

**Using the theory of African American offending to develop a re-incarceration prevention
framework**

by
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ABSTRACT

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Title: Using the theory of African American offending to develop a re-incarceration prevention framework

Mass incarceration is a pervasive issue facing the United States, with Black people being disproportionately incarcerated. Using a mixed methods design (quantitative and qualitative) and the Theory of African American Offending as a theoretical guide, the current study examined crime prevention programs that may help Black people desist from crime. Ninety-seven participants were recruited to participate. Of these, 79 indicated they were interested in participating in qualitative interviews. Of these, 33 were randomly selected to complete qualitative interviews, with a final total of 27 participating in the interviews.

The quantitative research questions focused on perceptions of criminal justice wrongdoings, racial discrimination, and racial socialization and the impact on number of convictions and whether a person was convicted of a violent crime. Semi-structured interviews were conducted exploring crime prevention programs and necessary components for helping Black people desist from crime.

The study results found that those with higher educational attainment were less likely to commit more crimes and those who received more racial socialization were more likely to commit violent crimes. While this last finding is unusual, it is explained in part by the qualitative interviews which suggested that participants tended to receive more negative racial socialization messages.

Within the qualitative interviews, participants shared their experiences with crime prevention programs. Crime prevention programs for the general incarcerated population (e.g.,

substance abuse prevention/treatment, mental health, anger management, education and employment, housing, and community service programs), may be helpful for Black people if such programs provide culturally competent care. Ultimately, the provision of culturally competent care that addresses racial discrimination was highlighted as a need to help support Black justice-involved individuals.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mass Incarceration

In the United States, there are over 2 million people incarcerated or 639 people per 100,000 (The Sentencing Project, 2022). Compared to other countries, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration as well as the largest incarcerated population (Statista Research Department, 2021). This epidemic in which so many are imprisoned (frequently referred to as mass incarceration) is very costly. Annually the United States spends 182 billion dollars to incarcerate people or roughly \$35,000 per prisoner (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

There are many problems that have arisen related to mass incarceration. One significant issue relates to the racial disparities within mass incarceration specifically for Black people. Overall, Black people are five times more likely to be incarcerated than White people (Nellis, 2021). Racial disparities are so pronounced that scholars are calling the system of mass incarceration, “the new Jim Crow” (Alexander, 2010; Chettiar, 2012). Many argue that, similar to the Jim Crow laws, mass incarceration legitimizes anti-black racism, discrimination, and exclusion especially related to housing, employment, and voting. In her book, Michelle Alexander states:

In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color “criminals” and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right

to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it. (Alexander, p2, 2010).

Because of these racial disparities Black people disproportionately suffer the consequences associated with incarceration and having a felony record (Alexander, 2010). Many of these racial disparities may be attributed to discrimination and biases in the justice system. Discrimination and biases can be seen at every step of the criminal justice process, including biases in policing, prosecutorial decisions, and sentencing (Sawyer, 2020). Ultimately, these biases work together and continue to lead to the mass incarceration of Black people.

Disparities and Biases Within the Criminal Justice System

Disparities and Biases in Policing and the Effects on Black People

Disparities and biases in policing have surfaced through factors such as the prevalence of police stops, police use of force during these stops, and overall negative interactions between Black people and the police. First, Black people are more likely to be stopped by police officers (Sawyer, 2020). One study (Pierson et al., 2020) found that Black people are stopped 20 percent more times than their White peers. However, there exists what is known as a “veil of darkness” - that is, the darkness of the night hides the race of the drivers from police officers and eliminates racial disparities in stops (Pierson et al., 2020; Taniguchi et al., 2017).

Not only are there racial disparities in police stops, but there are also racial disparities in police officer’s use of force. Amongst those who have any interaction with the police, about two percent experienced police use of force. Black people (4 percent) were more likely to experience

police officer use of force than White people (2 percent) and Hispanic people (3 percent, Harrell, 2023).

Black people are also more likely to be killed by police officers. While Black people only make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, 23 percent of those fatally shot by police officers are Black (McLeod et al., 2020). Because of these negative interactions, Black people are less likely to call police officers in times of need (Sawyer, 2020). Additionally, Black people are less likely to support punitive policies or the death penalty because they believe such policies will lead to more Black people being incarcerated and sentenced to death (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Overall, these issues in policing have soured relationships between the Black community and the police force.

Such police interactions negatively impact the mental health of Black people. Police interactions have specifically been linked to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicide in Black people (McLeod et al., 2020). In fact, Black people who report any kind of interaction with police officers are almost twice as likely to suffer from negative mental health impacts than those who had no interaction with police officers (McLeod et al., 2020).

These biases in policing may persist due to pejorative stereotypes where Black men are viewed as violent, dangerous, unlawful, and predatory (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). This is reinforced by the media where Black men are portrayed harshly and represented as criminal by nature. Because of this, implicit biases may be triggered in people of any race who view them in this unfavorable light (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Police officers are not immune to these biases and may therefore behave unfavorably or harshly against Black people (Doubek, 2020). Ultimately biases such as these impede the ability of Black people to have a positive relationship with police officers, with almost half of Black people stating they do not trust the police to treat them fairly (Santhanam, 2020).

Disparities and Biases in Prosecution

Another area where disparities and biases persist is through prosecution and the trial process. Prosecutors have discretionary power to determine whether to take a case to trial, enter a plea bargain, or decline to prosecute a case altogether. This allows them to influence different stages of the trial process (Portman, n.d.). Empirical evidence suggests that some of the sentencing disparities of Black and White defendants can be explained by charges submitted by the prosecutor. For example, prosecutors are twice as likely to charge Black people with crimes holding mandatory minimum sentences (e.g., drug possession) than White people (Cox, 2015). Further, research suggests that Black people are more likely to receive a custodial sentence and more punitive charges than their White peers (Kutateladze et al., 2014).

Prosecutor biases are pervasive and rampant. In a review of empirical studies on prosecutorial decision making, one study found that the race of those involved in the case influences the outcomes of the case, where defendants of color are more likely to receive harsh treatment (Kutateladze et al., 2012). Prosecutor racial bias, like any other racial bias, can be hard to detect because it is often hard to prove people are acting in a racially motivated way (Washington, 2020). However, these disparities can be found when examining sentencing outcomes.

Disparities and Biases in Arrest and Sentencing

Within the criminal justice system there also are disparities in the types of crimes for which different racial groups are arrested. For example, while Black people use marijuana at the same rates of their White counterparts, they are almost four times more likely to be arrested for possession. Further, a little over half (56%) of those imprisoned for a drug crime are Black (The Sentencing Project, 2018). Black people are more likely to be arrested for possession of drugs even though there is no difference in drug use between Black and White people (Ingraham,

2014). While Black people are more likely to be arrested for selling drugs, White people are actually more likely to sell drugs (Ingraham, 2014). This disparity in drug arrests, by race, can be explained, in part, by where people are selling drugs. Specifically, Black people are more likely to sell drugs outside, where they are more likely to be seen by a police officer, while White people are more likely to sell drugs indoors, where they are less likely to be caught (Ingraham, 2014).

Being arrested at disparate rates is not the only problem facing Black people who commit drug crimes. There is also a disparity in sentencing. In general, Black defendants receive harsher and longer sentences than their White counterparts for low level crimes such as drug crimes and property crimes (Kansal, 2005; Sah et al., 2015). For example, crack users –who are more likely to be Black –tend to receive a longer prison sentence than cocaine users –who are more likely to be White (Sah et al., 2015). For those serving life without parole for nonviolent crimes, 65 percent are Black, while only 18 percent are White (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014).

When looking at sentencing for all crimes, Black people with a past criminal record are more likely to be sentenced for a crime than are White people with a similar record (Kansal, 2005). Black men, specifically receive sentences that are about 19.1 percent longer than White men with similar records (Schmitt et al., 2017).

Ultimately these disparities create a system in which Black people are overrepresented in prisons/jails. Thus, the negative consequences of incarceration are disproportionately borne by Black people, their families, and the communities where they live. These areas are explored in detail in the following sections.

The Effects of Mass Incarceration

Incarceration Effects on the Individual

After they are adjudicated, a person may serve time in prison for a crime for which they were convicted. Being in prison may affect the incarcerated individual in multiple ways. One way is through neurobiological mechanisms and ultimately mental health. A study by Umbach et al. (2018), found that incarceration worsens cognitive functioning (a risk factor for committing a crime). While in prison, many of those incarcerated are subject to bullying, emotional distress, social distress, isolation, and substance use. Incarcerated people are also routinely exposed to violence that can be very traumatizing for them. In fact, exposure to violence can worsen mental health disorders and lead to the development of disorders such as anxiety, depression, hypersensitivity, and hypervigilance (Umbach et al., 2018).

In addition, the exposure to violence combined with trauma, the lack of enriching activities, and sleep deprivation can further harm the brain. Umbach et al. (2018) found that incarceration leads to a decline in executive functioning, specifically emotion recognition, emotion regulation, and cognitive control. Low emotional and cognitive control are both associated with antisocial behavior, which, in turn, is associated with crime (Umbach et al., 2018). By negatively affecting these processes, incarceration may reduce a person's chance of rehabilitation, and, ultimately, perpetuate a cycle of crime.

Not only do 43 percent of people incarcerated in state prisons have a mental disorder (Prison Policy Initiative, 2022), but incarceration impacts a person's mental health and can create mental health concerns in someone who did not previously have them (Quandt & Jones, 2021). Incarceration has been linked to mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder (Quandt & Jones, 2021). Mental health disorders are so prevalent that researchers have coined the term "post incarceration syndrome" (PICS) relating incarceration to PTSD (Quandt & Jones, 2021). This syndrome is brought on by being repeatedly exposed to punishment-oriented environments, with little opportunities for personal growth (e.g., resources for education, employment,

(*BarNone Inc., 2021*). PICS is similar to PTSD in that even after being released from prison, people may continue to suffer from negative mental health effects that were created in prison (Quandt & Jones, 2021).

Further impacting mental health, incarceration may cause people to lose their autonomy and purpose in life as they are not in control of everyday things such as when to eat and when to go to sleep (Quandt & Jones, 2021). This lack of control may instill feelings of hopelessness and, ultimately, may lead to dependence on others. Incarceration can also lead to a lack of mental stimulation, that has been known to be associated with increased anger, frustration, and stress (Quandt & Jones, 2021). These negative mental health impacts may be further confounded by poor conditions in prison leading to additional trauma and suffering (Quandt & Jones, 2021).

Impact of Incarceration on Families

Problems associated with mass incarceration do not necessarily stop at the individual level but can impact the families of those incarcerated. Stress and strain are common in households of those incarcerated (Crutchfield & Weeks, 2015). These negative health effects may mount due to the monetary cost families have to pay including court fees, visitation expenses (e.g., phone calls and travel), and money for the incarcerated person's commissary account (Lockwood & Lewis, 2019). It is estimated that, within the U.S., the families of incarcerated individuals pay a total combined cost of roughly \$2.9 billion per year for their incarcerated family members (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

Mass incarceration also impacts children, where 1 in 14 children have an incarcerated parent (M. D. Anderson, 2019). Disparities become evident when the rate of parental incarceration is broken down by race. It is estimated that 1 in 9 Black children have an incarcerated parent compared to the national average of 1 in 14 (M. D. Anderson, 2019). Parental incarceration has been recognized as an adverse childhood experience, impacting a child's

health, behavior, impulse control, concentration, and emotional state (M. D. Anderson, 2019; Gjelsvik et al., 2014; Kjellstrand et al., 2020). Additionally, parental incarceration can lead to shame and stigma in children with an incarcerated family member. Further, it shapes how a teacher perceives the child (M. D. Anderson, 2019). M.D. Anderson (2019) observed that teachers perceive children with incarcerated parents as less competent than their peers. Ultimately the stigma and shame children experience can negatively affect their reaction to experiences with their teachers, friends, and others (M. D. Anderson, 2019).

Incarceration can also negatively impact families as it may separate people from their loved ones. A study by researchers at the University of Georgia, Edgemon & Clay-Warner, (2019), found that people who are imprisoned over 50 miles away from their home are more likely to experience depression. Family separation can have a great impact on stress levels of those incarcerated as well as their family (Quandt & Jones, 2021).

Mass incarceration may also affect the structure of the family. For instance, incarcerated men tend to get married at lower rates, and those who are married are more likely to become divorced or separated than their peers (Western & Lopoo, 2004). For incarcerated men who have families, incarceration may decrease prosocial development between children and their fathers specifically (Turney & Wildeman, 2013), while adding to harsh maternal parenting strategies (Turney, 2014). Ultimately, members of families with incarcerated fathers face a higher likelihood of depression as well as economic hardships (Lee & Wildeman, 2021).

Maternal incarceration is especially related to poor outcomes for families. Because mothers are typically the primary caregivers of children, maternal incarceration can be particularly disruptive for children (Arditti, 2015). While 89 percent of incarcerated fathers reported that their children were in the care of nonincarcerated mothers, only 37 percent of mothers reported their children lived with the other nonincarcerated parent (Arditti, 2015). While

children with incarcerated mothers are most likely to live with grandparents, a substantial amount are placed in foster care -- further disrupting the family structure (Arditti, 2015). As a result, children of incarcerated parents may be at risk for antisocial behavior, psychopathology disorders, and suffer intergenerational effects of their parent's incarceration (Arditti, 2015).

Community Burden

Employment. In addition to effects on the individual and family, mass incarceration creates a strain on the communities most affected by it (i.e., communities of concentrated disadvantage). It does so primarily through employment. While people are incarcerated, they are not able to obtain necessary job skills, as a result making them less competitive for jobs (E. Smith & Hattery, 2010). In turn, businesses are unlikely to operate in communities with a high incarcerated population because there are not enough suitable or qualified people to work. Ultimately, communities with a high incarcerated population, have fewer job opportunities (E. Smith & Hattery, 2010).

Finding employment can be especially hard for Black people in particular. A field experiment by Pager (2007), found that a Black man without a felony record was less likely to get a job callback than a White man with a record. The likelihood of obtaining employment was even smaller for a Black man with a felony record (Pager, 2007). Another study by Rucks-Ahidiana et al. 2021, estimated that amongst previously incarcerated people, White people were 1.5-2 times more likely than Black people to find employment. It also took Black people longer to secure a job – 10 months, than White people – 8 months, (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2021).

For those reentering their communities post incarceration, they have more luck finding jobs in “felon friendly industries” such as construction, food services, retail, manufacturing, and temporary jobs (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2021). However, geographic location plays a factor in employment. Rucks-Ahidiana et al. (2021) found that White people tend to re-enter into rural,

urban, and suburban communities, post incarceration, while Black people tend to re-enter urban communities with a higher percentage of previously incarcerated people. This further increases job competition for “felon-friendly jobs”, and exacerbates employment disparities (Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2021).

Still another study by Vuolo et al. (2017), found that the effects of employment biases and discrimination can be so detrimental, that ban the box policies – policies that challenge employers to stop asking about criminal records of job applicants – can have the reverse effect on Black people. These policies are meant to lower the rates of legalized employment discrimination, but for Black people this actually can increase the rates of employment discrimination. Vuolo et al., (2017) found that for Black people, if no criminal record question was asked on a job application only 18 percent of Black people received a call back. However, if a criminal record question was asked and if Black people could effectively say they had no criminal record, 22.6 percent received a call back. The authors however, reported this result was not statistically significant. Still, the implications stand, that if Black people can say they do not have a criminal record (versus saying nothing at all) they may be more likely to receive a call back (Vuolo et al., 2017). A study by Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, (2018), suggested that this difference is observed because when there is no criminal record question, employers may assume that all Black people have a criminal record and therefore may be reluctant to hire any Black people (Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018). Perhaps a better solution to the disparities in employment would be to train employers to be aware of their biases rather than banning the box.

Another issue within employment of incarcerated people is the system in which private sectors employ prisoners for a fraction (e.g., 14 cents to \$2.00/hour) of what they would make as a civilian within their community, then refuse to hire them for a fair wage following incarceration (Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018; Kent State University, 2021). These racial and

employment disparities related to incarceration are so pronounced that some are calling mass incarceration a relic of slavery. A “relic of slavery” (Ajunwa & Onwuachi-Willig, 2018) The combination of the racial disparities in incarceration and employment discrimination puts Black people at a far greater disadvantage than White people in terms of securing employment.

