

## **Reimagining Prison Research from the Inside-Out**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The history of conducting research with prisoners has often been one-sided and problematic. For instance, researchers have been known to use prisoners as research subjects for testing medicines, drugs, and medical devices without considering the rights of the individuals or the risk to them (Kiefer and Veit, 2014). Prisoners have recently begun to be viewed as more than just “guinea-pigs” to be studied, contributing to research by collaborating with academics and introducing our carceral experiences through quantitative and qualitative work (Bosworth *et al.*, 2005; Bryant and Payne, 2013; Fine and Torre, 2006; Piché *et al.*, 2014). As more and more collaborations have been considered successful, researchers are increasingly recognizing the value and incredibly unique nature of the knowledge to be gained by talking with prisoners, and, more importantly, by listening to prisoners. Prisoners have even contributed their insights to scholarly publications (Piché *et al.*, 2014), including under the banner of convict criminology (Richards and Ross, 2003).

Several fields throughout the academic community have focused their attention on prison/prisoner research. Traditionally, the painstaking process of gaining access to prisons and prisoners does not guarantee results (Wacquant, 2002; Yeager, 2008). Researchers must then focus on relationship-building to foster enough trust, and for it to be reciprocated, to engage intellectually with people that are incarcerated (Bosworth *et al.*, 2005; Schlosser, 2008). The uncertain amount of time it may take per individual is unrealistic for sustainable research. However, if researchers from state colleges and universities offer college courses at local prisons, not only could trust be earned bilaterally, but researchers could simultaneously select the best pupils to collaborate in conducting research. With researchers strictly adhering to current ethical standards and practices as a means of preventing exploitation of subjects/prisoners, this collaboration can help ensure a mutually beneficial research environment.

In the spring of 2016, Arizona State University’s School of Criminology and Criminal Justice (ASU) partnered with the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC), and taught its inaugural Inside-Out Prison Exchange course in the State of Arizona. The Inside-Out program was developed by

Lori Pompa at Temple University in 1997.<sup>1</sup> It brings together college students and incarcerated individuals to learn about issues of crime and justice over a full semester. Ten ASU “outside” students and twelve incarcerated “inside” students met once per week for three hours in an Arizona prison. Both ASU and incarcerated students had the same syllabus and academic requirements and learned about crime and justice together through collaboration and dialogue. To date, five Inside-Out courses have been taught in Arizona. The highest-achieving “inside” students who graduate each class are invited to become members of the Arizona Transformation Project (ATP),<sup>2</sup> a think-tank composed of incarcerated men, ASU faculty, and graduate students.

In May 2017, five incarcerated ATP members conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with prisoners at ADC’s East unit, a medium-security facility for men. Their goal was to conduct a study on re-entry and recidivism, based solely on the perspectives of incarcerated persons, and to present their findings to the Arizona Governor’s Recidivism Reduction Project Team, which partnered with the Office of Correctional Solutions (now Center for Correctional Solutions) at Arizona State University and the ATP. After completing 409 total interviews over an eight-week span, the empirical data was compiled and a report<sup>3</sup> was presented to the Governor’s team in August 2017. The groundbreaking nature of prisoners conducting research, instead of just being the subjects of it, serves as an example of how the incarcerated are reimagining studies on imprisonment from the inside-out. As we discuss in this paper, bringing education to correctional facilities can help aid in the development of mutually beneficial research partnerships. Below, we share our experience and the impact of this unprecedented study to encourage other universities to invest in their local prison populations and bring education to correctional facilities so that others can complete similar research.

## **OUR EXPERIENCE**

We began this project by developing interview questions related to re-entry. This process was tedious, as well as somewhat frustrating. The most tedious aspect was determining what questions to ask and how to phrase them in order to ascertain the needs of those re-entering society. The majority of us have been criminalized and imprisoned for the first time with significant sentences to serve still ahead, so we had no first-hand knowledge of the needs

of those being released, beyond the basics (i.e. housing and employment), nor had we previously contemplated it. This fact slightly impeded the process of developing the research survey. Our different perspectives, coupled with each individual's diminished social skills resulting from incarceration, caused some of our discussions to become contentious at times. One such example was when we were presented with the multitude of suggested questions from the Governor's Recidivism Reduction Project Team. Some of our members believed their questions to be too technical or broad, while others disagreed. However, the leadership of our outside ATP members provided a calming presence. Their experience as ASU researchers taught us how to work together as a group, how to understand what we wanted to know from the prison population and how to phrase each question properly. That is when the process became exciting and began to take shape.

