
Criminal justice policy inside-out: An initial case study in education among police and incarcerated men

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Abstract

This project discusses the development and implementation of a three-credit graduate/undergraduate course, offered to police officers and incarcerated men, that would eventually become part of the city's recruit training academy. The initial class consisted of six veteran officers and six men serving life sentences. The programme has the potential to integrate the fundamentals of restorative justice within the occupational culture of policing in order to produce direct benefits for public safety and may also be effective for building more authentic relationships between police and communities of colour. The article explains what went into creating this class, how it progressed and what resulted.

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Introduction

From 2009 through 2016, our group – the Elsinore Bennu Think Tank for Restorative Justice – devoted considerable effort to developing, negotiating and funding an ancillary curriculum for police academy training that we believed would help improve the professional socialisation of police officers by lessening the transmission of outdated notions within their occupational culture. Specifically, we have worked to synthesise the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program (Pompa, 2013; Werts, 2013) with police academy training. Inside-Out is andragogy developed by Pompa (2004) in which university students and incarcerated people take university courses inside of correctional facilities to foster collaboration, reduce stigma and prisoner recidivism. Our initiative is a dynamic partnership between the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, Duquesne University and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections that brings police recruits together with incarcerated men to study as peers in a seminar behind prison walls. The seminar is an academic course, meeting once a week, where ‘outside’ students (i.e., police officers and/or recruits) and an equal number of ‘inside’ students (i.e., incarcerated men) attend class together inside of a prison. We believe that the addition of an innovative experiential learning curriculum to traditional academy training provides recruits with an opportunity to develop a more nuanced professional vision during their initial socialisation. For the incarcerated men, their coursework holds the secondary benefit of empowering them to see the humanity in a group of people (i.e., the police), whom up to that point they had recognised only as adversaries.

Police Training Inside-Out (hereafter PTI-O) is a response to the widely accepted finding that traditional training methods are failing new officers and their departments (Buerger, 1998; Conti, 2009; Fielding, 1988; Harris, 1973; Lundman, 1980). There is a consensus among scholars that traditional training promotes the type of us vs. them mentality that undermines even the best efforts of law enforcement within the communities they serve. Training environments that apply pressure to recruits for the sole purpose of generating a response to that pressure (i.e., high stress paramilitary academies), socialise recruits into maladaptive coping strategies (Conti, 2009, 2011; Violante, 1993; Wozniak, 2017). While extreme harassment, debasement, isolation, and a loss of identity are supposed to re-socialise the recruit into a disciplined officer they lack any educational value whatsoever (Shernock, 1998). Moreover, paramilitary stress academies produce defensive and depersonalised officers while collegiate non-stress training models, a small minority in American policing, have no such consequences (Lundman, 1980). Additionally, depersonalised teaching models undermine cohesion among police officers of different racial backgrounds (Conti and Doreian 2011, 2014). Furthermore, the stress model can result in unquestioning obedience to superiors, increased hostility and low self-esteem (McCreeley, 1980).

For over a decade, scholars have criticised the role of pedagogy in police training, noting that a system designed for the transmission of information from expert to novice implies that it is teaching children (Birzer, 2003; Marenin, 2004). Each author posited andragogy (i.e. the mutual involvement of expert and novice in the learning process) as an alternative training regime. An andragogical structure is expected to better orient officers toward problem solving, critical thinking, and the goals of policing in a democracy rather than the 'robot, soldier-like mentality that has been perpetuated in the training classroom' under the pedagogical system (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001).

PTI-O is expected to address these ongoing criticisms; specifically, Inside-Out employs the type of andragogical structure that has been called for while also utilising the recommended university connections. Ironically, the relative freedom of a course offered in prison, in comparison to the academy, is expected to be a stress relief for recruits. Beyond this emotional benefit, the programme goal is to transform the way that recruits view the people they arrest and the neighbourhoods they patrol (i.e., using the prism of prison to alter their cognitive lenses) while transforming how incarcerated men look at the police. The curriculum maintains a rigorous public safety focus with an emphasis on restorative justice, while functioning as a space for dialogue where the two groups can come to see each other – and themselves – as people with vested interests in their shared communities.

