

Handbook on Lived Experience in the Justice System

Editors: Christopher P. Dum | Jamie J. Fader | Thomas P. LeBel | Kevin A. Wright

Series Editors: Beth Huebner and Jodi Lane



HANDBOOK ON LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

This volume offers a diverse set of scholarly essays on the imaginative potential of corrections and sentencing research/practice that centers on the lived experience of the criminal legal system. The Editors define “lived experience” broadly, encompassing the subjective ways in which corrections and sentencing directly or indirectly affect a person’s daily life. They employ a diverse and expansive conceptualization of lived experience; for example, people with lived experience can be directly involved in writing or conducting the research or may be indirectly involved where the submission is about a program that includes people with lived experience in its operations (e.g., credible messengers).

The volume includes 60 chapters written by academics, practitioners, and lived experts who are currently or formerly system-impacted. Chapters include short reflection essays on the meaning of lived experience, state of the knowledge reviews on topics related to lived experience, and more traditional empirical entries that highlight specific dimensions of lived experience.

This groundbreaking and thought-provoking Handbook will appeal to academics, practitioners, policymakers, advocates, and students seeking to understand the many ways in which corrections and sentencing directly or indirectly affect a person’s daily life. This is Volume 10 of The ASC Division on Corrections and Sentencing Handbook Series. The handbooks provide in-depth coverage of seminal and topical issues around sentencing and corrections for scholars, students, practitioners, and policymakers.

Christopher P. Dum is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Kent State University. He is the author of the book, *Exiled in America: Life on the Margins in a Residential Motel*, published by Columbia University Press. His research examines issues around prison, reentry, and public opinion, and has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the Ohio Attorney General. Dr. Dum has appeared on NPR’s Marketplace, as well as the Doc Project on CBC. In 2016, he co-founded the ID13 Prison Literacy Project, which works to amplify the voices of incarcerated writers.

Jamie J. Fader is a Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Temple University. She is the author of *On Shifting Ground: Constructing Masculinity on the Margins* (University of California Press, 2024) and *Falling Back: Incarceration and Transitions to Adulthood among Urban Youth* (Rutgers University Press, 2013), which won the 2016 Hindelang Award for best

book in the field. Dr. Fader's research interests include the lived experiences of members of vulnerable groups in the criminal legal system, particularly adolescents and young adults. She is the founder of the Division of Qualitative Research of the American Society of Criminology.

Thomas P. LeBel, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee's Helen Bader School of Social Welfare. Dr. LeBel has lived experience with the criminal legal system and is the author or co-author of numerous publications about prisoner reintegration, desistance from crime, the stigma of incarceration, drug treatment courts, and incarcerated women with substance use disorders.

Kevin A. Wright is an Associate Professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and is the Director of the Center for Correctional Solutions at Arizona State University. His work focuses on enhancing the lives of people living and working in the correctional system through research, education, and community engagement. He is co-author of *Imprisoned Minds: Lost Boys, Trapped Men, and Solutions from Within the Prison* (Rutgers University Press, 2025), lead-authored by a man incarcerated for life.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

The ASC Division on Corrections & Sentencing Handbook Series

Edited by Beth Huebner and Jodi Lane

Editorial Board

Julie Baldwin, American University
Dan Butler, Iowa State University
TaLisa Carter, American University
Christopher P. Dum, Kent State University
Jamie Fader, Temple University
Chantal Fahmy, University of Texas-San Antonio
Kimberly Kras, San Diego State University
Nathan Link, Rutgers University, Camden
Lin Liu, University of Florida
Ojmarrh Mitchell, Arizona State University
Meghan Novisky, Cleveland State University
Danielle Rudes, Sam Houston State University
Ebony Ruhland, Rutgers University
Christine Scott-Hayward, California State University, Long Beach
Kevin Wright, Arizona State University

The American Society of Criminology's Division on Corrections & Sentencing sponsors a series of volumes published by Routledge on seminal and topical issues that span the fields of sentencing and corrections. The critical essays, reviews, and original research in each volume provide a comprehensive assessment of the current state of knowledge, contribute to public policy discussions, and identify future research directions. Each thematic volume focuses on a single topical issue that intersects with corrections and sentencing research. The contents are eclectic in regard to disciplinary foci, theoretical frameworks and perspectives, and research methodologies.

6. Handbook on Pretrial Justice

Christine S. Scott-Hayward, Jennifer E. Copp, and Stephen Demuth

7. Handbook on Inequalities in Sentencing and Corrections among Marginalized Populations

Eileen M. Ahlin, Ojmarrh Mitchell, and Cassandra A. Atkin-Plunk

8. Handbook on Prisons and Jails

Danielle S. Rudes, Gaylene S. Armstrong, Kimberly R. Kras, and TaLisa J. Carter

9. Handbook on Contemporary Issues in Health, Crime, and Punishment

Edited By Nathan W. Link, Meghan A. Novisky and Chantal Fahmy

10. Handbook on Lived Experience in the Justice System

Edited by Christopher Dum, Jamie J. Fader, Thomas P. LeBel, and Kevin A. Wright



For more information about this series, please visit: <https://www.routledge.com/The-ASCDivision-on-Corrections--Sentencing-Handbook-Series/book-series/ASCH>

HANDBOOK ON LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Volume 10

*Edited by Christopher P. Dum, Jamie J. Fader,
Thomas P. LeBel, and Kevin A. Wright*

Designed cover image: Getty Images

First published 2026

by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2026 selection and editorial matter, Christopher P. Dum, Jamie J. Fader, Thomas P. LeBel, and Kevin A. Wright; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Christopher P. Dum, Jamie J. Fader, Thomas P. LeBel, and Kevin A. Wright to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

For Product Safety Concerns and Information please contact our
EU representative GPSR@taylorandfrancis.com. Taylor & Francis Verlag
GmbH, Kaufingerstraße 24, 80331 München, Germany

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

ISBN: 978-1-041-01605-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-01606-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-61562-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003615620

Typeset in Sabon

by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To our authors, who have filled these pages with what the world so desperately needs. Your words bear witness to the realities of the criminal legal system—its harms, its failures, and the resilience found within and beyond it. We are deeply grateful for your willingness to share your stories, insights, and struggles, trusting us to lift them a little higher above the prison walls. Our hope is that this book amplifies your voices, sparks conversation, challenges assumptions, and moves all of us toward greater understanding and change. This work is about you, and it would not exist without you. Thank you.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xviii</i>
<i>Contributor Biographies</i>	<i>xix</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xliv</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xlvi</i>

SECTION 1

The Big Picture of Lived Experience	1
1 What Is More “Empirical” than Lived Experience? <i>Jamie J. Fader</i>	3
2 Mapping Lived Experience Contributions to Criminal Justice <i>Gillian Buck</i>	10
3 Interrogating the Epistemic Politics of Lived Experience: Navigating Identity, Co-optation, and Intersectionality in Contemporary Criminological and Criminal Legal Discourse <i>Dwayne Antojado and Jessica Budd</i>	14
4 Understanding Life Story and Narrative in Lived Experience Criminal Legal Scholarship <i>Philip Mulvey, Leah Ouellet and Dan P. McAdams</i>	29
5 When the Shoe Doesn’t Fit: A Reflection on ‘Lived Experience’ <i>B. Williams and Mackenzie Ninness</i>	38

Contents

6	#Blackvoicesmatter: Defining “Lived-Experience” Through a Collaborative, Black Insider-Outsider Perspective <i>Kadija Osei and Christopher Husbands</i>	43
SECTION 2		
	Considerations for Lived Experience and Research	47
7	Autoethnographic Notes on Role-Conflict in Lived Experience: The Case of the Formerly Incarcerated Researcher <i>Carlos Sanchez and Andrew Davies</i>	49
8	Navigating Lived Experiences: Professional Entanglements and the Role of Project Rebound <i>Annika Yvette Anderson, Michael Griggs and Carolyn McAllister</i>	53
9	Lived Experience Contributions to Reentry Research: Enhancing Context and Meaning <i>Kristin Stainbrook, Janeen Buck Willison, Pamela Keye and Grant Burton</i>	58
10	Incorporating Lived Experience in Empirical Research on Prisons <i>David Pitts</i>	63
11	Learned Strength <i>Erik S. Maloney</i>	68
12	Looking Down the Barrel of a Gun: The Struggle for Incarcerated Voices to Be Heard <i>Xavier Perez and Raul Dorado</i>	71
13	The Power of Lived Experience <i>Brian Jones and Jennifer Cobbina-Dungy</i>	75
14	Elevating Lived Experience to Lived Expertise in Criminological Research <i>Helen Skipper</i>	78
15	Teaching Criminology as a Formerly Incarcerated Person: The Gift and the Curse <i>Chris Miner</i>	87
16	Amplifying Lived Experience: Transforming the Criminal Legal System Through Training and Technical Assistance <i>Tameka V. Williams and Lauren Henderson</i>	90

17	Peer Support During the Pandemic: Views from the Inside <i>Gillian McNaull, Shadd Maruna, Mark Johnson and Dan Hutt</i>	102
 SECTION 3		
	Lived Experience in Prison	117
18	Living Without Parole: Assessing Life Sentences by People Who Live It and People Who Study It <i>Shaun Mills, Erik Maloney, Cedric Rue, Kevin A. Wright and Cassia Spohn</i>	119
19	Putting the Person in the Picture: An Examination of the Lived Experience of Entry, Assimilation, and Adaptation on Death Row <i>Robert Johnson, George T. Wilkerson and Moriah Sharpe</i>	138
20	Invisible or Purposely Neglected?: Lessons from the Lived Experience of an Incarcerated Woman <i>Myrna Diaz</i>	151
21	Lessons from Time: A Perspective About Sentencing, Education, and Hope <i>Maria Montalvo</i>	157
22	Hospice in Prison: Compassion in Action <i>David Garlock, Dragana Derlic and Stuti Kokkalera</i>	163
23	Carceral Abandonment: The Real Punishment of the Contemporary Prison Sentence <i>Timothy C. Malone</i>	168
24	Innate Health and Psychological Freedom: Narrative Co-Production of Transformative Self Following Childhood Trauma <i>Jeanne L. Catherine-Gray, Beto Contreras and Derrick Mason</i>	179
25	Prison Law Libraries and the Gender Gap in Exonerations <i>Jill A. McCorkel and LaTonya Myers</i>	191
26	Media and Identity Dynamics in German Prisons: A Study of Lived Experience and “Exogration” <i>Aaron Bielejewski</i>	198
27	Access Denied: Examining Control, Retribution, and Inequities in Prison Programming <i>Vu Huynh, Tereza Trejbalová and Kimberly Kras</i>	211

Contents

28	Liminal Identities: Critically Reflecting on Lived Experience as Former Prison Workers <i>Nicole Patrie and William Schultz</i>	219
29	“It Was a Risk, but It Was One I Was Willing to Take”: The Experiences of Moving to Be Closer to an Incarcerated Loved One <i>Christopher P. Dum</i>	223
30	The Lived Experiences of Families of People in Prison <i>Janani Umamaheswar and Arden Richards-Karamarkovich</i>	237
SECTION 4		
	Peer-Led Programs and Credible Messengers	241
31	Walk Right up to the Sun, Hand in Hand: The Power of Peer Mentorship in Facilitating the Successful Reentry of Former Lifers <i>Christian L. Bolden, Jennifer Roberts, Eve Thomas and Sawyer Castle</i>	243
32	Peer Support Services: A Comprehensive Review of the Corrections and Reentry Literature <i>Hannah G. Cortina and Luke Muentner</i>	257
33	Exploring the Promise of Resident-Led Peer Support Programs in Prison: Perspectives from Incarcerated Resident-Leaders <i>Ryan J. Schenk, William Davenport, Maurice Engelby, Ryan J. Krueger and Michael Hadnot</i>	267
34	Reintegrating Back Into the Community: Heeding the Wisdom of Post-Release Case Managers with Lived Experience <i>Tim Goddard and Wendy Dressler</i>	282
35	Art and Autonomy: The Value of Peer-Led Art Programming in Prison <i>Alexis Klemm, Lizzette Peralta-Romero, Adrianne Acles and Jessica Coz</i>	293
36	A Conversation with Kurt Danysh, Director of the Cumberland House: A Peer-Led Reentry Intervention for Older, Recently Incarcerated Men <i>Divine Lipscomb, Kurt M. Danysh, Kristina Brant Andrea R. Hazelwood and Derek A. Kreager</i>	298
37	Empowering Change: Credible Messengers as Catalysts for Community Transformation <i>Ryan Flaco Rising and Ricardo Zepeda</i>	310

38	Hope and Help: Peer Support and Peer-Led Programs Within Texas Prisons <i>Danielle S. Rudes, Aaron Flaherty, Daniel Dickerson, Bryce Kushmerick-McCune, Chelsey Narvey, Sydney Ingel, Wyatt Brown, Alexa Mata and Jaylyn Magana</i>	322
39	DIY Education: System-Affected Academics Building Educational Peer Support Networks <i>Grant Tietjen and Daniel Kavish</i>	340
SECTION 5		
	Lived Experience and Education	355
40	A Motley Crew: The Synergy of Sharing Lived Experience: The Inside- Out Prison Exchange Program® <i>Lori Pompa</i>	357
41	The Transformative Journey of Higher Education for Everyone in Prison <i>Lyle C. May</i>	365
42	Researching Within Community: The Necessity of CPAR Partnerships and the Value of Lived Experience in Prison Education and Reentry Research <i>Nicole McKenna, Lalee Awad, Alessandra Milagros Early and Ebony Ruhland</i>	367
43	The Value of Garden-Based Participatory Environmental Science Projects in California Prisons <i>Laci Gerhart, Heidi Ballard, Calliope Correia, Joshua Johnson, Ryan Meyer and Andrew Winn</i>	380
44	You Are About to Witness the Strength of Street Knowledge: How Formerly Incarcerated Latine Students Utilize Their Lived Experience to Navigate Higher Education <i>Joe Louis Hernandez and Kriistal Arpi Bilderbach</i>	393
45	“C.O., Can I Get an Unlock?”: An Inside Look at Prison Programming <i>Silvia Castillo, Gabe Collins, ShannaRai Diaz, Yaritzel Guerrero-Montoya, Madison Hatfield, Vu Huynh, Martha Ponce, JohnMichael Price, Kimberly Kras and Alan Mobley</i>	409
46	“I Am in Jail on Tuesdays”: An Insider-Outsider Perspective on Institutional Education <i>Jennifer Lanterman</i>	424

SECTION 6	
Lived Experience and Re(Integration)	429
47 To Tell or Not to Tell?: Justice-Impacted Individuals' Use of Concealment/Disclosure as a Stigma-Management Strategy <i>Thomas P. LeBel</i>	431
48 Professionally Formerly Incarcerated <i>Enrique Olivares-Pelayo</i>	449
49 Credible but Vulnerable: Navigating the Challenges and Risks in Community Violence Prevention <i>Peter Simonsson, Quinzel Tomoney, Peter Twigg, ShaKia Fudge, Caterina Roman and Shadd Maruna</i>	452
50 Desistance and Masculinities: Being Oneself Post Incarceration <i>Ruth Utnage and Rosemary Ricciardelli</i>	463
51 Simulating the Lived Experience <i>Alesa Liles, Stacy Moak and Dena Dickerson</i>	468
52 The Meaning and Importance of Lived Experience: Insights from the Lenses of Two People on Parole in New Jersey <i>Stephon Whitley, Audrey Wilson and Nathan W. Link</i>	481
53 Beyond the Verdict: Navigating the Long-Term Consequences of Wrongful Convictions on Reentry, Employment, and Identity <i>Danielle Thomas, Jessica Grosholz and Walter Dunn</i>	486
54 Reflections on What Lived Experience Means for a Correctional Unit Officer and Justice-Involved Individual: The Genesis of Empathotherapy and Peer Supporter Academy in Singapore Prison Service <i>Chua Yong An and Andrew Joseph Ng</i>	499
SECTION 7	
Lived Experience and Engagement in Criminal Legal System Reform	505
55 Experience for Justice: How Lived Experience Is Changing Ideas About Criminal Justice and Criminology in the UK <i>E4J Collective: Scott Kidd, Rod Earle, Laura Sheffield-Kidd, Gillian Buck, Shadd Maruna, Paula Harriott, Danica Darley, Lucy Campbell, Max Dennehy, Fleur Riley and Donna Arrondelle</i>	507

Contents

56	Why Convict Criminology Matters <i>Jeffrey Ian Ross</i>	519
57	Voices from Within: Using Lived Experience to Reform Laws, Policies, and Reentry Requirements for Individuals Convicted of a Sex Offense (ICSO) <i>Jaclyn Truman, Meghan M. Mitchell, Madeline Lewis and Matthew Neary</i>	532
58	The Traits They Bring: How Jurors with a Carceral History Envisage Jury Service <i>James M. Binnall and Sonali Chakravarti</i>	546
59	Lived Experience Can Inform Reentry Programs Inside of Prison for Individuals Sentenced to Life <i>Brittany Ripper, Lewis Whitmire, Phillip Vance Smith II, Moriah Sharpe, Rachel Leopold and Robert Johnson</i>	559
60	Challenging the Routine of Incarceration for Young Black Men in Philadelphia <i>Yah'aair Black, Rodney Gardner, Neshaun Sephes, James Aye, Kendra Van de Water, Kadelia George, Chloe Sierka, Autumn Talley and Caterina G. Roman</i>	575
	<i>Index</i>	589

PREFACE

These pages carry the weight of someone’s story—some from inside prison walls, many from the aftershocks of incarceration, and others from those working within, or adjacent to, the criminal legal system. From the moment we decided to curate this collection about “lived experience” in that system, we knew we were taking on a project saddled with complexity and resonating deeply with our authors. When Chris, Jamie, and Kevin initially agreed to co-edit this collection, they realized that it required an editor with experience in the criminal legal system, and it is wonderful that Tom stepped in to fill this important void.