After several drafts, and in collaboration with various state agencies, a full draft of the survey was completed. After months of developing survey questions, we conducted 25 pilot interviews in February 2017. The purpose of the pilot interviews was to identify and correct potential concerns prior to survey implementation. Using feedback from these interviews, a final survey was developed in March 2017. After a final review from the Governor's team, we began conducting interviews on 12 May 2017. All study protocols were approved by Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board. ADC also provided approval for the project. All data collection was led by prisoners without staff involvement.

Prior to the start of data collection, ATP interviewers received training on both conducting semi-structured interviews and on engaging in research with human subjects. As we do not have access to the internet, we could not complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), as is typically required for social and behavioral science research. Instead, ASU faculty created a packet of materials from CITI for us to read. We then received two hours of in-class review of this material and an in-class quiz on relevant questions regarding human subject research (e.g. describe the ethical principles of respect of persons, beneficence and justice; how a breach of confidentiality could lead to harm for respondents; what will you do to ensure a participant understands what he is being asked to do). If it sounds monotonous, it was. Nevertheless, the process was necessary to obtain the certification needed to conduct the survey and hopefully future surveys. We also signed a statement to the ASU Institutional Review Board

noting that we were voluntarily agreeing to be interviewers, and that we understood our rights and responsibilities as members of the research team. After all, we felt so honored and privileged to have such an *opportunity* to become researchers.

Interviews took approximately 45 minutes to conduct. We completed each interview by writing down the responses of each participant verbatim on a paper survey. We were instructed to ask all questions on the survey and were encouraged, based on our interview training, to use follow-up questions or clarifying probes on the open-ended questions as needed to fully and accurately report the views of participants (Legard *et al.*, 2003). Efforts were made on our behalf to conduct interviews in a private area and maintain the confidentiality of respondents. We also kept a list of all those who were interviewed so as to ensure that no subject was interviewed more than once. The roster of participants may be used to further assess the representativeness of the sample in future work (race, age, sentence length, offense type, etc.). No identifying information was included on the survey and survey responses cannot be linked to a particular prisoner.

ASU faculty picked-up completed surveys from East Unit, which were safely locked and stored in a filing cabinet. ASU faculty entered the data into a secure online database to allow for easier data analysis. ASU researchers compiled the results in a report and included both quantitative and qualitative data. ATP interviewers and ASU researchers jointly analyzed the data and determined the major implications for recidivism state wide (see Haverkate *et al.*, in press; Wright *et al.*, 2017). The data revealed six implications that emerged as central themes from respondents. They are: 1) the need for useful/meaningful jobs and training while in prison; 2) the need to remove barriers to existing programming such as testing fees for the General Education Development (GED) exam in prison; 3) the urgent need to find stable employment with fair wages upon release; 4) the importance of mentorship in both prison and community settings; 5) the stigma and stereotypes associated with being criminalized as major barriers to finding employment and housing, obtaining higher education, and being active in pro-social communities post-release; and 6) the need to discontinue unsupportive halfway houses and reward supportive halfway houses.

Inside ATP members collectively agree that conducting research was a life-altering experience. As a result, we experienced a sense of accomplishment, success, and are currently in the midst of witnessing the

impact our work has had, and will continue to have, in the state of Arizona. We strongly recommend that, if given the opportunity, every prisoner should experience the unfamiliar sensations and thought processes that come along with conducting meaningful research (see Piché, 2008, pp. 4-5, 9-10). For us, there exists a new-found motivation to be involved and make a difference.

