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Source: *Journal of Correctional Education (1974-)*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (December 2018), pp. 49-67

Published by: Correctional Education Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26864112>

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# Transformative Learning, Higher Order Thinking, and the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program

Brian R. Wyant  
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## Abstract

*The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program is a course held inside a correctional facility that brings together currently incarcerated individuals and university students. Although this program has been implemented widely, questions about its impacts remain.*

*This study examines the transformational nature of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, as well as the degree to which it emphasizes higher order thinking skills.*

*Utilizing a pretest-posttest, nonequivalent control group design, university students from multiple Inside-Out courses were compared to university students in traditional social science courses. Results from t-tests and multinomial regression models determined that Inside-Out participants experienced statistically significant shifts in perceptions of those who are incarcerated, relative to their peers in other courses. Statistically significant differences were also found on a higher order thinking index, indicating that Inside-Out students felt their course emphasized assessing information and applying concepts to complex circumstances, to a higher degree than did students who took other courses.*

**Keywords:** *Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, transformative learning, higher order thinking, dispositional attribution*

## Introduction

The value of attending college is, in part, the potential of higher education to foster comprehension, insight, an ability to incorporate various perspectives, and knowledge (Daloz, 1990). Universities, colleges, faculty, and staff have used a variety of strategies and techniques as they attempt to actualize transformational

experiences (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). One innovative pedagogical approach in higher education that touts transformative experiences for participants is the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program (Inside-Out). Inside-Out is a national program offering a structure for college courses to take place inside correctional facilities with both currently incarcerated individuals (inside students) and college/university students (outside students). The course relies solely on indirect instruction and intergroup dialogue as opposed to more traditional direct instruction methods commonly used in university classrooms (Allred, Harrison, & O'Connell, 2013). This study attempts to gauge the transformational nature of Inside-Out by asking whether, and to what degree, participation in an Inside-Out course influences undergraduate students' perceptions of criminal justice issues, personal attributes, and higher order thinking skills.

### ***Literature Review***

Developed over 20 years ago, Inside-Out courses are generally a semester-long course held inside a correctional facility that typically meets once per week. They are comprised of approximately 15 inside students within the correctional facility, 15 university students, and a trained facilitator whose primary job is to encourage dialogue and a collaborative work environment (Inside-Out Center, 2018; Link, 2016). The students sit in a circle, alternating inside and outside students. All students are assigned and expected to complete the same coursework (Pompa, 2013). The goal of Inside-Out is to create opportunities for those enrolled to have a transformative learning experience (Inside-Out Center, 2018) and the potential for students to develop "critical thinking" skills (Pompa, 2013, p. 131). A common theme of those who have taken and taught Inside-Out is the promotion of the transformational nature of the course (Boyd, 2013; Draus & Lempert, 2013; Maclaren, 2015; Pompa & Crabbe, 2004; Werts, 2013). According to Lori Pompa, the founder and director of Inside-Out, "The unique educational experience provides learning dimensions that are difficult to achieve in a traditional classroom" (2002, p. 68). Likewise, the Inside-Out Center where the international administrative office of Inside-Out is housed notes that the program "allows for transformative learning experiences that invite participants to take leadership in addressing crime, justice, and other issues of social concern" (Inside-Out Center, 2018, para 2).

Transformative learning can take many forms, but broadly, transformative learning is based on altering your frame of reference or seemingly stable assumptions. Through their experiences, people develop various values, feelings, and associations that define their world view. These frames of reference

selectively affect and define expectations and perceptions. Although frames of reference clearly help humans interpret and assign meaning to our experiences, they can be problematic when they lead a person to cast off suggestions that do not conform to preconceived notions; such ideas can be dismissed without full consideration (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning develops a frame of reference that is more comprehensive, perceptive, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 2003). Through critical reflection, a person can transform his or her frames of reference. In the proper environment and with the aim of educators, individuals need to heed their assumptions, redefine problems from different perspectives, incorporate new information, and broadly partake effectively in discourse (Mezirow, 1997). Key benefits of transformed frames of reference include the generation of viewpoints that prepare individuals to make more informed decisions and ideally present more options for problem solving to justify and guide action (Mezirow, 1991 ; 2003).

