Enhancing the Prison Environment in Arizona

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Why should we care?

- Nearly one in every one hundred people are incarcerated in the US\(^1\)
- 42,000 prisoners in AZ as of 2020\(^2\)
- Need for viable solutions

Research Questions

1. What would you change if you were the Director of DOC?
2. What is the best program you have been involved in?
3. What programs do you wish you had?
4. What motivates you do to the right thing when no one is watching?

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Collaborative research paradigm focuses on research with people not on people
- Internal and external legitimacy
- Interviewers gain skills and purpose
Methods

- 386 incarcerated men in Florence Arizona
- Interviews with open-ended questions
- Completed in 2020

- Specific codes generalized into broader themes
- Responses have multiple codes, summing to over 100 percent
“I would change the way we view inmates who get in trouble while incarcerated, it's hard in here and we all have hiccups. If i messed up a few times and want to do good, shouldn't I get the chance to move forward?"

“More opportunities such as education, jobs, skills, just make it easier to get things done."

“How we're treated in here - get more respect."

“I would change the culture from hostile to inmates to supportive of inmate personal and occupational growth."

29% of all responses for Programming and Education changes

23% of responses about Food Quality and Portions

15% of responses for Better Staff Training and Treatment
What is the best program you have been involved in?

- **Education**
  - Music Theory
  - Computers
  - ASU Inside-Out (IO)
  - % of Total: 32%
- **Self-Improvement/Growth**
  - Parenting
  - Thinking for a Change
  - % of Total: 21%
- **Drug/Substance Use**
  - Alcoholics Anonymous
  - Narcotics Anonymous
  - % of Total: 12%
- **Vocational**
  - Construction
  - HVAC
  - % of Total: 8%

What programs do you wish you had?

- **Vocational**
  - Automotive/Mechanic
  - HVAC
  - General Labor
  - Culinary
  - % of Total: 38%
- **Education**
  - College Courses
  - Gen Ed.
  - Language Specific Courses
  - Computers
  - % of Total: 26%
- **Life Skills/Wellbeing**
  - Communication
  - Support Groups
  - Rehabilitation
  - % of Total: 11%
What motivates you to do the right thing when no one is watching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Motivations</th>
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</table>
| Personal Beliefs, Character | 28%        | • Integrity  
                                • Self-respect  
                                • Personal Beliefs  
                                • Partner  
                                • Children  
                                • Brother/Sister  
                                • What’s “morally” right  
                                • Because it “feels good” |
| Family                    | 24%        | • Faith  
                                • Jesus  
                                • God |
| Religion                  | 23%        | • Faith  
                                • Jesus  
                                • God |
| Act in Good Conscience    | 13%        | • What’s “morally” right  
                                • Because it “feels good” |

“Wanting to be a better person for myself, to show others you can change.”

“The thought of my son who’s about to be 18 and needs me.”

“I try to do the right thing for myself no matter if someone is watching or not.”
Implications

- Strong demand for more programs and educational opportunities in prisons.
  - Computer and college courses
  - Vocational training
- Individuals are driven by self growth, but need more resources and support from staff to successfully do so.
- PAR can inform on future program and policy implementations by giving a voice to those incarcerated.