Motivation is a powerful ingredient for success. We believe that every prisoner should be put in a position to experience both motivation and success. Unfortunately, due to the persistent failures throughout our lives, many prisoners have never experienced either. We recognize that the lack of institutional rehabilitative opportunities, such as higher education and vocational courses, presents prisoners with structural obstacles, which have been an impediment to success. Incarceration has caused prisoners to lose social skills, trust and often times hope – all of which inhibit the ability to self-motivate (Bryant *et al.*, 2014). However, much of the loss experienced as a prisoner can be restored by the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. The transformative experience ignites a sense of leadership and improves self-efficacy in prisoners (Allred *et al.*, 2013), which motivates them to engage in social issues. In general, self-efficacy involves “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Gist and Mitchell, 1992, p. 184). The improved self-efficacy from taking Inside-Out encouraged us to accept the unfamiliar challenge that came with conducting research.

Being a member of the ATP inspired confidence in our ability to learn how to conduct research. Having university professors who are experienced researchers oversee our training and provide instruction on techniques only enhanced our conviction of assured success. There were times when each individual experienced anxiety due to the unfamiliar pressures that come with the research process. Some members felt as if they were going to let the ASU researchers, or each other, down by not doing their best. Others became unsure of their abilities and began to feel as if they would be the cause of our impending failure. However, our ability to mobilize as a team and pick each other up inspired confidence in our capacity to succeed and propelled us forward. We believe that it would be equally impactful on other prisoners to utilize them in future research.

We received valuable information from conducting interviews. We learned that many prisoners want to be successful but lack the tools. For

example, many prisoners would like to use their time to further their education, but they feel as if there are too many barriers in Arizona to do so. One prisoner stated that he has been requesting enrollment in the GED class for two years, but was denied because he was not on the Department of Correction's priority ranking list – meaning those who have been identified as having a high risk to recidivate. Further investigation revealed that those on the priority ranking list often do not want to be in the class, while those who do want to be there may be denied enrollment. During the interview process we learned that GED books are not allowed to be checked-out to those who want to self-study while waiting for enrollment. After learning this from an interviewee, a researcher confirmed this with ADC education staff, and they immediately made GED books available for checkout for those who wish to study.

Another prisoner interviewed stated that he applied to work in the education department, but was denied because he was a “Phase I” and did not qualify even though he had a college education.<sup>4</sup> We also learned that prisoners who seek higher education through self-pay colleges face many hurdles. Either they are denied without a clear explanation, their approvals take too long or they have difficulties in receiving course materials and books. Learning this information not only did allow us to formulate recommendations to the Governor's Recidivism Reduction team, but the information also gave us targeted goals to advocate for moving forward.

The most challenging aspect of conducting research came from interviewing prisoners living with mental health issues. Prisoners living with mental health needs are rarely paid attention to or given a voice because many people do not have the patience or the understanding. However, this sub-group of prisoners is most in need of assistance with re-entry, so it was important for us to gain their perspectives despite the risks and challenges. Their confusion as to whether what they said to us would end up in the hands of prison staff made some reluctant to participate. For others, their skepticism faded once they were convinced that their responses would remain confidential. At times, dealing with these fellow prisoners in a research capacity became overwhelming, but the magnitude of our work compelled us to continue to include them. Despite the challenges, inclusion of prisoners living with mental health issues proved rewarding as it showed our commitment to interview all who were willing to participate – regardless of our differences.



There was also a challenge in getting racial balance and a true representation of East Unit's residents. The results in our research showed an underrepresentation in the number of Hispanic respondents who participated in our research surveys. Our sample was 48% Caucasian, 25% Hispanic, 24% African American, 3% Native American, and 1% Asian. As of December 2017, the demographics of East Unit were as follows: 44% Caucasian, 34% Hispanic, 16% African American, 5% Mexican National, and 2% Other. The racial breakdown of the five ATP researchers was three African Americans and two Caucasians. Lacking Hispanic ATP researchers likely contributed to challenges in interviewing Hispanics in the East Unit population. Due to the racial divide and politics in prisons, unnecessary hurdles were often created. For example, depending on the prison unit where you are located, eating or working out with a person of a different race could have severe consequences. Consequently, based on prisoners being conditioned in certain ways, over time they have become skeptical of participating in research interviews with people from a different racial background. The overrepresentation of African American respondents compared to the overall population can be explained by having three African American ATP researchers. In the future, having a more racially and ethnically diverse research team may prove to be advantageous and provide results that better reflect the environment we live in.