We understand the incredible and devastating power wielded by corrections and sentencing, a power that has impacted every contributor to this volume. As such, we were highly attuned to the power wielded by our editorial choices and decisions. We forged ahead precisely aware of the balance we had to strike: ensuring that voices were preserved, perspectives honored, and yet, as editors, also shaping a book that would meet the expectations of readers and further the broader discourse on the criminal legal system.

The first challenge we faced was defining what “lived experience” even meant in the context of this volume. It obviously encompassed those who had been behind bars. But did that definition include families, advocates, or those working within the system who had come to see its effects firsthand?

While we had to define “lived experience” to invite submissions, our goal was to allow a range of affected voices to define it themselves. Therefore, the themes for each section of this handbook emerged inductively based on what our authors chose to submit. These resulting sections capture overarching issues that those affected by the system deem most pressing, while allowing for exploration of the many corners of “lived experience.”

Another challenge was editorial in nature but ethical at its core: How do we preserve the raw, unfiltered voices of contributors who may not have had experience with academia or formal writing, while also doing our job as editors—ensuring clarity, coherence, and accessibility for readers? There were times when we debated how much to intervene, how much to smooth the edges of expression without dulling the urgency and authenticity of the words. The truth is, we didn’t always agree. But through conversation, reflection, and a deep respect for each contributor, we found ways to preserve voice while also crafting a collection that speaks to a broad audience.

Preface

Ultimately, this book is a testament to every person who took the time to share their perspective, to be vulnerable on the page, to challenge systems and narratives, and to trust us with their words. We are profoundly grateful to every writer who contributed and who reminded us that the criminal legal system is not an abstract entity. It is the people it affects, the futures it shapes, and the pasts it tries to rectify. It is the collective memories that coalesce here before you.

– Christopher P. Dum, Jamie J. Fader, Thomas P. LeBel, and Kevin A. Wright

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The co-editors would like to thank Beth Huebner, Jodi Lane, and Kate Taylor for their guidance, and Arizona State University student Alexis Klemm for her extensive editorial assistance in compiling this volume.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Adrianne Acles is a talented artist who has worked with the Arizona State University Center for Correctional Solutions and been a member of the Arizona Transformation Project since 2022. She has participated in {Ink}arcerated since 2022, and in 2025 is now a co-lead of the program at her unit. Adrianne Acles also currently facilitates art classes for her peers.

Chua Yong An is a Senior Correctional Unit Officer at Institution B1, Correctional Unit 1, in the Singapore Prison Service. His core work involves the operational and security management of the institution. He also actively collaborates with incarcerated individuals to support their rehabilitation and works with various stakeholders and community partners to formulate rehabilitation programs.

Dr. Annika Yvette Anderson is the Chair of, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), where she teaches classes on deviant behavior, criminology, reentry, and race and ethnic relations. In 2016, Dr. Anderson co-launched Project Rebound, a campus-based reentry program that helps formerly incarcerated students apply to, enroll in, and graduate with degrees from CSUSB. Since its launch, she has served as the Principal Investigator and Executive Director of the program at CSUSB. She received her BA in Public Relations from Pennsylvania State University and her MA and PhD in Sociology from Washington State University. Her research interests are in developmental and life-course criminology, reentry, social stratification, and race and ethnic relations. She has presented her research at numerous conferences and has several publications on crime and reentry based on research conducted in San Bernardino.

Dwayne Antojado is a Lecturer in Sociology and Criminology at Adelaide University. His research predominantly focuses on ‘lived experience’ in criminological and criminal justice research, policy and practice. He has produced numerous scholarly works on lived experience criminology, and has engaged with industry, government, and not-for-profit organisations in empowering lived experience knowledge in the criminal legal system.

Donna Arrondelle is a critical interdisciplinary scholar in the Centre for Population Health Sciences at the University of Southampton. Her research focuses on health justice, working with “justice-involved” adults and their children, and is underpinned by a commitment to knowledge equity.

Abdi “Lalee” Awad is currently incarcerated at Maine State Prison. Lalee refused to let his current circumstances define who he is. While incarcerated, he earned his AA, BA (from the University of Maine at Augusta), and MS in Adult and Higher Education (from the University of Southern Maine). He is currently looking to apply for his PhD program. He is a Nationally Certified Yoga Instructor in Traditional Vinyasa and Holistic Yoga Flow, two times Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Fellow (2021–2022 and 2022–2023), Senior Justice Scholar with Opportunity Scholars, 2023 UCLA Dream Fellow, Alliance for Higher Education 2024–2025 Fellow Certified Hospice and Palliative Care Volunteer, Culturally Responsive Restorative Justice Practitioner Consultant and Youth Mentor. Social/Immigrant Justice Advocate, Presenter, and currently a Consultant with the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine. He is also a board director member of the non-profit organization Restorative Justice Project Maine. He is a firm believer that education is the greatest equalizer in our society. His current work includes uplifting the voice of underserved community members (justice system-impacted and immigrant communities).

James Aye is a Co-CEO of YEAH Philly. Before YEAH Philly, he worked for the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia as a Violence Prevention Specialist.

Heidi Ballard is a Professor of Environmental Science Education and Founder and Faculty Director of the UC Davis Center for Community and Citizen Science in the School of Education at UC Davis, California. A former high school biology teacher, her academic career has focused on studying and enhancing participatory and collaborative approaches to environmental science in meeting both scientific and learning goals, and studying what, how, and why people learn through these programs. She first began collaborating with Land Together in 2018, her first direct experience with the carceral system, and has led pollinator and bird observation activities in five facilities.

Aaron Bielejewski is a Research Fellow at the Center for Criminological Research Saxony (ZKFS) in Chemnitz, Germany, the first criminological research institute established in the former East Germany. Originally from Trenton, NJ, he has lived in Germany since 2008. He earned his PhD from the University of Kassel in 2021, conducting participant-observation research on community policing in rural and small-town areas. His current work explores lived experiences of incarceration through ethnography, narrative interviews, and media analysis, with a focus on media, work, and identity. He co-produced the 2024 short film *Freiheit und Freiheitsentzug (Freedom and the Loss of Freedom)*, which examines prisoners’ experiences and perceptions of freedom and its loss through recreated interviews. He also serves as an associate editor for *Symbolic Interaction*.

Kriстал Arpi Bilderbach, MS, is the current Life Skills Specialist at NextUp/REACH at Mt. San Antonio College, California. She is an alumnus of the same community college, where she graduated in 2018 with associate degrees in social and behavioral sciences and sociology. She went on to receive her bachelor’s from Cal State University, Long Beach, California, in Sociology, and a master’s degree from Azusa Pacific University, California, in College Counseling and Student Development. Her research focuses on the experiences of students impacted by the foster care system and marginalized communities navigating higher education. Her passion for serving students comes from her own personal experiences with overcoming barriers and challenges to pursuing higher education while navigating the restrictive systems in place in our society.

James M. Binnall is a Professor of Law & Criminology at California State University, Long Beach, California, and is the author of *Twenty Million Angry Men: The Case for Including Convicted Felons in Our Jury System*.

Yah'aair Black is a young man who grew up in Philadelphia. Despite being in the criminal legal system most of his life, he is proud to be who he is today. Through YEAH Philly, he has gained mentorship and lifetime relationships and resources. He aspires to write books and own a clothing brand.

Dr. Christian Bolden is Chairperson and Associate Professor of Criminology and Justice at Loyola University New Orleans, Louisiana. He studies gangs and carceral experience. He was formerly incarcerated as a juvenile in the adult prison system in Texas during the 1990s.

Kristina Brant is an Assistant Professor of Rural Sociology at Pennsylvania State University, where she also holds an appointment with Penn State Extension. Her research focuses on the social and structural determinants of rural health, with an emphasis on criminal-legal involved individuals and their families.

Wyatt Brown, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Instruction in the School of Criminal Justice at Texas State University. His research broadly focuses on understanding the disparities present in the criminal justice system. His interests are driven by the expanded use of punishment and the consequent inequalities that have surfaced in the past decades.

Dr. Gillian Buck is Associate Professor of Social Work in the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Society at the University of Chester, UK. She is also Principal Investigator on the Imagining Possible Futures for Lived Experience project, funded by UK Research and Innovation (Reference: MR/Y017110/1). Dr. Buck uses qualitative, participatory, and arts-based research approaches to understand people's experiences of criminal justice systems. She is also an experienced researcher and lecturer in the related disciplines of social work and Criminology and has a specific interest in participatory and coproduced approaches to justice.

Jessica Budd is a researcher and academic within both Criminology and Criminal Justice, as well as Education and Professional Studies. She predominately teaches and works on various research projects at Australia's Griffith University and the University of Queensland. In addition, Jessica also teaches at the University of Southern Queensland in the School of Law and Justice. Ms. Budd has a Bachelor of Social Science, a double major in Criminology and Behaviour Management from Bond University, Australia, and a master's in Forensic Mental Health from Griffith. She completed her dissertation on the impact of procedurally-just police management and leadership on officer resistance to new technology in 2023. This research was presented at the 2023 ANZSOC conference. Ms. Budd's work outside of university includes her time at Queensland Corrective Services as a Case Manager, and with the AEIOU Foundation in behavioural management. Jessica has recently commenced research looking at masculinity, prison culture, and impact on reintegration for her PhD at Monash University.

Grant Burton currently serves as a research consultant at RTI International, and brings lived experience to the 5-Key Long-Term Reentry Study. Mr. Burton has four years of experience working on research projects; his roles include conducting and scheduling interviews, tracking participants, and contributing to qualitative analysis. In addition to his work with RTI, he has also worked on research projects at Florida State University and Westat. His prior work experience includes more than three years in the clinical field working with clients with substance use disorders.

Lucy Campbell, MSc, PSCPSE, BA (Hons) is a third-year PhD candidate and researcher based at the University of Edinburgh, UK. Her thesis is titled “Doing Time, An Autoethnographic Account of an Affective Imprisonment.” She is the founder and director of Flip of the Coin CIC, a community arts organization focusing on participatory action research (PAR) and public health inequalities. She is the director of policy and advocacy at the Experience for Justice Collective, an eclectic organization of professional people working with lived experience in the criminal justice system. She is also a community-embedded researcher on the Scotland-wide UKRI REALITIES project.

Silvia Castillo, MS, earned her BA in Social Work and MS in Rehabilitation clinical counseling at San Diego State University, California. With comprehensive experience in the substance abuse treatment field, she is a certified drug and alcohol counselor dedicated to leveraging her lived experience to help others. She is passionate about supporting individuals with trauma, mental health issues, co-occurring disorders, and those impacted by the carceral system. She provides education and guidance to aid in their reintegration into society. She is committed to fostering resilience and promoting recovery through compassionate and evidence-based practices.

Sawyer Castle, a native Vermonter and recent graduate of Loyola University New Orleans, Louisiana, continues to pursue a lifelong passion for abolition and social justice.

Jeanne L. Catherine-Gray earned her PhD at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Currently the Chief Operating Officer and Lead Scientist at the non-profit Innate Health Research, Dr. Catherine-Gray leads collaborative and interdisciplinary research into promising community solutions to the global mental health crisis. She is passionate about empowering women and people who have been disenfranchised to take back their voice and take action.

Sonali Chakravarti is Professor of Government at Wesleyan University and is the author of *Radical Enfranchisement in the Jury Room and Public Life*.

Jennifer Cobbina-Dungy is a Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. She examines the intersection of race, gender, and crime as well as public response to police use of force. Her research interests also focus on gender and prisoner reentry, desistance, and recidivism. Recent publications have appeared in *Criminology & Public Policy*, *Crime and Delinquent*, *Race & Justice*, and *Journal of Crime & Justice*.

Gabe Collins, MS, earned his BS in Criminal Justice and MS in Criminology and Criminal Justice at San Diego State University, California. His professional interests include criminal law, correctional reform, innovative reentry, and juvenile justice.

Norberto “Beto” Contreras is the developer of the recovery support program, Breakin’ Da Chainz, and a lead organizer, teacher, and mentor for the non-profit The Insight Alliance. He is a community activist with over 20 years of lived experience in the criminal justice system. Having spent the majority of his youth incarcerated, he is passionate about breaking the school-to-prison pipeline and creating support systems to help people escape the cycle of recidivism.

Calliope Correia began volunteering with Land Together in 2017 and has been the Program Manager at Avenal State Prison since 2018. Calliope has a bachelor’s degree in Plant Science from California State University Fresno as well as a master’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Plant Science and Rehabilitation Counseling. She wrote her thesis on curriculum development for young adults with disabilities using horticulture to improve life and

social skills. In 2015, she became a Registered Horticultural Therapist with the American Horticultural Therapy Association. In 2024 she retired from her career as an Instructional Support Technician of the University Agricultural Farm Laboratory with California State University Fresno and shortly after began working full time as the Southern California and Central Valley Regional Lead with Land Together.

Hannah G. Cortina, PhD, is a Research Criminologist in the Corrections and Reentry Research Program of RTI International. Her multimethod research examines experiences of incarceration, conditions of confinement, and correctional treatment programming and their impact on in-prison and post-release outcomes.

Jessica Coz was incarcerated for 15 years, during which time she actively participated in educational and programming opportunities facilitated by Arizona State University's (ASU's) Center for Correctional Solutions. Her involvement deepened and in 2021 she became a member of the Arizona Transformation Project, a group of incarcerated individuals committed to improving the lives of those within the prison system. Through ASU's {Ink}arcerated Art Program, she began as an artist in 2022, later becoming a lead at her unit in 2023, where she played a key role in strategic planning and coordination. In 2024, after her release, she attended the {Ink}arcerated show as an alumni artist, marking her transition from incarceration to a creative future. She believes that art and creative outlets are essential for restorative justice and self-expression within carceral settings.

Kurt M. Danysh is Founder and Executive Director of Tomorrow's Neighbors, which operates The Cumberland House, a 13-bed reentry housing solution. Prior to this role, he was incarcerated for 24 years in the state of Pennsylvania where he educated himself out of the cycles of crime and recidivism. Today, he strives to reduce the need for, and create better outcomes from, incarceration.

Danica Darley MA, PGCHE, BA (Hons), is a Research Associate at the University of Sheffield, UK, and a lecturer in Applied Custodial Leadership at Leeds Trinity University, UK. Her PhD research examined the experiences of care-experienced young people of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and was co-produced with three young people who had been in the care of the local authority and had experienced CCE. Prior to coming into academia in 2017 Ms. Darley worked with children in care and those on the fringes of the criminal justice system in Scotland and England for 15 years. She is also a lived experience criminologist having served a custodial sentence, experiencing firsthand the harms of the criminal justice system. Her research interests include care-experience, child exploitation, women in conflict with the law, relational practice, lived experience Criminology and participatory and co-produced methods.

William Davenport was born in Denver, Colorado. He has been incarcerated since 2004 and works as a Peer Specialist inside of prison.