Despite the rapid growth and popularity of Inside-Out Prison Exchange programmes, with hundreds of universities and correctional institutions participating and over 30,000 students having taken an Inside-Out course (Inside Out Center, 2018), there is a paucity of work examining the outcome and effectiveness of the programme. While existing studies (Allred, 2009; Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer, 2014; Van Gundy *et al.*, 2013) indicate that the programme has at least some effect on changing participant perceptions around a number of criminological and criminal justice issues, there remains significant need for more examination of how these courses impact their participants and their potential for reducing stigma and changing relationships between social groups. Importantly, to our knowledge, this is the first study of an Inside-Out programme in which the outside participants are not college students but rather police cadets.

Bringing this idea into practice began with several requests for funding from various U.S. criminal justice agencies. While our proposals were generally well received and described as innovative, reviewers were sceptical about the likelihood of law enforcement agencies actually participating in this sort of a programme. Rejecting that conclusion, we chose to move forward without funding and begin the programme locally with a pilot course made up of six municipal police officers and six men imprisoned at a state correctional institution. For the course, all participants, both police and incarcerated men, received three credits – at either the graduate or undergraduate level depending upon whether they had completed a college degree already or not. The pages that follow contain a review of the literature on police culture and socialisation that calls for improved educational programmes, an account of what makes Inside-Out an ideal mechanism for building authentic relationships between police and communities, as well as documenting the efforts that went into this project and their payoff in this pilot course.

Theory

Inside-Out is devoted to teaching university courses in correctional settings.¹ These courses include traditional college students as well as an equivalent number of university students and incarcerated people (Pompa, 2004). One of the goals of Inside-Out is to generate a shift in the consciousness of each student and the destigmatisation of incarcerated people is the key to that experiential process (Pompa, 2004; Werts, 2013). Courses begin with a discussion of labels and a mandate that negative terms (e.g., ‘inmate’) be exchanged for ‘inside student’ – while the rest of the class are referred to as ‘outside students’. Starting with this re-labelling, participants begin to realise that neither can be reduced to the one-dimensional image that they had previously assumed. As students interact over the course of a semester, incarcerated men and women no longer appear as just the misfits and monsters presented in popular culture, but as people with lives and families beyond prison walls, while college students become something more than children of privilege incapable of understanding why people succumb to the culture of street crime. In time, initial changes in how the two groups see each other affect how group members see themselves, their futures and their potential impact on society.

Fundamentally, Inside-Out classes are encounters that begin as uncomfortable and unsettling interactions, but are quickly normalised and as participants become comfortable around one another and overcome the stigma of incarceration (Goffman, 1963). In this shift, outside students come to recognise people serving prison sentences as something more than the sum of their crimes. Once the stigma is challenged, critical thinking towards the criminal justice system can be sharpened and students, both inside and outside, are more likely to seize upon opportunities to work for positive social change. As a social mechanism, this process draws its power from that which it seeks to eliminate. Goffman explains that:

When normals and stigmatized do in fact enter one another’s immediate presence, especially when they there attempt to sustain a joint conversational encounter, there occurs one of the primal scenes of sociology; for, in many cases, these moments will be the ones when the causes and effects of stigma must be directly confronted by both sides.

Obviously, the tension between police and incarcerated men creates an even more powerful ‘primal scene of sociology’ because each group is so deeply stigmatised by the other. We have sought to harness that energy in order to make even greater gains than those that result from more general Inside-Out course.

PTI-O is both justified and inspired by what Alpert and Dunham call *authority maintenance theory* – an explanation for their findings on police-civilian encounters that culminate in violence. Their theory explicates ‘the exaggerated role that authority plays in police-civilian interactions’ and shifts the analysis away from psychological characteristics and personal attitudes of police and instead focuses on an interaction order of power (i.e., the officer’s authority) and either deference (i.e., the civilian’s submission) or resistance (i.e., the civilian’s failure to submit) as a model for

understanding police use of force (2004: 171). The authors contend that instances of police-civilian violence are the result of status threats whereby the officer's demeanour towards the civilian and its reciprocation are either generating or suppressing conflict. Their model fits with earlier research that documents the importance of 'maintaining an edge' and being 'one up' on civilians in order to ensure personal safety among police officers. Moreover, it reflects an interaction order which is at the heart of police culture.