Our approach to conducting interviews proved to be less than perfect. Initially, we believed that given the openness of the medium-security facility, we could simply post bulletins two weeks in advance of conducting surveys, and subjects would show-up at their discretion to a pre-disclosed location. That thinking, however, proved to be misguided. We did not consider the fact that most of the residents in the facility do not regularly read what is posted on the various bulletin boards around the facility, and those who did read our bulletin seemed to require overt solicitation, so as to clear up the many misconceptions and questions they had about the survey. We also did not consider the weekly turn-over rate of the unit, requiring new arrivals to be briefed individually about the survey (and advised by an ATP member at orientation). Once misconceptions were cleared-up and individual questions were answered, residents began to agree to be interviewed. After some initial interviews were completed, the enthusiasm of those interviewed spread and each individual solicited afterwards became easier to persuade. Participation was voluntary, but ATP members did try to individually recruit as many people as possible during the interview period.

## IMPACT

The value of prisoners speaking to inside researchers can be seen more broadly through a podcast that is produced from inside San Quentin, California State Prison called “Ear Hustle”.<sup>5</sup> Prisoners and outside professionals work as colleagues to produce content for this very popular podcast. It shares stories and ideas from those who are confined. Not only has it become a trending podcast based on the number of listeners, but it has also built a reputation for professionalism, where prisoners feel comfortable sharing their very personal stories. PBS News reported on “Ear Hustle”, and shared the story of a prisoner who eventually felt “comfortable and calm with Ear Hustle to talk about being raped in prison” where he likely would not have otherwise (Brown, 2017). Prisoner interviews allow for a relaxed environment wherein prisoner interviewees tend to be more forthcoming. As Jones (2016, p. 105) argues, “Incarcerated scholars who intimately understand and experience marginalization, secrecy, and subjection are also better able to comprehend the systematic subjugation of others. Our experiences unearth human stories and the structures and formations at work that created their subjugated experiences”.

Inside researchers allow for new storylines and perspectives that likely would not have been shared with traditional researchers. For example, a respondent was open in sharing his fears about his upcoming release with an ATP interviewer. He said, “I need to decide where to be released to, and both choices are scary. I can either be released to a half-way house where I’ll be surrounded by felons and most likely drugs, or I can be released to my family who are drug users. Both choices give me little chance of getting ahead and staying away from temptation”. This demonstrates the awareness that prisoners have of the collateral damage that occurs when surrounding themselves with those who use drugs. In fact, this individual shared that he routinely discouraged his family from visiting him because they often showed-up high. He spoke about his sister and how she earned a full-ride scholarship to a Division I university. He told the interviewer of his parents’ negative influence on him and his sister, and how they introduced drugs to them. He spoke about losing contact with his sister after she graduated from high school, and how he recalled feeling when he saw her homeless two years later pushing a shopping cart through a bad neighborhood. It was our belief that as fellow prisoners the answers provided to us would be more honest than traditional researchers. However, we did not anticipate the



profound effect that some of the stories would have on us. Jones (2016, p. 106) suggests, “At stake is the loss of our collective stories and experiences that cause us – as incarcerated scholars, but also you as reader – to examine our beliefs and ourselves. At stake is the loss of our common humanity, our interconnectedness with one another”.

We believe answers are more honest when asked by fellow prisoners as opposed to a university researcher. For example, our survey questions included: 1) At the time of your most recent arrest, what was your housing situation? and 2) What are your biggest fears upon release? If a university researcher asked the first question – a common response may be “I owned my own home, I was doing great out there”. But the reality may have been different. The respondent may have been couch-to-couch at different friends’ houses, but embarrassed to admit it. Prisoners, oftentimes, portray a front to people they do not know. Our research showed 12% were homeless/couch to couch/motel prior to their incarceration. If research was completed by university researchers, we believe the numbers would be artificially less than what we found. In regard to the second question (i.e. what are your biggest fears?), if a university researcher asked this, you likely would have received several misleading responses, including “I have no fears”. Hypermasculinity stereotypes pressure men to say that they do not fear anything, especially in prison (Jewkes, 2005). Peer-to-peer researchers allow for a more open and honest dialogue. Additionally, prisoner researchers are better capable of navigating the culture within prison. However, perhaps future research may be needed to compare the level of honesty. Future research may be useful to find out if different answers would be provided to different interviewers (e.g. university researchers of various genders vs. incarcerated researchers).