Related is the notion of higher order thinking. Although there are varying definitions for what constitutes the concept of higher order thinking, in general it requires students to evaluate and incorporate new information as they make judgments. Further, students who are able to use higher order thinking can apply information to better understand complex situations (Lewis & Smith, 1993). Although Inside-Out does not explicitly claim to develop higher order thinking skills, a stated goal is to create opportunities for the reinterpretation of information and utilization of new information to broaden a person's perspective. For example, according to the mission statement of Inside-Out, participation in the course prepares students to examine more broadly social systems and "allows problems to be approached in new and different ways" (Inside-Out, 2018, para 1). Pompa (2002) has argued that the Inside-Out model provides a learning environment where a student is encouraged to appraise information from new points of view and overall "takes the educational process to a deeper level" (p. 68). Transformative learning often occurs and higher order thinking skills developed with the help of a facilitator in "an environment in which learners become increasingly adept at learning from each other and at helping each other learn in problem-solving groups" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11). Thus, it would seem Inside-Out's structure is well-suited for transformational learning to occur, as well as acquire higher order thinking skills.

A number of scholars have described, and to a lesser degree, assessed, the effects of Inside-Out on students. While some research has focused on the challenges of implementing Inside-Out courses (Link, 2016; Van Gundy, Bryant, & Starks, 2013), instructor training (Conti, Morrison, & Pantaleo, 2013), and its efficacy

for law students (Shay, 2013), the majority of the research has focused on the transformational nature of the course. In a few cases, Inside-Out students have documented and published how the course offered a transformational learning experience and can lead students to reevaluate their perspective (Mishne, Warner, Willis, & Shomaker, 2012; Werts, 2013). The majority of the research has focused on examinations of student comments from class evaluations and/or writing assignments completed during the course (Maclaren, 2015). For example, Pompa (2002) highlighted the transformative educational experience of Inside-Out via student reflections. She identified themes from the student narratives (both inside and outside) and noted how the course can lead some individuals to consider subject matter from a new perspective and challenge commonly held assumptions about those incarcerated and the criminal justice system (Pompa, 2002).

Similarly, Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer (2014) evaluated students' notions of punitiveness and empathy. They systematically analyzed 151 weekly reflection papers from 46 outside students submitted over four semesters. The themes identified in the papers suggested that students critically reassessed their beliefs after the completion of the course; particularly related to criminal justice issues and specifically to punishment philosophies. Further, students' reflections indicated they had a more realistic idea of prisons and conditions of confinement, as well as reconsidering how they view inmates. They hypothesize that this was likely spurred by the interaction with the inside students.

Relying not only on student reflections but also survey data, Allred (2009) examined the impact of course structure, content, and reading on student comprehension of material in an experiential class modeled after Inside-Out. Data were collected from both inside ( $n = 14$ ) and outside ( $n = 12$ ) students during week four of the 15-week course. Results for both the survey and qualitative data suggested the course structure, which emphasized engagement between inside and outside students, was most important for facilitating understanding of the topics followed by course content and daily readings. The author remarked that the class structure may have also helped present opportunities for critical reflection by the students (Allred, 2009). Similarly, Allred et al. (2013) tested shifts in self-efficacy from the first class to the end of the 15-week semester. Surveying 95 students almost evenly split between inside and outside students from three different correctional institutions and universities, they found in the aggregate significant shifts in self-efficacy of the inside students only. They did note, relative to the inside students, outside students' self-efficacy levels were higher at Time 1, and this might, in part, explain the disparity.

### ***Rationale for Current Study***

Although Inside-Out originated 20 years ago and has been implemented widely across the United States and in other countries, questions still remain regarding the course's effects. Often declared as producing transformational educational experiences, the vast majority of investigations into this have relied on post hoc examinations of student comments, and/or student writing assignments at the conclusion of the semester. The present study sought to extend current research on Inside-Out by measuring higher order thinking skills and utilizing a pretest-posttest, nonequivalent control group design. Unlike prior research on Inside-Out, the current study measured individual students' attributes and perceptions from students in Inside-Out and non-Inside-Out courses at the start of the semester and again at the end of the semester. Further, although the limitations of nonequivalent control groups are well documented (see Taylor, 1994), this research design should offer a more rigorous examination of Inside-Out than others done previously, by investigating how much individual Inside-Out students transformed over the semester, relative to a comparison group.

### **Methods**

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) affiliated with our academic institution, and student participation was voluntary. Students' names were not used on the survey and instead students provided a unique identifier, protecting against potential loss of confidentiality but allowing for the researchers to link individual survey results taken from Time 1 with Time 2.