Van Maanen ([1978]1999) explains that every civilian interaction opens police responsibility for public order to potential disgrace, embarrassment, and insult so officers internalise a role that requires them to perpetually command their milieu. For police, civilian encounters are character contests where the authority of the state is recognised, rejected, or left uncertain. Personal affronts challenge the police definition of the immediate situation to the degree that a disrespectful civilian is a threat to the proper police drama as presented in everyday interactions. The ability to maintain command status during a civilian interaction is vital to officers because 'the authority of the state is also his personal authority, and is, by necessity, a matter of some concern to him' (Van Maanen, 1999[1978]: 353).

Even for civilians, people who are awkward, unkempt, moving strangely or talking to themselves pose a threat akin to 'a dangerous giant, a destroyer of worlds' (Goffman, 1961: 80). 'Deviants' of this type possess the power to generate interpersonal and organisational chaos by contradicting normal definitions of the immediate situation and presentations of self. Deviance does not have to threaten physical harm – or maintain criminal intent – to be feared. Since cultural norms are established and maintained through interaction, manners and identities are the building blocks of social structure. Indiscretion, discourtesy, bad taste or simply 'being the sort of person who does not belong' are disconcerting, because they challenge the conviction that our social world will not plunge out of control and shatter our sense of who we believe ourselves to be. Accordingly, stigma relies on the expectations regarding the categories of people we will confront within social encounters. When discrediting information arises, and people realise that those with whom they are interacting are not what they appear to be, the interaction order is challenged.

From training, police are pushed to internalise an interaction order based upon obedience to police authority. Any substantial status threat leads an officer to discredit the civilian with the label of 'asshole' (Conti, 2009; Conti and Nolan, 2005; Van-Maanen, [1978]1999). Defining a civilian as an asshole describes and explains the individual with a set of motives contrary to the orderly function of society. Stigmatisation dehumanises the asshole and discredits any behaviour, or its motivation, as both senseless and threatening, while the police officer is recognised as the 'good guys', a force of order maintaining control over potential chaos. While not all police will subscribe to the use of violence against, or maintain the same threshold for tolerating, disrespectful civilians, those who do can find something equivalent to a subcultural justification for their behaviour in their early socialisation. Moreover, the fact that this interaction order fits with a number of the normative orders (i.e., morality, safety, competence and machismo) that have been used to explain the subculture as a whole, makes it all the more powerful (Herbert, 1998).

Of course, these perceptions of obedience, compliance and respect are highly contingent upon the racism that is so deeply embedded into our social structure. Beyond the voluminous literature detailing racial disproportionalities in stops and arrests (Koch *et al.*, 2016; Rice and White, 2010), there is a substantial body of work noting the impact of race on officer perceptions of behaviour, with Black suspects far more likely to be seen as disrespectful, combative and potentially dangerous than similarly-situated white suspects (Brown, 2005; Engel *et al.*, 2006; Kochel *et al.*, 2011). As such, Black Americans, especially Black men, are significantly more likely than any other social group to be perceived as threatening to the authority maintenance work of the officer (Alpert and Dunham, 2004).

As Link and Phelan have noted, stigma rarely has any intrinsic connection to a particular characteristic, but is a social construction contingent upon positionality (2001: 367). This approach recognises that, as in the case of racism, the stigmatised are not qualitatively any worse than the 'normals', but simply lack the requisite social capital for normalisation. Loury (2003) has used this framework to develop a conception of racial stigma that explains both the historic and present mistreatment of African Americans. 'Criminality' poses its own stigma, which is often interrelated with racial stigma (Hutchinson, 2014). When these two powerful stigmas intersect, we can imagine an occupational culture that not only reflects a larger irrational fear of African American males, but is charged with responding to the fictional threat that their stigmatisation entails.

From this perspective, the shootings of unarmed African American men – as well as mass incarceration – are understood as part of a viscous cycle beginning with labelling and social distance that generates fear among the majority population that police are responsible for ameliorating. Eventually, as police racism is further and further documented, the police are highlighted as a uniquely racist group, despite the fact that they are accurately reflecting the racism at the core of American culture. At this point, the impossibility of the police mandate – effective crime control within a democracy – is further complicated by the requirement that individual officers transcend their own racism despite being products of a racist society. This speaks to a necessity of not only destigmatising criminal offenders as such, but especially Black criminal offenders. Based upon almost 20 years of scholarship in the area of police socialisation (Conti, 2001) and over a decade of experience with the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, we decided to use Inside-Out's andragogy in an attempt to address the issues discussed above.