Voting. Communities also bear the brunt of laws and policies that serve to further disenfranchise incarcerated people. Incarcerated individuals can vote in only two states in the U.S., Vermont and Maine (Lewis, 2019). Even after serving time in prison – when they supposedly have repaid their debt to society – they still cannot vote in many states (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021). This system of stripping away voting rights for people convicted of a felony is called felon disenfranchisement (Purtle, 2013; E. Smith & Hattery, 2010). If a high percentage of people within a community are or have been incarcerated, then their ability to elect a chosen official might be compromised, thus limiting their representation.

Presently, the majority of Black people (over 80 percent) tend to favor Democratic candidates over Republicans (White & Laird, 2020). One study, by Uggen & Manza (2002), estimated that between 1978-2000, allowing incarcerated people to vote would have resulted in changes in the senate seats, with seven Republican seats going to Democrats (Uggen & Manza, 2002). This means that from 1986-2002 a Democratic majority would have ensued. As for the 2000 presidential election, Al Gore may have beaten George Bush in Florida and secured the presidency (Purtle, 2013; Uggen & Manza, 2002).

Poverty/Income. Poverty is one of the byproducts of mass incarceration. Wealth accumulation is nearly impossible for those incarcerated (Booker, 2016). A study by DeFina & Hannon (2013) found that mass incarceration has led to higher poverty rates in the United States over the past 30 years despite economic growth. One pathway by which poverty might be sustained or deepened by incarceration is through the removal of a primary breadwinner from a

household followed by legal discrimination ensuing after incarceration (DeFina & Hannon, 2013). In fact, if it had not been for mass incarceration, it is likely that the United States would have seen a 20 percent reduction in poverty and millions of people may have circumvented poverty (Gilna, 2019).

Other studies have found that high amounts of incarceration within communities have been linked to childhood poverty. This may be due to mass incarceration's negative impact on social networks, contributing to employment shortcomings (DeFina & Hannon, 2013). Child poverty is, in turn, associated with poor cognitive outcomes in children in such areas as math/problem solving, reading comprehension, and memory/attention tasks (Gifford, 2019). Child poverty has also been linked to higher cortisol and heightened stress markers in the brains of children (Blair & Raver, 2016). This can affect the development of brain structures, such as those necessary for executive functioning. Executive functioning is needed for self-regulation, and provides a level of cognitive competence (Blair & Raver, 2016). Poverty can create deprived structural development of the brain, which further contributes to an achievement gap (Hair et al., 2015). Ultimately the mass incarceration of communities can negatively impact developmental outcomes in children and fuel the cycle of poverty through generations.

Impact on Society

Lastly, mass incarceration negatively impacts the United States, as a whole, in multiple ways including the overall financial costs associated with incarceration and the reduction of economic and social productivity, increased adverse health effects, and overall damage to families impacted by it (Cobb, 2021; O'Neill Hayes, 2020).

Financial Costs. It is estimated that corrections expenditures total \$1.2 trillion annually O'Neill Hayes (2020), or roughly a loss of six percent in GDP (McLaughlin et al., 2016). The costs of mass incarceration consist of both direct and indirect costs (O'Neill Hayes, 2020). Direct

costs (i.e., costs directly connected to incarceration) amounted to roughly to \$295.6 billion in 2016 (Spielman, 2022). This included the costs of policing (\$142.5 billion), prisons, parole, and probation, (\$88.5 billion), and the judiciary and legal system (\$64.7 billion). Indirect costs (i.e., costs that accrue beyond the scope of operating corrections) included lost wages (\$300 billion), negative health impacts (\$100 billion), negative effects on children of incarcerated parents (\$160.6 billion), and negative effects on families (\$20.1 billion, Spielman, 2022). This ultimately reduces the U.S. GDP (McLaughlin et al., 2016).

Healthcare Costs. Negative health effects related to incarceration includes higher mortality rates, and poorer physical and mental health of those imprisoned (McLaughlin et al., 2016). In addition to these healthcare costs, the cost of an aging incarcerated population has contributed to increased costs associated with incarceration (Cobb, 2021). Mandatory minimum sentences have led to longer prison sentences. This, in turn, has led to an older population with additional healthcare needs and expenditures. Many have argued that incarcerating individuals for such a long period may not make sense as people who are older are more likely to have “aged out” of crime and are less likely to reoffend (Cobb, 2021).

Family Costs. Some of the negative and costly tolls parental incarceration can have on children include poorer educational attainment and a greater likelihood of future criminality of the children. Negative impacts on families and the incarcerated person include moving and homelessness costs related to incarceration, as well as divorce and child welfare costs (McLaughlin et al., 2016).

In sum, these economic costs of mass incarceration are not sustainable. This is especially true, given that the current system provides only a minimal reduction in crime (Stemen, 2017) and does not seem to prevent further crime as evidenced by high recidivism rates.

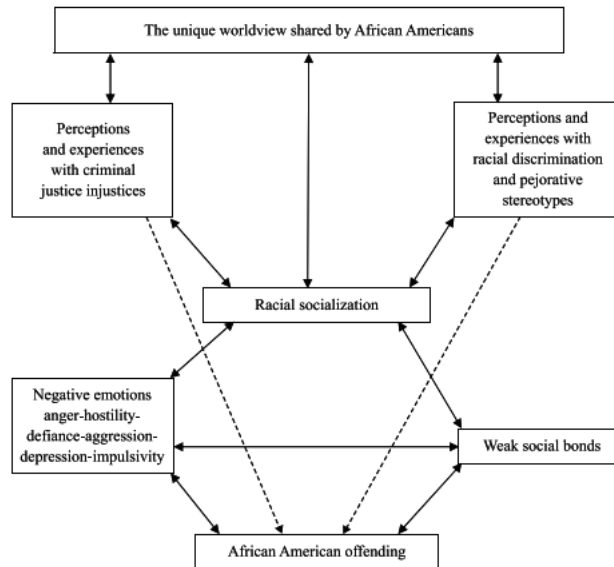
Crime Rates and Recidivism

While there have been reductions in crime since 2000, this has largely been attributed to factors other than incarceration, such as more education/employment opportunities, an aging population, changes in policing strategies, higher wages, and increased law enforcement officers (Stemen, 2017). One study found that incarceration has no impact on violent crime rates and in some cases incarceration may actually increase crime (Stemen, 2017).

Further, the recidivism rates of incarceration have remained high and unchanging over the years. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021), 62 percent of people previously incarcerated in state prisons were rearrested within 3 years post incarceration. This number rises to 71 percent of people recidivating 5 years post incarceration (M. R. Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). At the federal level, the rearrest rate for people being released from prisons was 49.3 percent by 8 years post incarceration (Hunt & Dumville, 2016). Indeed these high recidivism rates are evidence that incarceration may not be an effective means of rehabilitating people (Benecchi, 2021).

Black people bear the brunt of these issues because of their overrepresentation within the corrections settings. Despite the increased number of crime control interventions, many are not effective for Black people (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016; Kalich & Evans, 2006; McKean & Warren-Gordon, 2011; Wong et al., 2016). Several have argued that this is because existing crime control interventions for Black people are not considering the underlying systemic barriers they face and how these lead to crime and incarceration (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016; Howard, 2016; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Theoretical Background: The Theory of African American Offending

Figure 1 Our Theory of African American Offending.Figure 1 *The Theoretical Model*

The Theory of African American Offending (TAAO) is useful in explaining why some Black people may commit a crime and why others are able to desist from crime (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). TAAO suggests that Black people have a unique, but shared worldview related to race and racism in the United States. The worldview of Black people includes the actual reality of their discrimination as well as their perceived discrimination. For some Black people, experiencing racial discrimination may lead them to engage in criminal acts (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Those who experience racial discrimination can experience many negative emotions, such as anger, hostility, and aggression— all of which are risk factors for social deviance and criminal behavior (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Racial socialization – which will be discussed in detail below – may be a protective factor against committing a crime (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Figure 1 depicts a theoretical model for TAAO. As the theory suggests, because of the shared worldview and experiences Black people face related to discrimination, crime control

interventions may better help Black people if created with an understanding of the unique challenges Black people face.

Discrimination

In a 2003 Gallup poll measuring the occurrences of perceived discrimination on Black people, 18 percent of Black people reported daily instances of discrimination, 21 percent reported weekly or monthly discrimination, 40 percent reported discrimination a few times a year or less than once a year, and 19 percent said they had never been discriminated against. Another study by Unnever et al., 2009, examined the different forms of discrimination individuals experienced. The most reported types of discrimination included: being unfairly pulled over by the police (51%), denied a job (28%), physically threatened or attacked (26%), people being afraid of them (21%) and people acting like they were dumb or not smart enough (14%, Unnever et al., 2009).

These experiences of discrimination can push some individuals towards crime (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Being discriminated against can impede the ability of Black people to make strong social bonds with white dominated institutions such as schools (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). For example, Black students in particular are aware of biases in school, especially in terms of their increased likelihood of being suspended, being reported to the police by the schools, and receiving lower grades (Bell, 2020; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). This is of importance as forming strong social bonds is a protective factor against crime (Apostol, 2020).

Pejorative stereotypes also compromise the ability of some Black people to develop social bonds with white-dominated institutions (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). In some cases, it leads to Black people internalizing these stereotypes that Black people are violent and criminals (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). As labeling theory suggests, attaching pejorative stereotypes to a

particular group can lead to members of this group changing their behaviors and eventually acting out in a manner consistent with the assigned labels (Nickerson, 2021). Another theory, stereotype threat, posits that people are aware of negative stereotypes/labels assigned to them and may feel a risk of confirming such a stereotype (National Institutes of Health, 2017; Steele, 2011). Ultimately pejorative stereotypes may lead some Black people to commit crimes where they may not have otherwise done so (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Injustice within the criminal justice system also affects behaviors in Black people (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). TAAO asserts that reasons why some Black people commit crimes, but others do not, is due to the level in which different people perceive the injustices (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). A study by Tyler (1990), suggests how people come to view the laws as well as those who uphold the laws (e.g., police officers and judges) can lead to people committing a crime. People who perceive both the laws and the justice system as unfair are more likely to disregard the laws and, hence, commit a crime (Tyler, 1990).

TAAO explains that in addition to these beliefs of injustices, it is important to consider a person's emotions and how these injustices may make someone feel. For example, Sherman (1993), discussed criminal behavior occurring because of shame, anger, and defiance. Within this model, Sherman posits that Black people may feel disrespected because of these injustices, which can lead to feelings of shame and later, anger. Defiance or criminal behavior may develop as a result of these negative emotions (Sherman, 1993; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Racial Socialization

While there are risk factors for crime, TAAO suggests there also exist protective factors against crime, specifically racial socialization (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Racial socialization is the way in which Black parents bring up their children and teach them about the injustices that Black people face, as well as the joy of being Black. Doing so may prevent young

Black children from internalizing the pejorative stereotypes they hear, namely that Black people are violent, criminals, and uneducated (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Racial socialization can also help children overcome the toxic effects of racism by promoting positive coping strategies such as being religious or seeking help from others (R. E. Anderson et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2008; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). However, if children are overly racially socialized this can actually make them more likely to commit a crime. For example, if overly racially socialized, Black people may be very distrustful of White people and become more prone to committing a crime because of their distrustful beliefs/attitudes (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Reducing the Incarcerated Population

Given these issues related to mass incarceration, many are pushing for a change within the criminal justice system to reduce the use of incarceration, especially for marginalized populations who are disproportionately impacted. Various approaches have been created (and continue to be created) to do this. Some of these approaches happen on the forefront to provide alternatives to incarceration (ATI), while others are implemented during incarceration and post incarceration to promote successful reentry into communities and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. However, few have been developed to address the unique needs of Black people.

Providing Alternatives to Incarceration

Alternatives to incarceration (ATI) interventions are a particular type of intervention that may decrease the burden associated with mass incarceration. Within the United States, there is substantial public support for ATIs, with about 77 percent of adults supporting them as a form of rehabilitation (FAMM, n.d.).

ATIs are treatments or interventions in lieu of incarceration (English, 2022; FAMM, n.d.). Rather than incarcerating individuals, ATIs tend to focus on rehabilitation. A person who commits a crime may be sentenced to differing forms of treatment through ATIs such as drug

courts, mental health courts, restorative justice programs, probation, home confinement, community service, and fines/restitution (FAMM, n.d.). A thorough discussion of the different ATIs is presented in Appendix A.

Benefits of ATIs. There are many benefits of ATIs. They seek to rehabilitate the person who committed the crime by addressing both the crime committed and people impacted by the crime. They can repair harms to victims of crime, provide treatments to those who committed the crime, and help the communities heal as well (FAMM, n.d.). While the cost of ATI programs varies depending on what services are being provided, they are generally substantially less costly than incarceration, thus decreasing the financial burden associated with mass incarceration. For example, the cost of a drug court program ranges from \$1,500 to \$11,000 per person per year, and the cost of probation is approximately \$6,000 per person per year (FAMM, n.d.). Compared to the average cost of incarcerating a person per year of \$35,000 (Wagner & Rabuy, 2017), an ATI program can provide a substantial decrease in costs associated with people convicted of a crime.

Shortcomings of ATIs. Research has suggested that ATIs are not helpful for Black people (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016; Kalich & Evans, 2006; McKean & Warren-Gordon, 2011; Wong et al., 2016). However, this may be due to racial differential access to programs and/or the lack of culturally responsiveness of the interventions to Black populations (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016). Dannerbeck et al. (2006) uncovered racial disparities in how participants access one particular ATI intervention, drug courts. They found that Black people were more likely to enter their drug court program at reentry while White people were more likely to access the drug court as an alternative to incarceration (Dannerbeck et al., 2006). This timing of the intervention could lead to differences in its efficacy. There is also a disparity amongst who gets referred to drug courts (NCSC, 2020). While Black people are overrepresented in drug court

arrests, they are less likely to be given the option to participate in a drug court as an alternative to incarceration than their White counterparts (NCSC, 2020). Because they are less likely to participate in drug treatment as an alternative to incarceration, Black people may still suffer from the harmful effects of incarceration as previously discussed.

When Black people are referred to services at drug courts, they are expected to undergo treatment that may not be culturally competent. For example, one study suggested that drug use by Black people may be a way to cope with racism amongst other traumas (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016). Participants of the qualitative study discussed the ways in which they felt that the quality of treatment was not beneficial for them. For example, Black participants stated that the treatment provided was similar to that of NA or AA, and felt that the counseling services offered were repetitive, and they were not able to discuss issues related to drug use (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016). They felt they could not address past traumas that had led to substance use. The majority of Black participants shared they felt the treatment was culturally incompetent (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016).

Mental health courts also struggle with racial disparities. One issue within mental health courts is the screening tools used to determine who is eligible to participate in the intervention. Often the screening tools, such as the Brief Jail Mental Health Screen (BJMHS), have differing responses across racial groups, reflecting differences in prior service utilization among different races and symptomology (i.e., weight gain, feeling useless), with Black people less likely to report prior service utilization and less likely to endorse mental health symptomology than White people (Prins et al., 2012). This has led to fewer Black people being referred to mental health courts (Prins et al., 2012).

Rehabilitation and Reentry Focused Programs in Prison and Community

In addition to ATIs, another way to reduce incarceration is by reducing recidivism. Reentry programs can be beneficial in this respect in that they focus on supporting those who are or were incarcerated to prevent further recidivism and any future incarcerations. Many argue that preparation for reentry begins the first day a person becomes incarcerated (Bell, 2018; BOP: Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.). As such, another area of programming to prevent recidivism takes place in prison and in the community.

Support Programs in Prison and at Reentry

While ATIs exist as an alternative to prison, when a person is incarcerated, providing them with rehabilitation or reentry programs may help them avoid recidivating. Such programs may occur while a person is in prison or after they are released from prison/jail and returning to their communities (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, n.d.).

Programs that a person may access while in prison include mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, mentoring programs, education programs, and job/employment programs. Similarly, post-prison, reentry programs include housing-based interventions, substance abuse programs, mentoring programs, and job/employment programs (Kjellstrand et al., 2021; PlanStreet, 2020; Prendergast, 2009). A detailed discussion of the different prison and reentry programs is presented in Appendix B.

Benefits of Prison-based and Reentry Programs

Prison-based programs and reentry programs have many advantages. Many are able to provide support that targets a diversity of needs including substance abuse, job/employment, therapy, reentry, housing, or support specific to certain populations such as women or parents (National Institute of Justice, 2018). People who participate in prison-based programs and reentry programs, may be supported in such areas as housing, employment, education, or mental health and/or drug issues (Davis, 2016; Duwe, 2017).