Respondents were drawn from two separate Inside-Out courses and three upper-level cross-listed sociology and criminal justice courses to act as a nonequivalent control group. Initial surveys were completed in the first week of the fall 2017 semester, and the second survey was filled out in the week prior to final examination of that same semester. A total of 104 students completed either the pre- or posttest, with 88 completing both. Ten students only completed the pretest and six completed only the post, leaving Inside-Out ( $n = 22$ ) and non-Inside-Out ( $n = 66$ ). Outside students completed the surveys at their midsized private university prior to their travel to the correctional institution, and students in the traditional courses completed surveys during class time.

Survey questions included basic demographic information, including gender, academic major, race/ethnicity, academic standing, and political ideology. Three questions developed by Maruna and King (2009) and a six-point Likert scale ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly" was used to gauge dispositional attribution related to criminological perspective including:

Crime is mostly the product of a person's circumstances and social context (reverse-coded). Crime is a choice—a person's social circumstances aren't to blame. People commit crime because they want to. Broadly, attribution theory attempts to explain how people construe behaviors, specifically dispositional or internal attribution interprets behavior based on personal or individual traits whereas situational attribution perceives behavior as a result of external factors from the environment (Malle, 2011). Dispositional attribution was measured with a focus on how respondents perceive the nature and causes of crime. Higher scores on these questions indicate a more classical school of criminology approach (individuals have free will/choice) and lower scores indicate more of a positivist perspective (situational factors).

Related to the nature and causes of crime is the notion whether a person believes offenders can change and more broadly the permanence or lack of criminality. Again, using a six-point Likert scale ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly" and utilizing items previously used in the literature (Maruna & King, 2009), the following four questions were used to gauge redeemability: (1) Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work. (2) Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior. (3) Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better (reverse-coded). (4) Some offenders are so damaged that they can never lead productive lives (reverse-coded). Higher values indicate a stronger belief that offenders can change.

The Cronbach's alphas were low (Nunnally, 1967) for both the criminological perspective and redeemability scales. In both cases, the Cronbach's alpha values varied slightly from Time 1 and Time 2 but had a range of .49 to .64. Attempts to identify, isolate, and remove items did not result in significantly different alphas; thus a decision was made to examine if differences exist between Inside-Out and non-Inside-Out students for each individual question.

Last, four survey items from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) were used to assess if a course emphasized higher order thinking skills. The NSSE has been used in prior research studies (e.g., Zhao & Kuh, 2004) and the reliability and validity of the survey is well regarded (Kuh et al., 2001). Using the same six-point Likert scale, students were asked to rate the following statements: This course emphasized analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory. This course emphasized organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships. This course emphasized making judgments about the value of information,

arguments, or methods. This course emphasized applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations. These items were only asked during time two or the posttest and had an alpha of .89. A higher score indicated a person felt the course emphasized greater levels of higher order thinking skills.

### ***Analysis***

We begin with a univariate analysis to better understand the characteristics of the individuals who completed the questionnaires and their views both before and after their courses. We then proceed with bivariate analyses in the form of t-tests to determine if there are significant relationships between participation in Inside-Out and changes in perceptions of people incarcerated, punishment, and the criminal justice system. To do so, we subtracted the values of the students' responses at the end of the courses from the corresponding values of the same perceptions at the start of the courses. This resulted in the construction of a continuous variable for each survey question that was suitable for t-test analyses. Further bivariate analyses were conducted to produce Pearson's correlations so that we could identify any potential issues of multicollinearity in the subsequent multivariate models. Finally, we utilized multinomial regression models to estimate the relationships between participation in Inside-Out and student demographic characteristics on changes in students' perceptions by further transforming each of the student perceptions variables into categorical items that represent whether the students' perceptions decreased, stayed the same, or increased, between Time 2 and Time 1. As an example, if a student responded to the statement "Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work" with a 4 at the beginning of the course and a 4 at the end of the course, the student would receive a 1 on the change variable to indicate "no change" for that particular statement. If the student's response to that statement changed from a 5 during the pretest to a 3 at the posttest, the student would then be considered to have a decreased view, while the opposite values would indicate that someone experienced an increase in the value of that particular statement. We opted for multinomial logistic regression, rather than linear regression models using the continuous dependent variables that were created for the t-test analyses, as multinomial logistic regression would be able to more intuitively compare students whose perceptions had decreased, increased, or did not change. The categorical nature of these dependent variables makes multinomial logistic regression the appropriate type of regression model (Long & Freese, 2006).

