted:

> I receive emails and phone calls from my counterparts letting me know how grateful they are that I, a Black PO, am working on a case, or that they have an opportunity to work with me again and my community partners and all the rest of the other police agencies, FBI, juvenile department, and other legal areas, especially in court. When a judge says "Sir, it's good to see you here in my courtroom, I know you will have everything in place." So yes, I take pride being recognized and being recognized for knowing what I'm doing or when a client on my case has success or hoping to move towards success, that my counterparts know that they have a good person working for them and can culturally understand them.

Anthony discussed the positive and negative components of being an African American working as a juvenile justice professional. He stated:

> I think for the most part Black families appreciate having someone that looks like them to help navigate the ins and outs of the system but when it comes down to accountability, they will see you as just a cog in the "White man's system" rather than being someone

> helping their child make better decisions. It has its good and bad man. I think Black culture needs to figure out what it wants honestly. We complain about the system and then look at Blacks that work in the system as selling out. Some may do sell out though. I can't argue that, but things will never change if we keep pushing that same narrative on everyone that is Black that works in it. Especially when they are trying to help their children. It really comes out when they want you to help plead a case that makes no sense. Like I can't advocate for certain things when your child has done blatant crimes against the community and has victims. There has to be accountability too.

As I conducted semistructured interviews with each coresearcher and descriptions of their experiences representing the African American community was communicated, being hypervigilant about the perception's juvenile justice professionals and youth families have of them was an emergent subtheme. This perception awareness will be further investigated in the next section.

Subtheme 2: Perception Awareness

A second emerging subtheme when discussing the identity duality of African American juvenile parole and probation officers was the need for them to constantly be aware of how they are perceived in their work environments. Frederick mentioned:

> You also got to be mindful of your approach because I don't want my approach to be just because I'm doing it because I'm Black. And it's really not that. It's about [being] . . . accountable and White or Black or Brown or blue or green. I'll do the same thing for anybody. And so you really have to be mindful when you're working with other ethnicities and another culture. I'm going to do the same thing if you were this person or

that person. There's no color differences. I'm not going to treat one way and not the other. I'm fair across the board.

Gerald referenced how being an African American juvenile parole and probation officer forces him to be more well-prepared than his White colleagues. He stated:

> I feel that I always have to be on my A-game. I feel like I need to know my cases well. I feel like I need to be the, be able to articulate things well. . . . You don't belong in, it was like, oh like where did he go to school? What degree did you get? What did you do before this? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I mean this is a very competitive field to get in. So, people are always looking at you like, Oh, how did you get it? I know I can do better than you.

Lester also gave very specific insight into how he is keenly aware of the way his is perceived for being an African American in the juvenile justice system work environment. He explained:

> Having to have to go over the top. Having to have to do much extra. Having to feel that whatever I present is going to be questioned. Feeling that there's going to be an audit. Realizing that body language speaks louder than words. And so I watch the people, in some cases, look down their noses or that they have something negative to say, or knowing that they are negative and wanting to play it as if they didn't mean any harm, but they said it anyway. An example is, a couple of days ago, I was at a meeting about a client and this person was talking to me, and in closure they said, "Well that a boy." And so then about 20 minutes later they did it again.

Anthony also gave an intriguing account of having to be more aware of how he is perceived than his White counterparts. He asserted:

> Being Black and working in this system, you have to hold yourself to a higher standard than White folks too. What I mean is, some people automatically assume you either are not a PO, you can't possibly be a PO, or the decisions you make are not the sharpest or most effective. You really have to have your ducks in a row working in his system as a Black man. I have personally seen White folks do things that they should have been straight up fired for, get a pass on. It's crazy. But this person is managing some Black cases. What do you think the family and the kids this dude is working with think about the system? That's what I am saying. Then you have me come in and say the system ain't that bad, your behavior need needs to improve kid. It is kind of BS sometimes because the person they are dealing with may be that bad. I have been in this business along time man . . . crazy enough well over 20 years now. I have worked in the correctional institution and as a PO and I can tell you this; As a Black man you have to be way more aware of how you operate and the decisions you make and being Black helps you when navigating conversations with Black families. It has its good and bad.

Each coresearcher offered detailed experiences of having to be more aware of their decision-making and how they are perceived as African Americans conducting their job duties. Based on each coresearchers' account, navigating their African American identity within the juvenile justice system as an employee requires a heightened sense of awareness. The next section will summarize findings explored in this chapter.

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 introduced the transcendental phenomenological discoveries of the lived experiences of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, this chapter reiterated the research design, data collection, and analysis

methods used in this study. This chapter also outlined the following three themes and six subthemes that emerged from the interview dialogue with each coresearcher:

- Theme 1: Youth support and accountability
    - Subtheme 1: Frustrations with the criminal justice system
    - Subtheme 2: Negative perceptions/experiences with the criminal justice system
- Theme 2: Erratic/varied schedules (including the belief that as African American juvenile parole and probation officers, there is a need to be more competent, meet the demands of an unpredictable schedule, and manage unequitable work performance standards)
    - Subtheme 1: Youth needs met/ community safety
    - Subtheme 2: Trust and rapport building
- Theme 3: Navigating identity duality
    - Subtheme 1: Cultural representation
    - Subtheme 2: Perception

The discussions with the four coresearcher's explored complex and multilayered experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, these discussions provided a wealth of rich and thick descriptions that provided insight into the coresearchers' shared experiences.