Methods

This article draws on ethnographic research conducted between 1999 and 2000 as well as ongoing participatory action research that began in 2016. Ethnography subjects ($n=70$) were recruits beginning their police training in a Midwestern academy. Ethnography subjects are not directly quoted, but interviews and participant observation inform helped us modify Inside-Out pedagogy for police training purposes. Participatory action research partners ($n=130$) are half police officers and half incarcerated men in varying points of their respective careers. The 8 individuals featured in this article are subset of a

subset of the first training cohort featuring 5 incarcerated men and 5 veteran police officers. Participatory action research partners volunteered to participate in an experimental pilot programme for PTI-O, and received three college credits for participation.

Participants featured in this article are between the ages of 30 and 65, though most are in their 40s and 50s. Veteran police officers are racialised exclusively as White (n=4), while incarcerated activists are African American (n=4). The police officers have completed up a minimum of 60 credits of college, while some have obtained Masters' degrees. Most incarcerated activists have obtained a high-school degree, while one has obtained his Bachelor's. All participants are residents of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

As described above, the lead author has been writing critically about police training for nearly 20 years. Ten years ago he became active with Inside-Out in order to develop his teaching in the more general area of criminal justice. During his instructor training, it was immediately apparent that the Inside-Out andragogy was antithetical to – and perhaps an antidote for – the flaws in traditional police training. Having argued that police were socialised through a process of shame and degradation, he was drawn to a pedagogy of dialogue and destigmatisation; bringing police together with incarcerated men might help to change the way each group understood each other and themselves. In many ways, PTI-O was offered in adherence to traditional Inside-Out andragogy; students took all classes together with the exception of debriefing sessions before and after the semester, students sat in a circle as the emphasised dialogue and participation, and there were equal numbers of 'inside' and 'outside' students (Pompa, 2004). The only major modification was that veteran police officers took the place of university students.

Analysis

As discussed above, a fundamental element of PTI-O is that police are encouraged to cultivate a more nuanced professional vision through destigmatisation, while being humanised within a group of incarcerated men. Faruq, a wise and compassionate man who has served over four decades in prison, explains the challenge of this novel idea:

When Norm first floated the idea of Inside-Out with police officers instead of college students the response was not overly positive. The convicts listened to his proposal, but I could still sense the reluctance in the classroom. Some of us had briefly mentioned our reaction to Norm's idea but no one, I had talked with, had decided yet. A couple men eventually refused while others spoke of their reluctance and apprehension, how they felt it would be extremely uncomfortable. I just listened, apprehensive of such a volatile mix, but highly intrigued. Could this simple idea make a difference?

I still have a visceral memory of when my community – Homewood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – actually fought with the cops fist-on-fist on Homewood Avenue and Kelly Street in the hot summer of 1968. I always wondered why no shots were fired that day. Maybe the cops were told to stand down or maybe they were enjoying it as much as we were, or maybe none of us pulled guns because they didn't, I don't know, but we fought for half an hour, and it felt like an eternity and it felt good. Hand-to-hand, blow-for-blow, young people, old people. Cops throw you in the paddy wagon, the people drag you out. Little kids throwing rocks, old women and men hollering and cursing 'let 'em go damit we tired of yall's shit,

we ain't takin this no mo.' Eventually more and more cops came and the people scattered. Yet in hindsight it seemed like something was spoken that day. Something about those times, the turbulent 60's. We had lots of meetings with City Hall after that and many changes were made only to revert back to status quo a few brief years later, when the talking stopped.

So yeah, WOW! Could we speak to them in an academic setting, maybe fight with our minds and find an opening, a start, a real conversation that would lead to a better understanding of each other? I could tell them of how when I was a nine year-old boy just walking down the street the cops would stop me asking me where I was going and what I was doing, as if I did not understand it was only because I was a Black Boy in a white neighborhood, I understood. Could I explain how those kinds of experiences made me feel like I was under surveillance and suspicion every time a police car came in sight for the rest of my days? Could they understand why I ran into that fight in the summer of 68? Could we find that old illusive, ever sought after rarely captured common ground? I sure wanted to give it a go.

