Life on Parole (LOP) Case Study: Measuring the Impact of *The New York Times and Frontline's* Collaboration on Connecticut and Beyond

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### **Executive Summary**

This state-wide case study measures the impact of the *Frontline* and *New York Times* media project *On the Outside* (OTO) - which includes articles, video shorts, and the documentary *Life on Parole* (LOP) – as utilized in a structured dissemination strategy over the course of a year and a half. In this evaluation, we aim to provide some understanding as to how documentary storytelling about reentry from the perspective of those directly affected can best be used to empower communities and individuals impacted by mass incarceration, and to inform public attitudes and organizational practices that influence the trajectories of returning citizens and their families.

In 2014, Purple States and DCTV began to develop the idea of a multi-platform, short-and-longform documentary that would bring the reentry experience to life through the stories of an 'ordinary' and representative group of prisoners – not the extreme cases always in the public eye. With the assistance of local criminal justice system stakeholders, DCTV and Purple States was given unprecedented access to the world of parole and reentry in CT. They enlisted highprofile platform partners: *Frontline*, and the *New York Times*. Filming began in the fall of 2015. The experience of 12 individuals were documented continuously for a year.

Beginning September 2017, Central Connecticut State University's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) partnered with Purple States, DCTV and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to:

- a) engage a diverse group of stakeholders in gathering perspectives on the "Life on Parole" documentary and elicit their support in incorporating additional facts, perspectives, resources, and research to be used for supplementary materials;
- b) develop and implement a distribution and engagement strategy in CT that utilizes On the Outside and other footage, as appropriate, for community engagement, public awareness, and / or professional development; and
- c) develop and share a case study to assess the influence of LOP materials on local (CT) and national conversations / awareness, and the effectiveness of the strategy for disseminating these stories.

Stakeholders, representatives from CT nonprofit providers, advocacy groups, victims' organizations, returning citizens, legislators, criminal justice system personnel, academics, business and community members whose work relates to reentry, were invited to play a meaningful role at all stages of this project. Participants representing this diverse group of stakeholders attended one of two focus groups during June and July of 2017. Focus group participants were then invited to join the OTO Project Leadership Team if they wanted to play an active role in the project.

This Leadership Team met monthly from October 2017 to June 2018, and then periodically during Fall of 2018. Upon first meeting, the Leadership Team reviewed results of the previous focus groups and developed an engagement and distribution strategy, which included: (a)

general screenings followed by discussions throughout the state (short term), and (b) working with selected partners to develop more in-depth usage of LOP in specific settings (long term).

Beginning in Fall of 2017, over 17 public screenings of the *NY Times and Frontline's* documentary 'Life on Parole' (LOP) were held throughout the state of Connecticut, including in: Bloomfield, Manchester, Southport, Enfield, Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU – Willimantic), New Haven Public Library, Hartford Public Library, Farmington, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (Hartford), Best Video (New Haven), UCONN (Hartford), and Manchester Public Library. The mix of urban and suburban locations was purposely selected to engage a cross-section of Connecticut. Given IMRP's objective to use the LOP documentary to inform the public about the complexities of reentry, the LOP leadership Team developed a brief survey to capture attendees' perspectives on the film and the issue of parole in general. This survey was developed through several iterations, which emerged from topics discussed in the two stakeholder focus groups. Out of approximately 250 participants, 232 completed the surveys for a 92% completion rate. Detailed results of the surveys are presented.

To assist in the educational impact of OTO, the IMRP created a project website: <u>http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/projects/OntheOutside.html</u> The website contains a link to LOP, the OTO NYT articles, as well as CT specific information related to prisons and prisoner reentry. In addition, Leadership Team created a screening Toolkit, called "On the Edge of Possibility: *Life on Parole* and the Justice System in CT and Beyond: A Resource Guide for Public Screenings", which was piloted at the follow up focus group to stakeholders in November 2018 and received positive reviews. This purpose of the toolkit is to give individuals, organizations, and communities a deeper understanding of incarceration, parole, and reentry in Connecticut and beyond.