In Chapter 5, I will summarize the discoveries from this transcendental phenomenological research study by combining the findings with the research question and subquestions. I will also relate the findings to the literature and the conceptual framework that guided this study. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I will provide recommendations for juvenile justice

agencies and for future research, all reflected from the described lived experiences of the coresearchers of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The previous four chapters outlined how the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers is a phenomenon that has seen few prior research studies, the historical context of the phenomenon, and a justification of the chosen research design. There was also research into how this demographic of juvenile parole and probation officer must navigate two identities that have historically had opposing views of each other (Faller, 2019).

This chapter will summarize the findings of this research study and describe how the findings, which were developed from the interview dialogue of the coresearchers, aligned with the central research question and subquestions. Additionally, this chapter will provide recommendations for juvenile justice agencies, to hopefully assist, better acknowledge, support, and recruit African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Lastly, in this chapter, I will propose topics for future research, all reflected from the described lived experiences of the coresearchers of the study. It is imperative to remember that although the findings from this study have value, the number of coresearchers were limited, and because of this, the findings may not represent the entire body of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest.

However, according to Carminati (2018), the traditional belief that generalization is often associated with sampling is controversial in qualitative research studies. No approach definitively explains researcher claims of data saturation based on the number of coresearchers in a study (Morse, 1995, as cited in Carminati, 2018). Based on this notion, the outline for a satisfactory qualitative study sample size is typically predicated on a researcher's understanding,

the quality of the findings and ultimately, the decision of the researchers' faculty chair (Boddy, 2016, as cited in Carminati, 2018). Therefore, qualitative research generalization is typically not based on samples sizes large enough to extend results, but on theories used and developed that can be extended to other studies (Beck, 1991; Ragin, 1987, as cited in Maxwell, 2012). According to Carminati (2018), generalization in qualitative studies is possible. It looks different than quantitative studies because it is analytical and/or theoretical rather than sample size based. According to Lee and Baskerville, as cited in Carminati (2003; 2018), theories used and developed through the context of a specific phenomenon, does not diminish its methodical significance or exclude future researchers from using it in other cases. The theories that guided this research study will be further examined through the lens of the findings in order to support the reader being able to determine if theoretical generalization is possible.

Summary of the Results

This phenomenological research study sought to understand the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. According to Seidman (2013), "Phenomenological interviewing involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each coresearcher. As indicated earlier, phenomenological theory leads to an emphasis on exploring the meaning of peoples' experience in the context of their lives" (p. 20).

The lived experience of the four coresearchers of this study was explored through the following three data collection methods: three separate semistructured interviews, field notes with a self-reflective component, and artifacts. Furthermore, the review of previous literature revealed the lack of substantial research on the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole officers and justified the need to conduct this phenomenological study. Additionally, each of the four coresearchers were given a pseudonym to protect his identity and confidentiality.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will refer to each of the four coresearchers by the pseudonym given. They are as follows: Frederick; Lester; Gerald; and Anthony.

Based on the research question being explored in this study, the use of a phenomenological research design offered the most effective approach to explore, analyze, and understand the lived experiences of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The following central question and three subquestions guided and informed this research study:

Research Question

RQ. What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following three subquestions assisted in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question:

Subquestions

SQ1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system?

SQ2. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities?

SQ3. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities?

Review of Themes and Subthemes

Guided by the subquestions above and the interview dialogue with each coresearcher, I read, reread, assessed, and coded the raw semistructured interview data for emergent themes. The four coresearchers of this study all shared and described experiences relating to each of

these themes and subthemes. These three themes and six subthemes uncovered the essence of the four coresearchers' lived experiences as African American juvenile parole and probation officers:

- Theme 1: Youth support and accountability
    - Subtheme 1: Frustrations with the criminal justice system
    - Subtheme 2: Negative perceptions/experiences with the criminal justice system
- Theme 2: Erratic/varied schedules
    - Subtheme 1: Youth needs met/ community safety
    - Subtheme 2: Trust and rapport building
- Theme 3: Navigating identity duality
    - Subtheme 1: Cultural representation
    - Subtheme 2: Perception awareness

To phenomenologically explore and understand the lived experienced of a demographic within the context of a certain phenomenon, there must be shared experiences amongst each coresearcher. According to Nellickappilly (n.d.), the essential component of phenomenology is to study a phenomenon through the lens of multiple conscious experiences and discover a universal essence. The identified theme and subthemes listed above reflect the shared experiences amongst each coresearcher of this study. In the following paragraphs, the commonalities of the coresearchers' experiences will be aligned with the subquestions that guided this research study.

Subquestion Review

Subquestion 1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system? Previous studies on role identity conflict of African American law enforcement officers have sought to explain the conflict that African American law enforcement officers experience as an outcome of being members of two groups who have historically been opposed to each other (Perlow, 2008). However, there have been few prior studies that sought to understand this identity duality amongst African American juvenile parole and probation officers and their motivation to operate within their work environment.