Some programs that have been shown to be especially beneficial to corrections-involved individuals include housing programs, drug treatment programs, employment/job training, education programs, drug courts, mental health courts, and therapy (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2017). Not only have these programs been helpful in reducing recidivism but they may also be financially beneficial as the cost of operating these programs is less than the cost of prison (FAMM, n.d.; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2017).

Disadvantages/shortcomings of Prison-based and Reentry Programs

Despite these benefits, prison-based and reentry programs have disadvantages. Similar to alternative to incarceration programs, prison-based programs and reentry programs have not been helpful for Black people in reducing recidivism (Galoustian, 2021; Kerrison, 2018; Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). Black men are more likely to participate in reentry programs than any other race. However, those participating in the programs still struggle with higher rates of recidivism.

One reason why prison-based programs and reentry programs have not been effective for Black people may be related to the lack of cultural competent care within the programs (Kerrison, 2018; Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). For Black people, their reentry experiences are frequently marred by racial discrimination (Ricci & Barry, 2011; Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). Therefore, programs that aim to support them, need to focus on environmental factors rather than solely on individual factors (Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). Current reentry programs tend to focus on individual factors. While such programming may help Black people, they are still up against a plethora of contextual factors tied to racism.

One study by Skinner-Osei & Osei (2020), explored the reentry experience of Black men. Findings from qualitative interviews suggested that one way reentry programs may provide more culturally competent care is by focusing on various environmental factors that may affect the reentry experience of Black people, such as stigma and pejorative stereotypes (Skinner-Osei &

Osei, 2020). Black men are further impacted by pejorative narratives that label them as unintelligent, aggressive, and criminal (Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). As TAAO discusses, these pejorative narratives may actually lead to criminal behavior (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Ultimately, for many reentry programs that have been examined, the evidence of their ability to reduce recidivism is mixed or nonsignificant (Berghuis, 2018; Kim & D'Amico, 2018; Muhlhausen, 2018). A study by Kim & D'Amico (2018), evaluated randomized control trials of seven reentry programs that were funded by the Second Chance Act (which provided support to organizations focused on reducing recidivism). In aggregating all the participants across the programs, a total sample consisting of 966 participants was analyzed. Participants in the reentry program group were 52 percent White compared to 31 percent Black. The control group participants were 49 percent White and 34 percent Black. By month 18, those who participated in a reentry program had no improvements in recidivism, compared to those who did not. This remained true at the 30 month follow up period as well (Kim & D'Amico, 2018).

Research goals

Many ATIs and reentry/prison support programs have not provided culturally competent programming for Black people. This study hopes to shed light on salient components of treatment and preventative incarceration programs for Black people. Specifically, the goal of the study is to identify some of the missing components in interventions that could more effectively address barriers and risk factors (e.g., systemic racism, navigating culturally incompetent treatment) that Black people experience. Addressing these barriers, in turn, may lead to more effective programs for Black people (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016; Howard, 2016), and in the long term, help more Black people desist from crime. In this way, this study hopes to guide the development of interventions for Black people at risk of incarceration, by highlighting systemic barriers, risk factors, and protective factors faced specifically within the Black population.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Qualitative Phase.

1. What components of criminal justice interventions help Black people desist from crime and avoid recidivating?
2. What components of criminal justice interventions are not effective in helping Black people desist from crime and avoid recidivating?

Quantitative Phase.

1. Do racial socialization, perceived discrimination, and perceptions of wrongdoings in the criminal justice system predict the number of convictions (an indicator of desistance) when controlling for age, sex, education, marital status, and the number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?

Hypothesis: Higher levels of racial socialization will be related to fewer convictions, while higher levels of perceived discrimination and perceptions of wrongdoings will be related to more convictions, when controlling for age, sex, education, marital status, and the number of ACEs.

2. Do racial socialization, perceived discrimination, and perceptions of wrongdoings in the criminal justice system predict violent crime when controlling for age, sex, education, marital status, and the number of ACEs?

Hypothesis: Higher levels of racial socialization will be related to fewer violent convictions, while higher levels of perceived discrimination and perceptions of wrongdoings in the criminal justice system will be related to more violent convictions while controlling for age, sex, education, marital status, and the number of ACEs.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

During Fall of 2021, I received funding from the University of Oregon Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to start a research project to inform the development of an intervention to help Black individuals desist from crime. The current research study was an exploratory study which employed a mixed model research design (i.e., combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods, Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Given the exploratory nature of this study, such a design provides deeper information relevant for guiding the development of interventions. This study was approved by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board in December 2021.

Power Analysis

A power analysis was conducted *a priori* using G*Power3 Version 3.1.9.6 (Faul et al., 2007), to estimate the sample size needed to detect a moderate effect at 80% power for multiple regression linear analyses. With a medium effect size, ($f^2 = 0.15$), and significance criterion of $\alpha=.05$ a sample size of 77 participants is needed to detect a significant effect.

Sample

To be eligible for the study, participants needed to be a Black adult over the age of 18, who had been incarcerated within 15 years prior to study enrollment, and who had been out of prison/jail at least one month prior to study enrollment. The crime committed was purposefully left unrestricted to explore the intersection of different crimes and relation to TAAO. Table 1 highlights key demographic aspects of the sample. Ninety-seven participants were enrolled in the study and with such a sample size there is enough power to test the hypotheses.

Table 1 *Participant Demographics*

Factor	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
---------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------------

Age			41.22	10.799
Gender	96	99		
Female	52	53.6		
Male	41	42.3		
Trans Man	2	2.1		
Trans Woman	1	1		
Education	97	100		
High School	46	47.4		
Diploma/GED				
2-year degree/ trade school	32	33		
Bachelor's degree	17	17.5		
Master's degree	2	2.1		
PhD or advanced degree	0	0		
Sexual Orientation	96	99		
Heterosexual	69	71.1		
Gay/Lesbian	10	10.3		
Bisexual	10	10.3		
Queer	2	2.1		
Heterosexual, fluid	1	1		
Pansexual	1	1		
Sapiosexual	1	1		
Other	2	2.1		
Marital Status	97	100		
Single/Never Married	47	48.5		
In a relationship	16	16.5		
Engaged	3	3.1		
Married	13	13.4		
Divorced	9	9.3		
Separated	4	4.1		
Widowed	5	5.2		

Procedure

Participants were recruited nationally through social media, various reentry and incarceration prevention organizations, and personal contacts with service providers in the criminal justice field. Over 81% of participants were recruited through social media. To do this, the study developed social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Facebook advertising was used to push advertisements across both Facebook and Instagram. Advertising

was also utilized on Twitter. Interested people would then reach out to the various social media page via direct message. The research team talked to interested persons about the study and screened them for eligibility.

In addition to social media, the research team emailed organizations who serve formerly incarcerated people. The research team attached a study flyer to the email message and asked organizations to distribute the flyer with the study's contact information to eligible participants. Participants then contacted the research team, at which time the research team used a phone script to go over the study with participants (including screening questions pertaining to race/ethnicity, age, and prisoner status). If a person indicated an interest and met the eligibility criteria, the research team provided them with a consent form and scheduled a time to answer any questions about the consent and/or the study. Once a participant signed the consent form, they were enrolled in the study.

Qualitative Phase

During the consent process participants indicated if they were interested in participating in the qualitative interviews. Of the 97 enrolled participants, 79 indicated they were interested in being interviewed. Of these 79 participants recruited, 33 were randomly selected to complete qualitative interviews, with a final total of 27 participating in the interviews.

Qualitative interviews took place over zoom during a 6-month period in the summer and fall of 2022. Trained research assistants conducted the interviews using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). The interview guide focused on individual, environmental, and societal factors that may have contributed to the participant's crime and specific components of programs that have and have not been helpful in preventing further crimes. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants of the qualitative interviews received an additional \$30 e-gift card upon interview completion.

Quantitative Phase

All enrolled participants were assigned a unique study ID and given a link to the online Qualtrics survey. The online survey consisted of: (1) a demographic questionnaire including questions about past crimes and beliefs about and exposure to the criminal justice system, (2) the Perceived Discrimination Scale (Williams et al., 1997), (3) the Comprehensive Race Socialization Inventory (Lesane-brown et al., 2005), and the (4) the Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire (Felitti et al., 1998). The survey took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. After participants took the survey, they were compensated \$15 in e-gift cards and automatically entered into a gift card drawing to win one of ten e-gift cards in increments of \$15, \$25, \$50, and \$100.

Measures

Perceived Discrimination. Perceived discrimination was measured using “The Perceived Discrimination Scale”, a 20-item, well-validated scale that assesses lifetime and daily discrimination (Williams et al., 1997). This study focused on daily discrimination. To measure daily discrimination, participants were asked a series of nine questions focused on the number of times they experienced different forms of racial discrimination, (e.g., being treated with less respect, people acting like they are afraid of you, 1 = “never” to 4 = “often”). Scores for the daily discrimination subscale range from 9-36. This variable was left continuous for the analysis with low scores indicating less perception of discrimination. See Appendix E for a copy of the entire quantitative survey including the Perceived Discrimination Scale.

Racial Socialization. Racial socialization was measured using the Comprehensive Race Socialization Inventory (CRSI), developed by Lesane-brown et al. (2005). The CRSI was created to better capture racial socialization behaviors that had been missing from previous racial socialization measures including: the date of racial socialization messages, the most useful racial

socialization message, the differing people/family members who provided the racial socialization teachings, socializing behaviors around what it means to be Black, and the messages people would pass down to their own children (Lesane-brown et al., 2005). This study used the first four questions of the inventory to create a racial socialization score (i.e., 1. How often did your parents or the people who raised you talk with you about what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside your race, 2. How often did close relatives talk with you about what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside your race, 3. How about your friends, 4. How about other adults?). This score captures the frequency (1 = “never” to 5 = “very often”) that participants received messages from others (i.e., parents/caregivers, other close relatives, friends, and adults) that helped them understand what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside their race.

The first four questions of the inventory were specifically used to create a racial socialization score because they provided the best depiction of how often people received racially socializing messages. These four scaled questions, broken down by the person who provided the racial socialization teachings, were summed to calculate a final racial socialization score which ranged from 4 to 20. This variable was left continuous for the analysis, with low scores indicating less racial socialization. See Appendix E for a copy of the entire quantitative survey including the Racial Socialization Scale.

Adverse Childhood Experiences. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were measured using “The Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire” developed in 1998 from a study examining the relationship between childhood trauma and health risk behaviors/diseases in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). Since then, the ACEs questionnaire has received considerable attention. Today the ACEs is a well-validated measure across the world (Dobson et al., 2021; Kazeem, 2015). The ACEs questionnaire contains 10 “yes”/”no” questions (e.g., Did a parent or

other adult in the household often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you or act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?; Did a parent or other adult in the household often: push, grab slap, or throw something at you, or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?). Affirmative responses are coded as 1 and negative responses are coded at 0. The number of affirmative responses were summed to arrive at the final score. Scores on this questionnaire range from 0-10, with 10 indicating the participant had been exposed to more adverse childhood experiences. This variable was left continuous for the analysis. See Appendix E for a copy of the entire quantitative survey including the ACEs scale.

Criminal Justice Wrongoings. Racism, discrimination, or wrongdoings experienced within the criminal justice system was measured using one question derived from TAAO (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). The question asked participants, “Do you believe the criminal justice system is racist?”. Affirmative responses indicated a belief in criminal justice racism and were coded as 1, while negative responses indicated a belief in the criminal justice system as just and were coded as 0 (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Crime. Crime was self-reported by participants who reported up to 10 previous crimes they were convicted of. The higher number of times an individual was convicted indicates a lower desistance rate. Violent crimes were recorded in a manner consistent with the National Institute of Justice, and included crimes such as sexual assault, rape, assault, robbery, and murder, (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Nonviolent crimes included other crimes such as drug crimes, property crimes, and public order crimes and did not involve the threat of harm to an individual (M. Durose & Mumola, 2004). If any of the crimes a participant reported were violent, they were coded a 1 for violent. If only nonviolent crimes were recorded, then the crime was coded as 0. See table 2 for a list of frequencies for each of the variables of interest.

Table 2

Variables of Interest

Factor	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Missing (%)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Type of Crime (0 Nonviolent, 1 Violent)	92 (94.8)	5 (5.2)	.43	.498
Non-Violent Crime	52 (53.6)			
Violent Crime	40 (41.2)			
Number of Incarcerations	95 (97.9)	2 (2.1)	3.63	4.02
Perceives Justice System as Racist (0 No, 1 Yes)	97 (100)	0	.88	.331
No	12 (12.4)			
Yes	85 (87.6)			
Number of ACES	96 (99)	1 (1)	4.66	2.93
Perceived Discrimination (Daily)	97(100)	0	25.36	7.01
Racial Socialization Score	95 (97.9)	2 (2.1)	12.13	5.04

Analysis

Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts were coded using Dedoose coding software, (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2021), under the supervision of a skilled qualitative researcher. The theory of African American Offending was the theoretical background for the coding plan. The codebook (see Appendix D) consisted of broad codes (e.g., trial unfair, crime prevention program) and secondary codes (e.g., related to race, helpful program).

Each interview was assigned a first and second coder for reliability (Sweeney et al., 2013). The research team then reviewed any discrepancies until consensus was met. Coding identified issues in congruence with TAAO such as criminal justice system wrongdoings, racial discrimination, racial socialization, as well as insight into what support is and is not helpful for of Black people in desisting from crime.

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics of key variables were run as part of the preliminary analyses (see Table 1). In congruency with TAAO, race-based discrimination, racial socialization, and perceptions of racism within the criminal justice system were examined for effects on number of convictions, and violent crime while controlling for age, marital status, education, gender, and ACEs. Two multiple regression analyses were run examining the effects of racial discrimination, racial socialization, and perceptions and experiences of wrongdoings within the criminal justice system on crime. Sex, age, the number of ACEs, marital status, number of past crimes, and education were included in the model as control variables. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 27, (IBM Corp., 2020).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Qualitative Results

The interviews identified issues in alignment with TAAO such as criminal justice issues, racial discrimination and racial socialization as well as insight into needs of Black people to support them in crime desistance.

Criminal Justice Wrongoings

Twenty-seven participants participated in the qualitative interviews. Overall, 20 of the 27 participants discussed issues or wrongdoings experienced at some point in the criminal justice system. Participants discussed these issues on a variety of levels including the justice system broadly and specific aspects of it (e.g., arrest, trial, incarceration).

In terms of the overall system, participants spoke about ways they felt the justice system did not work and how these injustices can lead to recidivism. As one participant said:

Due to my last incarceration and my fourth time being in prison, the door the doors have, basically revolving for me. ... They say, it's supposed to rehabilitate you. That's a crack of shit to me. The system makes people angry. Because you're mistreated. You're not treated as human; you're only treated as a number. Yes, you've committed a crime. And you're there to make dues, which are time and come back out into society. But both ways, you're being mistreated and imprisoned. And once you're released, you're still being mistreated, as though you've committed a crime and you made you paid your dues...If you don't do self-inventory on yourself, there's no change, it's going to be made.

Participants such as this one spoke about shortfalls of the criminal justice system including how incarceration leads to discrimination against those incarcerated. Such situations can lead to people feeling angry with the system. Ultimately, these feelings can fester inside a

person, leading to a continued cycle of crime. This is consistent with TAAO which posits this is one of the reasons why Black people commit crimes (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b).

Another participant spoke about the ways in which the justice system found them guilty of a crime they did not commit.

During my trial, the victim came to court and testified that I was not the person that committed this crime against them. They did not wish for me to be incarcerated. And they asked that they [the justice system] focus their efforts on finding the people that actually committed the crime against him. And that was ignored, and bypassed and I was still sentenced to prison.

Still speaking of shortfalls within the system, another participant discussed how they were arrested without any evidence.

I got locked up for felony theft scheme. So they didn't even they didn't know whether I was stealing or not. They didn't even have any evidence. And I guess just me it was this my first time not really knowing, I just took the charge. When they was like no, you should have should have fought it, you should have pled not guilty. So it's like, you know, when the situation happened, and they called me to the office, they didn't even know what was going on or what I was doing or what, what was going on... And next thing I know the police is coming and walking me out the back door and I got felony theft scheme. I'm like, how did you scheme this steal? Either you stole or you didn't.

Another participant discussed experiencing criminal justice discrimination due to her health.