## Results

Descriptive statistics for the student participants are shown in Table 1. We separated the values of those who participated in Inside-Out ( $n = 22$ ) and those who took other courses ( $n = 86$ ) to provide additional insight into how these two groups of students overlap and differ in terms of individual characteristics and perceptions of inmates, corrections, and the criminal justice system. As is shown in the top of Table 1, the mean change in the first three statements, representing dispositional aspiration, indicate that the Inside-Out participants experienced greater mean decreases in those views from Time 2 to Time 1, compared to the smaller decreases experienced by the nonparticipants. The next four items, representing changes in statements on redeemability, show that Inside-Out participants experienced larger mean increases in values for the first three statements, but a decrease in the last statement, compared to their counterparts. Asked only at the conclusion of the courses, Inside-Out participants reported larger mean scores on the higher order thinking scale item compared to those in the control group.

A review of student characteristics shows that a similar proportion of Inside-Out participants were white (41% versus 44%) and upperclassmen (3.18% versus 3.33%), compared to their peers. However, Inside-Out participants were less likely to be male (32% versus 45%) or criminal justice majors only (14% versus 43 percent), but had higher values on the politically liberal scale (4.60 versus 3.92), compared to nonparticipants.

The results of the t-tests are shown in Table 2. Tests A–C represent comparisons of the mean changes in the three statements representing dispositional aspiration, between Time 2 and Time 1, for those who participated in the Inside-Out course, and those who did not. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean differences for the statement “People commit crime because they want to,” between participants and nonparticipants ( $t [86] = 2.28, p < 0.05$ ). This shows that Inside-Out participants expressed significantly lower mean levels of agreement with that statement after the class, compared to those who took other courses, relative to their views of that statement at the beginning of the course. Table 2 also shows that there is a significant difference in the mean differences for three of the redeemability statements. Specifically, Inside-Out participants experienced significantly greater increases in their responses for the following statements: “Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work” ( $t [86] = -2.76, p < 0.01$ ), “Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior”

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

	Inside-Out Participants			Nonparticipants		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
<b>Dependent Variables</b>						
<b>Changes from Time 1 to Time 2:</b>						
<i>Dispositional Aspiration</i>						
Crime is mostly the product of a person's circumstances and social context.	22	-0.36	1.26	66	-0.11	1.21
Crime is a choice—a person's social circumstances aren't to blame.	22	-0.23	1.66	66	-0.11	1.30
People commit crime because they want to.	22	-0.60	1.18	66	-0.02	0.97
<i>Redeemability</i>						
Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work.	22	0.86	1.64	66	-0.03	1.19
Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior.	22	0.55	0.74	66	0.05	0.90
Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better.	22	0.82	1.56	66	0.16	1.13
Some offenders are so damaged that they can never lead productive lives.	21	-0.18	1.47	66	0.17	1.31
<i>Higher order thinking skills index</i> (only asked at Time 2)	22	4.94	0.58	72	4.58	1.01
<b>Independent Variables</b>						
Race (White)	22	0.41	0.50	82	0.44	0.50
Gender (Male)	22	0.32	0.48	82	0.45	0.50
Criminal Justice Major	22	0.14	0.13	82	0.43	0.66
Political Ideology <sup>a</sup>	20	4.60	1.14	73	3.92	1.18
Academic Standing <sup>b</sup>	22	3.18	0.85	82	3.33	0.77

<sup>a</sup>Political ideology: 1 = Very Conservative; 2 = Conservative; 3 = Somewhat Conservative; 4 = Very Liberal; 5 = Liberal; 6 = Somewhat Liberal; 7 = Other

<sup>b</sup>Academic standing: 1 = Freshman; 2 = Sophomore; 3 = Junior; 4 = Senior

( $t [86] = -2.35, p < 0.05$ ), and "Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better" ( $t [86] = -2.17, p < 0.05$ ), from Time 1 to Time 2, compared to their peers. The difference between Inside-Out participants and nonparticipants on the higher order thinking index was significant as well ( $t [86] = -2.14, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2: T-Tests of the Relationships Between Inside-Out Participation and Changes in Perceptions of the Correctional System**