Each coresearcher for this research study provided shared experiences that relayed their motivation to be juvenile parole and probation officers. Additionally, the four coresearchers described previous jobs working with youth involved in the juvenile system either in a juvenile correctional facility or at a residential program contracted with a juvenile justice agency, as a motivating factor. Gerald spoke fondly of the parole officers he worked with while working in residential programs, "I started working in a residential program and I always kind of admired the POs coming in and working with the youth." He proceeded to share how his interactions with parole officers are what drove his interest to do the work. Gerald stated:

> Just looking, talking to the POs that were coming to the program and asking them kind of what do they do, how can I get into this field. Just I think more helping youth and their families individual was something that I really felt I would be good at.
>
> Prior to becoming a juvenile parole and probation officer.

Gerald is a former caseworker for the Department of Human Services. He referenced his time at the Department of Human Services when desribing working with adjuducated youth.

Gerald contended, “That gave me a lot of experience as far as casework, how to work with families, how to work in the court system. And actually, how to work with POs.” Gerald also reiterated that the desire to be a positive African American representative within the juvenile justice system was also a motivating factor to pursue a job in the juvenile justice system. “Just being another African American person that can help in the community, I just think that it’s much needed.” He proceeded to clarify that his desire to see more positive African American cultural influences, does not minimize the needs of other cultures but firmly believes in what he represents as an African American in an influential role. Gerald argued:

> There’s nothing wrong with other cultures, but I think sometimes it’s good to see people that look like me. I think it’s good for the kids that I work with to see people that look like me or look like them. So just that was just motivation enough for me to keep on going, keep the grind going. I just wanted to make a difference.

Lester came from a family that has a history of working within the criminal justice system. During the discussion, he routinely reminded me that, “Both my mother and father were both from law enforcement.” Growing up around the environment was a motivating factor for him to pursue a career as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He claimed:

> My father was the third sheriff in my town. My mother worked in prison. My grandfather was the dietician in the prison. Every day, in my home, it was all I heard was about law enforcement, about doing the right thing, about the juvenile system, the laws, and anything that was appropriate, upstanding, and promising, addressing law enforcement.

Lester spoke proudly about his family lineage with criminal justice careers and this daily immersion was a motivating factor for entering into his career. After working a series of odd jobs

in his youth, he recollected on how he approached his parents about pursuing a career in juvenile justice:

> Me coming back to my parents, asking them if I can get a job where they worked. And they said, "Well sure. Keep in mind when you get a job with us, in this environment, you have a job for the rest of your life until you get ready to stop working."

After working in state correctional institutions for several years, Lester recounted how experiences working with young people in close custody motivated him to be a juvenile parole and probation officer. He recollected, "I got tired of seeing our young people, young adults, continuing to fail. They continued to come back into jail saying that I had no other choice, there was nothing for me to receive or to have" It was from these experiences that his motivation to become a juvenile parole and probation emerged. Lester believed these young people had opportunities in the community and he wanted to help them navigate their resources. He said, "I saw it different. So, to pursue a [PO] position in juvenile justice, would give me an opportunity to work with those persons."

Anthony started his juvenile justice career in juvenile corrections and was motivated to pursue a juvenile parole and probation officer by the impact he could make on youth lives in that role and in a community setting. He mentioned how maintaining a good work performance in corrections and sustaining healthy relationships with colleagues enabled him to promote into a parole officer role. "I kind of just stuck around, did not rub people the wrong way and was able to get promoted into the role I am in now eventually." He proceeded to convey how his role as an African American juvenile parole and probation officer meets his long-standing desire to support positive youth outcomes. "My motivation has always been to help kids make better decisions.

Now at this point in my career, I do not think there is a better field where kids need support making better decisions."

When Anthony was asked about his prior personal and professional experiences that motivated him to become a juvenile parole and probation officer, he claimed, "I think growing up the way I did and having the mentality I had about police really shaped my mindset about wanting to do something about how messed up the system was and not just avoid it."

Frederick referenced his past jobs working in residential programs with youth who were in Department of Human Services and a juvenile justice agency custody when describing his motivations for pursuing a job in the juvenile justice system. As he reminisced on his motivations, he recalled the type of conversations he would have with youth:

> Let's better yourself and be better than this. Your mom or dad's gone, or dad's on drugs or dad's incarcerated. What could you do to better yourself? You're the oldest of your siblings, get your degree. The actions you are taking . . . your siblings are seeing that and they're trying to emulate that, right?

It was through conversations like the one above and the transitioning to different positions such as a case manager for residential programs, behavior specialist in the school system, and a safety specialist for youth mental health organizations that motivated him to navigate towards a juvenile parole and probation officer position. After describing experiences in all the positions as motivating factors, Frederick stated:

> I saw a lot of guys go homeless and all these other facets. So that really motivated me to become a juvenile parole and probation officer. I've kind of seen the facets of being a residential case manager, working in the school system, and working in adult mental health. And what I now bring to the table is how I can help guide or steer some of these

young men as far as possible away from the adult system. And that's what I really try to focus and do in my job as a PO.

After reviewing raw interview dialogue of each coresearcher, I found it was past negative experiences, family connection with the criminal justice system, African American representation within the juvenile system, and/or past jobs working with youth involved in the juvenile system that were motivating factors to pursue careers in the juvenile justice system.