Due in part to results from the survey, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey implemented one of the survey’s recommended solutions and is in the process of implementing another. In November 2017, Governor Ducey signed an Executive Order, called “Second Chance Prisoner”, which makes it illegal for employers to inquire into past felony convictions during the interview process. This reform was inspired by our fifth recommendation, which noted the following: “The stigma and stereotypes associated with being a felon were noted as major barriers to finding employment, housing, ability to obtain higher education, and be active in pro-social communities post-release” (Office of the Governor, 2017). Governor Ducey is also in the process of expanding bed space in ADC and the Department of Economic Security

(DES) Second Chance Centers. Until now, these centers ran on a pilot basis in three prison complexes. They offer job training, job interview training and resume building classes to prisoners six months prior to their release from prison. Employment centers also hold job fairs, so prisoners can be employed immediately upon their release from prison. It should be noted that our survey did not necessarily directly lead to this new policy. The Governor's decision, however, was in line with our survey results and supports our first recommendation for "the need for useful/meaningful jobs and training while in prison" (ibid). Our survey results were directly mentioned by the Governor in an announcement of a partnership with Uber to allow prisoners who are released from the Second Chance Centers to be provided free transportation from Uber to any "verified job interview" (ibid).

Additionally, on 12 January 2018, through notification 18-02 ADC wrote "The Department is no longer charging for the High School Equivalency testing". Arizona Department of Corrections residents no longer have to worry about basing their decision concerning their enrollment into GED or high school equivalency programs based on fees/costs. Many residents are now excited and are enrolling in classes to further their education. This change in policy addresses our second recommendation to the Governor: "Removal of barriers to existing programming such as GED testing fees in prison".

Prisoners conducting research with academics is mutually beneficial. For academics, traditional research is not always effective or feasible due to costs, access, communication, resources, time, methods and other roadblocks (Schlosser, 2008). Specifically, research is often completed by graduate students who are supported by grants to fund the costs associated with studies. Prisons require background checks and/or applications before researchers are able to step inside a prison compound. Researchers will also be limited in the days and times they are able to conduct interviews. Communication between researchers and prisoners are usually monitored by correctional staff, making it difficult for already skeptical people held behind prison walls to feel comfortable enough to participate. Therefore, the protocol for traditional research creates additional burdens and costs that could be avoided with the accessibility of prisoners on site.

Time and cost savings are extensive for universities and colleges when utilizing prisoners as research assets. ATP members conducted a total of 409 interviews (Wright *et al.*, 2017). Each interview took, on average, 45 minutes, for a total of 306.75 hours. Generally, researchers have access

to a unit a couple of days a week, for a few hours a day. Had graduate students and/or professors completed similar research as ATP conducted, it would likely have taken a minimum of 6 months and \$100,000 to complete. Prisons are often located in remote areas far from universities. For example, Florence, Arizona is located approximately 65 miles from ASU. Traditional researchers would likely have traveled several thousand miles in total to complete identical research, whereas, we did not have to travel. In addition, there are times when a prison will be locked down and may require rescheduling of interviews, not to mention the question of whether the same 409 individuals would have agreed to be interviewed by graduate students or professors.

The return on ASU's investment of bringing college courses to Arizona prisons is substantial. It led to a think-tank comprised of former Inside-Out graduates, who later became trained researchers. This facilitated a groundbreaking technical report for the Governor of Arizona. The positive publicity generated from successful research by incarcerated individuals in collaboration with ASU faculty is priceless. Even more valuable is the unlimited amount of future successful research possibilities using the same model or other approaches. As noted by Piché and colleagues (2014), engaging in knowledge generation about imprisonment "is well-served whether such an alliance takes place through conventional approaches to 'giving voice' such as the qualitative interviewing... collaborative work between academics and prisoner researchers" or "teaching college and university courses behind bars via initiatives like the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program" (ibid, p. 457). Our success proves that colleges and universities around the world stand only to gain by investing in their local prison population.