Despite – or perhaps because of – his experiences with the police, Faruq was very excited about the course and on the first day, chose a seat between the two toughest-looking officers. He might have been thinking of that day in the summer of 1968 when he spotted those cops, but it's hard to know for sure.

Tiffany, a patrol and community resource officer, provided a detailed description of the destigmatisation that occurred in her experience with the course. She explained:

Throughout the past few months, I have had the privilege and honor of working with six men, who as inside students have given me new perspectives on the criminal justice system, on restorative justice practices, and on life. While all of these inside students have been sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole, none of them has given up on living. Quite the opposite, they have all dedicated themselves to improving quality of life. Four of my inside classmates work as peer counsellors and one is a yoga teacher, all working within the prison to help their peers. All seven of the inside students serve as members of a think tank that focuses on public safety issues, thinking about ways to improve life for the greater good.

From the first week when one of the Inside students told me his favorite part of nature was grass because he missed it, to another student explaining how he uses poetry and writing to keep hope alive, these men have given me perspective on living. We are all humans and therefore inherently complex and prone to mistakes. Certainly, we are all responsible for our choices, but people can learn from their mistakes and become better people as a result. The Inside-Out Program has not only taught me about a different side of the criminal justice system but also about the complexities of individuals and their circumstances.

Above, Tiffany's sketch describes how incarcerated men are normalised within Inside-Out courses. However, in order to better understand the success of our pilot course, you have to consider the police participants in terms of all their commonality and contradictions that were expressed during the semester. For instance, Peg is everything you would expect in an Irish Catholic mill-town girl who grew up to become a cop.

All that as well as being the survivor of domestic violence and the mother of an African American son who has struggled with both addiction and crime. Peg notes:

I was apprehensive when I learned that I was accepted into Police Training Inside-Out. Everyone in jail hates cops, right? University professors are bleeding heart liberals. They will never listen to my words or take seriously my ideas. How would six cops, six lifers and professors be able to sit in a room together and talk openly in regard to restorative justice?

Let's just say that I was apprehensive for no reason. I have been amazed at the respect and openness each time that we met. Where I thought that the insiders would sit across the room and glare at me each man actually walked up to me, looked me in the eye and shook my hand. Every session has ended with that same respect. Respect that we all now feel for each other.

The men that I have come to know in this program are brilliant. These men have taken responsibility for their actions and they have turned a terrible situation into an opportunity to learn and mentor and make a difference. These men live in a stifling, demeaning, emasculating environment, but they have succeeded. They have become educated and in the last several weeks they have all educated me.²

During the closing ceremony for our course, Peg was part of an amazingly poignant interaction. Standing at a podium, preparing to read the reflection offered above to an audience of correctional and law enforcement administrators, she realised she had forgotten her glasses and scurried over to Khalifa – one of the fiercest voices in our ongoing dialogue – and asked him for his. Stunned, he reacted too slowly, so Peg quickly pulled them from his eyes and headed back to read her piece. A smile spread across his face and those of us who know him laughed. In his reflection on the course, Khalifa wrote:

First and foremost, for me personally [this course] presented a unique opportunity to understand and forgive a very unfortunate incident involving police that scarred my mind as a very young child. Because of this class I am able to separate the past from the hopeful future by way of sharing this with others who feel all police were bias and supporters of oppression by means of violence and terror. I exit this class feeling quite free of such feelings and know that police are people 'just as we are,' some make poor decisions by way of adrenal rush, some in honest fear, and yes – some from poor teaching and unaccountability. I am thankful for this opportunity – most impressed by the honesty and answers from participating officers and would relish the possibility of continuing discussions in finding ways to address problems, such as drug addiction and violence.

Khalifa's near lifetime of institutionalisation began in a youth facility at eight years old after seeing police brutally beat and arrest his parents. The idea of being so connected to a cop that she would feel comfortable snatching the glasses off his face continues to bring him a smile.