Subquestion 2: How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities? According to Snyder and Sickmund, as cited in Schwalbe and Maschi (2009), 60% of youth offender interactions with the juvenile justice system are with their probation officers as a part of their court-ordered community supervision. When navigating discussions with the four coresearchers of this study, each of them described details of what that 60% of time consists of and other career experiences that were relevant to the phenomenon being studied. For instance, Gerald described the type of problems solving his days consist of as he lives out his professional identity as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He stated, "I'm looking at emails, seeing if anything happened overnight. "Did any of my kids blow up?" Meaning, did they get in fights or did they run away from a program? "Are they getting kicked out, whatever, et cetera." Gerald continued to describe other components of being employed as a juvenile parole and probation officer, "We travel a lot, we drive a lot. Phone calls, emails, putting out fires at programs, putting out fires with family members, writing court reports. Collaborating with community partners, paperwork, writing case notes. No day is the same."

Anthony also described the multitude of activities he engages in each day as he lives out his professional identity as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He stated, "I could have court,

I could have a treatment plan meeting with a kid at a program, I could have to respond to crisis wherever a kid may be." When describing what he experiences when his mental limits are met, Anthony said, "It is usually those days where you are fielding a lot of phone calls from a kid being in crisis. Meaning has gotten hurt, caught new charges, or the family is just concerned about stuff." He mentioned how juvenile parole and probation officers "have to know when to step back and breathe because the work never stops."

When asked how he lives out his professional identity, Frederick reflected on his train of thought when he experiences a youth being hurt or murdered while under his supervision. He reminisced, "I'm always thinking like, 'What if I should've did this. Or maybe if I had gone back, I should've did this or I should've locked him up.' It's a lot of these what ifs and what you could have do differently." Frederick also describe the variety of events that may take place and how he has to problem-solve consistently. He claimed, "Kids on warrant status I need to make sure I run by his house. Call the parents see if they've seen him. Kids who are pre commits, you got to make sure you put referrals out for residential programs." Frederick gave numerous examples of how living out your professional identity as a juvenile parole and probations officer includes large amounts of problem solving over the course of a day.

When describing his experiences of living out his professional identity, Lester described the variety of tasks he manages over the course of a workday. He said, "I work with young people and young adults. I head, guide, and lead them through life's experiences. Develop, create, assist, adapt, put them in school, hold them accountable and teach them." Each coresearcher described the complex and wide-reaching activities and problems solving that exist as they live out their professional identities.

Subquestion 3: How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities? Muhammad (2016) stated, "It is important to understand whether social attitudes and cultural factors are related to officers' decision making with regard to working with juveniles in a cross-cultural context" (p. 2). However, despite this perspective, minimal research studies have focused on the professional and personal experiences of probation officers (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001).

Each of the four coresearchers in this study described specific detail about their experiences living out their personal identities within the context of working within the juvenile justice system. During the conversation about living out his personal identity, Gerald described how necessary it is for Black youth in the juvenile system to have positive role models that "look like them." He asserted:

> Just being an African American, I think it's good to have good role models for these youth that we work with because there's nothing wrong with being an athlete, or an artist, or any of that stuff, but I think it's good to have positive role models in an authority professional that they can see like, "Hey, everybody's not bad in this position," we want to sit and help you. Just being another African American person that can help in the community. I just think that it's much needed. There's nothing wrong with other cultures, but I think sometimes it's good to see people that look like me. I think it's good for the kids that I work with to see people that look like me or look like them.

Gerald proceeded to further elaborate and describe good and bad experiences of living out his personal identity as a juvenile parole and probation officer. He stated:

> I've had good and bad. I've had good where it's like, "Oh my gosh, thank you. I've been hoping that my son can find a positive Black guy. He's never had a role model; he's

never had that in his life. And thank you for working with him and providing him everything that he needs and you know, hold him in accountable and still being there for him." So those have been really good. And the more frustrating part about that is that the family blames the system and when I hold the kid accountable, I am just a Black sellout apart of that system. I know they're mad at me, but I'm just the worker. I don't think it matters who it is.

When asked how he lives out his personal identity in the context of being a juvenile parole and probation officer, Lester gave an example of an interaction he had with a judge and how he advocated for African American representation in a board meeting but was rudely dismissed. He recollected:

> I approached a judge one day, and at that present time there was no persons of color on the judges board and I asked the judge, I say, after a conference, "Hey, it would be nice when making decisions with the curriculum that you had spoke about at the conference to have some persons of color on the panel with you." The judge spoke up, or spoke roughly, "Well we're not going to just have a person of color, a judge, a person of color." I said, well, that's not what I'm talking about. He didn't let me finish. What I'm asking, or giving a suggestion is that you have a person of color, a judge that's in your midst. So, when you're having your round table when these different subjects of culture and substance comes up, you got somebody that can relate and can talk about them in a way that a representative of other culture's voices are heard. And that judge said "Oh. Yeah, okay sir, have a good, have a good day."

Anthony also described positive and negative experiences with living out his personal identity and working with African American families as a juvenile parole and probation officer.