Andrew Davies is Director of Research, Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center, Texas. Since interning at a capital defender office in Atlanta, Georgia, more than twenty years ago, Andy Davies has focused on examining dysfunctional indigent defense systems in the United States. He earned his PhD in 2012 from SUNY Albany, New York, and helped found the Indigent Defense Research Association in 2015 as a meeting place for researchers and lawyers in the field. His work has been published in various places and funded by the National Institute of Justice, the National Science Foundation, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. He owes many debts to many good people, and he hopes they know who they are.

Max Dennehy is a PhD researcher at Strathclyde University, UK, specializing in the experiences and trajectories of prison leavers in relation to “rehabilitation” and “resettlement.” He is also a Release Engagement Practitioner for RECONNECT (Care After Custody), supporting individuals as they transition from custody to the community. With a professional background in addiction recovery and third-sector criminal justice organizations, his work is informed by his own lived experience. He has researched, written, and published extensively on these intersecting issues. Additionally, he is a member of the Experience 4 Justice collective, which amplifies the voices of lived experience professionals in the justice system and advocates for those still entangled within it.

Dragana Derlic, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Georgia Southern University. Her primary research areas include corrections, offender rehabilitation, and mixed methods. Her work can be found in the *Journal of Correctional Health Care* and *Crime & Delinquency*.

Myrna Diaz is a native of Brooklyn, New York. Her parents were originally from Isabela, Puerto Rico. Her father was a self-employed business owner and her mother was an elementary teacher. Hard work and accountability were traits exemplified and instilled in her at an early age. She studied business administration and worked for corporate companies throughout her career. After 9/11, she attended the Institute of Technology in South Jersey and formerly worked at Merrill Lynch as a help-desk administrator. She provided programming and computer assistance within the organization. At Merrill, she was also on the preliminary platform of online trading, known as “BondBook.” During her confinement, she obtained an associate’s degree and a bachelor’s degree, earning Summa Cum Laude Honors. She hopes to further continue her education in the field of computers and teaching, concentrating on research within the criminal justice field. Currently, she works in the Education Department as a Teacher’s Assistant and helps with the breakfast run in the morning within the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility (EMCF). Throughout her time, she has dedicated herself to various projects at EMCF: she is a member of the Commissioner’s Focus Group, Co-Manager of the NJ-STEP B.A. Tutoring Center, Co-Facilitator of the Spanish Book Club, Facilitator of the Zen Club and a tutor for bilingual students. She is also co-editor of two newsletters at Edna: Commissioner Tome’s EMCF Newsletter: Perceptions Reimagined and the NJ-STEP Newsletter: The Empowered Learning Center. In line with her interest to give back to community, she continues to attend various groups and clubs to continue educating herself and, by doing so, helping others along the way.

ShannaRai Diaz, is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Psychology and a minor in Child Development at San Diego State University, California. She plans to continue her education for a master’s degree as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor. She has six years of lived experience in the carceral system. Her career goal is to support at-risk youth who have been impacted by incarceration whether it be their own or familial.

Daniel Dickerson, MS, is Deputy Division Director at Texas Department of Criminal Justice within the Correctional Institutions Division. He is an experienced Warden with a demonstrated history of working in the government administration industry. He has a Master of Science (MS) focused in Criminal Justice Leadership & Management.

Dr. Dena Dickerson holds an honorary humanitarian doctorate from the Global Alliance, at Morehouse College. As a justice-impacted person, she takes being a messenger of hope and creating avenues for other justice-impacted people’s voices to be elevated. Dr. Dickerson serves as the Outreach Coordinator at Alabama Prison Art and Education Project (APAEP)

at Auburn University, Alabama, is a founding member of the Offender Alumni Association (OAA), where she serves as the Chief Operating Officer, and a 2024 Represent Justice Fellow. Dr. Dickerson also volunteers throughout her community and is committed to violence intervention and prevention.

Raul Dorado is an incarcerated author and advocate for criminal legal reform. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Justice Policy Advocacy from Northeastern Illinois University's University Without Walls program. As a co-founder of Parole Illinois, Raul is a leading voice to establish a comprehensive, retroactive parole system in the state. His work focuses on promoting earned reentry and reinstating parole, addressing the injustices of prolonged incarceration, and advocating for a more humane and equitable justice system.

Dr. Wendy Dressler serves as a Research Manager at The GEO Group, Inc., overseeing research across four key divisions: day reporting centers, halfway houses, in-prison services, and post-release programs. Her current research examines the impact and effectiveness of female leadership within corrections and reentry, evaluates rehabilitation services provided in custody, and develops strategies to improve program outcomes and enhance data collection.

Christopher P. Dum is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Kent State University, Ohio. His work uses both qualitative and experimental methods to examine issues around incarceration, reentry, and public opinion, and has been published in outlets such as *Justice Quarterly* and *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. He is the author of *Exiled in America: Life on the Margins in a Residential Motel*, which won the 2018 Scholarly Achievement Award from the North Central Sociological Association. Dr. Dum also facilitates the ID13 Prison Literacy Project.

Walter Dunn is a formerly incarcerated individual who served 12.5 years for a wrongful conviction. Mr. Dunn is an author, criminal justice reform advocate, and motivational speaker. Prior to his conviction, Mr. Dunn held the position of Director of Admissions at a public university. Mr. Dunn's narrative is unique in that he obtained Florida certification to be a law clerk while incarcerated and ultimately aided in his own conviction being overturned. He was released on July 31, 2022.

Dr. Rod Earle works at The Open University in the School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care. He has previously worked in youth justice and at several English universities teaching and researching criminology. He is a founder member of British Convict Criminology.

Alessandra Milagros Early is an Assistant Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, within the Department of Criminal Justice. Broadly, her research interests are centered on spatial dynamics, identity formation, and behavior. Specifically, her work has explored the complex interplay between queer social spaces, heterosexual social spaces, and LGBTQIA+ identity formation through substance use. She earned her Doctorate in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, her Master of Arts in Sociology from Northeastern University, Massachusetts, and her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Psychology from Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. More recently, Dr. Early worked as a Qualitative Researcher for the evaluation of Cure Violence in St. Louis, Missouri, a community-based program working to lessen gun violence. She is the Chair of the American Society of Criminology's Division of Queer Criminology's Social Committee and the Co-Chair of the Division of Queer Criminology's Journal Committee.

Maurice Engleby was born in Colorado Springs. He has been in prison since 2017. He is a Behavioral Health Peer Specialist at Centennial Correctional Facility, Colorado.

Jamie J. Fader, PhD, is a Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Temple University, Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Falling Back* (2013) and *On Shifting Ground* (2024), two ethnographic studies of how mass incarceration plays out in everyday life, and the founder of the American Society of Criminology's Division of Qualitative Research.

Aaron Flaherty, BS, is currently incarcerated within the Texas Department of Corrections. He is an expert on prison life and a prison reform activist. He has an Associate's Degree in Business Management and Administration and a Bachelor's of Science in Biblical Studies. He is author of the book, *Reshaping the Texas Prison System for Better Public Safety: An Inside View from a Texas Lifer* (2022).

ShaKia Fudge is a Manager at Philadelphia Cure Violence, Pennsylvania. With over ten years of experience, ShaKia Fudge oversees all hospital activities including shooting responses, gun-shot victim outreach and support. ShaKia Fudge grew up in Philadelphia and currently lives in the Germantown section of Philadelphia.

Rodney Garner is a young man from Southwest Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Along with other community outreach experience, he works as a VCI Intern at YEAH Philly, continuing to help other young people in his community. He is working toward furthering his education and obtaining a bachelor's degree in Sociology.

David Garlock is a Teacher's Assistant at Eastern University Prison Education Program, Pennsylvania. He is a formerly incarcerated national speaker. He has written op-eds, poetry, and scholarly articles and book chapters. He speaks about the trauma-to-prison pipeline, sexual abuse/assault, the Registry, hospice work, and reentry.

Kadelia George is a young woman from West Philadelphia. Connected with YEAH Philly through Temple University, Pennsylvania, she works as a Peer Researcher on a creative project that highlights YEAH Philly's impact on the community. Ms. George attends Cheyney University of Pennsylvania and is set to graduate in Spring 2025 with a bachelor's degree in Sociology.

Laci Gerhart is an Associate Professor of Teaching in the Department of Evolution and Ecology at UC Davis, California. She has ten years of experience in field-based college-level environmental education, including five years as a California Naturalist certification instructor focused on incorporating PES (Participatory Environmental Science) experience into higher-education coursework. She first began collaborating with Land Together in 2020, which was her first direct experience with the carceral system. She has led pollinator and bird observation activities in four facilities.

Tim Goddard is an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida International University. His current research focuses on youth justice policy, the role of voluntary non-profit organizations in program delivery, and reentry services managed by individuals with lived experience of incarceration.

Michael Griggs is a prison abolitionist and social justice advocate. Growing up in a high school filled with racial tension and gang activity, he drifted toward negative peer influences and became involved with criminal activity. During his senior year of high school, he was sentenced to the California prison system with a seven-year sentence. During his imprisonment, education became the escape from his incarcerated reality. He received his high school diploma, received his AA in Social and Behavioral Science. Michael holds a BA in Social Justice from Pitzer College, California, and an MSW from California State University San Bernardino.

(CSUSB). He has spoken on various panels at universities around the state about the intersections of access, higher education, and justice. Today, Mr. Griggs is the Program Coordinator for Project Rebound at CSUSB and PhD student at UCLA's Social Welfare Program where he is conducting research to improve the quality of higher education in prison.

Dr. Jessica Grosholz is an Associate Professor in Criminology at the University of South Florida. Dr. Grosholz received her PhD from Emory University, Georgia, in 2014. Her research centers on carceral studies, particularly in the areas of prison and reentry programming, recidivism, and health. She is a qualitative methodologist and seeks to integrate the voices of those with lived experience in her work. Dr. Grosholz's research has been published in significant outlets such as *Crime & Delinquency*, *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Feminist Criminology*, *Health & Justice*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, and *Race & Justice*.

Yaritzel Guerrero-Montoya, MPA, earned her AA in Sociology in 2020 at Borough of Manhattan Community College, New York, her BS in Criminal Justice in 2022 at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, and her Master of Public Administration at San Diego State University, California, in 2024. Her personal goals include working with communities most affected by mass incarceration and violence as well as developing strategies to improve the criminal justice system.

Michael Hadnot has been incarcerated since January of 2015 on a 44-year sentence. He is currently a core member for 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and has helped over 65 people and counting graduate and learn this character based inside-out approach to change. Hadnot is currently seeking a sentence commutation through Colorado's State Governor.

Paula Harriott is a leading voice in criminal justice reform, committed to power, accountability, and change in the social justice field. As CEO of Unlock, she champions the rights of individuals with lived experience of the justice system, working to dismantle systemic inequalities and challenge exclusionary policies. With a career rooted in activism, Ms. Harriott is dedicated to redistributing power and ensuring that those affected by injustice have a voice in shaping reform. She collaborates with policymakers, organizations, and communities to push for greater accountability and fairer opportunities for people with criminal records. Through her leadership, she continues to drive systemic change, influencing national conversations on rehabilitation, social mobility, and justice. Her impact extends beyond policy: she is a change-maker dedicated to building a more equitable and inclusive society.

Madison Hatfield received her Master of Public Administration from San Diego State University, California. Her fields of interest include prison reentry, corrections policy, and sentencing reform.

Andrea R. Hazelwood is a Criminology doctoral student at Pennsylvania State University. Her dissertation research focuses on the reentry experiences of older, previously incarcerated men exiting Pennsylvania state correctional institutions.

Lauren Henderson, MSW, is an Associate at Justice System Partners (JSP), where she works with the JSP team to provide comprehensive support to criminal legal organizations and community partners in transforming their systems. Leveraging her expertise in social work, she brings a holistic, person-centered approach to fostering meaningful change within the criminal legal system. Before joining JSP, Ms. Henderson worked as a clinical social worker and research assistant in various settings, supporting legal system-involved populations and collaborating

with legal system stakeholders. This work further ignited her passion for transforming systems to center the voices and support the healing of people impacted by the legal system. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work and a Master of Social Work, both from Florida State University.

Joe Louis Hernandez, PhD, is the current Director of the Rising Scholars program at Mt. San Antonio College, California. He is also an alumnus of the college, who graduated in 2014 with his associate degree in social and behavioral sciences. Since graduating, he has received a bachelor's from California State University, Los Angeles, in Rehabilitation Services and a master's degree from California State University, Long Beach, focusing on student development in higher education. Most recently, he has completed his doctorate at Claremont Graduate University, California. His research focuses on the experiences of formerly incarcerated and system-impacted students in higher education. His work looks to develop an anti-deficit perspective on this student population, positioning them as "Streetwise Scholars." His passion for serving this student population arises from his own experience with incarceration and having gone through the criminal justice system.

Christopher Husbands is a recent Centennial College, Canada, graduate who is passionate about defying societal limits and inspiring Black youth to dream again. He is dedicated to creating opportunities for youth through teaching, speaking, mentorship, and entrepreneurship. Mr. Husbands grew up in an at-risk neighborhood in Toronto, Canada, which led him into a criminal lifestyle and, ultimately, incarceration. Despite facing adversity, he has achieved remarkable things while incarcerated. He has completed a welding apprenticeship. Mr. Husbands has also advanced himself educationally by obtaining his high school diploma, completing a business management certificate at the college level, and taking developmental and abnormal psychology courses. He has guest lectured at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and held speaking engagements at not-for-profit organizations such as Peacebuilders International. As an active member of Toastmasters, he uses his Christian faith, education, and lived experiences to develop and deliver motivational speeches. Overall, Mr. Husbands is dedicated to uplifting his community and is determined to continue his education and pursue a career as a professor in criminology. His goal is to use his lived experiences and knowledge to develop policy-relevant Canadian scholarship and contribute to existing corrections and sentencing scholarship in Canada and beyond.

Vu Huynh holds a BA in Sociology and is currently pursuing a master's degree in criminal justice and Criminology at San Diego State University, California. He has over 24 years of lived experience in the juvenile and adult carceral system and is dedicated to supporting system-impacted individuals. As a peer mentor and outreach advocate, he has worked closely with formerly incarcerated students, helping them navigate higher education and access resources. His research interests focus on rehabilitative policies and their implementation, and he aspires to teach in higher education to further support and empower justice-impacted students.

Sydney N. Ingel, MA, is a doctoral student in Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University, Virginia. She earned her master's degree at George Mason University. She previously worked as a graduate research assistant at the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) on qualitative projects related to peer recovery specialists, probation officers, and people who live and work in correctional facilities. She still works at ACE! as a consultant, but she primarily works at the Early Justice Strategies (EJS) lab where she is quantitatively and qualitatively exploring pretrial defendants' perceptions of their risks and needs during the pretrial period.

Gunner Johnson (Land Together and UCD) has led and coordinated a variety of reentry support programs for currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. In his work with Land Together, he served as the Program Manager at Mule Creek State Prison, California, and the state-wide Reentry Manager, working with a dynamic team of formerly incarcerated people to build out Land Together's newly created reentry program throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Gunner currently works as the Director for the Underground Scholars Program at UC Davis, California, and as a facilitator for the Project Rebound Outreach Program at Avenal, Pleasant Valley, Valley State, and Central California Women's Facility where he supports incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students to expand educational opportunities.

Robert Johnson, PhD, is a Professor in the Justice, Law and Criminology at American University, Washington, DC, editor and publisher of BleakHouse Publishing, and an award-winning author of books and articles on crime and punishment, including works of social science, law, poetry, and fiction. His books include *Hard Time: Understanding and Reforming the Prison*, *Condemned to Die: Life Under Sentence of Death*, and *Death Work: A Study of the Modern Execution Process*, which received the Outstanding Book Award of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Johnson has edited or co-edited six social science books, including *The Pains of Imprisonment* (co-edited with Hans Toch), *Life without Parole: Living and Dying in Prison Today* (co-edited with Sonia Tabriz), and *A Woman Doing Life: Notes from a Prison for Women* (co-edited with Alison Brooks Martin). Johnson is a Distinguished Alumnus of the School of Criminal Justice, Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs, New York, and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York.

Brian Jones (deceased 2025) was a paralegal with a B.S. in paralegal studies. He worked with the Vera Institute of Justice, helping to reestablish the right for people in prison to have access to Pell Grants to pay for education while incarcerated. At the time of his passing, he was working for a consumer law firm while pursuing a law degree.

Daniel Kavish, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. His research focuses on juvenile delinquency, masculinity, stigmatization, and carcerality. His work has been featured in academic journals such as *Crime & Delinquency*, *Criminal Justice Studies*, *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, *Contemporary Justice Review*, the *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, the *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice and Criminology*, and books such as *Convict Criminology for the Future* and *Power and Pain in the Modern Prison: The Society of Captives Revisited*.