Colleen, a Sergeant in the police academy, had spent a number of years on medical leave for injuries sustained during a robbery when the suspect hit and dragged her 20 feet with his van as he attempted to flee the scene. She explained how that experience led her to PTI-O:

The program has allowed for a think tank of three different perspectives, the inside students whom are part of the system, the outside students who work within the system, and academics who study the system. A blending of the ideals that each individual brought during this has allowed us to take off our officer lens and see things from a different view, a perspective we sometimes lose in our careers.

Personally, I also signed up for this training because I was a victim of a severe assault a few years back. The actor is up for parole next month and I believed by taking this training it would allow me to better understand him and why he did what he did that day. I also wanted the unique opportunity to have a glimpse on how his days have been spent since his arrest. Therefore, to me personally this class has sometimes been emotionally hard, yet healing.

What made Colleen's experience in the class even more powerful was that her assailant was robbing a drug dealer and received a relatively light sentence (i.e., five years in prison). Seeing how the criminal justice system can mistreat its own agents was a shock to most of the inside students.

Most – except for Shawn, who is serving a life sentence for his role in the murder of a man who had robbed him during his previous life as a drug dealer. Shawn was very familiar with Colleen's incident and recognised her as soon as she entered the room. For him, Colleen was an example, like himself, on how the criminal justice system was more focused on what, to that point, had been non-violent drug dealers, rather than men who robbed them at gunpoint and injured police in their escape. Shawn explained that:

I truly believe that this type of interaction with inmates and police need to continue. It was a chance to let the officers hear my point of view on crime prevention in the black communities and police relations with those communities. Coming from the 'other' side of being a part of destroying my community it was an honor to be able to be a part of a class that is looking for ways of making communities safe. I learned that the officers have the same concerns that I have about safety and there was an understanding that both police officers and former inmates need to work together for the common goal of safety. I had a chance to express why some people in the black communities feel the way they do about police.

I also got the chance to hear from caring officers who truly want every neighborhood to be safe for everyone. I believe this class broke down barriers that were built up by some inmates and changed the way we view police officers and see them as 'people' who care and not an enemy trying to lock up or kill us. I have told and will continue to tell other inmates about this class and how much I have learned and how much the officers are willing to listen without judgment.

Souroth, a patrol officer, provided a comment that fit perfectly with Shawn's understanding of what had transpired over the course of the semester. He noted that:

through interacting with the 'inside students' my worldview has begun to evolve into one of greater empathy and understanding. This change has had the effect of making me a more respectful and prevention-oriented officer. I now understand that people's lives are not wholly defined by their negative actions but can evolve. In knowing and acknowledging

this I am able to treat those I arrest with a sense of respect and understanding which I did not previously have.

Oscar, the youngest inside member of our group, offered a slightly more critical perspective in the following:

On one hand, I believe that my time in this class will not affect the police's view of the reformed in prison. On the other hand, I hold out hope that by doing this they will see that people do change and make wrong decisions but that an offender should have a second chance at life once this is demonstrated. This class also shows me that I can sit in a room with a profession that I don't totally agree with, but that I am able to find something that I have in common with these people. I believe even if the curtain of stigmatization comes down on both sides just a little then progress is going in a good direction and I believe the class has accomplished this so, I am thankful.

Perhaps, since student response to the course was so overwhelmingly positive, Oscar's more measured evaluation should be taken as a baseline for indicating what can be achieved through PTI-O. It would be naïve to argue that PTI-O can be the magic bullet of police training that is called for in so many of the critical responses to policing in America. However, if employed with humility, the fundamental elements of the Inside-Out programme could be an important mechanism in generating the sort of sustained dialogue necessary for authentic relationships.

Discussion

PTI-O capitalised on the power of learning across boundaries by approaching policing from a social problems perspective; it focused on the problems that police respond to, the problems that they create, the problems that they suffer from and how their professional vision contributes to each of these problems. While the content of this course was not dramatically different than the standard Inside-Out course, the participants in the course represent a significant departure. While the outside students are typically college students, this is the first time to that the outside students were all veteran police officers. This presents potentially a powerful new approach to the destigmatising work of the Inside-Out programme.