I do kind of feel like I was profiled because, um, of what I went through. I was never given the chance, honestly, I just never was given a chance. And I'm stuck with this card. It's like, everything is hard for me to do. I can't do anything. Because I was put into a

position where I either had to choose my health looking out for my health or just sitting and waiting, just sitting and waiting. So I pled guilty for my health because I was pregnant. And the way that the county, county jail was like is like no good medical or anything like that. I was five months pregnant. And I was in so much pain. So I pled guilty... So I just got bombarded with a harsh sentence. And I kind of regret just not sitting there but who wants to sit in jail, being pregnant sleeping on concrete floors. So a lot of it needs to be looked into the whole system.

As articulated in their interviews, many participants discussed frustrations with criminal justice wrongdoings. Participants discussed experiencing discrimination broadly, and some voiced experiencing discrimination tied to race. Racial discrimination was discussed further by many.

Racial Discrimination

Participants discussed issues/wrongdoings within the criminal justice system specific to racial discrimination. Seventeen participants indicated they had experienced racial discrimination at some point during their involvement with the criminal justice system. Participants described experiencing racial discrimination in the form of being profiled during the arrest process, being harassed by the police, and receiving harsher sentences.

One participant discussed experiencing racial discrimination at the arrest process because the officer refused to provide them medical care despite, them needing care at this time. This participant felt this was due to them being Black.

When a, the, sheriff officer came in here, you know, he was like, I can take you to jail right now. And I was like, take me to jail looking like this? You know, my face was all messed up like I had a cut by glass or something. And you know, it was just like, he was so rude...it was definitely because I'm Black.

In speaking to racial discrimination they experienced, another participant discussed how they were arrested because of racial profiling:

My most recent arrest, I feel like I was, well I don't feel like I was falsely arrested. I was ambushed while I was in my car by some NYPD officers. And I was arrested. And the case was eventually dismissed, and all charges were dropped... I'm always as a Black man, I'm always racially profiled and harassed by police. Ever since I was an early teen. So I believe it's definitely motivated by race. And I'd definitely say gender too, because we face more discrimination against police than our female counterparts in my experience. So yeah being a young Black man out here, you're prone to being harassed by NYPD.

Another participant spoke about the way in which they were pulled over for being Black. It was a white deputy. And one of the first things that he ask... what was I coming from? And that fact that he did that. It wasn't a traffic stop. He followed me. And, he said himself that because I was in a black Chrysler 300, with tinted windows. It was a rental car. It had South Carolina tags. He said to me, you're a Black man in the middle of the night, driving a black Chrysler 300 with South Carolina tags. And we know drugs come from South Carolina.

Participants discussed experiencing racial profiling and ultimately feeling harassed by the police. Another felt discriminated against when the police only focused on the confession of his white partner and seemed to discount the story of the participant.

Certainly the race piece, and then also gender [come into play]. Most people perceive me to be a cisgender person. So, officer rolls up, and the officer that initially came out was feminine of center and White and only talked to my then partner. So you have a “militant looking” Black guy inside the house, which is my house, and, you know, a devastated,

you know, damsel in distress White lady outside. The optics just look bad. And no one ever asked me anything, and it, and I absolutely believe it's because I'm a Black man. Another participant discussed their arrest being tied to their identity as a Black gay man. Yeah, it- it was kind of fair because I, like I said, I did the crime. I shouldn't have done it. But like I said, it wasn't fair, fair..., I'm gay for one..., I was a Black male, in a White area... you know, me being gay, they don't like it... So that's why I too much afraid of, you know, being out or being around other police officers...I don't like, I don't like being around them, because they keep, they get an attitude and they're trying to put you down.

These participants discussed experiencing discrimination tied to race, gender, and sexuality. For these participants the discrimination may have been more pronounced due to being associated with multiple marginalized identities.

Another participant discussed perceiving racial discrimination during the trial process. This participant was not certain that they experienced discrimination due to their race, yet described how pronounced their perceptions of discrimination were.

I'm going to always think statistically, that the same felony that I committed when I see the same thing being done by other people who live in other demographics, who just happened to not be of my race, or gender, and how, why wasn't I given the same opportunities and amendments and options other than jail...I wasn't given any alternatives or whatever. Even though what I'd done was illegal. However, there are people who are non-black and non-people of color, and they do the same things, but they're given, you know, community service, they're given home arrest for decades. I just recently started finding out about home arrest. You know, the little shackle thing they put on you the little, they've had that for decades, but that was never ever offered to me. I had to be placed in custody around murderers and rapists for literally stealing someone's

things. Now, yes, stealing is wrong. However, they're seeing people from other demographics who did the same identical thing that I did... They never made it to a jail facility.

This participant highlighted that though they understood that the crime they committed was wrong, they felt the sentence received was harsher than what the crime necessitated. They ultimately felt that if they were not Black, they may have received a less punitive sentence. However, they expressed that this was just a feeling and perhaps not having concrete proof led to uncertainty about the fairness of their arrest for this participant.

Overall, 10 participants indicated they did not feel they experienced any racial discrimination during their interaction with the justice system. Of these participants, many simply expressed that they had committed a crime and were justly caught, arrested, and tried for it. Speaking to this one participant confessed how they committed the crime they were convicted of. "Yeah, I was trespassing. I had met someone on Facebook. And I went to their home. And I was fully intoxicated... but to make a long story short, I ended up going to jail". Similarly, another stated:

I can say it was fair. You know, you doing wrong, you get arrested to me it's fair...

Because you know, at that time, I was doing something I had no business doing so I guess you had to pay the cost of course. And I learned from my mistakes.

These participants discussed how they committed a crime, and they were rightfully so, arrested for the crime committed. They did not feel that they experienced any discrimination for this reason. Another participant spoke to their arrest being fair in a similar manner.

I would say yes, because I was living a lifestyle of survival. And just because you're surviving does not mean you go break the law. But when you're out there trying to survive, you're not looking at laws or anything. And for me, it wasn't intentional to bring

harm to the community that ultimately had me incarcerated. But it was a survival mode. I had nowhere to live, I had no food, I had nothing, I, and I took the easy way out instead of using avenues in which I know that were available, then. That's just like they're available today. So I would say yes, it was fair when you look at the whole spectrum of the situation. Yes, it was fair, because I had other options, and I chose not to use them.

Despite having been brought up in an environment in which resources may have been sparse, people still have other options to take that are legal. This participant echoed this sentiment and ultimately, they felt their arrest was justified as they knowingly chose to go down the wrong path. Another participant who discussed their trial was fair had discussed a similar process. "It was a fair trial I had pleaded guilty because I know I was wrong. So I had to do what I had to do. Get the situation over with and get it behind me".

One participant felt she did not experience racism due to her judge being a Black woman. Indeed, having a judge of the same race and gender may have made the judge more sympathetic towards the participant because the judge may have saw something of herself in the participant.

I'm gonna be honest, I actually think this might have been in my favor because my judge was a black woman. So, she understood...I think at that point that might have actually helped me. Because I've seen, I did see a couple of White people come up there and definitely got it harder than what I had.

While some participants discussed a lack of racial discrimination at the arrest/trial process, this participant was a bit unique in that she did not feel discriminated against in a negative way during her trial process. While race still played a role in her interaction with the justice system, it had a more positive impact.

Racial Socialization

Ten participants discussed some form of racial socialization. However, all ten participants spoke to the way they had come to understand race and racism throughout their lives in negative ways. No participants discussed positive messages received.

One participant discussed a negative experience with the education system not properly educating children on the history of Black people. “A lot of people homeschool their kids, because they're scared to send their kids to school... They don't educate you on everything. Like they'll talk about George Washington, but they haven't even talked about Martin Luther King”.

One participant spoke to the negative messages they received about being Black relating to racial profiling.

I think just being black in America is enough for people to just assume that you are guilty or to assume that you have done something wrong, whether that is actually true or not, or whether there are extenuating circumstances or not.

Another participant spoke to how they felt that skin color matters especially within the criminal justice system.

I try not to say everything always happens because you Black but at the end of the day, kind of get a harder time just off your skin color...I try to like be prideful and break the stigma. And I always believe that it was because of the color of my skin. But it comes down to that all the time.

Another participant discussed having a shared understanding of racial discrimination amongst Hispanic people.

Because I said, the program it was called La Familia. So, you know, that it was ran by, you know, the Hispanic community. And, you know, a lot of times they face the same adversities we face as black people. Honestly get a little deeper, but, you know, they were right there, they understood, you know.

In sum, participants in the study discussed negative forms of racial socialization. Participants discussed racial socialization through improper education of Black history, poor treatment of Black people within the criminal justice system, and how other marginalized groups have a shared experience of discrimination.

Crime Prevention Programs

All 27 participants discussed crime prevention programs in some way whether it was regarding ways the program was or could be helpful or ways they were not helpful. The following summarizes the participants' thoughts on different types of programming.

Incarceration

Over half of participants, ($n = 15$) discussed the harms caused by incarceration. These harms included being exposed to abuse and violence in prison, being separated from supportive families and communities, missing out on major life events within their family, issues finding jobs post incarceration, and being denied care for medical issues. One participant described harms associated with violence:

Well honestly, it was hurtful, because when I was in there, I had people picked on me. I had people calling me out on my name. I had to protect myself. And at that time, you know, I had people try to rape me in there too.

Another described the loss of relationships while being incarcerated.

I could have been in there for the rest of my life... the last time when I got out, like, I lost my son, I lost my mom, I lost my grandma. So it's like, now I try to stay on the right path.

Another participant discussed how incarceration was not helpful as it set them back, career-wise.

I learned some skills while I was inside. And I had a lot of time to read books. But it also hurt my chances of getting a job. And almost 10 years later, I'm still trying to put my life back together.

Another participant discussed a similar experience.

There could have been some alternatives to it, but just lost everything... employment, vehicle, family, and it's just once you're getting out, you're just playing catch up. You know, you have, you have the background checks, and you just, you're just playing catch up...But it's, it's such a, it's such a set It's such a setback, and especially at my age. You know, I'm not a man in my 20s. I'm in my 40s, you know. So it's just, just makes it that much harder to try and make another comeback.

Feeling that their life was postponed or set back was something participants discussed about the way in which incarceration hinders them with their ability to advance their careers and therefore their livelihood. Post incarceration, participants discussed feeling as though they had to play “catch up” just to get a decent job with decent wages, like that of which they may have had prior to being incarcerated.

Another participant discussed not receiving their medication and how this affected them while incarcerated.

Um, I shouldn't have been there. I shouldn't have. I should not have had that experience. Um, I have a medical condition. And so I was without medication. And, and my, my condition is a chronic illness. And so, um that, that definitely made things worse and it affected my mental health... It was very traumatic.

This participant felt that incarceration worsened their physical health which negatively impacted their mental health. Ultimately the stress of not having their medication readily available may have contributed to added stressors for this participant.

Even though many felt incarceration was harmful, some of the participants ($n = 12$) provided incarceration was helpful in preventing or deterring them from future crime. The most common reason cited was that it helped participants to turn their lives around once they were released. One participant discussed how they were able to learn from their experience. “It was helpful for me, because it drove home the fact that I didn't want to do it again. You know, I mean, I miss my family and everything. So yeah. It was definitely a learning situation”.

This participant alluded to a lack of familial support once incarcerated. Being disconnected from one's family during the incarceration period can have negative outcomes due to the lack of social support. However, this participant was able to use this to their advantage to turn their life around. Another participant discussed how the programs they chose to seek out once incarcerated had positive lasting effects that followed them post incarceration.

Well, you when you're in custody, and they have so many programs that are helpful to one's journey post incarceration, so it's a choice you can take the program and, and see what it offers you or you don't and you can recycle the same old type of behavior. I took the, I took the other. I actually wanted to change my life. I've you know, I got tired of going on vacations to the New York State Department of Corrections.

Another participant echoed how being incarcerated multiple times allowed them to change their life for the better.

The last time was helpful. Yes, I've been in there a few times, I'm not gonna lie. I'm 50 years old. Like a lot of my life was incarcerated. I've been in prison five times. You know, that's like a lot of times, but the last time I woke up and smelt the coffee, so that time was helpful.

Similarly, other participants indicated incarceration was only helpful when an individual was ready to stop engaging in crime around as indicated in this quote:

[Incarceration] was only helpful to me because I wanted it to be helpful. I would say it was more hurtful. There's nothing about incarceration that's rehabilitative...It's just punishment. So if anyone is going into being incarcerated, thinking that it's going to somehow change a person's mindset, because of what it is or because of the system. That's not correct. The only way your mindset is going to change is if you want it to change, because nothing about the prison system is going to help you rehabilitate or become a better person.

Overall participants discussed incarceration as being helpful when they made the change in their life to stop committing crimes. This was the common thread with incarceration having a positive outcome on participants. It tended to provide such a punishment that participants did not want to go through being incarcerated again.

Alternatives to Incarceration

While all participants were asked if they participated in alternatives to incarceration only one participant identified they had done so. This participant discussed an alternative to incarceration they participated in and how they found it helpful due to the option of not going to prison.

The most helpful was, I think the most helpful was having an option. You know to instead of like going to jail for you know like you know like your crime or whatever... And I think for people, especially people who use drugs, like, it doesn't really make sense to incarcerate them... if you go to incarcerate them, and you don't have any rehabilitation, going on to help them, you know, they're just gonna come right back you know.

Despite this participant having a favorable experience with alternatives to incarceration, the general consensus amongst participants was that they did not participate in an alternative to incarceration intervention.

Other Crime Prevention Programs

Participants discussed what was helpful for them in a crime prevention program, what was not helpful and gave their thoughts regarding what they felt were necessary components of a crime prevention program. Reentry programs and specific aspects were discussed, and some program components were applied to an alternative to incarceration. Fourteen participants discussed specific aspects of reentry programs that were helpful to them. Participants discussed programs that focused on substance abuse, mental health, anger management, education and employment, housing, community service and other necessities. Many mentioned the value of comprehensive re-entry programs. One participant gave an example of a comprehensive reentry program they had participated in. Speaking to the program, the participant provided:

They [the program] did job training, and they taught, uh, you know, things as far as you know, how to, you know, help with things as far as you know, maintaining the family structure and things of that nature. Computer skills, all that type of stuff.

Substance Abuse. Several participants ($n = 8$) discussed elements of substance abuse programs; both those that were both helpful as well as those that were not. One participant discussed how getting drug treatment changed their life.

When I was arrested, I was on crack cocaine. And um through the court system, I was able to get treatment. Go to sober living. I did four years of probation. So I had to stay straight. And it changed my, it changed my life. I haven't went back.

Another participant shared a positive story of a drug treatment program she participated in.

It's centered around women who are all just like me. And they give you a therapist, um, you have to go to AA [Alcoholics Anonymous], CA [Cocaine Anonymous], or NA [Narcotics Anonymous] some type of, you know, a support group. It's a requirement. And

they were just very supportive of me. Anything I needed, whether it was food, gas, anything I needed, they were there to help me. Bridges Hope is an awesome program, and I recommend it to anyone, woman, who's trying to get their life together...Some days, I was depressed and sad. And they always encouraged me to keep going and to stay sober another day. You know. Yeah. And they're definitely they were definitely my cheerleaders. And they still are. I'm out of the program, but they still call me and check on me. And it's just, that was a great program. It was.

These participants discussed how substance abuse programs ultimately helped them. Perseverance and social support seemed to be driving factors for substance abuse program success.

Despite some participants discussing how substance abuse programs helped them, many participants were actually critical of substance abuse programs. For instance, one participant discussed how having a coed living space was not helpful to women who were more vulnerable during their recovery.

But it is Co-Ed [the substance abuse program]. So the men sort of like, harp on the women that they know are vulnerable, and early, and early in recovery. And it throws a lot of women off focus, because now they're in this relationship, and they have to worry about him. And they forget to take care of themselves. So a lot of women relapsed.

Another participant discussed how they did not feel they had a substance problem but still had to be in the program.

Like, dude I only smoke weed. That's it. You know, and but you have people who did who were on, who had other, you know um, you know um, habits. I didn't feel like I needed to be there. Or you know, like, and they were like, well, why this dude here, he come on weed...They were like, why are you here? Why? Why are you here?

These participants highlighted negative aspects of substance abuse programs that they felt should be considered by organizations and the system.

Mental Health. Accessing mental health treatment was important for many. Though many participants spoke highly of the need to address mental health, they also discussed some aspects of mental health programs that could be strengthened. Participants discussed how having a therapist with whom they could open up to without feeling judged was important. “Really the most helpful thing was the therapy. Your counselor, having a having a therapist. Somebody just sit there and listen to you and not judge you”. Another participant discussed the importance of being understood by her therapist.