When asked to describe how his personal identity impacts his work as a juvenile parole and probation officer, Anthony claimed:

> I think for the most part Black families appreciate having someone that looks like them to help navigate the ins and outs of the system but when it comes down to accountability, they will see you as just a cog in the "White man's system" rather than being someone helping their child make better decisions. It has its good and bad man. I think Black culture needs to figure out what it wants honestly. We complain about the system and then look at Blacks that work in the system as selling out. Some may do sell out though. I can't argue that, but things will never change if we keep pushing that same narrative on everyone that is Black that works in it—especially when they are trying to help their children. It really comes out when they want you to help plead a case that makes no sense.

Each of the four coresearchers in this study described experiences of navigating the positives and negatives of being an African American that works in the juvenile justice system. The desire to be a positive influence despite having to navigate the negative experiences were prevalent in each coresearcher's description. The next section provides a thorough summary of the subquestion analysis.

Summary of Analyzed Subquestions

The three themes and six subthemes that emerged from the phenomenological analysis of the four coresearchers of this study embodied the essence of their experiences. Furthermore, the four coresearchers in this study described through their lived experience, the intricate, detailed, and often complex realities of being an African American and a juvenile parole and probation officer. Through the lens of the described experiences of coresearchers in this study who are both

newer in their careers (5 years or fewer) and more tenured (15 years or more), I discovered that frustration exists over the life an African American juvenile parole and probation career due to lack of sufficient diversity in leadership roles and inadequate services/treatment for African American youth. There were additional shared described experiences about being held to a higher standard than White colleagues around decision-making and actions taken pertaining to youth. Each coresearcher also described their perceptions of the juvenile system and the misalignment of their values with their perceptions of the juvenile justice system. However, the motivation to support youth growth and to be a positive influence in African American youth lives seemed to outweigh their frustrations with this misalignment of values.

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Through the framework of qualitative research designs like phenomenology a continued focus on unpacking the shared experiences of racism, discrimination, and inequitable practices that such a vital position within the juvenile justice system witnesses or endures can continue to unravel. Juvenile parole and probation officers are charged with making decisions that have far reaching impact on the youth's lives place under their supervision. Muhammad (2016) stated, "Minimal research has been conducted to investigate probation officers' decision making and their strategies and approaches to individual youth on probation" (p. 2). It is imperative to continue exploring the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probations officer because those experiences shape their decision making which influences the outcome of youths' lives. It is crucial to the life outcomes of youth under juvenile court supervision to identify whether social attitudes and cultural influences are related to juvenile parole and probation officers' judgment within the framework of youth supervision (Muhammed, 2016).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study's findings are limited to the coresearchers shared reality of the phenomenon being studied. According to Moreno (2002), "No matter the phenomenon being investigated, the conclusions derived by the researcher apply only to that aspect of reality that was perceived by all participants and mutually identified by both parties" (p. 1765). Because of this limitation, this study cannot be generalized for larger sample sizes. The findings from this study are limited to the shared realities of the coresearcher's described experiences. I utilized interview transcripts, field notes, and artifacts to gather intricate detail about the shared realities of African American juvenile parole and probation officers. However, the findings are limited to components of the coresearchers' experiences that were shared.

I collected data by conducting semistructured interviews with four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. The essence of the four coresearchers lived experiences—described earlier in this chapter—align with the experience and motivations of law enforcement officers that are described in Chapter 2. Additionally, this study explored the shared experiences of juvenile probation officer's lives that impact their career decisions. The need to further explore this phenomenon, was a recurring recommendation amongst the few prior research studies that have been conducted on similar topics (Schwalbe & Maschi, 2009).

This research study was restricted to African Americans employed by a juvenile justice agency as a juvenile parole and probation officer in the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, these coresearchers had to have been employed in their roles for fewer than 5 years and more than 15 years. The reason for this variance was to discover the essence of shared experiences over the life of a career. For example, I discovered that despite the variance in years worked and two of

the four coresearchers being employed outside of the juvenile justice system before becoming juvenile parole and probation officers, they each were essential to the discovered essence. Additionally, each coresearcher met the minimum education requirement of holding at least a 4-year bachelor's degree to become a juvenile parole and probation officer with an agency in the Pacific Northwest where this study was conducted.

Implication of the Findings for Theory, Practice and Policy

This research study was guided by a conceptual framework consisting of the following three theories: SIT, CRT, and P−O fit theory. While these theories helped structure the nature of this study, the data collection and analysis process were not constrained by them and I was readily willing to accept if themes emerged that did not align with either one of them theories used. The next three sections will communicate how the findings of this study align with each theory of the conceptual framework.

Social identity theory. According to Turner and Tajfel (1986), SIT suggests that the social groups a person belongs to establishes a level of that person's concept of self. Furthermore, it allows people to merge into social groups and characterize each other based on these groups. One of the emergent themes of this study outlined how the four coresearchers were very much aware of their social groups (e.g., African Americans and juvenile justice system) and how they navigate operating in both of those spaces. Numerous described experiences were detailed pertaining the benefits and frustrations with being members of both social groups. Each coresearcher described being perceived as second tier status as African American employees and being held to a more rigid standard than their White colleagues. Furthermore, the lived experiences of having to navigate a more demanding and erratic schedule due to being held to a

different stand was also shared. This recognized status by each coresearchers led to numerous described frustrations with the juvenile justice system.