Throughout the project, the Project Leadership Team made efforts to engage multiple-levels of stakeholders, including: the Connecticut State Department of Correction, state policymakers, higher education, national stakeholders, parolees and parole officers featured in the OTO materials, as well as the general public (various communities across the state). The efforts to engage each of these groups are described in detail.

# Results

**OTO Content: Accurate & Compelling.** Given the depth of this analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, *the On the Outside* media project is an accurate portrayal of the complexities of parole through the lens of multiple viewpoints. Stakeholders felt that the stories / backgrounds of the sample of the 12 individuals recorded were representative of the state's parole population terms of demographics, but more importantly content and context, capturing the complexities from the viewpoints of both the P.O. and the parolee. Specifically, drug addiction, the stress of parole, the stipulations are made to be broken, PO's unilateral decision-making, but their tendency to show restraint are all accurate portrayals of the issue.

**OTO Impact on Parolees.** From the perspective of the four parolees interviewed for this project, the OTO media release is an accurate portrayal of the parole / reentry experience and can be a useful tool for engaging the public. During Jeff's interview of Bobby, whose experiences on parole were filmed but his story was not included in the final cut, he said that the documentary was "pretty good," and that it "could be used to show it to people who have never really been in the system, to know what it's like...it's oppressive..." Regarding being filmed for the documentary, Bobby said, "I enjoyed your company. I was a good feel'n to be followed and filmed. I really enjoyed it. I appreciated being followed for the film...it was a good experience for me. Ya'll good people, man. I respect what you all are doing."

Jessica's experiences on parole were a major focus of the LOP film. She remained on the outside and even served on a LOP screening panel at the 2018 New Haven Film festival in May, 2018. Before the film screening, Jessica was interviewed by Jeff Arak. Of her experienced being filmed for LOP, Jessica said "I felt like it (the documentary) was awesome. I got a lot of positive feedback about it. I felt like a lot was left out, but it was seen by a lot. Maybe it made a difference to some people...there are people in authority who are willing to give help and not just lock someone up. Whereas though beforehand, I didn't experience it. I wasn't willing to accept the help. I hope (the documentary) will be used for educational purposes, to educate the public on people go through things in life. You know, things happen and it's all up to that person and society to better ourselves. I've had people stop me and thank me and say that I'm an inspiration and wish me luck on my journey. That makes me feel good."

Project evaluator Jacob Werblow interviewed two former parolees ('Warren' and 'Keith'), who also served as panelists for the community conversations after the film screenings. Regarding their response to the OTO materials, both men felt that the *film was accurate and portrayed the challenges that parolees and POs are under*. They said that they were both encouraged of IMRP's effort in hosting public screening in various communities around Connecticut. Regarding LOP, Warren commented that although it's impossible to cover every issue in one hour, he felt that one thing missing from the film was more of a focus on the trauma that the parolees had experienced. He felt that if the cause of the trauma is not addressed in prison or reentry, then it is unlikely that the returning individual will ever be able to successfully reintegrate into society. On the other hand, Keith felt that the most important factor in determining the success of returning individuals is making better choices and learning to ask for help. According to Keith, when parolees are ready to follow the rules and decide to change, they will be successful.

**Impact on the DOC.** The CT DOC deserves praise for allowing unprecedented access to the DCTV filmmakers to capture the realness and complexity of parole in CT. This shows clear openness and leadership from the top levels of the administration. According to Jeff Arak, a co-producer of the OTO, when the DOC was shown the final cut of the film, they were pleased with it, calling it "very accurate" and "balanced." Months later, however, after the documentary was aired nationally, Andrew Clark and Jacob Werblow met with the DOC administration, and received a more reserved response. At this time, the DOC indicated that they were not interested in: (a) using the film for any educational or professional development purposes within the DOC, (b) participating in public screenings or community conversations, (c) nor in

providing a public statement about the film and its impact. Because of this response, the OTO project might have actually had a *disempowering* impact on the CT DOC. Initially, the Leadership Team planned to develop curriculum and learning modules for screenings within the DOC, but because of their lack of interest, we chose to focus our efforts on other venues and audiences.