As can be seen from the reflections of both inside and outside students, there is clearly a process of destigmatisation facilitated by PTI-O (Pompa, 2004; Werts, 2013). Although we lack the longitudinal data to examine how these new attitudes hold up over time, this points to at least the possibility of transformative change sparked by the andragogical style of learning in PTI-O. That these changes were observed in officers with a significant amount of policing experience further speaks to how such training could be a meaningful component of reducing the prevalence of the combative, us vs. them mentality fostered in American police training (Alpert and Dunham, 2004; Buerger, 1998; Conti, 2009; Fielding, 1988; Harris, 1973).

This study seeks to add to the small but growing literature surrounding the efficacy and potential of Inside-Out to spark cognitive shifts in programme participants. Although

existing studies (Allred, 2009; Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer, 2014; Van Gundy *et al.*, 2013) of the programme indicate it has at least some effect on changing participant perceptions around a number of important criminal justice issues, there is much to be explored on how these courses impact the participants. Our study not only helps to address this lacuna, but expands the field to include outside participants who are not college students, but rather criminal justice practitioners.

What our study demonstrates is that PTI-O has the potential to not only break down stigmas surrounding race, crime, and incarceration, but also begin to address some of the well-known issues in police training (Conti, 2009; Fielding, 1988; Wozniak, 2017). Current police training schemas rely on top-down instruction in a paramilitary style which not only contain little of educational value (Sherlock, 1998), but socialise recruits into maladaptive coping strategies (Violante, 1993) and undermine interracial cohesion among officers (Conti and Doreian, 2011, 2014). PTI-O represents almost the exact opposite of the high-pressure, high-stress nature of paramilitary academies through an emphasis on collaboration, discussion and the thoughtful consideration of complex situations.

Our findings are in line with the limited literature surrounding Inside-Out programmes, with both inside and outside participants reporting greater understanding and increased humanisation of the other group. The andragogical nature of putting police recruits and inmates on equal footing within the course clearly contributed to increased empathy and lesser stigmatisation. However, the single most important piece of direct evidence of student learning within this course is the fact that, led by the two officers from the training academy, the police wrote the following proposal to make the course a formal element of academy training.

To: Chief Scott Schubert and OPS Command Staff
From: Police Training Inside-Out Pilot Class
Date: January 27th, 2017

Purpose

We write this letter to propose a worthwhile addition of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police's Recruit Training Program.

We suggest that the Bureau adds an amended version of the Inside-Out Program into the basic recruit curriculum. Pittsburgh prides itself on being an innovative city; this training would be the first of its kind in the country supporting the ideal.

Sociology training in police academies

The Inside-Out Program is helpful to police recruits because it enables them to examine situations with knowledge of the structural issues that shape society. For example, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity and age are all important in understanding specific conflict situations. By understanding how these factors affect conflict, the recruit will learn to ask questions that provide an accurate depiction of the crime without the influence of stereotypes. In conducting police work, it is also important to understand that communities are composed of relational networks. These networks can be especially important both in investigating crimes and in preventing criminal acts. Understanding group dynamics is crucial to being a successful police officer.

Recruits would also benefit from an understanding of cultural diversity. Those entering a career in law enforcement need to learn that there is variation in living patterns and cultural diversity; officers must be able to anticipate and understand those patterns on the job. The Inside Out Program can help prepare the recruits to be better police officers in the communities they serve.

Solution to the problem

We propose that we implement the Inside-Out Program into the basic recruit curriculum.

We propose the introduction of 26–28 hours of Inside-Out Training into the curriculum. First, the recruits would be given introductory reading materials and a 2–4 hour orientation to the programme and its goals. The recruits would then be assigned to one of two groups, which would attend separately. The actual programme would consist of five weekly meetings lasting 4 hours each week. Three hours of this time would be spent inside the facility with the Inside students, and 1 hour would be used to debrief the recruits. The recruits would be accompanied each week by Dr Conti as well as an academy staff member who would serve solely as a monitor and observer. Upon completion of the programme, each recruit will write a summary of the course, comment on how it served their academy training, and make suggestions for future sessions. Recruits will be offered three college credit from Duquesne University and will also be offered preference in future officer involved Inside-Out Programmes once they have completed at least one year of patrol work, not to include field training.