With the therapist umm, it was okay, the Center Stone was okay. You know, I really felt like, if I could speak candidly, that my therapist didn't connect with me on a personal basis, but a professional basis. Yeah, but just, I didn't feel seen, or really heard, I didn't really feel like I was heard... until I got a Black woman therapist...But where I'm at now, United Neighborhood Health Clinic, it's a diverse, like, umm my primary care physician is a Hispanic woman. And she's amazing. The behavioral specialist is a Black woman. And she's amazing. So, I do feel seen and heard on a lot of different levels.

When asked to provide more insight into her experience with the therapist the participant did not connect with, the participant provided:

It was just like, I felt like I was kind of being studied [laughs] in a way. And just like I wanted to be understood and just be okay to cry. And my ha- hear my therapists tell me that they understand where I'm coming from and put feeling, these feelings I couldn't name kind of give those feelings space that I had.

As illustrated by these participants, having therapists who provided empathy and understanding in a culturally appropriate way was critical. Participants wanted therapists they could relate to and feel comfortable with.

When asked about important components of programs to help prevent recidivism, addressing mental health and trauma was stressed. As one participant note: “we would talk about trauma, I would talk about trauma. I would definitely talk about, you know, rehabilitation, what they need to be, you, to rehabilitate and to establish themselves and, and be a productive member of society”. Another participant described the trauma that can be experienced through racial discrimination.

You're dealing with first of all that discrimination of being you know, African-American and we're talking about men specifically. So yeah, being a, being a Black man already is a double threat. And so now you have a...you're a felon, that you have a record... I would, I would include those factors you know, how to work through the discrimination, how to you know, have someone in place for that, um definitely mental health because it's gonna fuck with your mental.

The need to have therapy to address trauma was expressed by participants who felt that trauma may be experienced by Black previously incarcerated people while in prison and/or through racism. Having mental healthcare address trauma was a critical crime desistance component discussed.

Anger Management. Anger management was discussed as a useful program in helping people desist from crime. As one participant described:

And I really, I can say, I did, I came, I came to grips, I took, took some, took accountability for my actions, took responsibility for my actions and express a lot of empathy through that course... I'm not gonna say it made me a better person, because it

would, gonna take more than a program like that. But it's, it's a piece of the puzzle to help me construct into being a better, better individual, all around individual.

As reflected in this quote, while such a program might be helpful, it may not be sufficient as a standalone program for many. Other programming might be required for successful reentry.

Participants discussed aspects of the anger management programs that were not helpful. One participant discussed the mandatory nature of the program conflicting with their schedule.

I think the least helpful for the anger management part was that it was mandatory. And there was a timeframe involved. So, I was working at the time. So, I had to do weird things like take off work or like completely readjust my schedule to go to this thing that's supposed to be helpful for me and for the safety of the community. But it wasn't that, it was actually more stressful than anything else. And when I finally did like, kind of get into a groove, then it was fine. But worrying that my freedom was going to be taken away because of a scheduling conflict was not helpful at all. It didn't really make me feel like I wanted to engage heavily with what was going on.

Another talked about the way the program seemed focused on money, and did not seem to have the best interests of the participants at heart.

But there are times where you could just see, it's all about, it's all about money grabbing and kinda hope, I want to say, not say hopeful for you to fail, but they wouldn't mind you failing, because you have to retake the course back again. And again, you have to pay back. It's not like you get credited for those weeks you did. If you have to take it back over yourself, you're starting back on scratch and whatsoever.

This participant felt disappointed in the anger management program they participated in because it seemed the program was more focused on making money rather than helping people.

Education and Employment. Participants discussed the importance of education programs for teens and adults in preventing future crime and getting ahead. As one participant described:

I would say Upward Bound. I think maybe that, that was it because it's like you, you kind of getting them when they young. And then the summers you giving something productive and proactive and positive...Like that's the only way I even got college on my mind was seeing this as, as a little girl.

Another participant discussed the importance of education and how that can change one's life trajectory. In speaking to important components of crime prevention programs, this participant conveyed: "Black people with felony records, it would be, first thing would be education, to make sure that you know they, cause without education, I mean, you can't get anywhere in life".

Yet another participant focused on the link between education and future job possibilities after prison.

Tech. I will try to teach everybody tech. Technology, programming, coding, something along those lines if I mean, because those are fields to where I feel like you don't really, it really doesn't really matter about your background. You know, when it comes to the tech field. That, construction, like apprenticeships and like concrete work. Like the, the basic skills that people used to be trained for all the time, like, you know, back in the day when our grandparents had homemade stuff.

Education was discussed as a preventive measure to help Black previously incarcerated people desist from crime. Education was connected to employment as the skills learned in school translated into different trades.

Securing a job after incarceration was important for many participants who discussed the need for a job to support basic financial needs. Yet, several alluded to the difficulty of landing a job with a felony on their record and reflected on the possibility of expunging one's record or getting some type of second chance. One participant spoke directly to need of a second chance program for previously incarcerated people.

The type that I would build is like a second chance kind of like program. Because like, everybody, just because it's documented that you're guilty doesn't necessarily mean that you're guilty of anything that you're doing... it's hard to get jobs and stuff anywhere with the label.

Another participant spoke to how background checks should only pertain to the nature of the job in which one is applying for.

And once they do like a background check and then they be like, ah, well, this pops up we can't take you. And it's like, dude, like, I don't understand what does, what did I do in the past that got anything to do with me coming here to work for you? It has nothing to do with it? Like, I don't even know why you're asking that. You know? I mean, I kind of understand for like banks and stuff like that. We want to see if you're a thief or something. But, you know, if I'm working at a factory, and I'm fucking making medical tools, why do you care if I did something five, six, years ago? Like what does it matter to you? Oh we want a safe environment? So would you say I'm not a safe person? Because you know, most people felonies are non-violent.

In speaking to the importance of a job program, one participant discussed taking part in a program focusing on employment that lasted eight weeks, providing in-depth training. "They gave me job training. Um, they took me through a series, I think was like eight weeks long, and helped me learn how to do my resume. And that really helped me when I got out".

Ultimately participants recognized and addressed jobs as an important need for previously incarcerated people. Additionally, participants discussed the challenges associated with a felony record during the job search process.

Housing. Housing was addressed as a basic need that previously incarcerated people needed before they could focus on anything else. One participant discussed how while it is important to focus on mental health, individuals must first focus on basic needs such as stable housing.

I think that the best. I think that one thing that I would definitely make sure that was in that program was guaranteed employment and housing partners. It's great to like address trauma, and all of those things. But I don't care about trauma if I'm homeless, I don't care about trauma if I don't have a way to generate income...It's easy for me to want to engage in therapy if my basic needs are being met.

Overall participants felt that housing at reentry was a prominent need for previously incarcerated people.

Community Service. Community service was discussed by one participant as how it helped them alongside other efforts to desist from crime.

I do community service, like cleaning the street, um, yards, and alleyways like that. Like I say, it helped me it was kind of fun for me, because it helped me to, you know, put everything set aside and try to get back in the streets again, and try to, you know, get a job, maintain it, and try to support my, um, sisters and brothers and my niece and nephew, so it was helpful to me.

This participant felt that community service allowed them to give back to their community in a positive manner. Ultimately this participant saw community service as something that they enjoyed.

Quantitative Results

A Pearson correlation test was run, the following are results from the test. Crime category has a positive correlation with racial socialization, $r = .286, p=.006$. As nonviolent crimes were coded as 0 and violent crimes were coded as 1, the results suggest that people were more likely to commit violent crimes if they had received some sort of racial socialization message about what it means to be Black and how to deal with others of different races. See Table 3 for the full correlation model.

Table 3

Correlation Table

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Committed Violent crime	.43	.498	1	-.183	.053	.286*	.074
2. Number of times incarcerated	3.63	4.02	-.183	1	.044	-.194	-.101
3. Perceives system is racist	.88	.331	.053	.044	1	.104	.168
4. Racial Socialization	12.13	5.04	.286*	-.194	.104	1	.154
5. Perceived Discrimination (Daily)	25.36	7.01	.074	-.101	.168	.154	1

* $p < .01$

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. It was determined that the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were not violated and therefore the conditions for conducting the analysis were met.

Two multiple regression analyses were run as “working models” looking at the effects of perceived discrimination, racial socialization, and criminal justice wrongdoings on the number of past crime and the likelihood of committing a violent crime. The first model examining the effect of perceptions of discrimination, racial socialization, and perceptions and experiences with

criminal justice wrongdoings on number of times an individual was incarcerated was not significant, $R^2=.125$, $F(8,84)=1.497$, $p=.171$. However, when looking at the unique contributions of each predictor, education had a significant effect on number of times an individual was incarcerated, $b = -1.147$, $p = .040$, suggesting that people with higher levels of education, were less likely to be convicted of additional crimes when controlling for age, gender, marital status and ACEs. See table 4 for the full regression.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Predicting Number of Incarcerations

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> (<i>LL</i> , <i>UL</i>)
(Constant)	4.815	3.015	-	1.597	.114	(-1.181, 10.811)
Perceived Discrimination (Daily)	0.015	0.066	0.026	0.229	.820	(-0.117, 0.147)
Racial Socialization	-0.100	0.087	-0.125	-1.146	.255	(-0.272, 0.073)
Perceives System is racist	0.327	1.312	0.027	0.249	.804	(-2.281, 2.936)
Age	0.047	0.043	0.127	1.113	.269	(-0.037, 0.132)
Education	-1.147	0.551	-0.234	-2.083	.040*	(-2.242, -0.052)
Gender	0.028	0.708	0.004	0.040	.968	(-1.380, 1.437)
Marital Status	-0.132	0.221	-0.065	-0.597	.552	(-0.572, 0.308)
ACES	-0.068	0.157	-0.050	-0.434	.665	(-0.380, 0.244)

* $p < .05$

The second model that examined the effects of perceptions of discrimination, racial socialization, and perceptions and experiences with criminal justice wrongdoings on whether an individual committed a violent crime was also not significant, $R^2=.102$, $F(8,81)=1.152$, $p=.338$. However, when examining the unique contributions of each predictor, racial socialization had a significant effect $b = .029$, $p = .011$. See table 5 for the full regression. Racial socialization scores

ranged from 1-16 with higher scores indicating more frequency of racial socialization. This suggests that people who received more racially socializing messages—regarding what it means to be Black and how to interact with people of different races—from various sources were more likely to commit violent crimes when controlling for age, education, gender, marital status and ACEs. It is not clear why this interaction took place, as racial socialization is typically thought to protect against crime, and as such one would think that would extend to violent crime. This interaction is explored in greater detail in the discussion.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Predicting Violent Crime

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% <i>CI</i> (<i>LL, UL</i>)
(Constant)	.239	0.385	-	0.620	.537	(-0.528, 1.006)
Perceived Discrimination (Daily)	0.002	0.008	.030	0.253	.801	(-0.015, 0.019)
Racial Socialization	0.029	0.011	.293	2.612	.011*	(0.007, 0.051)
Perceives System is racist	0.034	0.168	.022	0.201	.841	(-0.300, 0.367)
Age	-0.003	0.005	-.070	-0.593	.555	(-0.014, 0.008)
Education	-0.055	0.070	-.091	-0.783	.436	(-0.195, 0.085)
Gender	-0.048	0.091	-.057	-0.532	.596	(-0.228, 0.132)
Marital Status	0.025	0.028	.100	0.887	.378	(-0.031, 0.081)
ACES	0.007	0.020	.003	0.029	.977	(-0.039, 0.040)

**p*=.005

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study sought to test the Theory of African American Offending (TAAO) using a sample of previously incarcerated Black people and to explore crime desistance program components for Black people. Black people are incarcerated at disproportionate rates in the United States. While they make up 13.7 percent of the population within the United States, they represent 38.6 percent of the incarcerated population (*BOP Statistics: Inmate Race, 2025; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2024*).

Because of the high rates of incarceration for Black people and the burden that comes with mass incarceration, there is a need for culturally competent and relevant interventions that prevent initial or subsequent incarcerations within the black community. Such preventative programs or alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) may be one way to do this. Using TAAO as a framework, this study explored components of crime prevention programs that may be helpful for Black people.

The qualitative interviews provided insight into what may be missing from current programs. In congruency with TAAO, participants discussed how criminal justice wrongdoings, racial socialization, and racial discrimination impacted their involvement with the criminal justice system. The participants in this study also discussed their experiences with incarceration as a crime prevention program and discussed other crime prevention programs such as ATIs, substance abuse treatment, mental health care, anger management, education and employment, housing, and community service.

While these needs align with the general incarcerated population, the importance of providing such care in culturally competent ways was highlighted by many. While there were many similar experiences and needs discussed by participants, there were also unique issues

mentioned. As such, programs need to attend to everyone's specific experiences, challenges, and strengths.

The exploratory quantitative analyses helped to enhance our understanding of some of the predictors of crime, specifically violent crime. While the regressions examining the effects of perceived discrimination, racial socialization, and criminal justice injustices on number of incarcerations and the incidence of violent crime, were not significant, there were a few individual predictors that were significant in each of the models. The study findings as well as limitations and implications are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Criminal Justice Wrongs

While many participants discussed how they felt their experience with the criminal justice system was not fair and cited forms of discrimination they received, some participants discussed how they did not feel discriminated against during their involvement with the justice system. Participants who discussed experiencing wrongdoings within the criminal justice system discussed facing discrimination tied to being an individual convicted of a crime as well as racial discrimination. Feeling mistreated by the system for being a felon was something cited by many participants. Such a feeling can lead to resentment which may lead to all around negative beliefs of the justice systems. According to TAAO this may be a reason why Black people commit crime (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011a). While this study did not find any link between the belief that the criminal justice system is unjust and engagement in crime, the messages of wrongdoings conveyed by participants are still important to note as this was something discussed by many participants.

On the other hand, there were participants who expressed that they did not experience any wrongdoings during their involvement with the justice system. These participants felt that they did the crime they were accused of, and rightfully so, they were convicted of the crime.

Some participants even went so far as to state that they do not feel race played a role at all in their arrest or trial. This is important to note because TAAO posits that criminal injustices and discrimination can lead to more crime in Black people specifically (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011a). Perhaps racial discrimination and racial socialization do not play a role in the lives of every Black justice-involved person. Other factors may be at play here for these individuals.

Racial Discrimination

Many participants discussed experiences with racial discrimination leading up to their arrest, during their involvement with the criminal justice system, and post incarceration as well. Some of the key takeaways from the interviews were that the environment participants lived in played a role in their incarceration. Environments riddled with crime and drugs paved the way for cycles of crime for some of the participants. Some participants discussed not seeing a way out of the negative environment they were in. Others discussed living in areas frequented by police officers who profiled community members which ultimately contributed to their arrest. Participants discussed feeling harassed and pressured by the police in their environment. This is consistent with literature that suggests that the environment where one lives can impact crime (Beard et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2022).

Disparities in sentencing were discussed by participants who felt they received harsher sentences due to their race. Some felt that their White counterparts did not receive as harsh a sentence for committing the same crime. Participants also discussed being denied the option of an alternative to incarceration or having to complete a prison sentence before being offered interventions that may help them desist from crime. Participants ultimately felt the reason for these circumstances was due to racial discrimination.

While many participants felt unjustly discriminated against, some participants felt their treatment was just. Some participants conveyed they did not experience any racial discrimination

during their involvement with the justice system. Of those who felt this way, many provided they served a sentence for a crime they committed, and race did not impact them during their interaction with the justice system.

Racial Socialization

Within the second regression model that examined predictors of violent crime, racial socialization was identified as a significant predictor when controlling for age, education, gender, marital status, and ACEs, suggesting that those who received more racially socializing messages were more likely to commit a violent crime. This is an interesting finding, given that per TAAO, racial socialization is thought to be a protective factor for crime. TAAO proposed that those who received more forms of racial socialization would be less likely to commit a crime (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011a).

Racial socialization messages often include a multitude of content, including instilling pride in one's racial-ethnic heritage, showcasing the inequalities between different races, and providing ways to cope with discrimination (NeblettJr & Billingsley, 2016). Because of this, it is thought that more racial socialization would lead to less crime. On the other hand, some literature (including TAAO) suggests that those who receive more negative messages and are overly racially socialized may be more likely to internalize racism and be distrustful of White people, which, in turn, may lead to more negative outcomes (Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Shellae Versey et al., 2019; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011a). Because the type of racial socialization messages received was not captured in the quantitative measure used in this study, it is difficult to fully understand why this relation occurred in the quantitative results.