**Impact on Higher Education**. From the perspective of institutions of higher education in Connecticut, OTO has had a very positive impact. At the time of writing the report our distribution strategy, has and continues to successfully impacted universities across the state of Connecticut. Thus far, we have screened LOP to over 500 university students at Eastern Connecticut State University, Central Connecticut State University, and UCONN, and have received very positive results in the audience surveys. Future screenings are also confirmed at Quinnipiac School of Law. In most cases, audience surveys have been collected at each of the screenings. Results are provided in the following section.

**Impact on the General Public**. Given IMRP's objective to use the *Life on Parole* (LOP) documentary to inform the public about the complexities of reentry, the LOP leadership Team developed a brief survey to capture attendees' perspectives on the film and the issue of parole in general. This survey was developed through several iterations, which emerged from topics discussed in the two stakeholder focus groups. Out of approximately 250 participants, 232 completed the surveys - for a 92% completion rate.

When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?" the following themes emerged in the attendees' responses (presented from most frequent to least):

- (a) the system is broken / doesn't work,
- (b) LOP is an accurate portrayal of the system,
- (c) LOP screening & discussion humanizes the issue,
- (d) supports are unknown / insufficient, (e) POs are inconsistent, need better training,
- (e) POs have a tension between helping vs. punishing,
- (f) hopeful that there's an effort to change the system,
- (g) "If parolees work hard, they can be successful."

When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?" the following themes emerged in the attendees' responses (presented from most frequent to least):

- (a) nothing missing,
- (b) need for models that work (other states / countries),
- (c) better discussion / facilitation,
- (d) need for more diverse perspectives in the film (esp. women),
- (e) need to see impact of parole / incarceration on youth / families,
- (f) need for more diverse perspectives of parolees (panel), and
- (g) CT PO trainings? How to improve?

At the time of writing this report, seven more screenings across CT are confirmed through April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**Impact on the Media**. To investigate the landscape of US media coverage on issues of re-entry and to follow the conversation generated by the *Frontline* broadcast and the *New York Times* Coverage, *Media Cloud* was used to analyze the impact of the broadcast of LOP. *Media Cloud* is a system for tracking discourse in digital media. The analysis uncovered some interesting findings: media covers 'parole' far less than 'recidivism' and 'reentry.' Results of their analysis suggest that 'parole' only appears to get the media's attention as an anomaly or a case-by-case basis (ex. O.J. Simpson, the Cheshire Murders) and not as a policy/program. The *OTO* media release did not appear to have drastically changed the trend in media coverage on the issue of 'parole.' Some suggestions for *Media Cloud* to consider for future analyses are given.

# Follow-Up Stakeholder Focus Group

Nine individuals participated in a follow-up focus group on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at IMRP. In attendance were individuals representing the Malta Justice Initiative, the Reentry Roundtables, IMRP, the Department of Corrections (retired), and Family ReEntry.<sup>1</sup>

Of the items discussed, participants agreed that LOP was an accurate portrayal of CT's current system of parole. Attendees expressed that the frustration of the POs as depicted in the film was "clear and real," and acknowledged that "Parole officers have a difficult job with limited supports." Regarding positive policy changes, which may or may not be as a result of the film, two individuals stated that POs are now making referrals to the local Alternative in the Community Programs (AIC), of which there are 19 in the state. Since September, Hartford PO's have made at least 25 referrals, which participants found commendable. There is concern, however, that risk and needs assessments aren't being conducted when individuals are given parole, so parolees are being referred to AIC only after they have committed a violation.

Participants also expressed the need for better communication between the DOC and support networks during reentry. One individual expressed, "There is little connection between the good things that (inmates do) during incarceration and when (they are) on parole. Programs need to have better knowledge what each returning citizen has accomplished (during incarceration). If it's not followed up in the community, how can they be successful?" In addition, there was a general consensus that all CT POs should have the same supports that exist in the TRUE Unit. Regarding halfway houses, participants were clearly frustrated with the lack of oversight. There was a general frustration with the lack of willingness of the DOC to support this project and to support meaningful change in parole / re-entry. Recommendations to the CT Department of Corrections and for future grant funders and media projects to consider are also provided.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Interview via telephone after the meeting.