	Inside-Out Participants			Nonparticipants			T-Test Value
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
<i>Dispositional Attribution</i>							
A. Crime is mostly the product of a person's circumstances and social context.	22	-0.36	1.26	66	-0.11	1.21	0.85
B. Crime is a choice—a person's social circumstances aren't to blame.	22	-0.23	1.66	66	-0.11	1.30	0.35
C. People commit crime because they want to.	22	-0.60	1.18	66	-0.02	0.97	2.28*
<i>Redeemability</i>							
D. Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work.	22	0.86	1.64	66	-0.03	1.19	-2.76**
E. Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior.	22	0.55	0.74	66	0.05	0.90	-2.35*
F. Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better.	22	0.82	1.56	66	0.16	1.13	-2.17*
G. Some offenders are so damaged that they can never lead productive lives.	21	-0.18	1.47	66	0.17	1.31	1.05
H. <i>Higher order thinking skills index</i>	22	4.94	0.58	72	4.58	1.01	-2.14*

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

Finally, the results of the multinomial logistic regression are displayed in Table 3. Rather than examine predictors of the change in each of the 10 items included in the t-test analyses, we only estimate models for the four statements in which a significant difference was identified between the Inside-Out participants and nonparticipants between Time 1 and Time 2. As a result, the dependent variables represent whether each individual's score on those four statements increased, decreased, or stayed the same between Time 1 and

Time 2. For each of the four models in Table 3, we report the odds ratios and 95 percent confidence intervals. Each model includes three sets of odds ratios. The first set of odds ratios represents the effects of each predictor on experiencing an increase in the score for that statement between Time 1 and Time 2, relative to those whose scores did not change. The second set of odds ratios in each model expresses the increased or decreased likelihood of an individual experiencing a decrease in their response to that statement between Time 1 and Time 2, again relative to those whose views did not change. Finally, the third set of odds ratios displays the effects of each predictor on experiencing an increase in the response score for that statement between Time 1 and Time 2, this time relative to those who experienced a decrease in the score for that statement. As a result, the third set of odds ratios for each model theoretically represents the largest gulf between students, as it expresses the effects of each predictor for those experiencing an increase, versus a decrease.

Odds ratios for each predictor are displayed in Table 3, rather than the coefficients, because odds ratios can be more intuitively understood. For example, an odds ratio above 1.0 indicates that the odds of experiencing an increase in the response to a statement (such as in the first set of odds ratios in Model 1) is increased, relative to those who have not experienced a change. If an odds ratio for a predictor is less than 1.0, this indicates that the predictor is negatively related to the likelihood of an increase in that statement over time, relative to those who have not experienced a change.

We begin by interpreting the odds ratios in Model 1, which represents students' responses on the statement "People commit crime because they want to" between Time 1 and Time 2. Across all three sets of odds ratios, no predictors are estimated to have a significant effect on a student experiencing an increase or decrease in their response to that statement across their time in their class, relative to those who experienced a decrease or did not change their views.

Model 2 regresses whether a student experienced an increase, decrease, or no change when responding to the statement that "Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work," relative to the other trajectories, onto each of the predictors. The first set of odds ratios, which compares the odds of experiencing an increase in responses to that statement, relative to those who did not experience a change, indicates that students who participated in Inside-Out are more than 10 times more likely (odds ratio = 10.49,  $p < 0.05$ ) to experience an increase in their view that "Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work," compared to those who did not

**Table 3: Multinomial Logistic Regression Models Predicting Changes in Support for Students' Perceptions of the Correctional System Relative to Other Types of Changes**