However, the two coresearchers with 5 years or fewer were more idealistic about being African American change agents in the juvenile justice system. They each described experiences of seemingly wanting to be the bridge that better unites these two social groups, despite their negative experiences. The other two coresearchers with 20 years' experience or more seemed to accept the disparities in the juvenile justice system that African Americans face and focused more on being positive influences for youth on their caseloads. The navigation of the two social identities changed over time based on the research findings.

Critical race theory. According to Highsmith (1996) Whites hold most executive level positions and hold the decision-making power in nearly all levels of government. The framework of CRT asserts American laws and dominant White cultural social order are formed to preserve White privilege and systemic power, which allows White's to remain at the top of the political, legal, and social systems in the U.S. These entities support the direct and indirect mistreatment of people of color, social disdain of their culture, and a climate of overall abuse of people of color (Bitz, 2004). In this research study, I explored the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest to understand and examine their social group identity as African Americans and as juvenile parole and probation officers. Each coresearcher in this study described experiences and frustrations with the lack of African American leadership in the juvenile justice system. There were also numerous described experiences of having to navigate the lack of adequate services and treatment options for African American youth under juvenile supervision. Two of the coresearchers gave specific examples of direct discriminatory practice at the hands of judges and lawyers they have had to manage.

According to Delgado et al. (2001), CRT promotes the need to include the equality theory, and the unbiased principles of the constitution when discussing and interpreting the law. The principles behind CRT were prevalent in numerous shared experiences amongst the coresearchers.

Person−Organization fit theory. According to Kristoff (1996), P–O fit occurs when the employee displays the aptitude to meet the employer workload demand, and the organization fulfils the employee's values, goals, and interests. Based on the numerous examples and described experiences by the coresearchers of this study, P–O fit theory was not substantiated. None of the coresearchers in this study definitively claimed their juvenile justice system employer fulfils their values, goals, and interests. In fact, when asked how their value system aligns with their employers, each coresearcher responded similarly, while referencing different examples of how it did not align. Each of the four coresearchers seemed to be committed to improving youths' lives and helping keep them from the adult system as factors to persist despite the misalignment of values.

Recommendations for practice and policy. During the interview discussions with each coresearcher, there were several statements made that offered suggestions based on their experiences for improving African American juvenile parole and probation officer African American recruitment practices, as well as how to retain the existing ones over the life of a 25-30 year career. For example, Anthony made this comment on the topic:

> Man, I think just valuing the one's they already have and using what they think more to create policies and procedures. The only thing I have seen the agency do is get a Black PO's supervisor to tell him he is going to a job fair to represent the agency. They literally will just pick one of the few and say, "hey go be the Negro to rep the agency at this fair."

That ain't right man. I get what they are trying to do but don't use my color like that. The agency also needs to make it a point to engage more with communities of color in a positive way. We got to shake this idea that our system just wants to lock Black kids up and keep them there. I think you do that by just being more visible and engaging. Any chance we have to engage with the community in a positive way should get on it. Oh oh oh and get more supervisors in here that can connect with Black folks. You got supervisors in here that obviously treat White POs different than Black ones. It ain't right man. So yea, I would say get better supervisors. Ones that can connect with Black folks. Engage the POs that already work here and use what they have to say more to shape what we supposed to do and get out here in these communities, go to schools, and all these other cultural events in the area the shed a more positive light.

Lester offered insight on what juvenile justice could do to retain African American juvenile parole and probation officers. He argued:

Give them some opportunities for advancement, give them some opportunities to be able to supervise and manage and those kinds of things. In my case, I have applied over 35 times to positions within our agency and have never been looked upon for any management supervisory treatment position. I have the education as well as the knowledge and experience to be an asset, but there's other politics that plays a part and cuts away at the possibilities because you have nepotism and "good ole boy" and all the rest of those kinds of things that holds a person of color back from having an opportunity to be in management because it can be done without question. There's a lot of persons that has what it takes. Period. People of color that's here that can do that job. Our job, a manager's job, and any other job. I think there are very few persons of color here that are

in management positions that could influence the culture and help better serve our kids. They will throw a bone here and there and place one in the culturally specific service department, like they have a choice. Give more opportunities.

Frederick echoed Lester's sentiments on retaining African American juvenile parole and probation officers and suggested there be more opportunity for growth. He said:

> I say increase the opportunities for growth, right? I think, increasing the opportunities for growth like supporting going back to school, right? Being able to get the master's or something. Or developing these employees training for leadership opportunities, right? We don't have almost any Black managers in this agency. Especially in the field and the facilities where the kids are. I think increasing the amount of opportunities to pursue next steps, like after so many years as a PO, if they wanted to try and do something else, right? They have opportunities of growth, and these Black POs can be funneled into managers, and move up the ladder. So, we don't stay so stagnant where somebody sit and be like, "Okay, what should my next move be? Hmm, what should I do?" Well, the manager should be training them for leadership positions. "Create lanes for Black employees to feel like they can move up to managers. Right now, they don't exist."