However, the qualitative findings may offer some insight into this result. In the interviews, if participants discussed any messages, they mentioned only the negative messages they received about being black. Many of these messages focused on how hard life was for Black

people which is consistent with racial socialization literature (Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011a). Interestingly, no participant in this study focused on positive messaging. Such messaging can instead instill racial pride in children and teach them about the resiliency and perseverance of Black people throughout history. It is possible that the imbalance of negative racial socialization messaging versus positive messaging was indeed leading to the increased likelihood of committing violent crimes. More research on this topic is clearly warranted.

Incarceration and Alternatives to Incarceration

Participants described what interventions they felt were helpful with crime desistance. Incarceration and ATIs were discussed as two possible crime prevention programs. Incarceration could be especially helpful for those who had hit rock bottom. In a sense, it provided an opportunity for them to start over and make necessary changes in their life. This was especially true if individuals got the support they needed while incarcerated (e.g., drug treatment, mental health care, anger management, and education and employment skills) and if they are motivated to change in positive ways.

However, some participants felt that incarceration did not help all, especially for those who were exposed to violence or victimized in prison. For these participants, incarceration was perhaps more traumatizing than helpful. It is clear that providing a safe and supportive environment for individuals is critical for their long-term success.

Only one participant discussed participating in an ATI; a program focused on drug use. The majority of participants did not participate in any ATI. Participants discussed not being given the option to participate in an ATI which is consistent with literature which suggests that Black people in particular are less likely to be referred to an ATI (Dannerbeck et al., 2006; NCSC, 2020).

On the other hand, ATIs were discussed as a good option especially by participants who felt that their sentence was too harsh for the crime for which they were sentenced. One participant discussed how they were placed in an environment surrounded by violent criminals, despite having committed a nonviolent crime. Their exposure to violence in prison was horrible for them. Studies have shown that exposure to violent crimes while incarcerated can lead to future antisocial and aggressive behavior and make it difficult to adjust post-incarceration (Boxer et al., 2009). This could have the opposite effect of preventing recidivism in people exposed to such conditions.

ATIs have many benefits, including the ability to repair harms to victims of crime, treat those who committed the crime, and ultimately help the communities heal. Additionally, ATIs are more cost effective than incarceration (FAMM, n.d.). Of note, over three quarters of Americans believe that ATIs are appropriate for people who commit nonviolent crimes (B. Smith & Alires, 2023). Given the research on program effectiveness as well as the support of the nation, it might prove possible and beneficial to provide more alternatives for these individuals. Such alternatives could include programs such as drug courts, mental health courts and restorative justice programs and decriminalizing substances (B. Smith & Alires, 2023).

Other Crime Prevention Programs

Participants discussed re-entry programs as being helpful with crime desistance, especially those programs that provided comprehensive care. Helpful components that participants mentioned included substance use prevention, mental health treatment, education, anger management, housing, and jobs.

Drug Treatment

Substance abuse amongst the incarcerated population is pervasive. While only eight percent of U.S individuals have a substance use disorder, 32 percent of the incarcerated

population struggle with a substance use disorder (Widra, 2024). Study participants discussed how drug treatment allowed them to get off drugs and alcohol post incarceration. Many discussed how social support helped them to stop using drugs and alcohol. However, there were some participants who did not feel such programs were helpful. Participants who expressed this were those who used marijuana and felt that the programs did not apply to them. This is consistent with literature which suggests that marijuana users downplay the severity of their dependence (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016).

For participants who use marijuana, perhaps it may be beneficial for them to participate in a separate treatment program that more specifically addresses issues related to marijuana use. Because barriers to treatment for marijuana users include a belief that treatment is not needed, a lack of motivation to quit, and an avoidance of the stigma attached to drug treatment, users of the drug may benefit from a treatment that addresses these barriers specifically. Despite participants feeling like the severity of their marijuana use is not an issue, studies have shown that addiction to marijuana is an issue, and it needs to be treated accordingly (Budney et al., 2007; Webster et al., 2024).

Mental Health

Incarcerated people experience elevated mental health needs; about twice that of the general population (*Mental Health Treatment While Incarcerated*, 2025). Regarding their mental health needs, participants discussed mental health treatment not only for general mental health issues, but also for the extra stress that racial discrimination may have on their mental state. Participants discussed a need for culturally competent mental health care to address the specific challenges they face as a marginalized population. Most important was for providers to be more empathetic to the specific needs of Black people (e.g., how perceived racial discrimination can impact one's mental health, the impact being a marginalized group has on one's health).

Participants wanted therapists they could connect with and who understood what they were going through. Having a therapist who was able to relate to discrimination on some level is a critical aspect of providing culturally competent care.

Anger Management

Participants discussed how anger management programs were both helpful and unhelpful. Anger management programs frequently helped participants to take accountability for their actions, learn from past mistakes, and grow into better people. These all helped the individuals move forward in healthy ways. However, a few participants discussed that such programs were not always offered at convenient times (e.g., they conflicted with work hours). Others did not like the mandatory nature of these programs which proved to further anger the participants rather than help them. In this sense these programs elicited the very emotion they sought to reform.

Offering programs at more convenient times may be helpful for participants who may work, amongst other obligations. Certainly, being mandated to a program can be difficult for anyone. However, stressing the importance of dealing with anger for future success could help defuse some of the anger or resistance to the program.

Education and Employment

Within the quantitative results, the first regression model (examining predictors of the number of incarcerations), indicated that having more education predicted fewer incarcerations, when controlling for age, gender, marital status and ACEs. This is consistent with prior literature that suggests that higher educational achievement reduces crime (Costa et al., 2018). Some of the mechanisms through which education impacts crime rates are by way of keeping youth occupied and off the streets during the day and providing better wage outcomes which leads to decreased need for crime to earn a living, among others (Costa et al., 2018; Lochner, 2020).

Providing adequate education, which may lead to employment, is beneficial as formerly incarcerated people experience unemployment at a higher rate than the general population. The unemployment rate for previously incarcerated people is 30 percent (Melhorn et al., 2024), compared to that of the general population of 4.2 percent (*Civilian Unemployment Rate*, 2025). Despite this high unemployment rate for previously incarcerated individuals, over 93 percent are actively looking for work yet are unable to find steady work (Melhorn et al., 2024). Unemployment has been linked to recidivism; the recidivism rate for those who secure a job is 16 percent, compared to a recidivism rate of 52 percent for those who are not able to secure a job (Melhorn et al., 2024).

Providing adequate employment is beneficial to the community as much as it is beneficial to the previously incarcerated person. Communities of concentrated disadvantage that have higher incarcerated populations may have fewer job opportunities as businesses are less likely to operate in such places (E. Smith & Hattery, 2010). Further because Black people may struggle with obtaining employment at disparate rates when compared to their White counterparts, it is beneficial for employment programs to focus efforts on helping these individuals gain employment (Pager, 2007; Rucks-Ahidiana et al., 2021).

Within the interviews, participants provided ways in which education and, ultimately employment, helped them with their reentry experience. One participant discussed the need for previously incarcerated Black individuals to receive an education that was more directly linked with employment in fields where there are ample job opportunities that offer livable wages (e.g. technology, computer programming, coding).

While participants discussed the importance of education and employment support, they also highlighted that these programs alone are not enough to help those re-entering their communities due to felony criminal records. One of the issues previously incarcerated people

face is discrimination from potential employers. Unfortunately, for many previously incarcerated people, legalized employment discrimination through background checks persist as employers use background checks to screen out people with criminal records from jobs (Kleinman & Kajeepeeta, 2023). About 70 percent of employers conduct background checks as a preemployment qualification (Kleinman & Kajeepeeta, 2023). Using background checks is one of the factors contributing to a higher unemployment rate of the formerly incarcerated population (Lo, 2020). Record expungement (i.e., the removal of past crimes from one's record) has been discussed as a component of employment programs that may help people get and keep a job (Lo, 2020). This also may help open the pool of jobs available to people who have criminal records, thereby lowering unemployment rates. Overall, education and employment are important in their role of preventing crime.

Housing

Participants stressed that having housing was of utmost importance at reentry and as such, was a crucial element to any reentry program. One participant spoke about how other elements of a reentry would fail if there was no stable home for the previously incarcerated individual. The need for housing, as a basic component of living, is consistent with literature that suggests that previously incarcerated individuals benefit from stable housing during the reentry process (Herbert et al., 2015).

Housing impacts a person's safety and wellbeing and a person's ability to find and maintain steady employment (*Why Housing Is a Human Right*, 2023). People reentering their communities face many challenges (e.g., discrimination in securing affordable housing, securing stable employment, maintaining relationships with loved ones, having an adequate environment to stay clear of drugs/alcohol) and having adequate housing may alleviate some of these barriers to accessing these other components critical to successful reentry (Herbert et al., 2015).

Community Service

One participant discussed community service as part of a crime desistance program. They discussed how doing community service helped them feel more connected to their community. Research has found that community service programs can help with reducing recidivism rates (Holmes & Waliczek, 2019; *The Benefits of Community Corrections: Reducing Recidivism Rates & Enhancing Public Safety*, 2023). Community service programs may provide participants with social support, while helping them develop necessary living skills, such as vocational skills (Holmes & Waliczek, 2019; *The Benefits of Community Corrections: Reducing Recidivism Rates & Enhancing Public Safety*, 2023). Additionally, providing these avenues of support help previously incarcerated people form more social connections, potentially increasing their social capital through these connections, and thus leading to better employability outcomes due to possible new skills they acquire.

Suggested Programs

Overall, the programs suggested by participants in this study align with programs suggested as helpful by other previously incarcerated individuals (Boer Drake & LaFrance, 2007; Goger et al., 2021; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2017). These include programs focusing on substance use, mental health, employment, education, monetary needs, records expungement, housing, and community outreach. The major difference in the needs expressed by participants in this study was a need for programs that demonstrated cultural competence. This is consistent with research that suggests the Black incarcerated population would benefit from services that provide cultural competent care (Primm et al., 2005; Youman et al., 2010). Literature also suggests that one reason why re-entry programs have not been effective for Black people specifically may be because these programs fail to provide cultural competent care (Kerrison, 2018; Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). It seems that there is less of a need

to create new reentry/crime desistance programs but rather adapt existing programs so that they provide culturally competent care to Black people.

It is important that programs that provide culturally competent care, discuss racial discrimination with participants, and allow them the space to share their story and their experiences of being discriminated against. Cultural competence in programs would also include addressing the trauma that that can result from microaggressions, stigma, pejorative stereotypes, and discrimination that reentering individuals may be facing in everyday life as well as specific domains in their lives (e.g., housing, employment; Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020). Overall, programs should consider underlying systemic barriers Black people face that may contribute to crime (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016; Howard, 2016; Unnever & Gabbidon, 2011b). Because environmental factors such as these affect the reentry experience of Black people, literature suggests that culturally competent programs focus on how the environment impacts these individuals, rather than solely on individual factors (Skinner-Osei & Osei, 2020).

Limitations

While the study offers some valuable information, there are some limitations that should be noted. First, while the sample focused on Black previously incarcerated individuals, these individual's views may not be representative of all Black people. Additionally, the study recruited participants from online methods, including social media, various reentry and incarceration prevention organizations, and personal contacts with service providers in the criminal justice field. For this reason, it is possible that only the participants who enrolled in the study may have been more successful, as those who were struggling may have been less likely to come across the study and less inclined to participate in it. Further of those who participated in the study, the impact of institutionalization and being a marginalized group may have affected what participants were willing to share. For example, participants may have been less likely to

critically discuss their experience being incarcerated due to fear of being re-incarcerated for speaking out against the system.

The sample size of the quantitative study was another limitation. The sample size was relatively small in this study, so the quantitative results were more exploratory and should be approached with caution. Larger studies are needed to further analyze how these variables interact with one another and lead to all types of crime.

Another limitation was the way in which the criminal justice wrongdoings variable was measured. This was measured by a yes/no question derived from TAAO that asked the participants “Do you believe the criminal justice system is racist?” As many participants conveyed experiencing criminal justice wrongdoings that were not tied to racial discrimination, this question may have been limiting. Indeed, it is possible to experience criminal justice wrongdoings not tied to race and this is a shortcoming of the current study.

Within the analysis there were several limitations with the design and execution of this study. While the frequency of racial socialization was measured, the type of racial socialization message (positive or negative) was not clarified, so it is not clear what type of messaging was received by individuals. Further the qualitative interview guide did not prompt participants to relay any positive messages related to their culture that they had received. This may have contributed to participants focusing only on negative messages. Future studies are needed to explore this issue with more nuance and information.

Lastly, only previously incarcerated Black people were recruited to be in the study. Having a control group of Black people who had not been incarcerated may have provided a better way to test TAAO. The control group and experimental group could have then been compared in terms of racial socialization and perceived discrimination scores, and belief in

criminal justice wrongdoings and effect on crime. Future studies could use such a research design to better explore these aspects of TAAO.

Implications for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

It is clear more work is needed in this area focused on crime prevention efforts for Black previously incarcerated people. This study offers some preliminary insight on what is needed in terms of programming. The key takeaway from this study is that while interventions aimed at the general incarcerated population may be helpful in preventing crime for Black previously incarcerated individuals, these programs need to exercise cultural competence. Future research needs to explore this more fully.

Future research is also needed to explore the relationship between racial socialization and its association with crime. It is possible that participants of the current study were overly racially socialized which led to mistrust of White people and externalizing behaviors. These in turn may have led individuals to commit more violent crimes. Future research should investigate the type of messaging provided and its relation to violent crime to better understand what type of messaging in particular is needed to reduce the likelihood of crime.

A great deal of research which focuses on high recidivism rates and reductions in crime being attributed to factors other than incarceration indicates that mass incarceration is not working (Benecchi, 2021; M. R. Durose & Antenangeli, 2021, 2021; Hunt & Dumville, 2016; Stemen, 2017). Roughly 85 percent of Americans support the goal of rehabilitating individuals rather than punishing them, and given this, and that the majority of the U.S. population support ATIs (77 percent) (FAMM, n.d.; Reason, 2024), we need to look at way to reform the current system.

For instance, at the policing level, police officers need to be made aware of implicit biases and how they impact their decisions in the field especially when they need to make split

second decisions as these biases can affect these decisions. Additionally, it is critical that police agencies engage in community policing where police officers live in the communities they police, allowing for a more open channel of communication with the community it serves (Keesee, 2015). Doing so may help reduce racial disparities and police use of force during arrests. Further, ensuring that race is not the sole factor for stopping an individual or not allowing the officer who pursues the suspect to be the one to put handcuffs on the suspect may help to ensure strong emotions do not lead to police officer violence or undue aggression against an individual (Keesee, 2015). In turn this may have better implications for Black people.

Within the courts, some have suggested that blinding prosecutors to the defendants' race may help reduce implicit bias and therefore unfair sentencing. Because prosecutors have biases which lead to harsher charges being brought against Black people specifically, it may be beneficial to blind the prosecutor to the defendants' race at all steps possible (Sah et al., 2015). However, this takes the onus of control away from prosecutors and does not hold them accountable for their bias. As with police officers, prosecutors must be made aware of their implicit biases. Prosecutors should participate in bias training that allows them to reflect on how implicit biases can influence their decisions and understand how their use of discretion allows them great control over the lives of justice involved individuals. Because many may not be aware of implicit biases, providing training may help prosecutors to make more just decisions when it comes to Black justice involved individuals.

Additionally, changes should occur within the courts to stop biases at other levels. Drug courts should be provided as an option to everyone arrested for drug crimes. It should not fall on the courts to exercise discretionary power over who will participate in a drug court as biases are ever present with the justice system. Similarly, mental health courts could adapt to this model, providing alternatives to incarceration for those convicted of a crime who have mental health

needs. Programs should be continuously monitored to ensure everyone has equitable access to such alternatives to incarceration.

We also need to reduce the prison population specifically for people who commit nonviolent crimes. Given how traumatic incarceration can be, it is not effective to expose these individuals to such an environment when there are other pretrial options such as probation and community service. Funding for programs that provide alternatives to incarceration should be increased. These programs should also be mandated to provide culturally competent care to ensure equitable access for all. As the participants of the current study highlighted, with the provision of culturally competent care, programs need to understand how an environment may impact an individual. Ultimately, it is important that the justice system address these disparities at every step of the process and create policy and practice changes that may lead to better outcomes for Black justice involved individuals.

The mass incarceration of Black individuals is a prominent issue facing the U.S. today. Black people are overrepresented in the prison population because as a nation, the U.S. has allowed biases to seep into our justice system. While we cannot fix the past, we can provide solutions to ensure that these individuals have a better future than those who came before them. Because all areas of the justice system have failed these individuals, it is up to every area in the justice system to do the work to create reform and end these disparities.