For prisoners, the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program inspires cognitive transformation by allowing the marginalized to experience inclusiveness through the social support and collective efficacy provided by learning alongside members of the community. It allowed us to envision ourselves as members of that community and instilled confidence in our ability to become a future self who stands in contrast to the one who became incarcerated. This transformative experience awakens a sense of pro-social responsibility by which prisoners tend to want to participate and to make amends for past harmful behavior. State colleges and universities can build upon the prisoners' positive momentum and assist in perpetuating

behavioral change by collaborating with them on future research, which may be of benefit to find out if different answers would be provided to different kinds of interviewers. We agree with Piché and colleagues (2014, p. 457), who “concur with Mary Bosworth and colleagues (2005 p. 261, original emphasis) that ‘[w]orking *with* prisoners directly, rather than writing *about* them’ to excavate what happens within carceral sites is needed”.

## RESPONDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

So, what do those who were interviewed think about this research process? Our newest ATP member who joined after participating in the survey provided his feedback from an interviewee’s perspective:

Culturally, prisons breed a great deal of mistrust and diminished social skills within them, which in-turn is directed towards the administration of the Department of Corrections. Some prisoners (convicts) tend to perceive that the Department of Corrections (administration) is constantly engaged in a conspiratorial plot against them (psychological warfare). This can cause skepticism and difficulties in getting them to volunteer for a survey such as the one presented. However, many others and I quelled our skepticism by putting aside any doubts we may have held and consented to be interviewed.

The fact that we were interviewed by fellow prisoners made it much easier to be completely honest. The interviewers spoke our language and live by the “convict code” – the convict code is an unwritten code of conduct amongst prisoners, which limits their ability to speak openly and honestly with administration on most subject matters out of fear of being viewed or labeled as a snitch – and that allowed me to be at ease during my interview. I was able to let my guard down and totally relax.

The interviewers allowed me trust that my answers would be to “our” benefit as prisoners and not to “our” detriment. The interview was well-conducted, professional and the questions asked were concise. They covered six main topics: demographics, employment, housing, substance abuse, re-entry and solutions. Though not all of the questions asked applied to each interviewee, they still held significant value as some

questions posed caused each subject to ponder a question that he may not have known existed or affected him.

Seeing and reading the final results from the data collected through these interviews has given a tinge of hope to those of us who may initially have viewed the survey as just another of the many well-intended programs that have come and gone over the years, always starting out strong and then losing steam. Just knowing that there are genuine groups of people and organizations, such as the ATP, whose purpose is geared towards the changing of the present culture that exists to one which promotes new ideals and objectives through rehabilitation, behavior modification, and reducing recidivism is significant for respondents. This in-turn would be a departure from the current culture. The mere thought of this gives the respondents a brighter outlook upon our current circumstances and future.

## CONCLUSION

There are many choices in life that prove to be life altering. For us, signing up and completing a criminal justice class offered by Arizona State University proved to be life changing. Not only did we gain confidence in our ability to complete college classes, but we also found *purpose*, even while incarcerated. We had the unprecedented opportunity to engage in research where the unfiltered voices of prisoners were provided to us, *researchers*, who understand what it is like to live in prison. Through this process, we learned that criminology and criminal justice is very complex.

We recognize that prisoners conducting research is not ideal for all facilities as some will not allow unit-wide access; therefore, it is recommended that these programs begin on lower level security units so as to showcase their effectiveness and success. Success allows the prison administration to witness the transformative effect the program has on prisoners and encourages expansion to higher security level units. Success also allows word to spread throughout the “prisoner grapevine” of a program that helps facilitate growth. This encourages prisoners who seek growth to work towards a goal of being transferred to the unit that hosts the college level program. Restoring hope in this way motivates good behavior and serves to benefit the prison, regardless of security level.