Pamela Keye, EdD, currently serves as a research consultant at RTI International, and brings lived experience to the 5-Key Long-term Reentry Study. Dr. Keye has more than five years experience providing consultation and advice on research and analysis. She also has experience providing leadership and advocacy to support programming for vulnerable populations, as well as curriculum development for educational, peer support, and reentry programming.

Scott Kidd, MA, PGDIP, BA (HONS), CMS, IIPT, MBPsS, MLIA, is a Lecturer in Criminology in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Lincoln, UK, specializes in policing, violence, and social justice. His research explores public and professional perceptions of crime, community safety, and policing effectiveness. He has worked on evaluations of policing, probation, and community interventions with law enforcement, policymakers, and third-sector organizations. A specialist in participatory research methods, he ensures the voices of those affected by criminal justice policies shape academic and policy discussions. He also researches belonging in higher education, focusing on justice-involved individuals, and serves

as an Executive Advisor to Experience for Justice CIC, supporting initiatives that amplify lived experience in criminal justice and policy reform.

Alexis Klemm, MS, is a third-year doctoral student in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University (ASU) and a research assistant for the school's Center for Correctional Solutions (CCS). She has worked collaboratively with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry since 2019, engaging in research, program development and facilitation, and subject matter support. This work includes facilitation of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program, co-leading the Arizona Transformation Project—a learning community of university researchers and incarcerated individuals—and leading the {Ink}arcerated: Creativity Within Confinement program—an annual charitable prison art program and show.

Stuti S. Kokkalera, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas. Her current research employs quantitative and qualitative methodologies to examine different aspects of state discretionary release practices as they impact juveniles sentenced to life. She is equally interested in cross-country comparative research on juvenile offending, as well as correctional practices generally.

Kimberly Kras, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University, California. She earned her PhD in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri–St. Louis, following a career with the Missouri Division of Probation and Parole. Her research focuses on the back end of the criminal legal system—institutional and community-based corrections and engagement with community-based organizations. Her research examines the lived experiences of people experiencing reentry from prison and their process toward desistance, specifically looking at the role of housing, social support, fines and fees, and employment in the community reintegration of legal system-involved people. Her research has been published in *Criminology*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Criminology & Public Policy*, *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, and *Crime & Delinquency*.

Derek A. Kreager is a Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Pennsylvania State University. His current research focuses on social networks and health, particularly of incarcerated and returning citizens.

Ryan J. Krueger, 48, has been incarcerated in the Colorado Department of Corrections since 2006. Over the last five years, Ryan has worked extensively on developing and implementing Resident-Led Peer Support Programs.

Bryce Kushmerick-McCune, MA, is a doctoral student in Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas. She is affiliated with the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!). Her work involves qualitative research focused on incarcerated people's experiences in prisons and jails as well as people's experience with community supervision. Her research interests include institutional corrections, prisonization and adjustment to incarceration, and societal reactions to crime and punishment.

Jennifer L. Lanterman, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and Director of the School of Social Research and Justice Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her research interests include the institutional and community-based management and treatment of high-risk and high-need offenders, carceral education, and restorative justice training and quality assurance processes.

Thomas P. LeBel, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee’s Helen Bader School of Social Welfare. He has lived experience with the criminal legal system, and is the author or co-author of numerous publications about prisoner reintegration, desistance from crime, the stigma of incarceration, drug treatment courts, and incarcerated women with substance use disorders.

Rachel Leopold is a master’s student at American University, Washington, DC, in the School of Public Affairs studying public policy. She holds a BA from American University in Communications, Legal Institutions, Economics, and Government (CLEG). Currently, she works as a case manager at a law firm, focusing on veteran disability benefits. She plans to pursue a legal career and continue engaging in Justice, Law, and Criminology research. Her next research project will be alongside Dr. Robert Johnson researching prisons and technology.

Madeline Lewis is currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology at the University of North Dakota. Before starting her academic career, she served in the United States Air Force. She started her criminal justice interest as a Security Forces Member, which led her to the University of North Dakota.

Alesa R. Liles is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Georgia College & State University. She has an MSW and a PhD in Criminal Justice from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Her research interests include legal policy, women and crime, juvenile justice, and mental health issues in the criminal justice system. Dr. Liles teaches the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at Georgia College and has received multiple grants to create combined educational opportunities for college students and currently and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Nathan W. Link is an associate professor of criminal justice at Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey. His research focuses on issues and barriers that confront people navigating carceral systems including during prison and jail reentry.

Divine Lipscomb recently graduated with a master’s degree in Counseling Education from Penn State and will begin a PhD program in the same field in the Fall semester, 2025. He is a husband, father, advocate, entrepreneur, public speaker, volunteer, executive director, and returned citizen.

Jaylyn Magana, BA, is a graduate student in Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas. She studies issues related to punishment, incarceration, community supervision, substance use disorder and treatment. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and Computer Information Systems.

Timothy Malone is a formerly incarcerated scholar who spent eight years inside of various California carceral sites. Upon release, he earned his PhD from Claremont Graduate University, California, in Cultural Studies. His monograph in development, *The Carceral Thresher: Abandonment, Contagion and Sacrifice in the Contemporary Prison* argues that the primary punishments that any inmate is subjected to within the contemporary prison exceed what they were sentenced to endure by the court. Through its foundational logics, the primary function of the contemporary prison is to actively abandon a largely racialized, rendered-superfluous population within a state-totalized space to a steered machinery of delegated, proto-genocidal death production—social, subjective (madness), and/or biological.

Erik Maloney has dedicated his life to advocating for a trauma-focused approach to rehabilitation in prisons and bringing attention to the harms of mass incarceration through his writing and work as a co-founder of the Arizona Transformation Project (see www.aztransform.org). He is the co-author of *Imprisoned Minds: Lost Boys, Trapped Men, and Solutions from Within the Prison*. He developed and teaches a class, based upon his book, which focuses on helping those who are incarcerated with him to overcome the irrational mindset (the Imprisoned Mind) that develops in response to childhood trauma.

Professor Shadd Maruna is a world-leading criminologist and Head of the Department of Sociology, Social Policy, and Criminology at the University of Liverpool, UK. A leading expert in desistance from crime, rehabilitation, and reintegration, his influential research has shaped policies worldwide. He served as President of the American Society of Criminology (2022–2023) and is best known for his award-winning book, *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. His work has influenced justice reforms across the UK, Europe, and North America, and he has held prestigious positions at institutions such as Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology. A respected scholar, speaker, and mentor, Professor Maruna continues to drive critical debates on justice, social inclusion, and offender rehabilitation.

Derrick Mason has facilitated for several neighborhood and prison programs, such as Beyond Recovery, A Slice of Happiness, and Three Principles Global Community. He is a sought-after speaker and facilitator whose mission is to free others regardless of their circumstances.

Alexa Mata, MA, is a doctoral student in Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas. Her interests include research focused on incarcerated people's experiences in prisons and jails using mixed methods to study questions related to incarceration and punishment.

Lyle C. May is an Ohio University alumnus and graduated from Adams State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in law and sociology in 2024. He is an incarcerated journalist and author of *Witness: An Insider's Narrative of the Carceral State* (Haymarket Books, 2024) and *The Transformative Journey of Higher Education in Prison: A Class of One* (Routledge Academic Press, 2024). To learn more visit LyleCMay.com.

Dan P. McAdams is the Henry Wade Rogers Professor of Psychology and Professor of Human Development and Social Policy at Northwestern University, Illinois. A personality and lifespan developmental psychologist, Professor McAdams focuses his research and writing on the stories people construct to make sense of their lives. He is the author most recently of *The Strange Case of Donald J. Trump: A Psychological Reckoning* (2020) and, with Will Dunlop, *The Person: A New Introduction to Personality Psychology* (2022).

Dr. Carolyn McAllister is a Professor and the Graduate Coordinator of the School of Social Work. Carolyn McAllister received her BA in Psychology at UC Davis, California, in 1996, her MSW from UCLA, California, in 1999, and her PhD in Social Work from Michigan State University in 2008. Her professional experiences include work in the areas of crisis and long-term mental health services, practice with individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, and social work in health settings. She teaches social work students in the areas of micro practice and research methods. Her research interests focus in the areas of access to and acquisition of education (high school and beyond) for high-risk populations.

Jill McCorkel, PhD, is Professor of Criminology and Sociology at Villanova University, Pennsylvania. She is the founder and executive director of Philadelphia Justice Project for Women & Girls, a non-profit research and advocacy organization that challenges wrongful arrests, incarcerations, and convictions of women and girls.

Nicole McKenna, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Kentucky's College of Social Work in the Department of Criminal Justice. Her research to date has focused on gender, trauma, and alternatives to the juvenile legal system. She is currently working on multiple participatory action projects related to education during incarceration and reentry, restorative and transformation justice for youth, and trauma during incarceration. She adopts a critical, feminist, and abolitionist framework in her research and activism.

Gillian McNaul is a Lecturer in Criminology & Criminal Justice, School of Applied and Social Policy, Ulster University, UK.

Ryan Meyer has been the Executive Director of the UC Davis Center for Community and Citizen Science, California, since 2016. His career has focused on the connections between science and society, and has involved time as both a scholar and practitioner working on a wide range of environmental topics. Collaborating with Land Together, beginning in 2018, has been Ryan's first direct exposure to the carceral system. He has supported listening sessions, and pollinator and bird observation activities in five facilities.

Shaun Mills is a member of the Arizona Transformation Project (ATP). He is currently working towards his Associate of Arts degree. He is the facilitator of his unit's Toastmasters program, and his focus is on calling attention to the unjust sentence of Life Without Parole (LWOP).

Chris Miner is a formerly incarcerated PhD student in Criminology, Law, and Justice, with a focus on desistance theory, at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Since his incarceration, he has worked with over 50 returning citizens as a peer mentor, founded a non-profit organization that helps people with felony convictions access higher education, and serves on the Champaign County Mental Health Board.

Meghan Mitchell, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of North Dakota. She received her BS and MS from North Dakota State University and her PhD in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University, Texas. Her current work examines the areas of corrections, subcultures, and research methodologies. She has published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, *Sociological Methods & Research*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *British Medical Journal Open*, and the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* among other places. She has extensive knowledge and expertise in data collection within correctional settings involving both incarcerated people and correctional staff, and she is a trained facilitator for the Inside-Out Prison Educational Exchange Program.

Stacy Moak is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Alabama Birmingham and holds secondary appointments in Criminal Justice and Social Work. She received a juris doctorate from Loyola University New Orleans, Louisiana, and a PhD in Urban Studies from the University of New Orleans. Dr. Moak is a member of the American Political Science Association, the European Society of Criminology, the Urban Affairs Association, and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Her primary research focus concerns offender reentry and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She is

also a faculty associate with the Institute for Human Rights and an active advocate for the Offender Alumni Association.

Alan Mobley, PhD, is an activist, writer, researcher, and Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at San Diego State University, California. He is co-founder of several justice-related initiatives, including Convict Criminology, a Division of the American Society of Criminology, All of Us or None, the US civil rights initiative, and the Project Rebound Consortium of the California State University.

Maria Montalvo is a native of New Jersey. The influence of maternal grandparents who indoctrinated the significance of family and cultural values remains well-founded to date. The importance of education and discipline was instilled by first-generation parents, who were driven, college educated professionals. Formerly, an operating room nurse, the passion to care and nurture others continues. Ms. Montalvo has always been motivated and focused on education as being a source of empowerment and the key to possibilities. During her confinement, she earned an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts from Raritan Valley College, New Jersey. She graduated from NJSTEP Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice, New Jersey, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Justice Studies, earning Summa Cum Laude honors. She hopes to pursue a graduate degree in the future, focusing on the criminal justice field. Currently, she continues her dedication to service by working as a paralegal, a member of the Inmate Liaison Committee and active member of the Commissioner's Advisory Group and the Assistant Commissioner's Focus Group. She is a member of Book Club and the cofacilitator of Spanish Book Club. She has been appointed as the manager of the NJ-STEP Tutoring Center, E=MCF2, the first of its kind to be located within the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility. Maria Montalvo is also the co-editor of the NJ-STEP Newsletter and the coeditor of *Perceptions Reimagined*, the institutional newsletter. Maria believes strongly in the transformative power of education for the justice impacted and its ability to reduce recidivism. She has dedicated a great deal of time pursuing justice not only for herself, but for others similarly situated. She believes that there are no hopeless cases and that hope is the catalyst to self-efficacy.

Luke Muentner, PhD, MSW, is a Researcher in the Corrections and Reentry Research Program of RTI International in North Carolina. His research interests span correctional programming, reentry supports, and intervention development and testing, with specialized expertise in parental incarceration and child and family well-being.

Philip Mulvey is an Associate Professor and the MSVSM (Master of Science in Victim Services Management) graduate coordinator in the Department of Victim Studies within the College of Criminal Justice at Sam Houston State University, Texas. His academic work focuses on the experiences of individuals with mental illness under formal social control, as well as other marginalized groups and their experiences. Prior to entering academia, he was the Program Manager at the Health Disparities and Public Policy program at Northwestern University, Illinois.

LaTonya Myers is the founder of the grassroots service and advocacy organization, Above All Odds. By channeling her lived experience and working to uplift the voices of her neighbors, she is fiercely dedicated to transforming the criminal justice system, supporting returning citizens, and empowering communities which have experienced historical disinvestment and disproportionate targeting by law enforcement.

Chelsey S. Narvey, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice & Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas, and is the Associate Director of Research for the Correctional

Management Institute of Texas. Her research interests include developmental psychopathology and corrections. She has published on issues related to personality development and its impact on later incarceration, procedural justice in correctional settings, the intersection of health and criminal justice, and the effects of empathy on recidivism. She is a Canadian-born mixed-methods researcher and is skilled in both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Matthew Neary is a talented chef hailing from Orlando, Florida, known for his innovative approach to culinary arts. He is also a successful returning citizen and a fierce advocate for employment and reentry training as he helps system-impacted people who want to pursue culinary and entrepreneurial goals. He is the mastermind behind Food Group 137, a unique concept that redefines fine dining by taking it to the streets through a food truck. Neary's creative dishes and dedication to bringing high-quality cuisine to unexpected places have garnered him a loyal following in the Orlando food scene. His fusion of flavors and passion for gastronomy continues to delight food enthusiasts across the city. He has now moved on from Orlando to Louisville, Kentucky, where he is starting a life with his wife.

Andrew Joseph Ng was one of the justice-involved individuals in Institution B1, Correctional Unit 1, who co-developed Empathotherapy and was instrumental in the curriculum design of the Peer Supporter Academy. Trained in Clinical Pastoral Care and Choice Theory, he has spent a substantial number of years in the healthcare sector journeying with oncology patients and those in palliative care, assisting them to make meaning and purpose of their lives. His current core work involves collaborating with community partners to build effective rehabilitative programs and enhancing current services that will help strengthen desistance.

Mackenzie Niness (she/they) is a third-year PhD student and NSF Graduate Research Fellow at the University of Delaware in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. Her interests include prison programming, women and queer people's carceral and reentry experiences, and gendered organizations.

Enrique Alan Olivares-Pelayo is a doctoral student in the University of Arizona's School of Geography, Development and Environment. His research focuses on carceral geography, the dynamics of racial identity construction inside of jails and prisons, and qualitative methods and methodology. He is a proud Tucsonan, and dual citizen of Mexico and the United States. Alongside his academic work, Enrique organizes towards a new vision of what "safety" means, outside of policing and punishment, as the lead organizer for Just Communities Arizona. He celebrates ten years of freedom in November, 2024.

Kadija Osei is currently a doctoral candidate at the Centre of Criminology and Sociolegal Studies at the University of Toronto. She is interested in reintegration programming, restorative justice and reentry for formerly incarcerated persons. Her advocacy work at the University of Toronto, which consisted of preserving an access program for adults lacking the credentials necessary for university admission, drives her passion to bring awareness to issues surrounding post-incarceration reintegration programming for marginalized and racialized individuals.

Leah Ouellet is a doctoral candidate in Northwestern University's Department of Human Development and Social Policy in Illinois. Her work focuses on carceral politics, policies, and decision-making processes. She is especially interested in the intersection between adolescent development and the criminal legal system. Ms. Ouellet was awarded a Graduate Research Fellowship from the National Institute of Justice for her dissertation, which focuses on life without parole sentencing for minors.