### **Conclusions and Significance:**

This project is unique in the complexity of its content, engagement strategy, and multi-layered evaluation design. It is important to note that stakeholder perspectives were central to this project's direction. Specifically, multiple stakeholders were involved in: (a) determining the measures of success of the evaluation and appropriateness of the project; (b) serving as panelists following film screenings; and (c) assisting in the coordination and the dissemination of the engagement strategy.

Stakeholder perspectives were also essential in determining the significant gaps that the OTO media release did not adequately address, so that we could provide supplementary resources to the general public as well as organizations or individuals interested in facilitating a film screening and community conversation. For example, stakeholders repeatedly stated (both in the focus groups and in screening participant surveys) a desire to know more about 'what works' or 'best-practice' in reentry. Thus, among other topics, we have identified and provided supplementary resources highlighting the German / Finnish models, as they are widely recognized as two of the most successful prison and reentry systems in the world.

Given the depth of this analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, the OTO media project is an accurate portrayal of the complexities of parole through the lens of multiple viewpoints. Stakeholders felt that the stories / backgrounds of the sample of the 12 individuals recorded were representative of the state's parole population in terms of demographics, content, and context, and adequately captured the complexities of reentry from the viewpoints of both the P.O. and the parolee. Stakeholders strongly agreed that the specific topics of drug addiction, stress, that stipulations are made to be broken, PO's unilateral decision-making balanced with a tendency to show restraint, are all accurate portrayals of the issue. In addition, OTO gives attention to the following topics, all of which are worthy of exploration: the importance of family supports, effective drug treatment, childhood trauma, CIP perspectives, pressure to ensure public safety, likelihood that parolees will recidivate, storytelling and providing generalizable data, and humanizing the issue. In this way, LOP sufficiently captures the complexity of 'parole' accurately, from the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders, which is, in itself, a commendable task in a 55-minute time period. As a result of public screenings of LOP and OTO materials, we were further able to strengthen the impact of this effort by being able to expand and promote effective conversations on this sensitive and important topic. Recommendations for the CT DOC and for Future Media Coverage are also provided.

**Awards and Recognition**. According to numerous conversations, interviews, and surveys with multiple stakeholders (e.g., former parolees, former DOC administrators, academics, reentry service providers, and members of the general public), LOP appears to be an accurate and robust portrayal of parole in CT. By exploring the topic of parole in this way, LOP brings attention to an issue of national importance, one that directly impacts hundreds of millions of people around the nation, yet has historically received little, if any, national media coverage. Because of this, and the unique collaboration that was required, and the quality of the

documentary, LOP aired twice nationally and received two prestigious national media awards in 2018. In December 2018, *Frontline* was awarded the *DuPont-Columbia Gold Baton Award*, a prestigious award for excellence in journalism that hasn't been given in over a decade. LOP was specifically mentioned in the award letter from the DuPont-Columbia Award committee. LOP was also awarded the winner of the *2018 Media for a Just Society* in the TV/Video category.

### Next Steps:

One of the main takeaways from the multiple discussions centering around LOP is the intense pressure on the point of reentry from prison – both on the returning citizen and the supervision authority. The overwhelming consensus from participants in these discussions is that we can get better outcomes than we currently achieve. Numerous studies suggest ways in which either the system or the individual could adapt to realize greater results through particular programming. But what if success lies more in the overall culture, and not any particular program or individual action?