Studies show that prisoners who complete college classes are less likely to engage in violence during incarceration than prisoners who do not (Pompoco *et al.*, 2017). Conducting research accomplishes that and much more. The benefit of less violence is substantial for prison administration and safer prisons allow prisoners to focus on self-improvement. What better way to empower those who are incarcerated than by allowing them to aid in processes directly focused upon the improvement of prison and re-entry outcomes.

## ENDNOTES

- \* Special thanks to Kevin Wright, Travis Meyers, Cody Telep, and Wesley Smith of the Arizona Transformation Project for the inspiration and leadership to help us achieve the unthinkable. The corresponding author can be reached at the following address: Justin Thrasher, ADC #256945 Arizona State Prison Complex-Florence, East Unit, PO Box 5000 Florence, AZ 85132
- <sup>1</sup> See <http://insideoutcenter.org/>
- <sup>2</sup> ATP is a think-tank, co-founded in 2016, made-up of ASU faculty and students, as well as incarcerated alumni from the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. ATP's mission statement is "Producing and maintaining high-quality learning objectives that will make our communities and correctional facilities more just and socially aware – through collaboration, dialogue and transformative experiences". The work of ATP includes: the reintroduction of the Impact of Crime on Victims Class (I.C.V.C.), where actual victims of crime share the impact of their experiences with prisoners, in hopes of bringing awareness of the "Ripple Effect" that crime causes; a web-based re-entry information center, which contains resource information for recently released Arizona prisoners to seek employment, education, housing, medical and much more ([www.outtomorrowresources.com](http://www.outtomorrowresources.com)); developing content for grant proposals and academic speaking engagements; and research on re-entry and recidivism described here. See more at <http://aztransform.org>
- <sup>3</sup> See <https://aztransformationproject.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/asurecidivismredactionfinalreport.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> ADC prisoners are on a three-phase system. Prisoners begin at *Phase I* and have the least amount of privileges. If they do not receive a disciplinary write-up for six months, then they move on to the next phase. Each phase has more privileges than the last with *Phase III* having the most.
- <sup>5</sup> See <https://www.earhustlesq.com/>

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

*Justin Thrasher* is an LLM candidate at the University of London specializing in international business law, commercial and corporate law, and international dispute resolution. Justin received his M.B.A from CCU and his B.S. in Global Business from ASU. Justin is co-founder of Arizona Transformation Project and was a student of the first Inside-Out class in Arizona. He is most proud of his nephews Jay and Eric, and niece Allie.

*Erik Maloney* is a forty-one-year-old man who was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole at the age of twenty-one. He has devoted his life to helping advance the conversation surrounding the issues of mass incarceration and the lack of practical rehabilitation in Arizona prisons with his writing skills. He is a co-founding member of the Arizona Transformation Project and is currently collaborating with departments within two of the three major universities in Arizona on issues of mass incarceration.

*Shaun C. Mills* is a 48-year-old native of Phoenix, Arizona and proud father of six adult children. An innate thirst for knowledge drew him to the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program in 2017, which ignited a passion towards effecting positive change within the justice system. In still pursuing knowledge he is currently enrolled in a Horticulture program (Central Arizona College) and Psychology (Rio Salado).

*Johnny Lee House* was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. He has a beautiful wife and seven lovely children. His profession is barbering and his hobbies include drawing, fitness, and cooking. He is currently taking courses from Christ Evangelical Foundation to obtain a Bachelors in Ministry.

*Timm Wroe* is a 51-year-old father of four wonderful children, and three amazing grandchildren, with another grandson on the way. He loves his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and teaching parenting classes. He is honored to be part of the Arizona Transformation Project, and hopes to make the community, both inside and out, a place where change for the better is possible.

*Varrone White* was born on January 6, 1981 in Glendale Arizona into a good family of four. He and his brother Damen were raised by their parents Carl and Robin White in the Phoenix area in the 1980s and 1990s. During his teenage years, after his parent's divorce, Varrone began to depart from the good values that his parents raised him with, and became involved in gangs and many other criminal activities earning him a lengthy prison sentence exceeding twenty years. While in prison, Varrone has learned from his horrible choices, surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, returned to the values his parents raised him with, and has also begun holding Bible studies while planning to work with ministries and other programs aimed at rehabilitating the incarcerated and reducing recidivism upon his release in September 2022.