<b>Model 1</b>			
<b>People commit crime because they want to.</b>			
	<b>Increase vs. No Change</b>	<b>Decrease vs. No Change</b>	<b>Increase vs. Decrease</b>
Race (White)	1.68 (0.46, 6.12)	0.75 (0.24, 2.37)	2.24 (0.55, 9.18)
Gender (Male)	0.77 (0.21, 2.80)	0.75 (0.23, 2.45)	1.02 (0.24, 4.35)
Criminal Justice Major	3.60 (0.41, 31.50)	0.51 (0.11, 2.27)	7.13 (0.78, 64.79)
Political Ideology	0.88 (0.50, 1.61)	0.75 (0.44, 1.26)	1.20 (0.63, 2.29)
Academic Standing	1.13 (0.54, 2.37)	1.15 (0.58, 2.26)	0.99 (0.44, 2.22)
Inside-Out Participation	2.95 (0.31, 27.67)	2.68 (0.54, 13.29)	1.10 (0.12, 10.08)
<i>Model Fit</i>	-2LL = 129.08; $X^2(df = 12) = 11.29, p = ns$		
<b>Model 2</b>			
<b>Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work.</b>			
	<b>Increase vs. No Change</b>	<b>Decrease vs. No Change</b>	<b>Increase vs. Decrease</b>
Race (White)	0.77 (0.23, 2.56)	0.62 (0.17, 2.23)	1.24 (0.29, 5.24)
Gender (Male)	1.09 (0.32, 3.75)	0.28 (0.07, 1.14)	3.96 (0.80, 19.51)
Criminal Justice Major	2.43 (0.39, 15.26)	2.18 (0.35, 13.76)	1.11 (0.13, 9.43)
Political Ideology	1.00 (0.60, 1.71)	0.57 (0.31, 1.04)	1.78 (0.90, 3.49)
Academic Standing	1.39 (0.67, 2.86)	0.93 (0.46, 1.90)	1.49 (0.66, 3.36)
Inside-Out Participation	10.49 (1.52, 72.31)*	2.15 (0.26, 17.90)	4.89 (0.51, 46.60)
<i>Model Fit</i>	-2LL = 121.97; $X^2(df = 12) = 17.43, p = ns$		
<b>Model 3</b>			
<b>Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior.</b>			
	<b>Increase vs. No Change</b>	<b>Decrease vs. No Change</b>	<b>Increase vs. Decrease</b>
Race (White)	1.43 (0.44, 4.65)	0.79 (0.22, 2.88)	1.80 (0.42, 7.65)
Gender (Male)	1.11 (0.32, 3.81)	1.34 (0.38, 4.68)	0.83 (0.19, 3.51)
Criminal Justice Major	1.54 (0.24, 10.06)	0.73 (0.14, 3.82)	2.10 (0.24, 18.36)
Political Ideology	1.21 (0.70, 2.01)	1.09 (0.62, 1.90)	1.11 (0.62, 1.90)
Academic Standing	0.43 (0.21, 0.88)*	0.65 (0.30, 1.38)	0.66 (0.28, 1.56)
Inside-Out Participation	3.12 (0.47, 20.69)	0.14 (0.01, 1.73)	21.67 (1.34, 350.85)*
<i>Model Fit</i>	-2LL = 124.77; $X^2(df = 12) = 16.01, p = ns$		
<b>Model 4</b>			
<b>Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better.</b>			
	<b>Increase vs. No Change</b>	<b>Decrease vs. No Change</b>	<b>Increase vs. Decrease</b>
Race (White)	0.95 (0.32, 2.86)	1.40 (0.36, 5.46)	0.68 (0.16, 2.95)
Gender (Male)	0.98 (0.31, 3.11)	0.53 (0.13, 2.13)	1.84 (0.41, 8.36)
Criminal Justice Major	0.24 (0.05, 1.11)	2.44 (0.23, 26.05)	0.10 (0.01, 1.11)
Political Ideology	0.79 (0.48, 1.30)	0.94 (0.51, 1.74)	0.84 (0.43, 1.62)
Academic Standing	0.95 (0.49, 1.86)	0.56 (0.26, 1.22)	10.19 (0.90, 115.31)
Inside-Out Participation	0.64 (0.13, 3.13)	0.80 (0.07, 8.89)	0.80 (0.07, 9.73)
<i>Model Fit</i>	-2LL = 129.29; $X^2(df = 12) = 12.00, p = ns$		

\*  $p < 0.05$

experience a change in their view. No other predictor in Model 2 significantly predicts an increase or decrease in responses to that statement over time.

Model 3 presents the odds ratios for the effects of the predictors on changes in students' responses to the statement "Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior," both at the beginning and end of their course. The first set of odds ratios shows that academic standing ( $OR = 0.43, p < 0.05$ ) is negatively related to experiencing an increase in support for that statement, relative to those who experience no change. As students progress from freshmen to seniors, they become less likely to experience an increase in support for this statement during their course, relative to their peers who did not experience a change. The third set of odds ratios, comparing those who experience an increase in support in this statement compared to those who experience a decrease, shows that Inside-Out participants are more than 20 times as likely to experience an increase in support for this statement ( $OR = 21.67, p < 0.05$ ), relative to those who experience a decrease in support for that view of offenders. Finally, no odds ratios in Model 4 are shown to significantly predict change in students' support for the statement that "Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better."