Nicole Patrie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Safety and Justice Studies at MacEwan University, Canada, and a PhD Candidate in Education at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her research is on the role of education and learning in the criminal justice system. She has over a decade of experience working in Canadian prison education programs as a teacher and administrator.

Lizzette Peralta-Romero is at the tail end of a 16-year prison sentence and has been working with the Arizona State University Center for Correctional Solutions since 2021 when she became a member of the Arizona Transformation Project. Lizzette has co-led the {Ink}arcerated program at her unit since 2022 and since then has developed and now facilitates art classes to her peers. She credits her involvement in the Arizona Transformation Project with challenging her, helping her gain leadership skills and discover hidden talents, and supporting growth in herself and her community.

Dr. Xavier Perez is an Assistant Professor and co-founder of the Criminology Department at DePaul University. A passionate advocate for critical and inclusive perspectives in criminal justice, Dr. Perez draws on his personal history of growing up in Chicago, where he experienced the effects of disinvestment, housing segregation, and mass incarceration. Dr. Perez's research interests examine the relationship between Criminology and Latinx populations, specifically, what differentiates Latinx communities from other racial and ethnic groups in the US. As an advocate for criminal justice reform, Dr. Perez teaches inside correctional institutions to humanize punishment and challenge our perceptions of justice. As Chair of the Public Safety Committee in Chicago's 26th Ward, he collaborates with violence-prevention organizations to address crime through holistic, trauma-informed strategies.

David Pitts is Vice President for Justice Policy at the Urban Institute. His research focuses on conditions of confinement in prisons and jails, with particular interests in postsecondary education programs, restrictive housing, and LGBTQ+ issues in incarceration.

Lori Pompa has been going into prisons for 40+ years and has taken thousands of students (and others) into correctional facilities through a variety of courses and exchanges during that time. She has been on the Criminal Justice faculty at Temple University, Pennsylvania, since 1992 and is Founder and Executive Director of The Inside-Out Center at Temple University, International Headquarters of The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program®, which she began as a single class in 1997. As a 2003 Soros Justice Senior Fellow, she collaborated with others on both sides of the prison wall to develop Inside-Out into an international model of transformative pedagogy. Inside-Out brings together campus-based students and incarcerated students for semester-long courses through which they study issues of social justice collaboratively, as equals. Since 2004, more than 1,500 college and university instructors from throughout the US and 15 other countries have taken part in The Inside-Out Training Institute, of which 95 have been held to date. Many hundreds of Inside-Out classes have been offered so far, involving more than 65,000 inside (incarcerated) and outside (campus-based) students. Ms. Pompa regularly speaks about Inside-Out's history and contributions, most notably at the Clinton School of Public Service, Arkansas, at the Fetzer Institute's Global Gathering on Love and Forgiveness in Assisi, Italy, at the University of Sydney in Australia, and at Durham University in the UK. In 2016, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Teaching from the American Society of Criminology for her work with Inside-Out.

Martha Ponce, MS, earned her BS in Criminal Justice and her MS in Criminology and Criminal Justice from San Diego State University, California. Her research interests include juvenile justice and reentry. More specifically, her research looks at the ways our justice system should help individuals with resources during the reentry process.

JohnMichael Price, BA Psychology, has nearly two decades of lived experience within the carceral system. He shares his experience with others to bring insight and awareness of the roles trauma, abuse, neglect, neurodivergence, and mental health have in criminality. He advocates for change within the carceral and reentry systems and assists at-risk youth, some of whom are incarcerated. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in child development.

Dr. Rosemary Ricciardelli is Professor (PhD) and Research Chair in Safety, Security, and Wellness, at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. The winner of the 2023 International Corrections and Prison Association's Research Excellence Award, the 2023 Canadian Sociological Association's Angus Reid Applied Researcher Award, and the 2024 International Community Justice Association's President's Award, Ricciardelli was also elected to the Royal Society of Canada and is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. Her research centers on evolving understandings of health, gender, and vulnerabilities within different facets of the public safety systems. Her interests lie in the social health, identity construction, and lived experiences of individuals. She leads a longitudinal study on the mental health and well-being experiences of correctional officers employed by Correctional Services Canada.

Arden Richards-Karamarkovich, MA, is a doctoral student in Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University, Virginia. She received her master's degree at George Mason University. Her research focuses on gender and reentry, particularly focusing on women in the criminal legal system. Recently, her research has explored motherhood in reentry and narrative criminology.

Fleur Riley is a PhD researcher focusing on the lived experience of criminalised women. Her research explores issues of trust and trauma, and their intersecting impact on women's experiences of prison and rehabilitation. She has also conducted research with individuals who have experienced homelessness, war, intravenous drug use, and acute mental health services. She is interested in creative methodologies and using feminist, psychological and sociological perspectives to understand intersecting inequalities and promote social justice.

Brittany Ripper, JD, PhD, is a justice researcher whose research interests include life sentences, death sentences, reentry, and the intersection between the criminal and civil legal systems. She currently works for a government agency, but was previously an Assistant Professor in the Criminal Justice Program at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia. Dr. Ripper holds a PhD in Justice, Law and Criminology from American University, Washington, DC, a JD from the George Mason University School of Law, Virginia, and a BS in Criminology, Law and Society from George Mason University. Her experience as a defense attorney and as a family member of justice-involved individuals informs her research and teaching.

Ryan Flaco Rising is a transformative leader and an unwavering advocate for formerly incarcerated individuals, currently pursuing his PhD with a focus on social justice and systemic reform at the University of California, Irvine, in California. Having experienced the profound challenges of reentry firsthand, he is dedicated to dismantling the numerous barriers that hinder the progress and potential of those who have been incarcerated. His work is marked by a relentless commitment to empowering marginalized voices and fostering genuine community support.

Dr. Jennifer Roberts is Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her research and teaching interests include the life event calendar and survey methodology, violence, and gangs.

Dr. Caterina G. Roman is a health criminologist and professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Temple University, Pennsylvania, where she focuses on criminal justice reform and strategies to improve neighborhood well-being. With nearly two decades at the Urban Institute before joining academia, she has led numerous federally-funded studies on violence reduction, gang dynamics, and the role of social networks in shaping crime desistance and access to victim services and other social supports. Dr. Roman is deeply committed to service, working alongside communities to build their capacity for violence prevention and foster safer, more resilient neighborhoods.

Jeffrey Ian Ross, PhD, is a Professor in the School of Criminal Justice, College of Public Affairs, and a Research Fellow at the Center for International and Comparative Law and the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore, Maryland. He has been a Visiting Professor at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, and the University of Padua, Italy. Ross has researched, written, and lectured primarily on corrections, policing, political crime, state crime, crimes of the powerful, violence, street culture, and crime and justice in American Indian communities for over two decades. His work has appeared in many academic journals, books, and popular media. He is the author, co-author, editor, or co-editor of several books, including, most recently, *Introduction to Convict Criminology* (2024). From 1995 to 1998, Ross was a Social Science Analyst with the National Institute of Justice, a division of the US Department of Justice. In 2003, he was awarded the University of Baltimore's Distinguished Chair in Research Award. Ross is the co-founder of Convict Criminology and the former co-chair/chair of the Division of Critical Criminology and Social Justice (2014–2017) of the American Society of Criminology (ASC). In 2018, Ross was given the Hans W. Mattick Award “for an individual who has made a distinguished contribution to the field of Criminology & Criminal Justice practice” from the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2020, he received the John Howard Award from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences' Division of Corrections. The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) Corrections Section's most prestigious award was given because of his “outstanding research and service to the field of corrections.” In 2020, he was honored with the John Keith Irwin Distinguished Professor Award from the ASC Division of Convict Criminology. During the early 1980s, he worked for almost four years in a correctional institution.

Danielle S. Rudes, PhD, is a Professor of Criminal Justice & Criminology at Sam Houston State University, Texas. She is also the Deputy Director of the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!). She is a former Fellow with the Bureau of Justice Assistance with a focus on Enhancing Correctional Spaces and Cultures. Dr. Rudes is an expert qualitative researcher with over 20 years of experience working with corrections agencies. She is recognized for her work examining how social control organizations and their staff and clients understand, negotiate, and, at times, resist change.

Cedric Rue is a recent member of the Arizona Transformation Project. His focus is on calling attention to the harms of juvenile life without parole sentences. He is a facilitator and contributor to the {Ink}arcerated art show. He shares his passion for art by teaching classes within his unit.

Dr. Ebony Ruhland is an Associate Professor at Rutgers University, New Jersey, in the School of Criminal Justice. She received her PhD from the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on how criminal justice policies and practices impact individuals, families, and communities. Dr. Ruhland is currently working on research projects in four areas: 1) examining factors that lead to probation revocations, including the use probation conditions, specifically supervision fees; 2) exploring factors parole members consider to determine readiness for release; 3) identifying ways to bridge police and community relationships; and 4) examining the impacts of parental incarceration on children. Through her research, Dr. Ruhland hopes to find ways to improve criminal justice and corrections policies to reduce mass incarceration, racial disparities, and collateral consequences while at the same time maintaining public safety.

Carlos Sanchez, Research Assistant, Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center, Texas. Arrested in the fall of 1992 for a crime he did not commit, Carlos Sanchez spent nearly two and a half decades incarcerated in various high-security prisons located in upstate New York. During his incarceration, he earned his GED (General Education Development) certificate and subsequently his bachelor's degree in Mathematics through the Bard Prison Initiative in 2017. With the support of the Innocence Project, Carlos was released from prison in the spring of 2017. Since then, he has dedicated himself to improving his personal life and making a positive impact on his community. Carlos remains committed to fostering a more just and equitable society.

Ryan Schenk has been incarcerated in the Colorado Department of Corrections since 2005. Ryan helped to found Rebels' Redemption, an addiction recovery and mentorship program based on experience, grounded in faith, and elevated by training and expertise.

William Schultz is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at MacEwan University, Canada, and received his PhD from the University of Alberta, Canada, in 2023. His research focuses on correctional officers, violent extremism, and prison subcultures. Prior to his graduate work, Will spent five years working as a correctional officer in a Canadian prison.

Neshaun Sephes is a young man from Philadelphia. Connecting with YEAH Philly changed Neshaun's mindset and lifestyle as they offered him resources inside and outside the legal system. He continues to work toward a peaceful lifestyle.

Moriah Sharpe, MS, is a doctoral student in Justice, Law, and Criminology at American University, Washington, DC. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of North Carolina and a Master of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of North Texas. Her research interests center on life-course Criminology and evidence-based policy, in particular intersectional inequality and human dignity in the criminal justice system in the southern United States.

Laura Sheffield-Kidd is a criminologist and research consultant at the University of Lincoln, UK, specializing in social justice, education, and policy analysis. Her research critically examines the adversarial nature of the school system and its role in shaping pathways to justice involvement, with a focus on the experiences of marginalised and justice-experienced individuals. Passionate about inclusive education and community engagement, she works to challenge systemic inequalities and advocate for transformative policy change. Through her consultancy and academic work, Laura contributes to research-informed solutions that bridge the gap between education, social policy, and justice reform.

Chloe Sierka holds a master's in Criminal Justice from Temple University, Pennsylvania, where she is a current PhD student. She has previous research work experience in substance use and public health issues.

Peter Simonsson, PhD, MSW, LCSW, is a criminologist in the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, Pennsylvania, with over 15 years of direct social work experience before transitioning into academia. He specializes in community-based research on violence, desistance, and reintegration, focusing on people with violent histories and their recovery experiences. As Director of Violence Prevention at Temple University, he currently oversees a CVI (Community Violence Intervention) program using formerly justice-involved individuals who act as peer mentors to prevent gun violence. Additionally, Peter Simonsson serves as an expert witness and consultant for various agencies on issues of violent crime and trauma.

Helen Skipper ("Skip," as she prefers to be called) has been working in peer support since her final release from incarceration in 2007. After serving as Senior Manager of Peer Services at the NYC Criminal Justice Agency, she became Executive Director of the NYC Justice Peer Initiative in March 2022. A recognized subject-matter expert on justice-involved peer support, she consults nationally on designing programs and creating pathways to employment while promoting the inclusion of lived experiences. She trains NYPD and NYC's B-Heard program in Peer C.I.T., consults with the Urban Institute, and champions community voices. A member of several "higher education for the justice-impacted" coalitions and graduate of St. Francis College (with honors), she is graduating with a master's in Criminology at John Jay College, New York. She has presented original scholarship at the American Society of Criminology and is on track to earn a PhD. The inaugural Executive Chair of the NYC Peer Workforce Coalition, she co-won a SAMHSA Recovery Innovation Challenge in 2022 and the SAMHSA Equity Champion of the year in 2024, and sits on multiple boards, including the NYC Board of Correction as Vice Chair. Her mantra—"I've been around the block a time or two on my tricycle"—reflects her advocacy and unwavering commitment to those impacted by the criminal justice system.

Phillip Vance Smith II is an incarcerated writer who has been serving life without parole in North Carolina for 23 years. His fiction, nonfiction, and legislative proposals are just one Google search away. His collection of poetry, *LIFE: Learning Instructions for Everyone...In Prison and Out*, was released by Bleakhouse Publishing in January 2024. Contact him through a third party at phillipvancesmith2@gmail.com.

Cassia Spohn is Regents Professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University (ASU) and an Affiliate Professor of Law at ASU's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. She is a Fellow of the American Society of Criminology, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and the Western Society of Criminology. Dr. Spohn's research interests include the correlates of federal and state sentencing outcomes, prosecutorial decision making, the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, crime and justice, and sexual assault case processing decisions.

Kristin Stainbrook, PhD, is a senior justice and behavioral health researcher in RTI International's Center for Public Safety and Resilience in North Carolina. Dr. Stainbrook is an expert in designing and conducting program evaluation for behavioral health interventions in the areas of community-based crisis response, jail diversion, jail-based treatment, reentry, and for persons experiencing homelessness. She currently serves as the qualitative lead for the NIJ-funded Long-term Evaluation of the 5 Key Reentry Model Multisite RCT. She also leads

several evaluations of alternative response programs for behavioral health and quality life related 911 calls for service.

Autumn Talley is a Graduate Research Assistant in a doctoral program at a Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) university and community organizer. She also has a background as a social worker in New York City.

Danielle Thomas is a PhD student at the University of South Florida in the Department of Criminology. She received her BA in Criminology and Psychology in 2020, as well as her MA in Criminology in 2022 from the University of South Florida. Her research interests include corrections, reentry and recidivism, program evaluation, and the relationship between employment and crime. Ms. Thomas' research has been published in *Criminology*, *Criminology and Public Policy*, and *Offender Rehabilitation*.

Eve Thomas, a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans, Louisiana, works for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service.

Grant E. Tietjen, PhD, a carceral-impacted scholar, is an Associate Professor, and Chair of the Criminal Justice Program at the University of Washington – Tacoma. His work focuses on carceral stigmatization, mentorship within carceral-impacted populations, and pathways to correctional/post-correctional education. His new UC Press book (2025) is titled *Justice Lessons: System-Affected Scholars and the Future of Criminal Justice Transformation*.

Quinzel Tomoney is a Senior Manager at Philadelphia Cure Violence. Quinzel started his career as an Outreach Worker in Cure Violence over ten years ago. As a manager, he oversees all street activities including outreach, canvassing, shooting responses, and mediations. He grew up in Philadelphia and currently lives with his family in the West Oak Lane section of Philadelphia.

Tereza Trejbalová, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University, California. Her research interests include examining institutional misconduct and recidivism of different system-impacted populations (especially individuals on death row, individuals with severe mental illness, and women), as well as the prison experiences of those incarcerated. Aside from correctional topics, she is also interested in pedagogical research in the context of criminal justice classrooms to be able to offer meaningful learning experiences to her students. Trejbalová has authored and co-authored works that have appeared in outlets such as *The Prison Journal*, *Feminist Criminology*, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, and *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*.

Jaclyn M. Truman, MA, is a successful reintegrating citizen, an advocate of system-impacted people, and the president of TruAlchemy Productions Inc. in Orlando, Florida. She completed a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 2009 from the University of Central Florida and a Master of Arts in Theological Studies in 2016 from Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky. As a former sign language interpreter, her academic interests are focused on spirituality and intersectionality in the deaf community. She is passionate about supporting justice-involved populations and shares her lived experience to advocate for reducing barriers to successful reintegration. Additionally, her love of Semiotics and spiritual art led her to pursue stained-glass construction as a hobby, and she continues to do commissioned-based work.