The training will be conducted at SCI Pittsburgh and will be held during the work week from 0830 hours until 1130 hours. The recruits will be shuttled from the Training Academy to SCI Pittsburgh using the academy vans. The training should not occur before week 18 of the Academy training, in order to give the recruits the opportunity to attain a more thorough understanding of the criminal justice system and police work. Prior to implementation, the academy director, recruit sergeant and any other academy staff designated by the director will meet with Dr Conti et al. to discuss and approve the curriculum.

Conclusion

We believe that the addition of the Inside Out Program into the recruit curriculum would tremendously benefit the recruits, the convicts, and the communities in which we serve. We believe this training will provide knowledge, enhanced communications, community engagement and understanding, and opportunity for cultural diversity. We believe participation in the Inside Out Program will make our officers safer by building better understandings and improved interactions.

Please see attached testimonials from inaugural graduating class of Police Training Inside-Out Program. Please consider testimonials from officers as letters of recommendation for the Inside-Out Program. Thank you for your consideration.

Thanks to this memo and the positive reception from the police command staff, PTI-O was immediately established as a training module for an existing recruit cohort. Unfortunately, the day before our class ended, it was announced that SCI Pittsburgh would be

closing within a few months. However, prior to the close of the facility we were able to bring a cohort of 20 recruits in for a course with 18 men from the prison. While we will be detailing that course in a coming publication, we will point out that, given the intensity of the police academy and its tendency to generate paranoia among recruits, our second attempt felt even more intense than the first. Recruits entered our classroom as a unit, having heard that this sort of thing would make them soft and could be dangerous. In their black academy uniforms, they confronted their inside classmates and after a series of icebreaker activities, their excitement was visible as they took part in the fun of learning across boundaries.

This speaks to many of the potential implications of conducting PTIO on a much larger scale as a standard part of the academy curriculum. Building on the insights of Goffman (1963), such intense personal interactions between police and incarcerated individuals provides powerful potential for confronting and overcoming the stigma of incarceration. The breakdown of this stigma across the entire police force has the potential to radically reshape police-community relations. Lessening the current militaristic style of police training which fosters an 'us vs. them' attitude toward the public, with an andragogical style of training which emphasises empathy and shared understanding could well lessen the impact of the highly-racialised authority maintenance (Alpert and Dunham, 2004) stance which currently dominates American policing.

When considered in the context of pervasive racial, residential, occupational and social segregation in America generally (Krysan and Crowder, 2017; Massey, 2016) and Pittsburgh in particular (Rutan and Glass, 2017; Zuberi *et al.*, 2017), PTI-O presents the opportunity to address significant racial barriers to understanding. Given both the highly-racialised nature of American policing (Brown, 2005; Engel *et al.*, 2006, Kochel *et al.*, 2011) as well as the fact that most white Americans have no friends of color (Cox *et al.*, 2016), for many participants PTI-O could reflect the first time they have had extended discussions with people of color. While again our data are not able to speak to potential long-term changes in our participants, it does suggest many displayed more understanding of the effect of race upon the practice of criminal justice in America.

Our second iteration of the course was so well received that, since the prison was closing, the police department agreed to send all future recruits up to an hour away for course meetings once we established ourselves at another institution. Moreover, administrators from a number of local facilities were clamoring for the programme, and we have established it at SCI Fayette, a facility one hour south of Pittsburgh. As part of our ongoing efforts at curricular improvement, we have partnered with the Pittsburgh Holocaust Center and the National Holocaust Museum and Memorial to include their training module, *Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons from the Holocaust*. The national center has successfully trained over 100,000 law enforcement officers in recent years and the programme is a tremendous addition to PTI-O. Future research is necessary to demonstrate the impact of these changes on both the attitudes and behaviours of inside and outside students. Of particular interest will be whether and how the skills and knowledge gained in the Inside-Out curriculum within the training academy are translated to the outside world of policing, especially as it pertains to officer behaviour toward criminal suspects and the public.

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Notes

1. For more information, please visit www.insideoutcenter.org.
2. Fly, an inside student, made a similar point, ‘I found myself starting off the class with certain ideas of how things would go and it was nothing like I expected. As we sat down as men and woman and start to have a real conversation, I realize that we all want a lot of the same things. I came away with a better understanding of what Police Officers do besides what is shown in the media.’

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