Conclusion

This study hoped to shed light on salient components of treatment and preventative incarceration programs for Black people, by identifying some of the missing components in interventions that could more effectively address barriers and risk factors (e.g., systemic racism, discrimination, trauma) for Black people. In the United States, Black people are incarcerated at the highest rate of any race, and due to the costs associated with mass incarceration at the individual, familial, community, and societal level, interventions aimed at prevention have sprung up. This study highlights areas where there is a need for more research. Such research could help inform practice and ultimately policy so that this disparity can be effectively addressed.

Key themes emerged from the study around the need for specific interventions. These were similar to those that support the general population returning to the community after incarceration including interventions focusing on substance abuse, mental health, anger management, education and employment, housing, community service and other necessities. Implementing comprehensive programs that addressed these needs was seen as critical. The main aspect that seemed to be lacking from existing programs was the provision of culturally competent care that addresses issues related to systemic racism and any trauma that may be faced due to racial discrimination. By providing such care, these interventions may be more beneficial for Black people to help them desist from crime.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Alternative to Incarceration Programs

Drug Courts

Historically, drug courts have existed since the 1980s when the first one, in Miami, was created in response to high levels of crack prosecution. As the name suggests, drug courts are a form of alternative to incarceration (ATI) that defendants who use drugs may be sentenced to in place of incarceration or even in addition to incarceration. Drug courts are typically managed by a team of criminal justice officials, such as prosecutors, judges, lawyers, social workers and treatment providers (National Institute of Justice, 2020). In many cases a person who is deemed eligible for drug court will volunteer to participate in lieu of incarceration and will receive a reduced or diminished sentence upon graduation (Gallagher & Nordberg, 2016).

Drug courts have the ability to reduce drug use and recidivism rates. They can incorporate drug treatment into other services which may promote better long-term outcomes, and they are cost-effective when compared to prison (Justice Forward, 2019; Stanford University., n.d.; Superior Court of San Mateo County, n.d.). Because a drug court requires an individual to get drug treatment, people who go to drug courts are less likely to recidivate (Justice Forward, 2019). In fact, drug courts are estimated to reduce crime by 8-26% (The White House, n.d.). Because drug courts are able to coordinate with other rehabilitations services, and they are able to address the root cause of substance use, participants are likely to be successful in long term recovery. For example, drug courts may require a person to get a job, while also undergoing drug treatment (Superior Court of San Mateo County, n.d.). Lastly, the average treatment for each participant ranges from \$2500-\$4500 per year versus \$35,000 for an incarcerated person (Stanford University., n.d.; Wagner & Rabuy, 2017).

Despite the promise of drug courts, Gallagher, 2013, found that White people are four times as likely to graduate from a drug court than their Black counterparts. Being employed, having less positive drug tests, and being enrolled in school were predictive of graduation rates (Gallagher, 2013).

Mental Health Courts

Mental health courts first came about in 1997, to help those who are incarcerated and suffer from a mental health disorder (McNiel & Binder, 2007). In the 1950s and 1960s psychiatric hospitals downsized or closed altogether. At this time people with mental health disorders were being criminalized and incarcerated subsequently (Lange et al., 2011). Presently, around 6-16 percent of incarcerated people suffer from a mental health disorder (Lange et al., 2011).

Mental Health courts are problem solving courts which mandate treatment in addition to judiciary supervision (Landess & Holoyda, 2017). Mental health courts can vary across jurisdiction, but a few common components of mental health courts consist of having a separate docket for those with mental health disorders, having a designated judge and sometimes designated prosecutors and defense attorneys, and having a team of people working on the case, including licensed mental health professionals (McNiel & Binder, 2007). Someone who agrees to participate in a mental health court can be sentenced to treatment for their disorder rather than incarcerated. While they are getting mental health treatment, the person typically undergoes supervision that targets their needs (McNiel & Binder, 2007).

Mental health courts provide not only better mental health outcomes for those that complete treatment, but they also provide a means to lower recidivism rates (McNiel & Binder, 2007; Moore & Hiday, 2006; Sarteschi et al., 2011). In doing both a between group comparison and within group comparison of mental health courts, one study, by Moore & Hiday, 2006,

found that those who completed mental health treatment were less likely to be rearrested than those who did not complete treatment. Additionally, those who completed treatment were less likely to be rearrested than those who did not participate in a mental health court (Moore & Hiday, 2006).

Despite the ability of mental health courts to reduce recidivism rates, one study by Han et al., 2020, estimated that Black people were still more likely to be rearrested than their White counterparts. The authors found that Black people reported higher program satisfaction yet were still more likely to recidivate. This was an interesting finding, and this was explained as a potential discrepancy between being satisfied with the program and the ability of the program to provide rehabilitative services for people (Han et al., 2020). For instance, overall Black participants received more incentives during their treatment and reported program satisfaction at month 6 while rearrest data was collected at month 12. Receiving more incentives could have led to better reports of program satisfaction and may not be characteristic of treatment fidelity (Han et al., 2020). Lastly, the 6 month difference between program satisfaction reports and arrest data collection could have led to more reporting program satisfaction than would have otherwise been captured at the 12 month timepoint (Han et al., 2020). In addition to these court-based diversion interventions, there are other alternatives to incarceration.

Other Alternatives to Incarceration

Restorative Justice Programs. Restorative justice is an evidence-based practice that has been used across the world (Petersilia & Reitz, 2015). When operating as a diversion program, restorative justice cases are referred to an existing restorative justice program by a police officer or a judge (Pointer, 2021). Justice system workers are typically involved in the restorative justice diversion effort in addition to the survivor of the crime, the person who committed the crime, and

community members (FAMM, n.d.). All parties will meet to determine an appropriate sentence for the person who committed the crime (FAMM, n.d.).

Within the criminal justice system, restorative justice may focus on peacemaking circles, family conferencing, mediation, and bringing all impacted by the crime together to discuss how to move forward (Umbreit et al., 2007). These restorative justice meetings create a conversation between the person harmed and the person who committed the harm. During this conversation both parties are able to address the harm and the survivor is able to have their voice heard (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, n.d.). Through this process the person who committed the harm is able to take responsibility for the harm they have created and understand how their actions have affected others (Why me?, n.d.).

While restorative justice programs can provide an alternative to incarceration, historically, they have been used for either young people who committed a crime or adults who committed a nonviolent crime (Pointer, 2021). When used in the prison system, restorative justice can lead to reductions in crime, better outcomes for survivors, and reductions in costs associated with crime (Petersilia & Reitz, 2015).

Despite these successes of restorative justice programs, one study by Wood, 2015, estimated that restorative justice would not be able to reduce incarceration rates. Current evidence in support of this comes from high restorative justice usage in countries (Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand) with increasing incarceration populations. In these countries, there has not been a decline in incarceration despite long term widespread usage of restorative justice (Wood, 2015).

One reason restorative justice may not lead to a decrease in incarceration is because the premise of restorative justice is to reduce recidivism (Wood, 2015). Restorative justice may be more suited for people who have already committed a crime (Wood, 2015). Another reason why

restorative justice may not bring about a decline in incarceration rates is that despite it being considered an alternative to incarceration, there are few studies which provide evidence of its use as an alternative to incarceration (Immarigeon, 2004; Wood, 2015).

Probation. Probation is a court ordered sanction that allows an individual to remain in their community rather than be incarcerated (Criminal Justice Degree Hub, 2013). The person on probation is supervised by a probation officer throughout their sentence. Probation can be used as both an alternative to incarceration (in which a person is never incarcerated if they serve out their sentence) or it can be used in addition to incarceration whereby someone may be incarcerated with a shorter sentence and then participate in probation after release from jail/prison. While on probation someone may be asked to do community service, participate in mental health counseling, pay fines, and have restricted use of drugs/alcohol and weapons (Criminal Justice Degree Hub, 2013).

Probation has its strengths and shortcomings. Some benefits to probation are that it allows a person to remain in their community while serving their sentence (Ruhland, 2018). This may allow the person who committed a crime to be around any community or familiar support networks. Having a support network positively helps people who have committed a crime and can lead to a decreased likelihood in recidivism (Kjellstrand et al., 2021; Vera Institute of Justice, 2016). Probation also costs significantly less than incarceration does (Ruhland, 2018). On average it costs about \$4,392 annually to supervise a person, residing in their community, post sentence, in comparison to \$35,000 per prisoner for incarceration (United States Courts, 2017; Wagner & Rabuy, 2017)).

Despite these benefits, probation still has its disadvantages. One of these is community stigma. Community stigma may occur when people are aware of the crime that was committed and feel that the community member who committed the crime should not be allowed back in the

community (Lister, 2017). Community stigma may lead to poorer adjustment outcomes (Lister, 2017). This may be because social support is very important to the success of someone who commits a crime (Kjellstrand et al., 2021). Community stigma may provide a barrier to social support which can hinder the rehabilitation of someone who has committed a crime.

Lack of job opportunities is also a disadvantage to those on probation. People on probation are required to work, but it is often harder for them to find a job because of their criminal conviction and bias with hiring managers (Lister, 2017). In addition to having a job, there are other rules and restrictions placed on people on probation that may make it difficult for them to meet the standards set. One of such rules may enforce a curfew in which people are required to be home at a set time during the night (Lister, 2017). These restrictions may be hard for some to manage securing and keeping a job.

Home Confinement. Home confinement, sometimes referred to as house arrest or electronic monitoring, is a form of criminal sanction that allows a person to live in their home, or in another approved home, during their sentence rather than be incarcerated (Santos, 2021). A person in home confinement wears an electronic monitoring device or GPS that ensures they remain in their home. The person's location is carefully tracked and monitored at all times. A person in home confinement cannot leave their home unless they have received approval to do so (Santos, 2021).

Home confinement is typically reserved for people who commit certain types of crimes. For example, a requirement for home confinement is no history of violence (Santos, 2021). People who have committed crimes in the past are typically ineligible for home confinement. As part of the conditions of home confinement, people in home confinement have to have a secure place to stay, a telephone, and be able to follow all of the rules laid out for them. Medical and

mental health is also taken into consideration when deciding if a candidate may be right for home confinement (Santos, 2021).

Home confinement or electronic monitoring is cost efficient with costs ranging from \$460 to \$1070 per person per year (Roman et al., 2012). They also have a 24 percent reduction in recidivism. This adds to the cost savings and brings the total to about \$4,600 per person in comparison to traditional incarceration (Deloitte, n.d.; Roman et al., 2012).

Community Service. Community service or community restitution as an alternative to incarceration is centered around helping the community that was harmed by a person's crime. Community service is often used in tandem with other forms of punishment, such as fines, incarceration or probation (NOLO, n.d.). Judges typically are able to exercise discretion in determining community service parameters, such as length of service and type of service (NOLO, n.d.). Community service sentences should have a direct link to the crime committed and the subsequent type of service employed (NOLO, n.d.). Community service has similar principles as restorative justice in that the person who committed the crime is sentenced to provide a service that enables them to take accountability for the crime they committed (Liu, 2012). Community service may be a way to reduce recidivism rates (Liu, 2012).

Despite its promise, community service has some shortcomings. Community service is not inclusive of people who commit more serious crimes, such as those which require life sentences or death sentences (NOLO, n.d.). In fact, anyone who is convicted of a violent crime is typically excluded from participating in community service (McClain, n.d.). Another shortcoming is that because the community service intervention makes community service a punishment, people may be less inclined to contribute to community service as volunteer work. It essentially makes community service into something that is unpleasant to do (Liu, 2012).

Appendix B

Additional Information on Prison Support and Reentry Programs

Housing Programs

Housing based reentry programs typically provide housing to a formerly incarcerated person. Housing programs may be able to provide stable housing to people reentering their communities, post incarceration. The provision of stable housing is helpful in reducing recidivism and preventing homelessness (United States Department of Justice, 2016). Housing programs are especially relevant as people who were previously incarcerated are 10 times as likely to experience homelessness (Prison Legal News, 2021). Different types of housing programs include public housing, private housing, supportive housing, and transitional housing (Cortes & Rogers, 2010; Reentry and Housing Coalition, n.d.).

Public housing may be useful for people who are not able to access housing on their own or may not be able to afford it (Cortes & Rogers, 2010; Reentry and Housing Coalition, n.d.). Public housing is typically operated by local states or governments and may require reentering individuals to pay around 30% of their income (Cortes & Rogers, 2010; Prison Legal News, 2021). While public housing is able to provide a level of affordability, the rental application process may be long and overwhelming, and an income verification is mandatory (Cortes & Rogers, 2010).

Private housing is the most common type of housing available (Prison Legal News, 2021). Private housing is offered by private landlords, who typically use background checks which may exclude people convicted of a crime (Cortes & Rogers, 2010; Reentry and Housing Coalition, n.d.). Currently there is a movement to engage private landlords as they may be a substantial resource in providing housing to formerly incarcerated people (Francis & Joson, 2021). The movement to engage private landlords includes providing incentives and creating contracts

with private landlords that may cover rent, utilities, and furnishings for previously incarcerated people (Francis & Josen, 2021).

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) are programs that employ a housing subsidy in addition to other support services (Reentry and Housing Coalition, n.d.). PSH is typically created and maintained by an organization that is focused on creating permanent housing (Prison Legal News, 2021). Because of this PSH are not time-bound, meaning residents can stay as long as needed (Coventry, 2020). PSH may provide individualized case management treatment services in addition to housing that is provided at an affordable cost (District of Columbia, 2022). PSH may be beneficial as it is associated with decreased recidivism rates (Fontaine, 2013).

Halfway houses were created to be a place where people, post incarceration, could go when returning to their communities (Sunkin, 2015). Halfway houses often operate as a residential facility in which justice-involved people reside, as a treatment requirement (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Halfway houses typically provide help with employment, counseling services, and other rehabilitative services (Sunkin, 2015). Halfway houses operate both as an ATI and reentry program (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). When in a halfway house, a person will live in the facility in a group environment. They will typically have set rules that they must follow, for example, similar to probation, they may have set curfews, attendance rules, and conditions of employment (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020).

Some benefits of halfway houses include allowing a person who may be homeless a place to stay and regular meals (Riviera, 2022). Halfway houses are supported financially by the government so there are little to no costs for residents (Riviera, 2022). One disadvantage of halfway houses is the way they are structured. For example, they typically provide a dormitory-style way of living, which is not for everyone (Riviera, 2022).

Counseling/Substance Abuse Treatment

While a person is incarcerated, they can attend substance abuse treatment/counseling. Prisons have various programs to help with drug treatment, including educational programs, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and community treatment services (CTS) (Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.). Education programs include a series of classes that seek to educate incarcerated people on the effects of substance abuse. CBT treatment may be provided in a group session. It provides incarcerated people with communication skills, skill-building opportunities, and adjustment skills (Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.).

CTS typically occurs at reentry and provides continued care for people that are on home confinement or in a residential reentry center. Reentry is a vulnerable period for people with substance abuse disorders, so continued treatment is necessary at this stage (Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.). CTS provides community-based treatment services to those who have substance use disorders as well as those with mental health disorders (Federal Bureau of Prisons, n.d.).

Because prison can be a traumatizing experience, mental health treatment/counseling is important for people to receive while incarcerated and at reentry. While in prison, common forms of counseling offered are individual counseling, group substance use counseling, group mental health counseling, and CBT (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2020).

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring programs may be beneficial in recidivism reductions. They are typically delivered while a person is in prison or at the reentry period. Mentoring programs consist of a volunteer, peer, or a paid staff member that can commit to being a mentor for a set amount of time (Kjellstrand et al., 2021). Mentors receive formal training and are expected to set appropriate boundaries with their mentees (Kjellstrand et al., 2021).

Mentors are typically matched with 1 mentee at a time (Kjellstrand et al., 2021). A mentor and mentee are often matched on shared interests and backgrounds (for example a

veteran may be matched with another veteran, Kjellstrand et al., 2021). Additionally, programs that match peer mentors (in which a formerly incarcerated mentor is matched with an incarcerated – or formerly incarcerated mentee) may be helpful because the mentee is able to connect with someone who was previously incarcerated and, in turn, may better understand their life experiences (Kjellstrand et al., 2021).