It is also important to remark on the parameters of the models that describe the degree to which the models fit the data. For all four models, the lack of significance indicates that the full models, which include the predictors, do not significantly improve the predictive ability of the models, relative to the intercept-only models.

## Discussion

The current work sought to evaluate if participation in an Inside-Out course influences transformative learning and higher order thinking. Prior work has noted Inside-Out's transformative educational potential, but questions about the relationship remain. By using a pretest-posttest, nonequivalent control group design and incorporating questions to investigate to what degree a course emphasized higher order thinking skills, the current work should advance our knowledge about Inside-Out by offering a more thorough examination than has been offered before.

The results suggested that participation in Inside-Out was associated with greater changes in dispositional attribution and redeemability relative to those who took only traditional courses at universities. Specifically, the t-tests show that Inside-Out participants expressed decreased support for the statement that "People commit crime because they want to," relative to their peers in other

courses, at the end of their time in the course. It was also shown that Inside-Out participants experienced significantly greater increases in their support for the following statements, "Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work," "Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior," and "Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better," compared to nonparticipants. With the exception of the final statement, the significant differences in changes across their time in the Inside-Out course for the first three statements would appear to indicate that Inside-Out participants become more sensitive to the experience of people incarcerated and their ability to change their lives for the better.

It is not surprising many inside students might shift some of their assumptions regarding those who have been convicted of criminal behavior and their ability to change. Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer (2014) and others have noted the possible importance of the interface between inside and outside students as a mechanism that may aid in humanizing those incarcerated. Hyatt reasoned that participation in Inside-Out exposed outside students to "essential humanity that incarcerated people embody" (2009, p. 28). The interface and humanizing of an offender might mean seeing the incarcerated individual beyond just the offense he or she was incarcerated for and, thus, as someone who is dynamic, capable of change. Also, just as outside students volunteer for this course, inside students do as well, and if there are safety concerns regarding an inside student, that student would be barred from participating in the course (Inside-Out Center, 2018). Therefore, if the viewpoints of outside students related to redeemability are being developed based on the interaction with the inside students, it is important to bear in mind that only a small subset of those incarcerated are being represented.

The significantly larger increase in support for the final of these four statements, "Most offenders have little hope of changing for the better," relative to nonparticipants, might initially indicate that Inside-Out participants are less supportive of inmates. However, the increased support for this view for those interacting with inmates during the Inside-Out curriculum, may simply be due to the increased understanding of the difficulties that inmates face both in and out of prison facilities. This would be consistent with the finding that Inside-Out participants become more aware of the conditions and environment of a prison (Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014).

A key goal of this study was to better estimate if Inside-Out participation produces transformational educational experiences. While it is beyond the scope of this research to determine if students in Inside-Out are now able to

better reconsider their frame of reference, we found that, on average, Inside-Out participants did indicate greater changes related to a small number of criminal justice issues. We believe that these statistically significant changes in the perceptions of Inside-Out participants signifies evidence of transformative learning. Mezirow (1997; 2003) outlined that part of transformative learning is the ability to change and redefine assumptions; the changes we detected in Inside-Out participants between the beginning and end of the program may represent the students' willingness to reassess their worldview by incorporating new information and challenging their assumptions. Although the course is not necessarily designed to advocate for a particular attribution related to criminal behavior since there is considerable focus on systemic issues, and topics are often framed in larger political and social context (Inside-Out Center, 2018), it may not be surprising there was a shift toward a more positivist perspective, as this view more readily recognizes the role of situational factors in explaining behavior. Others have observed that participation in Inside-Out resulted in some students reflecting on the role of drug addiction or access to quality education as a contributing factor to offending (Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014).