Lastly, Gerald referenced more African American being involved in "higher level conversations" about tactics to recruit more minorities. He emphasized:

> I would say putting the Blacks that currently work here in the position to be a voice for the agency. You have some really smart and well-represented people here. Let them help you recruit, and I don't mean last minute calling them and telling them to go to a career fair. I mean like engage them in conversation around what it takes. Involve them more in the higher-level conversations. I think us going out and helping recruit is

> beneficial too, but it should be more than that because then we feel like you are just using us for our color. I think our agency and the system in general really, needs to do a better job of engaging with the Black community and teaching them about how to conduct themselves in court and be presentable. There should be more engagement and not just when it's time to give out consequences. That's part of the reason why the Black community feels the way it does now.

I was not able to determine the exact number of African American juvenile parole and/or probation officers in the Pacific Northwest but the coresearchers in this study all referenced a low number of the demographic in their respective agency. According to Wilson et al. (2015), nearly 50% of the law enforcement offices across the country employ 10 African American Officers or fewer and a need exists to examine African American law enforcement officer's perceptions and lived experiences to better recruit the demographic. Previous literature supports the narrative described by the coresearchers in this study that a need exists to improve African American criminal justice system employee recruitment practices and develop more equitable policies—while holding managers accountable to upholding them—to help retain the existing ones.

Recommendations for Further Research

Few research studies have focused on the professional and personal experiences of probation officers (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001). Sixty percent of interactions youth have with juvenile system workers are with their juvenile probation officers (Snyder & Sickmund, as cited in Schwalbe & Maschi, 2009), With the significant amount of influence and engagement juvenile parole and probation officers have over youths' lives and the lack of sufficient research on the topic, it is necessary more research studies be conducted on this phenomenon. The

phenomenological research design affords opportunities to conduct research studies on a multitude of lived experiences within the juvenile justice system. For example, I recommend a phenomenological study on the lived experience of African American youth who are under juvenile supervision. Based on the findings of this study, there seems to be a lack of appropriate services and treatment for this demographic of youth. Coresearcher Lester claimed:

> A lot of the funding streams and programs are based on children for children, other than ones that are of color. There are no adequate resources to the things that they need, the food or the services or the treatment and the development. And even to the staff, because the ratio of persons of color in some of our programs, there are no persons of color that work with the youth.

Additionally, other studies could be conducted on African American juvenile parole and probation officers from different regions across the globe that may have different ethnicity populations that could impact the experiences of the coresearchers.

Suggestions to Broaden the Research

The following suggestions to broaden future research are derived from the findings of this phenomenological study. This study centered on the lived experiences of four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. I also considered the delimitations of this study and I offer ways to broaden research beyond them in my forthcoming suggestions. According to Miner-Romanoff, (2012), phenomenology can be useful in criminal justice system related studies because researchers can examine individual experiences throughout the myriad of possible topics. It is my opinion that phenomenological studies that examine other juvenile parole and probation officer minority groups be explored. Indeed, phenomenological studies that explore women, self-identified LGBTQ community members, African American

managers, Latinos, and African American juvenile parole and probation officers from other regions would all extend the literature about this study's phenomenon. These proposed research studies all expand beyond the delimitations of this study, extend the literature on this topic, and provides more insightful knowledge to the scientific community about the phenomenon.

According to Manning and Raphael (2012), phenomenological researchers with criminal justice related topics recognize the traditional quantitative based researched designs used in criminal justice research studies do not provide substantial rationale on individual experiences and decision-making. The recommended studies above fill this scientific need. To reassert, these topics can quite possibly extend the literature regarding the lived experiences of minority employees/offenders of the criminal/juvenile justice system.

As I conducted the literature review for this research study, I recognized the substantial amount of criminal justice related studies with quantitative research designs. In fact, according to Copes et al. (2015), only between 5% and 10% of published articles in criminal justice journals are based in qualitative research designs. With this in mind and recognizing the existing need to further investigate studies related to African American employees within the criminal/juvenile justice system, I believe investigating the relationship between ethnicity-based pairing of minority youth and juvenile parole and probation officer and recidivism rates would extend the literature about this study's phenomenon. Examining the relationship between having culturally diverse leadership and minority employee turnover rates in the juvenile justice system setting would also extend the literature on this study's phenomenon beyond its delimitations.

As I sought to explore the lived experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers, it enabled me to assess a myriad of other areas within the scope of the phenomenon that would extend additional research within the scientific community. It was from

numerous professional and personal experiences that initially captivated my intrigue around the phenomenon researched in this study. In the next section, I will provide a conclusion to this research study.

Conclusion

According to Novak (2012), there is an overrepresentation of African Americans incarcerated within the criminal justice system. This disproportionate amount of contact is a factor that has resulted in the African American community largely developing a negative perception of the criminal justice system. Despite these factors, African Americans still pursue careers within the criminal justice system. Previous research has inadequately addressed why African Americans pursue long-term careers within the juvenile justice system, given the marginalization of youth from their community by that system. Brown (2003) stated, "the role that African American male juvenile probation officers play in the lives of young African American juvenile offenders has not been extensively explored (p. 3). To understand the experiences of African American juvenile parole and probation officers and how they navigate living and working within two social identity groups (i.e., African American and juvenile justice system), I conducted a phenomenological study interviewing four African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest. Interview transcripts were read over numerous times and then open coded, which allowed themes to emerge that reflected the essence of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The emergent themes reflect the rich and thick detail from each of coresearcher's lived experiences and provides understanding into the significance of conducting phenomenological research relating to this research study's phenomenon. Expanding upon previous literature, this research study was guided by SIT, CRT, and P–O fit theory. These theories were used as tools to

structure and analyze the four coresearchers described lived experiences but did not constrain my acceptances of the findings.