Peter Twigg, MS, is a Senior Research Associate in the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, Pennsylvania, where he researches desistance, incarceration, reintegration, health justice, and community-based violence intervention efforts among adults and youth.

He works to support and research the work of a CVI (Community Violence Intervention) program, as well as explore social issues through the lens of criminology, neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy.

Dr. Tameka Vaught Williams is an accomplished leader with over 17 years of experience in the criminal and juvenile legal systems, project management, leadership coaching, and higher education. She is the Director of Staff Investment and Curiosity at Justice System Partners (JSP). Previously, she has managed multi-million-dollar projects, provided training and technical assistance to criminal legal agencies, and worked in roles such as probation officer, juvenile court counselor, and quality assurance manager for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. Dr. Williams has also held the position of Clinical Assistant Professor at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) and founded a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering the next generation of women leaders in criminal and social justice fields. She holds dual bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Criminal Justice, a Master of Science in Criminal Justice, and a PhD in Leadership Studies. Dr. Williams is dedicated to fostering growth, innovation, and excellence in the criminal legal field and leadership development.

Janeen Buck Willison, MSJ, is a principal scientist in the Center on Criminal Legal Systems Research at RTI International, North Carolina, where she serves as project director for the NIJ-funded Long-term Evaluation of the 5 Key Reentry Model Multisite RCT. Her portfolio includes research, evaluation, and technical assistance initiatives for local, state, and federal governments and private foundations on prison and jail reentry, specialized courts, corrections and community supervision, juvenile justice, and alternatives to incarceration.

Janani Umamaheswar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University, Virginia. Her research interests are in the areas of punishment and incarceration, social inequality, and qualitative research methods. Her work has appeared in journals including *Justice Quarterly*; *Theoretical Criminology*; *British Journal of Criminology*; *Ethnic and Racial Studies*; *Incarceration*; *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*; *Punishment & Society*; and *Crime, Media, Culture*. www.jananiumamaheswar.com

Ruth Utnage is a Reentry Resource Coordinator at Civil Survival, where she advocates for communities impacted by the criminal legal system. She holds a degree in business management, is a small business owner with her wife, and a transgender woman who discovered her passion for change-making during an eleven-year prison sentence. Passionate about transformative change, she is dedicated to working towards a better future.

Kendra Van de Water is a Co-CEO of YEAH Philly. She holds a Master's of Social Work from the University of Maryland.

Stephon Whitley graduated summa cum laude from Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey, and is also a graduate of the NJ-STEP program. He is employed as a community organizer for the advocacy organization, Industrial Areas Foundation. A formerly incarcerated individual, he is passionate about achieving social and racial justice.

Lewis Whitmire is an entrepreneur who has successfully operated his own e-commerce business for the past five years. He currently resides in Western North Carolina and also works for OurJourney, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to helping returning citizens find resources in their communities. At OurJourney, he serves as the Director of Reentry Council Partnerships and the Director of Logistics and Fulfillment. Formerly a software designer and IT consultant, Lewis is also a self-taught, award-eligible graphic designer. He served six years in state prison,

where he was the Assistant Editor of *The Nash News*, North Carolina's leading prisoner-published news magazine. His multifaceted experience and unique journey provide a valuable perspective for his professional and advocacy interests.

George T. Wilkerson is a self-taught, award-winning poet, writer, and artist incarcerated on North Carolina's Death Row. His poetry has appeared in *Poetry*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is the author of two books of poetry (*Interface* and *Bone Orchard*) and coauthor of *Crimson Letters: Voices from Death Row*. Wilkerson is the recipient of four PEN awards and the Victor Hassine Memorial Scholarship.

B. Williams is a 44-year-old Continuing Education student at the University of Delaware and divorced mother of four. She continues to endure the cycle of the criminal legal system (CLS) that keeps her bound by her past as she "lives" the "experience" of a Black woman trying to survive the systematic effects of the justice system. Her goal is to finally graduate with her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and become a change agent by sharing her experiences to advance communities affected by the CLS.

Audrey Wilson graduated summa cum laude from Rutgers University, Camden, New Jersey, and is interested in legal and policy reform vis-à-vis education for the incarcerated, reentry issues, and voting rights for returning citizens. She was incarcerated in a women's prison in New Jersey for over thirty years, during which time she graduated from the NJ-STEP program. She now works as a Field Coordinator for The Petey Greene Program, a national non-profit serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Andrew Winn is a distinguished leader at the intersection of environmental and criminal justice and has served as the Executive Director of Land Together since 2021. As a formerly incarcerated individual, Andrew brings a unique perspective to his work, emphasizing the transformative power of horticultural therapy within prison settings and holistic reentry support. His commitment extends to higher education, where he played a pivotal role in building and developing the Underground Scholars Initiative at UCLA, California, and Project Rebound at California State University, Sacramento. Andrew is recognized for his expertise in addressing the challenges faced by individuals impacted by the criminal justice system while actively contributing to meaningful policy changes.

Kevin A. Wright is an associate professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and director of the Center for Correctional Solutions at Arizona State University. His work focuses on enhancing the lives of people living and working in the correctional system through research, education, and community engagement. He is the co-author of *Imprisoned Minds: Lost Boys, Trapped Men, and Solutions from Within the Prison*.

Ricardo Zepeda, University of Guadalajara, Mexico, uses his research and activism to bridge the gap between incarceration and deportation. His work, inspired by his direct experience with forced migration and the carceral system, has identified institutional and policy barriers that hinder access for deportees who identify as members of the homie community. As an academic, Zepeda leverages his academic knowledge to organize and gain entry into higher education institutes for system-impacted communities. His personal connection to these communities infuses his work with a deep sense of empathy and understanding.

FIGURES

17.1	Response to the Statement: “The Prison Service Is Listening to the Voices of Prison Residents and Our Concerns”	111
33.1	Progression of Program Development	269
51.1	Simulation Setup Diagram Adapted from West Virginia Kit	471
51.2	Life Card Adapted and Modified from Missouri Kit	472
54.1	The Empathery Collaborative Model: Emphasising the Collaboration Between Incarcerated Individual, Correctional Unit Officers, the Psychological and Correctional Rehabilitation Division (PCRD) and the Institutional Administration	501
54.2	Empathery Circle Plan	501
54.3	Social Discipline Window (Wachtel & McCold, 2000)	502
59.1	Prison Program Categories and Subcategories	564
59.2	Percentage of Respondents Who Experienced Each Reentry Challenge	566
60.1	The Figure Above Presents Points of Intervention Throughout the Legal Process Where the VCI Can Provide Support	579

TABLES

17.1	Reported Level of Support Received by Incarcerated Individuals During the Pandemic	107
29.1	Sample Demographics	226
31.1	Description of Sample	248
31.2	Descriptive Statistics for Program Outcomes at Waves 1–3	249
31.3	Post Hoc Analysis of Time in Program on Program Outcomes	250
32.1	Terminology Used in the “Peer Support” Services Literature	259
49.1	Sample Demographics	456
58.1	Participant Characteristics	550



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfranc>

SECTION 1

The Big Picture of Lived Experience



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

1

WHAT IS MORE “EMPIRICAL” THAN LIVED EXPERIENCE?

Jamie J. Fader

Introduction

If we analyzed the Table of Contents for this volume, a major theme would be “the value of lived experience.” In short, the contributors – many of whom are currently or formerly incarcerated or have worked alongside system affected individuals to promote system change – are making a concerted plea for mainstream criminologists to appreciate the value of this work. This plea echoes one that qualitative researchers in our field have made, in an effort to be afforded some legitimacy in how and whether our research is published, funded, and utilized (Zaatut et al., 2024). In both the case of lived experience and qualitative research (or more generally, research that centers subjectivity), we can see authors making knowledge claims that are heterodox to the current positivist regime in (U.S.) criminology and criminal justice. This chapter asks, are criminologists willing to share our seat at the table with lived experts? And how might academic criminologists make space for these experts?

As the chapters in this volume illustrate, the basis of lived experience scholarship is the idea that “those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.” As Shadd Maruna noted in his Presidential Address at the American Society of Criminology’s annual meeting in 2023, the inclusion of lived experts is increasingly becoming a more common practice in problem-solving spaces (2023; see also Teitjen, 2025). In Philadelphia, which had the largest number of individuals returning home after serving decades of a life sentence they received as juveniles, we have a robust credible messenger community, including mentors, violence interrupters, reentry and bail navigators, advocates, change agents, and non-profit founders. Policy-oriented criminologists will find system-impacted leaders on sentencing commissions, the DA’s and Defender’s offices, and even in adjacent reform spaces such as child welfare. Moreover, prison-to-college pipelines are producing newly credentialed “convict criminologists” and academic researchers increasingly work with community justice partners. These lived experts draw on a unique and valuable form of credibility that comes from firsthand experience (Antojado & McPhee, 2024; Wright, 2023).

Criminology and especially criminal justice (hereafter referred to as CCJ) in the U.S. has embraced disciplinary norms that privilege positivist, quantitative research, and practitioners have applied “gatekeeping” to maintain those normative boundaries. As I will describe later, this has created an uphill battle for criminologists who employ alternative or critical

epistemologies to publish, secure funding for our research, and thereby to navigate academic milestones such as tenure and promotion. The dominant discourse in CCJ devalues subjectively informed or humanistic studies (and their authors) by making a knowledge claim that so-called objectivity is the only way to do good, “empirical” work. But there is much imprecision and lack of historicity in this language and thinking. A quick check of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary shows that the primary definition of “empirical” is “originating in or based on observation or experience” (Merriam-Webster, 2025). In that case, we might ask, what could be more empirical than lived experience?

In this chapter, I argue that American criminologists’ commitment to positivist epistemology and methodologies may prevent us from sharing intellectual space with and learning from lived experts. I offer a brief history of knowledge production in criminology and criminal justice in the U.S. and discuss the costs of positivism’s hegemony. I discuss why lived experts are likely to draw on alternative (interpretivist or liberatory) epistemologies that are the basis of many subjectively informed research methodologies. The chapter concludes with concrete recommendations for removing existing barriers to producing and publishing research of the kind that is showcased so beautifully throughout this volume.

The Hegemony of Positivism

Most of the PhDs in our field have been trained exclusively in positivist epistemology.¹ In fact, positivism is so taken-for-granted that most of us do not learn that other ways of knowing exist. Because I came from sociology and was trained by Elijah Anderson, my research methods courses exposed me to a variety of epistemologies, or procedures by which we work to establish facts or truths. These kinds of discussions are typically found in the sociology (or history or philosophy) of knowledge, which often draws on historical lessons to show how “knowledge claims” are socially constructed and thereby undergo periodic fluctuations where some ways of knowing are privileged and others are marginalized (Kuhn, 1962). In short, there is no one “right” way to do science, but a plurality of ways that we can come to know our social world; nevertheless, there is a hierarchy of epistemologies that may be discipline-, era-, or place-specific.

Positivism as an epistemology is related to positivism as a theoretical framework. Positivist criminologists tend to start with the assumption that lawbreakers are fundamentally different than law followers, which leads positivist criminologists to engage in systematic comparisons between the two groups that allow them to highlight what is present in one group that is absent in another. We are trained in positivist epistemology early in life; when we did science fairs in school, we learned that the scientific method required us to start with research questions and hypotheses that were deductively drawn from the extant body of research. Then, using as precise instruments as possible and avoiding the “contamination” of bias or application of moral values, we can test to accept (or reject) these hypotheses and establish associations between a set of independent (explanatory) variables and one or more dependent (outcome) variables that we typically attribute to some causal process.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of scholarly training in CCJ does not present positivism as but one of many epistemologies or even introduce the idea or term “epistemology.” Instead, we are likely to see it named in books or articles written in other countries (especially the U.K.); in ethnographies, which often rely on interpretivism (i.e., perceptions are more important than any objective reality) or phenomenology; or among critical criminologists who practice liberatory epistemologies with the goal of identifying and removing oppressive structures such as racism, colonialism, misogyny, or heteronormativity (e.g., Williams, 2022). In fact, British,

Australian, and Canadian researchers and theorists are much more likely than their American counterparts to have embraced the postmodern “turn,” which problematizes the goal or even possibility of objectivity and recognizes that all research is co-produced with research participants. As a result, their journals are more likely to publish qualitative research (Copes et al., 2020) and their version of science often attends to phenomenological aspects of knowledge, such as narratives or sensory experiences. These criminologists, many if not most of whom seem to have navigated the postmodern turn without a collapse of scholarly rigor, are producing fresh analyses, unburdened by the strictures of positivism.

Making a seat at the table for lived experts requires us to appreciate the unique value of *subjectivities* in science. Our subjectivities include a lifetime of experiences, values, intentions, and interactions. Perhaps the most influential source of subjectivities, which we sometimes call bias, is our own disciplinary training. My training is in sociology, which means I approach substantive issues in crime and the legal system with a structural lens, viewing and writing about acts of individual agency as nested within cultural adaptations to structural forces. Further, I’m a Marxist, which encourages me to see the economy and labor market as the most central organizing institutions that influence/affect organizational and human behavior. Other structures, such as schools, families, neighborhoods, etc. are secondary to Marxists, and our parlor games often involve showing how each of these is actually motivated by market forces (let the party invitations roll in!). I have colleagues and collaborators who come from psychology, public health, and social work, among others; each of us applies our own disciplinary frameworks to our writing, and I’d argue that our field is stronger for it.

If we can agree that subjectivities stemming from disciplinary training are simply part of doing the business of science, let’s take it one step further. Our identities: gender identity, race and ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and abilities have shaped our body of lived experiences that we bring to our science. So have the places we grew up in, the way we were socialized by family members, or school curricula. We may draw on our personal well of experiences of being excluded, marginalized, victimized, or even privileged to formulate research questions and to guide our analysis. I teach and write about system-involved youth because I was heavily involved in delinquency as a teenager but was never caught and sanctioned; I even survived a police chase because my skin color and gender presentation were incompatible with officials’ expectations of who is “criminal.” We could try to pretend that each of us is an empty vessel that simply processes data or observations like a computer, but that seems both disingenuous and unwise. If understanding is the goal, why would I want to ignore the tools I carry with me daily to deepen my understanding of research findings?

American criminologists’ nearly singular commitment to positivism as the only way to do science has created structural inequities that benefit those who already occupy the most powerful positions in our field, leaving others excluded and marginalized. But this is not a natural or even evolutionary process where the best methods of science have simply “floated to the top” or been the ones to survive. All these norms and values surrounding how criminology “should” be done are historically specific and socially constructed – which mean they were and are not inevitable, and other choices can still be made.

American criminology’s founding – whether we trace it to DuBois’s Atlanta School or Park’s sociology department at the University of Chicago – was based on qualitative and mixed methods. Subjectivity was a research tool, and researchers instructed to use all their senses in documenting a setting. DuBois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) is a mixed methods masterpiece, drawing on years of participant observation conducted *while living in* the Seventh Ward in Philadelphia, interviews with residents, Census tables, and maps. It should also be noted that his conclusions are grounded both in these empirical data points, but also

in his Marxist analysis of Black crime as stemming from structural dislocation. This, he also understood from a first-person perspective, since he was excluded from a formal or stable position in the academy. Park is of course, famous for exhorting his students to “get the seats of [their] pants dirty doing real research,” by which he meant ethnographic field research.

If there was a precedent for what constitutes “real” research when American criminology was founded, it was subjectively informed research, guided by (at least in the Chicago School) an interpretivist epistemology. By contrast to positivism’s epistemological insistence on value-free research, the original American criminologists elevated subjectivities, or the interpretive nature of reality. In short, they cared less about establishing what was “real” than what their research subjects perceived to be real, since perceptions drive behavior (Thomas & Thomas, 1928).

When and why our field made the “positivist turn” is important to imagining a different future that embraces subjective and lived expert research. In the 1950s–1960s, as the Cold War was heating up, the federal government began to anticipate a need to develop intelligence in the form of large, quantitative datasets (Luker, 2009). Funding agencies began to incentivize social scientists to do large-scale surveys and to apply a neutral, bias-free method of handling and analyzing these data, in the interest of national security. As the field developed in the U.S., its practitioners worked to emulate “hard” science and for many decades, we had our own “arms race” to develop and apply increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques, now aided by software that allowed us to manipulate large numerical datasets. This was very much a White old boys’ club; the field’s limited gender and racial diversity resulted in limited methodological alternatives, and positivism and objectivity simply became *de rigueur*. If you wanted a turn in their sandbox – that is, to publish in good outlets and be considered a leader in the field – one needed to play by the very narrow rules of the game.