While mentoring programs may be helpful to some people, for others these programs may not be beneficial. One way in which a program may not be helpful is if the mentor and mentee are mismatched (Joseph, 2019). This may lead to a relationship that goes stale. The mentor/mentee meetings may also be challenging for mentees as mentors and mentees typically have regular meetings, and this may be hard for previously incarcerated people to navigate as they have many other obligations when they are reentering their communities (Engagedly, Inc, 2019; Kjellstrand et al., 2021).

Education/Employment Programs

Within prison, there are education and employment programs. Prison-based education programs typically allow people to obtain a GED degree or a college degree while incarcerated (Duwe, 2017). Education programs have been effective in reducing recidivism. They may do so by leading to more employment opportunities, post incarceration (Duwe, 2017).

While education programs may reduce recidivism, employment programs have not had the same effect in recidivism reduction (Duwe, 2017). While incarcerated, people typically can only be employed via what is referred to as prison labor. Prison labor may be beneficial as it has been effective at reducing prison misconduct and has been helpful in post-prison employment (Duwe, 2017). However, these benefits of employment programs have not led to a reduction in recidivism (Duwe, 2017).

Specialized Programs

One example of a specialized prison-based and reentry program is one that focuses on women specifically. Women have different needs than men who are reentering their communities (i.e., primary caregiver for children, more likely to be economically disadvantaged, and more likely to be a survivor of abuse), so a program targeting women may have a greater benefit for them (Ventura Miller, 2021). One study by Gobeil et al., 2016, conducted a meta-analysis of gender specific reentry program and found they were effective in reducing recidivism for women (Gobeil et al., 2016).

Appendix C

Qualitative Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today.

You are being asked to take part in a research study looking at important aspects of an alternative to incarceration program as well as the unique experiences and challenges that Black formerly incarcerated people face. Your answers will help guide the development of interventions to support Black individuals who are involved in the corrections-system.

Before I ask you any questions today, I wanted to remind you of the following.

- You can choose to answer any question you want.
- You can choose to skip any question you do not want to answer.
- There will be no penalty to you for not answering a question.

Further, I want to ask your permission to follow some strategies that encourage a good discussion and help me better understand your views.

Recording: We will be recording the discussion so that we can type up the conversation and review it later on. After we type up the recording, we will destroy the recording

Note Taking: We will also be taking notes to help us keep track of our discussion.

The typed-up recording and my notes will not include personal information like your name or your phone number. By doing these things, we will be recording your responses anonymously -- unconnected to identifying information about you.

Is it ok with you if I record our conversation? __Yes __No

If is ok with you if I take notes? __Yes __No

[Note: If “no” to either, then do not proceed with the interview. Provide the refusal script.]

[Note: If “yes” to both, proceed.]

Great.

Once we get going, if any question I ask is too personal or makes you feel uncomfortable, please let me know so we can skip it and go on to the next question. I can stop the interview at any point -- it is up to you at each point if you want to continue.

There is some information that if you do tell us, we are obligated to talk with the appropriate authorities. This is if you talk about harming or having harmed yourself or others, whether adults or children. We will not be asking you questions that normally solicit this type of information, but nevertheless, we want to caution you about sharing this particular information with me.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Past Incarceration Crime

The following questions are about your most recent incarceration.

1. Do you feel your arrest was fair?
2. Do you believe your arrest was related to any of the following identities, 1. Race/ethnicity, 2. Sexual orientation, 3. Gender? If yes, can you tell me more about that?
3. Do you feel your trial was fair?
4. Do you believe your trial was related to any of the following identities, 1. Race/ethnicity, 2. Sexual orientation, 3. Gender? If yes, can you tell me more about that?
5. Was incarceration helpful or hurtful for you? Why?
6. Do you think there were any environmental factors may have led to the crime you were convicted of? (i.e., neighborhood) If yes, ask can you tell me more about that?
7. Was the neighborhood that you lived in just prior to your arrest the same as your current neighborhood? (If no, ask them question 1a & the neighborhood safety survey, if yes, proceed to alternative to incarceration questions)
8. Thinking about the neighborhood you lived in prior to being incarcerated, what is the approximate percentage of different races of people who lived in your neighborhood (prior to incarceration)? (I.e., percentage Black____, percentage Latino/a____)
9. *Neighborhood Safety Survey*

Still thinking of this past neighborhood, rate the following questions using the scale: 1, strongly disagree, 2 somewhat disagree, 3 somewhat agree and 4, strongly agree

1. My neighborhood streets are well lit at night.

2. Walkers and bikers on the streets in my neighborhood can be easily seen by people in their homes.
3. I see and speak to other people when I am walking in my neighborhood.
4. There is a high crime rate in my neighborhood.
5. The crime rate in my neighborhood makes it unsafe to go on walks during the day.
6. The crime rate in my neighborhood makes it unsafe to go on walks at night.

Rate the next question using the scale: 1 = strongly dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = somewhat satisfied, 5 = strongly satisfied

1. How satisfied are you with...
____ the quality of schools in your neighborhood?

Alternative to Incarceration Questions

The next set of questions are focused on alternatives to crime

10. Have you participated in any programs focused on rehabilitation that helped you avoid criminal activity? (i.e., drug treatment, mental health treatment or restorative justice program)
11. Have you participated in any programs that prevented you from committing a crime (either before incarceration or at reentry)?

If yes...

- a. What is the name of each program, and what services do they offer?

If multiple programs, ask participant to choose the 3 programs they felt was the most helpful and then proceed with the following (if one just ask questions below):

- a. What made you choose this program?
- b. How often did you participate in the program?

Now ask about all programs they have accessed:

- c. Thinking about all the programs you took part in, what was most helpful about all of the programs?
- d. What was least helpful about the programs?

If no...

12. If you could build a program for Black people with felony records what components would be in it? (i.e., need to address historical, intergenerational trauma, address racism/discrimination)

Closing

13. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you feel we should have?

This concludes our interview! Thank you for sharing you experiences! I will confirm your email to get your amazon gift-card sent over!

Appendix D

Qualitative Codebook

1. Arrest Fair -- code responses that talk about if participants felt their arrest was fair and reasons provided in support of this
 - a. Related to race
 - b. Unrelated to race
2. Arrest Unfair -- code responses that talk about if participants felt their arrest was not fair and reasons provided in support of this
 - a. Related to race
 - b. Unrelated to race
3. Crime Prevention Program -- any program that the participant endorses as a crime deterrent
 - a. Helpful
 - b. Not helpful
 - c. None – code if the participant did not participate in any crime prevention program
4. Criminal Injustices -- perceptions and experiences with criminal justice injustices --any issues the participant may have with the criminal justice system as it pertains to racism and being oppressed. Please do not include positive messages the participant has, unless they are described as an understanding of criminal justice injustices
5. Environment -- when the participant mentions environmental factors that may have impacted them, not including the scales used

- a. Strictly individual factors – code when the person does not believe the environment completely played a role, and instead believes they are the sole reason for their incarceration
6. Externalizing -- anger-hostility-defiance-aggression-impulsivity (include any negative emotions that could be classified as anger, hostility, defiance, aggression, impulsivity)
7. Internalizing. -- anxiety, depression
8. Neighborhood -- when the participant talks about their environment using the neighborhood scale
9. Noteworthy -- code any other or interesting codes that do not fit into the above categories
10. Racial discrimination -- Perceptions and experiences with racial discrimination and pejorative stereotypes --include any excerpts about stereotypes such as Black people are violent, criminals, etc., Include any experiences with racism, discrimination, etc.
11. Racial socialization -- include any experience with teachings about race or what it means to be Black in the US, include teachings about racism and teachings about culture
12. Social bonds -- social bonds consist of four elements (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) and the presence of each element facilitates law-abiding behavior
 - a. Weak - devaluing any pro-social institution - political, educational, economic, family and religion
 - b. Strong -- job, education, family community oriented
13. Trial Fair -- code responses that talk about if participants felt their trial was fair, and reasons provided in support of this
 - a. Related to race
 - b. Unrelated to race

14. Trial Unfair -- code responses that talk about if participants felt their trial was not fair, and reasons provided in support of this
 - a. Related to race
 - b. Unrelated to race
15. Suggested programs – when the participant talks about things they would put in a program or like to see in an ATI or reentry program
16. Intersectionality - anytime a participant talks about an intersecting identity (other than race and criminal record)
 - a. Gender
 - b. Sexual orientation
 - c. Other

Appendix E

Quantitative Survey

Demographics

What is your participant ID as provided by the research team?

What is your age?

What is the highest level of education you've obtained

- High school diploma/ GED
- 2-year degree or trade school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD or other advanced degree

What state do you live in?

What race/ethnicity do you identify as? List all races you would like to provide.

What gender do you identify as? (i.e., trans, male or female)

What is your sexual orientation (i.e., homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual)

What is your marital status

- Single/never married
- In a relationship
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

What was the most recent crime for which you were incarcerated?

How long ago were you released for this crime?

How long was your sentence for this crime?

How many times have you been incarcerated in your lifetime?

List prior offenses and dates

	Date (approx. year)	Time incarcerated (years/months)	Crime charged with	Was this a parole violation?	Was this a probation violation?
First offense					
Second offense					
Third offense					
Fourth offense					
Fifth offense					
Sixth offense					
Seventh offense					
Eighth offense					

Ninth offense					
Tenth offense					

Do you currently have a job?

- No
- Yes

IF YES

How long have you worked there? (In years and months)

Is it permanent or temporary?

- Permanent
- Temporary

What is the total number of hours worked per week?

How many steady jobs have you had since being released?

What is the approximate percentage of different races of people who live in your neighborhood?
(i.e., percentage Black 90 percent, percentage Latino/a 10 percent)

Rate the following using the scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = strongly agree

	1 = strongly disagree	2 = somewhat disagree	3 = somewhat agree	4 = strongly agree
1. My neighborhood streets are well lit at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Walkers and bikers on the streets in my neighborhood can be easily seen by people in their homes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I see and speak to other people when I am walking in my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. There is a high crime rate in my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The crime rate in my neighborhood makes it unsafe to go on walks during the day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The crime rate in my neighborhood makes it unsafe to go on walks at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rate the following using the scale: 1 = strongly dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = somewhat satisfied, 5 = strongly satisfied

	1 = strongly dissatisfied	2 = somewhat dissatisfied	3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4 = somewhat satisfied	5 = strongly satisfied
1. The quality of schools in your neighborhood?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you believe the criminal justice system is racist?

- No
- Yes

IF YES...

What age were you when you first came to believe this/ when did you first experience any mistreatment?

Who exposed you to these criminal justice injustices?

How often have you been exposed to misdoings by the criminal justice system?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

How often have you seen police use excessive force?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

End of Block: Demographics

ACEs

The following questions are about events that happened during your childhood; specifically, the first 18 years of your life.

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often:

Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?

Or

Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

- No
 - Yes
-

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often:

Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?

Or

Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

- No
 - Yes
-

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever:

Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?

Or

Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

- No
 - Yes
-

4. Did you often feel that:

No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?

Or

Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

- No
 - Yes
-

5. Did you often feel that:

You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?

Or

Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

- No
 - Yes
-

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?

- No
 - Yes
-

7. Were any of your parents or other adult caregivers:

Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them?

Or

Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?

Or

Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

- No
 - Yes
-

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

- No
 - Yes
-

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

- No
 - Yes
-

10. Did a household member go to prison?

- No
- Yes

End of Block: ACEs

Perceived Discrimination Scale

Q40 How many times in your life have you been discriminated against in each of the following ways because of your race/ethnicity? Write the number of times each event occurred next to each statement for questions 1-11 and check the box of your response for questions 12-20.

1. You were discouraged by a teacher or advisor from seeking higher education.

2. You were denied a scholarship.

3. You were not hired for a job.

4. You were not given a promotion.

5. You were fired.

6. You were prevented from renting or buying a home in the neighborhood you wanted.

7. You were prevented from remaining in a neighborhood because neighbors made life so uncomfortable.

8. You were hassled by the police.

9. You were denied a bank loan.

10. You were denied or provided inferior medical care.

11. You were denied or provided inferior service by a plumber, car mechanic, or other service provider.

Please check the box that is true of your experiences, as it is tied to your race/ethnicity, over your lifetime

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
12. You are treated with less courtesy than other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. You are treated with less respect than other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. People act as if they think you are not smart.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. People act as if they are afraid of you.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. People act as if they think you are dishonest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. People act as if they think you are not as good as they are.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. You are called names or insulted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. You are threatened or harassed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Perceived Discrimination Scale

Racial Socialization

The next few questions are about messages you might have received to help you know what it means to be Black and know how to deal with people outside your race. Please check the box on the right to indicate how often the following people talked with you about these issues when you were growing up.

1. Please select the response that best fits what is true for you

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
a. How often did your parents or the people who raised you talk with you about what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside your race? Would you say very often, fairly often, sometimes, rarely, never?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Not including your parents or the people who raised you, how often did other close relatives such as your brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and grandparents talk with you about what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside your race?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. How about your friends?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

d. How about other adults such as members of your place of worship, your teachers, or neighbors?

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

IF "NEVER" FOR ALL RESPONSES IN QUESTIONS 1, GO TO QUESTION 5.

2a. When was the first time any of these people talked with you about what it means to be Black and how to deal with people outside your race?

2b. When was the last time?

3. Think about the messages you have received to help you know what it means to be Black and know how to deal with people outside your race. Do you remember being told any of the following things?

	No	Yes
a. Race doesn't matter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. With hard work you can achieve anything, regardless of your race.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. You should 'keep it real.' "keep it real" was a term popular in the early 2000s and means to be honest or truthful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. You should not trust White people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. You should be proud to be Black.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. You should not trust Asian people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Hispanics and Blacks have a lot in common.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Whites think they are better than Blacks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Sometimes you have to act White to get ahead.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. You will experience discrimination.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Did you receive any messages that were not mentioned?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IF "NO" TO 3K, GO TO QUESTION 4.

What were the messages that were not mentioned?

4. What do you think was the most useful message that you have received (CHECK ONLY ONE)?

- a. Race doesn't matter.
- b. With hard work, you can achieve anything, regardless of your race.
- c. You should 'keep it real.' *Note: "keep it real" was a term popular in the early 2000s and means to be honest or truthful.
- d. You should not trust White people.
- e. You should be proud to be Black.
- f. You should not trust Asian people.
- g. Hispanics and Blacks have a lot in common.
- h. Whites think they are better than Blacks.
- i. Sometimes you have to act White to get ahead.
- j. You will experience discrimination.
- k. Other.

5. Which of the following messages would you tell your children to help them know what it means to be Black and know how to deal with people outside their race?

	No (1)	Yes (2)
a. Race doesn't matter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. With hard work you can achieve anything, regardless of your race.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. You should 'keep it real.' *Note: "keep it real" was a term popular in the early 2000s and means to be honest or truthful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. You should not trust White people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. You should be proud to be Black.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. You should not trust Asian people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Hispanics and Blacks have a lot in common.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Whites think they are better than Blacks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Sometimes you have to act White to get ahead.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. You will experience discrimination.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Would you teach any messages that were not mentioned?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If Yes to "5k" What were the messages that were not mentioned?

6. Were there specific things that people did to help you know what it means to be Black and know how to deal with people outside your race?

- No
 - Yes
-

a. If “YES,” please give an example.

End of Block: Racial Socialization

Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ)

Do you identify as LGBTQ+?

- No
- Yes

IF YES...

The following is a list of experiences that LGBT people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and then respond to the following question: How much has this problem distressed or bothered you during the past 12 months?

	Did not happen/ not applicable to me	It happened, and it bothered me NOT AT ALL	It happened, and it bothered me A LITTLE BIT	It happened, and it bothered me MODERAT ELY	It happened, and it bothered me QUITE A BIT	It happened, and it bothered me EXTREM ELY
1. Hearing about LGBT people you know being treated unfairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Hearing about LGBT people you DON'T know being treated unfairly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Hearing about hate crimes (e.g., vandalism, physical or sexual assault) that happened to LGBT people you don't know	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Being called names such as "fag" or "dyke"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Hearing other people being called names such as "fag" or "dyke"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Hearing someone make jokes about LGBT people

7. People staring at you when you are out in public because you are LGBT

8. Being verbally harassed by strangers because you are LGBT

9. Being verbally harassed by people you know because you are LGBT

10. Being treated unfairly in stores or restaurants because you are LGBT

11. People laughing at you or making jokes at your expense because you are LGBT

12. Hearing politicians say negative things about LGBT people

13. Being punched, hit, kicked, or beaten because you are LGBT

14. Being assaulted with a weapon because you are LGBT

15. Being raped or sexually assaulted because you are LGBT

16. Having objects thrown at you because you are LGBT

End of Block: Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ)

End of Survey