This study comes at a moment in America history where it seems to be as tumultuous a time as ever regarding law enforcement and African American community interactions. Every time a law enforcement officers go under investigation for the abuse of power, excessive use of force or murder of African Americans, it further divides the two communities and negatively places every subset of the criminal justice system—juvenile justice system included—in the same category as law enforcement. Despite the push for community policing, more community engagement, and more policy relating to diversity, equity and in inclusion in the workplace, this qualitative study provided compelling and significant evidence that African Americans employed as juvenile parole and probation officers, the youth under juvenile court supervision, and their families still experience discrimination and inequality.

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Appendix A: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctor of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Andre J. Lockett

Digital Signature

Andre J. Lockett

Name (Typed)

5/18/2020

Date

Appendix B: Interview 1 Protocol-Motivation

Name of Interviewer:

Pseudonym of Participant:

Time and Length of Interview:

Date and Location of Interview:

Central Research Question: What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following subquestion will assist in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question: 1. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their motivations for entering and persisting in their employment within the juvenile justice system?

- Tell me about the region of the country where you grew up (Large urban city, rural area etc.).
- As you reflect, tell me about the racial demographics in your city, the neighborhood you grew up in, and the high school you attended.
- Tell me about how your family viewed law enforcement and the criminal justice system growing up? Are there any particular moments, conversations or experiences that you remember that led to them viewing the criminal justice system this way? If so, please describe them.
- Tell me about how your family responded to your career choice.
- Did anyone from your past inspire you to become a juvenile justice professional? Can you tell me more about that?
- What specifically did they do that impacted your career decision?

- Tell me about how you became a juvenile justice professional? (past Jobs, formal education, military service, family connection). Can you take me through some of those experiences?
- Describe how your values system align with your perception of the criminal/juvenile justice system.
- I asked you to bring an artifact, an item, that you identify with as an African American or as a juvenile parole and probations officer. Can you tell me about that item you brought today?

Appendix C: Interview 2 Protocol-Current Lived Experiences

Name of Interviewer:

Pseudonym of Participant:

Time and Length of Interview:

Date and Location of Interview:

Central Research Question: What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following subquestion will assist in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question: 2. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their professional identities?

- Tell me about what you do as a juvenile parole and probation officer? (Describe specific details of your experiences as a juvenile parole and probation officer. Over an 8-hour day what are you doing, seeing, feeling, and ultimately experiencing?) (Please keep the confidentiality of the youth you work with at the forefront of your descriptions)
- How would you describe a great day as a juvenile justice professional? What experiences within this day would make it great? How did it make you feel when going home after a good day? Terrible day? What experiences within this day would make it terrible? How did it make you feel when going home after a terrible day?
- I imagine a lot can happen over the course of a workday in your job, have you ever experienced meeting your mental limits? Describe to me what it means and feels like when you are overwhelmed? What happens? Have you discovered anything about your mental or physical limitations as a juvenile justice professional?

- Tell me about your current perception of the criminal justice/juvenile justice system. Can you describe specifically what you mean?
- Tell me about some of your experiences working with African American families as an African American juvenile justice professional.
- Tell me about some of your experiences working with other races of youth and families as an African American juvenile justice professional. (When you are in court, revocation hearings, meeting with programs, meeting law enforcement, etc.) Can you describe when you were thinking
- Are there differences in your personal (African American) identity and your juvenile justice identity that are reflected in your previously mentioned experiences working with multiple different races? If so, how do you manage navigating both these spaces?
- Based on what you have shared in previous interviews about your experiences, what characteristics would you use to describe an effective juvenile parole and probation officer?
- Describe what keeps you going when the job gets difficult?
- (Confirm confidentiality) Describe your professional support system? Who supports you? Give me a specific example of how they have offered support.
- How has your prior and current personal and professional experiences motivated you to pursue a career in juvenile justice?

Appendix D: Interview 3 Protocol-Reflection and Meaning Making

Name of Interviewer:

Pseudonym of Participant:

Time and Length of Interview:

Date and Location of Interview:

Central Research Question: What is the lived experience of African American juvenile parole and probation officers in the Pacific Northwest?

The following subquestion will assist in further describing the essential elements encompassed in the central question: 3. How do African American juvenile parole and probation officers describe their experiences of living out their personal identities?

- Before starting your juvenile justice career, what was your perception of law enforcement and the criminal justice system?
- Has working as a juvenile justice professional changed your perception of the criminal justice system? If so how? Are there any specific experiences that has helped lead to this change?
- Do you think your personal (African American) identity makes a difference (positive or negative) in your ability to perform your job duties? If so how Based on what you have shared in previous interviews about your experiences, what characteristics would you use to describe an effective juvenile parole and probation officer?
- Tell me about some of your experiences working within the juvenile system and what these experiences have taught you about the system and African Americans.

- Tell me what actions you think the juvenile justice system, in which you work, can take to recruit more African American juvenile parole officers, and retain the existing ones to last over the course of a 25 to 30-year career?