The second main goal of this analysis was to determine the extent that Inside-Out courses, relative to non-prison courses, emphasized higher order thinking skills. The results suggested students from Inside-out felt their course emphasized greater levels of higher order thinking skills compared to the student from the three upper-level cross-listed sociology and criminal justice courses that acted as controls. Therefore, students who took the Inside-Out course indicated to a greater degree their course emphasized organizing and evaluating information as well as applying concepts in novel circumstances. Although data on the specific reason(s) why Inside-Out students indicated their course emphasized a greater degree of higher order thinking skills were not collected by our study, the higher scores might be explained via the structure of the course that allows critical reflection (Allred, 2009). Unlike many traditional courses where instructors lecture from the front of the classroom to students, Inside-Out instructors act as facilitators emphasizing communication. Research has suggested that critical thinking skills are fostered in classrooms that encourage participation rather than passivity (Mayer, 1986). Further, research has highlighted the importance of dialogue with others and hearing multiple viewpoints as a means to develop higher order thinking skills (Barnes & Todd, 1977).

Turning attention to the results of the multinomial logistic regression analyses, Model 2 in Table 3 indicates that students participating in the Inside-Out program

are more than 10 times as likely to experience an increase in their support for the statement "Most offenders can go on to lead productive lives with help and hard work," compared to those who experienced no change. Similarly, Model 3 indicates that participants in Inside-Out are more than 20 times as likely to experience an increase in support for the statement that "Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior," compared to those who experienced a decrease in support for that statement. In brief, some students clearly felt offenders can be redeemed. Overall, the majority of the significant findings were related to the concept of redemption. As mentioned previously, the interaction between inside and outside students in the program likely contributes to these views.

Still focusing on the multinomial results, the significant finding that as students progress from freshmen to seniors, they become less likely to indicate support for "Even the worst young offenders can grow out of criminal behavior," relative to those who did not experience a change, deserves additional attention. It should be noted that only one freshman was surveyed (Inside-Out participant) and approximately 80% of the participants were juniors or seniors.

Some important limitations should be acknowledged. One limitation is the relatively small sample size of both participants in the Inside-Out course ( $n = 22$ ) and the overall sample size ( $n = 86$ ). These concerns reduce the statistical power of the multinomial logistic regression models and reduce our ability to generalize the results of those models to other student populations. Evidence of the low sample size can be further gleaned by the high confidence intervals for the significant odds ratios of Inside-Out participation in Models 2 and 3 in Table 3, which supports the concern that few students participated in the Inside-Out program. Perhaps the most serious limitation is the reliance on a pretest-posttest nonequivalent control group design, as we must consider the possibility and even expectations that students' experiences and material in their other coursework could pose a threat to internal validity (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Additionally, even with use of a nonequivalent control group, there are still internal validity questions, as some prior differences between groups can affect the outcomes, and we must take into account differences in instructors across not only the Inside-Out courses but also with the courses taught that were used as a control group. Despite maturation and nonequivalency concerns, the present study still extended prior work in this area by attempting to measure various outcomes at two different points in time. Additionally, unlike prior work, this study was able to link individual outcomes from the two time periods. Next, although some differences were present between the Inside-Out students and non-Inside-Out students, the two groups were rather similar in terms of race/ethnicity and

academic standing, and not incredibly divergent on other aspects. However, as Blankenship and Giacomassi (1990) stated in a research note on assessing attitudinal changes among students in criminal justice courses, results can be “more reliable with a nonequivalent group than with no control at all” (p. 259).

In sum, the findings of both the t-test analyses and multinomial logistic regression are supportive of the conclusion that participation in the Inside-Out curriculum may alter assumptions about inmates, punishment, and the criminal justice system. Further, Inside-Out emphasized higher order thinking skills, a critical educational aim. Considering participants in Inside-Out indicated the course stressed evaluating information, and employing concepts to complex circumstances, future work should seek to clarify which aspects of Inside-Out’s unique structure (e.g., location inside a correctional institution, a course with currently incarcerated individuals, emphasis on intergroup dialogue, or course content) are the primary drivers of generating higher order thinking skills. Further, future research should continue to evaluate multiple Inside-Out classes (including inside students) to identify between class variation, and attempt to gauge long-term outcomes. A more specific long-term concern would be whether or not shifts in perceptions alter how students consume concurrent and future course material. Ultimately some aspects of the Inside-Out structure that are worthwhile could be implemented in other course offerings. Last, higher education is currently experiencing increased pressure from external accrediting agencies and governmental bodies requiring assessment of student learning outcomes (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). Therefore, rigorous evaluations of student learning are imperative in the current educational climate. Overall, efforts to better understand educational outcomes of unique pedagogical structures such as Inside-Out should be pursued.

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