What have been the consequences of this narrow definition of science? One unfortunate outcome of our strict adherence to positivism is academic gatekeeping. In the last couple of decades, but especially since George Floyd’s 2020 murder by police, our field became substantially more racially diverse, as students look to social science for practical solutions to the harm caused by the criminal legal system. Prospective graduate students often write personal statements that describe how they, their families, or their communities have been chewed up in the maw of the system; they want to join our ranks and use research to improve lives, but are often dismissed as doing hopelessly subjective “me-search.” How can they possibly be “objective” if they already have decided that the system is unfair, some ask? Their lived experience is seen as a threat to science, or as a weakness in their pursuit of truth, but only because positivism is our primary framework, and subjectivity has no place in it. Of course, we must acknowledge that this is a form of bias itself, which has substantial consequences for those with lived experience, as well as disproportionately affecting scholars of color or those practicing feminist or queer methodologies.

Here’s a telling example of academic gatekeeping that comes from Luker’s (2009) excellent book, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Did you know that it wasn’t Robert Park who won the first Nobel peace prize for sociology? Rather, it was Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, who has that honor. Ms. Addams saw herself as a sociologist. She had a part-time appointment in the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago and was friends with Cooley, Mead, Thomas, and DuBois. She was a charter member of the American Sociological Society (which later became the ASA – the flagship professional association for sociology) and had at least five papers published in the field’s leading journal, *American Journal of Sociology*. But the men who were her friends and who held full-time appointments in the department thought that her work was *too quantitative* for the American version of

the discipline that they were building. Ms. Addams used something called “social arithmetic” inspired by the Victorian settlement house movement in England (which Hull House was modeled upon). She conducted what we would call today “needs assessments” using surveys and other quantitative methods to determine what services were most needed at Hull House. This quantitative stance was thus wrapped up in women’s work of community service and wasn’t considered serious enough for *real* sociology.

The consequences of this gatekeeping are played out in journal editors’ decisions and the rooms where graduate school, faculty position, or tenure and promotion or merit applications are reviewed. As Copes and colleagues (2020) established in their most recent inventory of publications in CCJ’s top journals, approximately 11 percent of peer-reviewed articles in the most high-impact outlets 2010–2019 were qualitative. Some journals, like *Law and Human Behavior* and *Crime and Delinquency*, publish almost no qualitative papers, which they accomplish by applying narrow positivistic standards that are impossible or too onerous for most researchers to meet (e.g., rejecting a paper because it contains no tables or asking researchers to have another researcher re-code transcripts or field notes to establish reliability). My colleagues and I conducted a survey of criminologists in 2021–2022 and found that qualitative researchers were significantly less likely than their quantitative counterparts to feel valued in the field. Importantly, Canadian and European qualitative researchers felt more valued than Americans. When we conducted interviews, some qualitative researchers openly cried as they described the uphill battle of getting their research published, getting grants, or making tenure. Personnel committees often assign numerical unit values to quantify our colleagues’ productivity and impact without considering the time it takes to write a book or to conduct field research, interviews, or participatory research, or the added value of these kinds of output.

If you’ve stayed with me so far, you might be wondering whether embracing a plurality of epistemologies means that facts do not matter anymore or that we can now begin producing research that is grounded solely in opinions or feelings (see also Wright, 2023). No. In fact, this moment in our political history, in which bad faith or ignorance (or both) has resulted in the spread of preventable infectious diseases, establishing that some things are true, despite problematic measurement, is important. The crime rate is an imperfect measure of crime for sure, but the best we currently can use to assess whether street crime is increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable. However, without critical theory and epistemologies, we may continue the status quo practice of ignoring crimes of the powerful – in our attempt to be as “value free” as possible. That’s not actually value free.

How do CCJ scholars practicing diverse epistemologies keep their own biases from turning research papers into opinion pieces? One common method is to employ reflexivity, which encourages the researcher to notice and document their own perspectives, as well as their relationships with research participants. Feminist epistemologist and theorist Sandra Harding (2015) calls this “strong objectivity,” because it allows the reader to see the shading of the interpretive lens that was applied. We can also use member-checking, which relies on research participants to review our research in progress and confirm that our facts are correct and provide their reactions to our analyses (McKim, 2023). Increasingly, all researchers are asked to provide supplementary information that allows others to examine the data, the code, instruments, and the like after several high-profile investigations of fraudulent conduct. Transparency is increasingly important as a result, which I believe is generally good for the field, as long as these demands are applied to all forms of research, not simply those whose subjectivities are most visible.

Building a More Inclusive Criminology and Criminal Justice

This volume makes a strong case for experiential knowledge claims, but CCJ will need to create structural openings for lived experts of all stripes – those who are currently or formerly incarcerated, who work inside these systems, and/or who have experienced the collateral consequences of the criminal legal, child welfare, or related systems. As founder of the American Society of Criminology’s Division of Qualitative Research, my agenda for the future of qualitative research in our field is aligned with a future that includes lived experts.

Here are some recommendations for expanding access and opportunities:

1. Graduate or at least Doctoral programs should make qualitative research methods a required course, and all students should be trained in multiple epistemologies.
2. Academic journal editors should review their policies to identify the barriers to publishing lived experience research, especially the problem of peer reviewers who apply positivist critiques and recommendations inappropriately to qualitative or lived experience research. A list of qualitative-qualified reviewers should be used to select at least one reviewer who will be used by editors as the key methodological expert. Some journals, including *Criminology*, have a dedicated qualitative editor, which has resulted in an appreciable increase in qualitative research published there.
3. Chairs and members of graduate admissions and faculty hiring committees should discuss and develop policies for avoiding methodological gatekeeping based on lived experience. The term “me-search” should be interrogated and probably discarded altogether.
4. Funding opportunities for lived experts should be expanded. Financial support for academic conferences in CCJ should be made available in the form of travel grants or small pots of money for conducting research on or by lived experts.
5. Tenure and promotion and merit guidelines should be reviewed with a careful eye toward how metrics of impact or counts of productivity systematically disadvantage non-positivist forms of research. Original data collection of any type and analysis of textual data is a time-consuming endeavor, and its practitioners are likely to produce less volume and in less prestigious outlets than their quantitative, positivist-trained counterparts.

Positivism privileges a certain type of expertise that comes from extensive academic training and learning how to write and conduct research in narrowly prescribed ways. Yet we cannot do prison research without a “prison rep,” or someone with lived experience on the Institutional Review Board to take an advocacy role to protect vulnerable research participants. We bring in practitioners and system-impacted individuals as classroom guest speakers because they offer our students a broader range of experiences than we alone can provide. This volume highlighting the varied ways that lived experience contributes to a comprehensive understanding of criminology and criminal legal issues should be a starting point for our field to re-think our ways of knowing.

Note

- 1 I have to cite my own lived experience to support this claim, which comes from a discussion with Department and Graduate Chairs in the 2024 meeting of the Association for Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice (ADPCCJ), as well as several research methods workshops I have hosted, whereby I have asked the graduate students and faculty who were present about their own training in the field. I was also part of the Zaatut (2024) data collection team, where we interviewed qualitative researchers in CCJ.

References

- Antojado, D., & McPhee, T. (2024). Move over and make space for lived experience criminology: Why we do “lived experience”. *Journal of Criminology*, 58(3), 485–501.
- Copes, H., Beaton, B., Ayeni, D., Dabney, D., & Tewksbury, R. (2020). A content analysis of qualitative research published in top criminology and criminal justice journals from 2010 to 2019. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 1060–1079.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1899). *The Philadelphia negro: A social study*. Schocken.
- Empirical (2025). In Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved August 23, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
- Harding, S. (2013). Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is “strong objectivity”? In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), *Feminist epistemologies* (pp. 49–82). Routledge.
- Harding, S. (2015). *Objectivity and diversity: Another logic of scientific research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Luker, K. (2009). *Salsa dancing into the social sciences*. Harvard University Press.
- Maruna, S. (2023). *Redeeming desistance: From individual journeys to a social movement*. Presidential Address, Annual Meetings of the American Society of Criminology, Philadelphia, PA.
- McKim, C. (2023). Meaningful member-checking: A structured approach to member-checking. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 41–52.
- Thomas, W. I., & Thomas, D. S. (1928). *The child in America: Culture and behavior problems in the 4-to-10 year old child*. Knopf.
- Tietjen, G. E. (2025). *Justice lessons: System-affected scholars and the future of criminal justice transformation*. University of California Press.
- Williams, J. M. (2022). Unwanted: Epistemic erasure of black radical possibility in criminology. In B. E. Owens, J. M. Williams, & B. L. Perry (Eds.), *Abolish criminology* (pp. 27–35). Routledge.
- Wright, K. A. (2023). A high potential for something good: Reflections on when lived experience meets what works. In D. S. Rudes(Ed.), *Handbook on prisons and jails* (pp. 433–445). Routledge.
- Zaatut, A., Jacobsen, S. K., Fader, J. J., & Wood, J. D. (2024). Criminologists’ perceptions of qualitative and quantitative methods in criminology and criminal justice. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2024.2421814>

2

MAPPING LIVED EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Gillian Buck

Introduction

‘Lived experience’ of criminal justice is increasingly being harnessed internationally as a resource to improve correctional policies and practices, yet few criminological studies have researched such participation and involvement in depth (Buck et al., 2022). This chapter employs Tomczak and Buck’s (2019) hybrid model of the penal voluntary sector as a conceptual framework to map some of the diversity of experience-informed justice practices. This model provides a rigorous mapping tool because it includes clear categories of criminal justice-related work, whilst recognising that social practices can be messy, heterogeneous and fluid. Extending earlier conceptual work by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Howe (2016), Tomczak and Buck (2019) categorised penal voluntary sector practitioners as ‘*fixers*’, who seek to improve individuals, rather than broader contexts of imprisonment and criminalisation; ‘*enablers of individuals*’, who provide person-centred support but take no action the broader context of criminalisation; ‘*thought changers*’ who challenge dehumanising ideologies through campaigning; ‘*distribution changers*’ who aim to create fairer alternative systems; and finally ‘*brokers*’, who seek to foster radical system change through facilitating allegiances. These concepts guided deductive analysis which involves sorting data into predetermined categories created from theory (Bingham, 2023).

Combinations of the following search terms were entered into Google Scholar (for academic sources) and Google search (for examples of lived experience organisations and reports): “lived experience”; “user-led”; “prisoner-led”; “coproduction”; “participation”; “criminal*”. No restrictions were placed on place or date of publication. Examples were then categorised using the model (Tomczak & Buck, 2019). For example, those drawing on lived experience to inspire changes in others were categorised as *fixers*; those providing person-centred support from a position of shared experience were categorised as *enablers of individuals*; those challenging labels or dehumanising ideologies through user-led campaigning, advocacy and writing were categorised as *thought changers*; those aiming to create alternative systems, such as coproduced provision, were categorised as *distribution changers*; and those fostering larger scale changes by mediating relations across sites were categorised as *brokers*. If organisations were engaged with more than one of these activities, this was noted, and they were assigned the category that best described their main business. Each category presented below includes

at least one UK example and one international example to indicate the global significance of experience-led justice developments. Understanding these varied (and often hybrid) forms of engagement enables a deeper analysis of these burgeoning practices.

Fixers are functionalists who work toward individual rather than social change (Tomczak & Buck, 2019). For example, the St Giles Trust charity in England harnesses peer supporter's past experiences 'to inspire and enable people to improve their lives' (St Giles Trust, 2024). Sweden's CRIS (Criminals' Return into Society) was founded by a group of men with a history of incarceration who use their experiences to help others move away from crime and toward social integration (Bäcklin, 2022). In Finland, various non-governmental organisations arrange peer support to help people desist from crime, theorising that positive role models inspire hope and examples of how to overcome challenges (Lindström, 2024).

Enablers of individuals, like fixers, do not directly address social conditions but adopt person-centred approaches (Howe, 2016, p. 92). For example, the Samaritans Prison Listener scheme (active in 112 prisons across the UK and Ireland) trains prisoners to provide confidential emotional support to other prisoners, aiming to reduce distress by encouraging people to talk about what is bothering *them* (Tomczak & Buck, 2019). In Canada, the Peer Offender Prevention Service (POPS) employs prisoners to provide support for other prisoners throughout Stony Mountain prison. POPS members listen to the troubles of prisoners and recount back what they have heard to the prisoners (Walby & Cole, 2021).

Thought changers seek to change the social world through consciousness raising (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Howe, 2016). For example, JENGbA (Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association), a grassroots prisoners' families' group in England, works to highlight how joint enterprise law has been 'discriminatory toward working class and Black and minority ethnic communities' (JENGbA, 2024, para 3). 'User Voice' is a user-led organisation which aims to give a voice to people in the criminal justice system. Their recent report for HM Inspectorate of Probation highlighted the need for improved awareness amongst prison staff, given ignorance around neurodiversity, and a lack of empathy (User Voice, 2023). The Convict Criminology movement in the UK and the US (Earle, 2018) elevates the perspectives of those with lived experience in the production of criminological knowledge and seeks to reshape the public imagination of 'the convict' by unsettling familiar meanings and images (Earle, 2016).

Distribution changers are radical structuralists (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) or 'revolutionaries' (Howe, 2016, p. 132), concerned with distributing resources more fairly. For example, the 'Jobs, Friends and Houses' scheme in England engaged criminalised people and those using drugs in apprenticeships to renovate poor-quality housing, generating a recovery community for creators to live in, a pro-social network and supports, which resulted in a 94% reduction in recorded offending (Best, 2019, 49–59). Co-operatives of (former) prisoners in England, Italy and Argentina provide business ownership and employment opportunities inside and post-prison, removing barriers to the reintegration of criminalised people (Gastón & Carnevale, 2023; Weaver & Nicholson, 2012).

Brokers facilitate allegiances and mediate relations across social sites (Tomczak & Buck, 2019). For example, 'Clinks' umbrella group for the criminal justice voluntary sector in England and Wales proactively recruit people with lived experience on their board (Emery, 2021) and lobby government to include justice impacted people in policy development (Mullen, 2021). They highlight how criminalised people are increasingly involved in contractual (community justice) commissioning and co-producing inclusive area strategies (Clinks, 2019). Internationally, the Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee (IWOC) are a prisoner-led section of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). They argue that incarcerated workers are amongst the most exploited sections of the workforce, exempted from minimum

wage protections and health and safety legislation. They connect the struggles of people in detention to workers struggles locally and worldwide, encouraging collective action among prisoners and communities (See Behan & Maycock, 2024).

Hybrid Activity

Whilst this short chapter has characterised different types of lived experience-led activity, practices often cannot be neatly categorised due to hybrid aims and approaches. For example, the Women in Prison (WIP) charity, England, ‘is built on lived experience [as] founder Chris Tchaikovsky was moved to take action by what she experienced and saw when imprisoned in HMP Holloway in the 1970s’ (WIP, 2022: para 1). WIP highlight gendered inequities in criminal justice (a thought-changing approach) and provide woman-centred support to divert people from the criminal justice system (enabling individuals). They also campaign for (distribution-changing) increases in homes and supports to address enduring problems such as poverty, addiction, mental health and abuse, and to reduce the prison population (Tomczak & Buck, 2019).

Conclusion

Lived experience-informed justice practices are expanding and diversifying on a global scale, yet they remain significantly under-researched (Buck et al., 2022). This chapter makes an original contribution by conceptually mapping some of the diverse and hybrid ways individuals leverage their lived experiences within criminal justice organisations. These practices encompass efforts to improve or rehabilitate people, support individual goals, transform societal belief systems, drive systemic reforms and amalgams of all of these. By providing a comprehensive framework for understanding these emerging practices, this work makes a significant contribution to advancing theory and practice in a burgeoning yet under-explored field, with the potential to shape future research and policy development.

References

- Bäcklin, E. (2022). Supporting masculinities: Wounded healing and masculinity in peer support organizations for people with experiences of criminality and substance abuse. *Victims & Offenders*, 17(6), 872–892.
- Behan, C., & Maycock, M. (2024). ‘Power to the convicted class’: Re-Assessing prisoner-led movements and trade union organizing. *The British Journal of Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azae077>
- Best, D. (2019). *Pathways to recovery and desistance: The role of the social contagion of hope*. Policy Press.
- Bingham, A. J. (2023). From data management to actionable findings: A five-phase process of qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231183620>
- Buck, G., Tomczak, P., & Quinn, K. (2022). This is how it feels: Activating lived experience in the penal voluntary sector. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 62(4), 822–839.
- Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of the sociology of corporate life*. Routledge.
- Clinks. (2019). *Commissioning principles to enable the voluntary sector to deliver services in the future probation model*. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Response%20-%20probation%20review%20-%20commissioning%20-%20September%202019%20FINAL.pdf>
- Earle, R. (2018). Convict criminology in England: Developments and dilemmas. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 58(6), 1499–1516.
- Earle, R. (2016). *Convict criminology: Inside and out*. Policy Press.

- Emery, J. (2021). *The value of lived experience and diversity in our trustee board*. Clinks. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://www.clinks.org/community/blog-posts/value-lived-experience-and-diversity-our-trustee-board>
- Gastón, L., & Carnevale, C. (2023). Criminal records and employment restrictions in Argentina: Between post-sentence discrimination and resistance strategies. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 23(4), 608–628.
- Howe, D. (2016). *An introduction to social work theory*. Routledge.
- JENGbA. (2024). *Joint enterprise not guilty by association*. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://jengba.co.uk/>
- Lindström, J. (2024). *Survival stories as access to society: Narrative research on experts by experience with a history of crime and substance abuse* (Doctoral dissertation, Itä-Suomen yliopisto). University of Eastern Finland.
- Mullen, J. (2021). *Clinks response to the Prison Strategy White Paper*. Clinks. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://www.clinks.org/publication/clinks-response-prison-strategy-white-paper>
- St Giles Trust. (2024). *Peer advice*. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/what-we-do/peer-advice/>
- Tomczak, P., & Buck, G. (2019). The penal voluntary sector: A hybrid sociology. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 59(4), 898–918.
- User Voice. (2023). *Not naughty, stupid, or bad: The voices of neurodiverse service users in the criminal justice system*. Retrieved December 3, 2024, from https://www.uservoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/User_Voice_Neurodiversity_Dec_2023.pdf
- Walby, K., & Cole, D. (2021). “I know it’s not saving a life, but I know I’m doing good...”: The Peer Offender Prevention Service (POPS) at Stony Mountain Institution, Canada. *Corrections*, 6(5), 349–365.
- Weaver, B., & Nicholson, D. (2012). Co-producing change: Resettlement as a mutual enterprise. *Prison Service Journal*, 204, 9–16.

3

INTERROGATING THE EPISTEMIC POLITICS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Navigating Identity, Co-optation, and Intersectionality in Contemporary Criminological and Criminal Legal Discourse

Dwayne Antojado and Jessica Budd

Introduction

In recent years, the integration of lived experience into criminological discourse has emerged as a critical frontier for both scholarly enquiry and policy development. Building on the work of Antojado et al. (2024), this chapter interrogates the multifaceted challenges and opportunities associated with incorporating the voices of those directly impacted by the criminal legal system, and adjacent and tangential social conditions in forensic and criminal legal contexts into academic and practical frameworks. Centred on four pivotal questions, reflected upon by the authors of this chapter, who have themselves been either subjects of the criminal legal system as incarcerated people or actively participated in lived experience discourses within the field. The discussion seeks to critically examine the complexities inherent in the validation, representation, and utilisation of lived experience within the discipline of criminology.

The first question addressed herein concerns the risks associated with framing lived experience as a distinct identity category. While the benefits of inclusive and representative practices are widely recognised (Bartoszeko, 2021; Pitkin, 1967)—especially those that incorporate authentic, experiential knowledge into broader discourses—the process of categorising such experiences is not without pitfalls. One principal concern is the potential establishment of new hierarchies or gatekeeping mechanisms (Spade, 2020), wherein the criteria for defining ‘lived experience expertise’ are controlled by a select few. This raises important issues regarding who is positioned to determine what constitutes valid lived experience, and whether such categorisations might inadvertently exclude voices that do not conform to narrowly predefined standards. Thus, this chapter considers the implications of these definitional boundaries and explores strategies to ensure that the recognition of lived experience remains equitable and reflective of a plurality of perspectives and expertise.

The second critical enquiry examines the risk that, even when minority voices are ostensibly included in discussions and decision-making processes, their contributions may be subject to co-optation. Co-optation, in this context, refers to the manner in which lived experience is incorporated superficially and symbolically into policy or academic discourse—often transforming rich, transformative narratives into marketable or palatable soundbites that serve

existing power structures rather than challenge them (de Jong & Kimm, 2017; Penney & Prescott, 2016). In cases where inclusion devolves into tokenism, the potential exists for policy responses to address only the symptoms of systemic barriers, rather than the root causes of social inequities. This chapter evaluates mechanisms by which scholarly and policy practices might safeguard against such dilution, ensuring that the integration of lived experience is both authentic and substantively transformative.

The third question focuses on the critical task of categorising lived experience in a manner that balances the recognition of collective, shared experiences with the acknowledgement of individual differences (see Antojado, 2023, for a discussion on what he terms ‘common’ and ‘persistent’ experiential narratives). While there is considerable value in identifying commonalities among groups—fostering solidarity and enabling coordinated responses to systemic injustice—this approach risks obscuring the unique facets of each individual’s journey. Overgeneralisation may inadvertently lead to homogenised narratives that fail to capture the nuanced and multifaceted nature of personal experience. To address this, the chapter explores theoretical and methodological frameworks that can reconcile these tensions, advocating for an approach that is both inclusive of collective identity and sensitive to individual variability. In doing so, it discusses the implications of such dual recognition for both epistemological robustness and practical policy interventions.

Finally, the chapter critically assesses the potential distortion of lived experience perspectives once they are mainstreamed into dominant discourses. As these perspectives gain broader acceptance, there exists the risk that they will be reshaped or even co-opted to align with prevailing political agendas, thereby erasing the depth and diversity inherent in their original form. This dynamic is particularly problematic when the complex interplay of intersectional identities is overlooked, reducing rich, multi-dimensional experiences to simplistic narratives that serve existing power structures. The discussion thus seeks to articulate strategies for preserving the authenticity of lived experience voices by maintaining a critical awareness of the power dynamics and institutional pressures that may otherwise lead to such distortions.

In articulating these four critical enquiries, this chapter aims not only to expose the inherent challenges in integrating lived experience into criminological discourse but also to propose pathways for fostering environments that genuinely value and elevate marginalised voices. Through a rigorous examination of definitional boundaries, the risks of co-optation, the balancing of collective and individual narratives, and the safeguarding against the distortion of lived experience, the discussion contributes to a more nuanced and effective engagement with experiential knowledge. Ultimately, it is argued that the thoughtful and critical integration of lived experience can play a transformative role in advancing both theory and practice, paving the way for more just and equitable policies that resonate with the complex realities of those most intimately connected to the issues at hand.

By addressing these intertwined issues, the chapter provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of lived experience within criminology. It invites scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike to engage in reflective and sustained dialogue, one that not only challenges entrenched hierarchies but also seeks to democratise the production of knowledge in ways that honour both collective struggle and individual lived reality.

What Is the Politics of Co-optation?

Changes or inclusion efforts may be framed as genuine attempts to involve groups or individuals in policy discussions. For example, the criminal legal system is often scrutinised for systemic inefficiencies, prompting policymakers to seek effective strategies (Doyle et al., 2021). Consulting those affected by laws and policies has become increasingly vital for crafting

policies that not only appear effective but also substantively represent and address the needs of impacted populations (McIntosh & Wright, 2019). A recent ‘solution’ incorporated within criminal legal contexts is to include lived experience voices and expertise to policymaking, practice, and adjacently within criminology. The representation of lived experience expertise within these spaces have gained traction across various domains, including mental health, disability, criminology, and substance use care (Charlton, 1998; Doyle et al., 2021; Frawley & O’Shea, 2020; Selseng et al., 2021). This growing recognition underscores the value of lived experience expertise in informing policy development (Martinovic et al., 2022), education and pedagogy (Antojado, 2023), and practice (Buck, 2020), as well as within the academic terrain (Antojado & McPhee, 2024), among other things. Lived experience offers unique insights into existing problems and their solutions, grounded in personal encounters with flawed systems (Voronka, 2015).

As Antojado et al. (2024) asserts, critical considerations must be brought to light regarding the representational dynamics of individuals operating within the lived experience domain. Moreover, it is imperative to engage in reflective discourse on the potential co-optation of lived experience expertise, particularly in its integration into criminological frameworks and its application within criminal legal systems. Antojado et al. (2024) explores issues of representation and the inherent vulnerabilities of lived experience due to the inadequate diversity of its members and contributors, at least within the Australian terrain. Building upon these insights, this chapter extends the discussion beyond the confines of the lived experience community, offering a conceptualisation of lived experience expertise as a cohesive and unified force—at least in its current iteration within the Australian context. It positions this expertise as a transformative movement operating within and against the dual backdrops of criminological enquiry and the criminal legal landscape but has been used as a mere symbolic political device to signal inclusion of the knowledges and expertise of those that have firsthand experience with the criminal legal system. For instance, although the integration of lived experience practitioners/practice within reintegration services in Australia is an emerging phenomenon (e.g., Australian Community Support Organisation, n.d.; Martinovic et al., 2022; Vacro, 2021), its effectiveness in achieving its intended goals—namely, delivering more responsive services informed by the unique insights of those who have undergone similar experiences—remains unevaluated. Consequently, the inclusion of lived experience perspectives risks being reduced to a symbolic gesture rather than constituting a substantive contribution. We then turn to discourses within the politics of co-optation to anchor this discussion. Another illustrative example is the formation of lived experience collectives aimed at integrating experiential perspectives into correctional and justice-related policymaking and practice (see Martinovic et al., 2022). However, one must question the extent to which these perspectives engender substantive policy change, as opposed to merely effecting superficial, cosmetic adjustments that may inadvertently enhance the efficacy of prisons in managing the social determinants underlying criminal behaviour, thereby perpetuating a cycle of incremental reform. Moreover, the collective described by Martinovic et al. (2022) is led by an academic without lived experience, and while the academic receives remuneration, individuals with lived experience are not adequately compensated. This arrangement epitomises symbolic inclusion rather than genuine empowerment, underscoring the persistent challenges of equitable representation in the integration of lived experience into institutional practices. This might also suggest ways in which ‘lived experience’ is co-opted and profited by those in positions of power.

The politics of co-optation involves the strategic absorption of dissenting elements by an established power structure, aimed at neutralising potential threats, garnering support, or propagating particular ideologies (Penney & Prescott, 2016). This tactic may encompass the appropriation and modification of specific terminologies or ideas. Historical instances

of co-optation date back to 19th century Europe and have continued into contemporary times, as observed in the governance practices of communist states within the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Bertocchi & Spagat, 2001). Here, governments offered dissenting groups a stake in the existing system, thereby discouraging them from maintaining opposition (Guevara Fino, 2024). The overarching aim is to sway opposing voices, thus diluting radical ideologies to align more closely with those of the dominant group. This is achieved through the provision of incentives, symbolic gestures, or selective incorporation of ideas (de Jong & Kimm, 2017). By these means, the power structure seeks to diminish opposition and potentially gain the support of marginalised groups. The selective appropriation of language and narrative manipulation to weaken opposition's potency are key issues highlighted in discussions of co-optation (Penney & Prescott, 2016). While the nominal objective is the inclusion of diverse experiences and minority voices, the decision-making process regarding which voices to include poses challenges, particularly in ensuring substantive representation and avoiding potential disconnect between those afforded platforms and those excluded.

Even when minority voices are included, co-optation can shift policy focus towards marketable solutions rather than addressing systemic barriers or underlying inequalities (Stratigaki, 2004). This phenomenon is evident in the commercialisation of health-food movements within capitalist frameworks, where the original health-orientated ethos is repurposed as a marketing tool (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Specifically, within the criminal legal terrain relating to Indigenous perspectives, issues can be seen when including minority voices on policy-related issues (Baldry & Cunneen, 2014). Ensuring the representation of minority groups is crucial, yet it must be genuine rather than a means for dominant groups to reinforce the status quo. This is particularly pertinent when political entities use the guise of inclusion to reshape the narratives of minority groups for their political agendas (Bertocchi & Spagat, 2001). The benefits of inclusion are undeniable, but framing lived experience as a distinct identity category introduces risks regarding who defines expertise and the construction of that identity (Voronka, 2015). This can lead to the continued stigmatisation or 'othering' of certain experiences while selectively promoting others in political discourse (Moran et al., 2024). In this way, the creation of a lived experience discourse is oppressive. While this is a complex topic, the main concerns around this have been voices of groups being neutralised in order to reduce perceived threat or disruption to the status quo (Holdo, 2019). For example, regarding the needs of Indigenous women specifically, changes made could be viewed as superficial amendments to existing structures, rather than new approaches which create meaningful change (Baldry & Cunneen, 2014).

Properly executed inclusion—where individuals or groups articulate their experiences authentically—can yield demonstrable, transformative outcomes. Engagement of this nature should transcend superficial tokenism and avoid merely assimilating dissent into the prevailing power structure (Bertocchi & Spagat, 2001). Superficial inclusivity that neglects systemic inequalities accentuates the inherent limitations of the co-optation process, thereby reinforcing the authority of dominant groups and adversely affecting both the individuals co-opted and the broader communities they represent. When addressing lived experiences related to incarceration, mental health, disability, or other domains, the categorisation of such experiences must account for both collective commonalities and individual distinctions. The propensity of dominant political groups to simplify these complex realities is problematic (Penney & Prescott, 2016). Previous work by Antojado et al. (2024) has examined the concept of lived experience within the criminal legal system, emphasising the necessity of incorporating the voices of individuals with direct encounter of incarceration and legal processes. Their analysis suggests that such inclusion can yield critical insights, thereby informing the development of more effective and empathetic policies and interventions. Acknowledging the diversity of

incarceration experiences, the authors, drawing on Pitkin's (1967) framework, argue that both symbolic and substantive representation can be realised when those with overlapping needs are empowered to contribute. While symbolic representation confers perceptual legitimacy without necessarily reflecting actual identities, substantive representation directly addresses the tangible needs of a group (Dovi, 2010; Kurebwa, 2018). The overarching objective is to access a depth of insight that remains unattainable without these authentic voices. Policymakers and legal reform advocates should actively integrate perspectives from individuals directly affected by the criminal legal system into decision-making processes, as these insights are indispensable for developing equitable and effective reforms. Moreover, researchers and practitioners must remain vigilant against the strategic deployment of co-optation accusations by political actors; such misuse not only distorts the intended message but also risks marginalising the multi-faceted intersectionality of individual identities (de Jong & Kimm, 2017). Feminist scholars have similarly documented instances in which non-feminist actors co-opt feminist discourse, a dynamic that further underscores this concern (de Jong & Kimm, 2017). In parallel, political and immigration debates require a nuanced examination of the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and nationalism to foster genuine understanding, coexistence, and collaborative progress (Baur & Schmitz, 2012).

Glissant and the 'Density of Relations'

Central to our examination is the work of Édouard Glissant (1997). His concept of the 'density of relations' is instrumental in understanding the intricate interplay of culture, history, and identity in contexts where inclusion is both celebrated and contested. In his seminal text, *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant argues against the imposition of hierarchical structures or enforced uniformity, insisting instead on embracing interconnectedness and diversity. Glissant's work posits that relationality can generate a richly woven tapestry of perspectives that resist oversimplification and rigid categorisation. Notably, his concept of creolisation—the fusion of disparate cultural elements to create new, hybrid identities—is pivotal in framing how diverse experiential narratives can co-exist without any single narrative dominating the discourse (Glissant, 1997). This theoretical approach challenges the traditional epistemologies that often privilege monolithic or 'orthodox' knowledge streams in criminology.

Moreover, Glissant underscores the value of both local and international perspectives, emphasising that an appreciation for cultural awareness and historical consciousness is essential to developing a profound understanding of interconnectedness. In effect, his work demonstrates that communities and individuals may be interwoven through shared histories and interactions without necessitating the loss of individual differences or nuances. In practice, this theoretical grounding implies that relating to others does not impinge upon the preservation of unique personal experiences; rather, it can augment and deepen our connections, thereby challenging conventional power structures and hierarchies.

Differentiating Lived Experience Criminology and Convict Criminology

Over the past few decades, a growing body of scholarship has emerged that privileges lived experience as a source of critical knowledge in criminology. Within this emerging paradigm, two subfields merit particular attention: convict criminology and lived experience criminology. Although these domains share an overarching commitment to incorporating alternative narratives and challenging conventional paradigms, they are analytically and historically distinct.

Convict criminology gained formal recognition in the late 1990s, following the foundational work of scholars such as Frank Tannenbaum and John Irwin, and has since been