Referenced in LOP are Connecticut's *Second Chance* reform efforts under former Governor Dannel Malloy. Not highlighted in the film are newer iterations of these reforms, most notably those resulting from Gov. Malloy and Com. Semple's trip overseas to visit Germany's prison system. Upon their return, both individuals spoke of the immense value in being exposed to a system rooted in an entirely different culture – one that values rehabilitation and resocialization as the primary directives in a corrections environment. They learned that this approach yields significant better reentry results than those achieved across the US. As a result, they began to experiment with change in CT prisons through the establishment of specialized units based on the German model. These changes, although lauded both in state and across the country, have been relatively small in scope. The vexing issue is what would allow for a more wide scale implementation of these changes?

To address this question, the IMRP believes it important to recreate the immersion experience. This time, however, the focus would be on prisoner reentry and would explore the role of the rehabilitative prison environment on individual successes. It will involve documenting the experiences of small group of grassroots stakeholders from Connecticut (DOC staff, former CT parolees and family members, policymakers, scholars, and students, etc.) in touring some of the world's most successful prison re-entry systems. We anticipate this research would have state and national implications.

#### BACKGROUND

Connecticut is a unique landscape to explore the issues of criminal justice and reentry. In the last decade, the state has surprisingly found itself on both ends of the national spotlight on issues related to criminal justice. Notably in 2007, the Cheshire home invasion occurred - the wife and daughters of a local medical doctor were brutally murdered in their home by two men serving on parole. The murders sent state officials into a panic; immediately following the invasion, all parolees were sent back to prison – regardless of their compliance status. At the same time, CT's justice system has gained national attention for making positive changes: (a) in 2004, CT became the first state to pass bi-partisan criminal justice policy known as Justice Reinvestment<sup>2</sup>; (b) 2013, CT passed the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act, making the state to identify racial disparities; (c) in 2015, Governor Malloy gained recognition for championing the "Second Chance Society" bill, which decriminalized many drug related offenses; (d) in 2019, CT's T.R.U.E. was recognized as a national model;<sup>3</sup> (e) Connecticut is one of the top five states in reducing its prison population in recent years.

Also worth noting is that CT pays a relative high price to run its corrections' system – CT leads the nation in the percentage of prison costs outside of the states' corrections budget (34%) and spends more per inmate than all other states in the nation, with exception to New Jersey.<sup>4</sup> Despite Connecticut's high spending on prisons, comparatively, the state receives little return on its investment - approximately 60% of parolees in Connecticut return to prison within three years<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when compared to other developed countries around the world, Connecticut – and the US in general - has both significantly higher rates of incarceration and, conversely, lower success rates for individuals returning from prison into their communities.

In 2014, Purple States and DCTV began to develop the idea of a multi-platform, short-and-longform documentary that would bring the reentry experience to life through the stories of an 'ordinary' and representative group of prisoners – not the extreme cases always in the public eye. With the assistance of Andrew Clark at IMRP, DCTV and Purple States was given unprecedented access to the world of parole and reentry in CT. They enlisted high-profile platform partners: *Frontline*, and the *New York Times*, raised funds for this effort. Filming began in the fall of 2015. The experience of 12 individuals were documented continuously for a year.

Beginning September 2017, Central Connecticut State University's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) partnered with Purple States, DCTV and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://csgjusticecenter.org/jr/ct/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://www.vera.org/blog/dispatches-from-t-r-u-e/how-connecticut-reimagines-prison-for-young-men

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Henrichson, C., & Delaney, R. (July, 2012). *The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers*. Vera Institute of Justice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://ctmirror.org/2018/02/19/new-crime-recidivism-rates-continue-to-show-modest-improvement/

(a) engage a diverse group of stakeholders in gathering perspectives on the "Life on Parole" documentary and elicit their support in incorporating additional facts, perspectives, resources, and research to be used for supplementary materials;

(b) develop and implement a distribution and engagement strategy in CT that utilizes *On the Outside* and other footage, as appropriate, for community engagement, public awareness, and / or professional development; and

(c) develop and share a case study to assess the influence of LOP materials on local (CT) and national conversations / awareness, and the effectiveness of the strategy for disseminating these stories.

#### Purpose

Since the 'collateral consequences' of imprisonment historically receive relatively little coverage, there is limited public awareness of the realities that impede successful reentry, with exception to the individuals and organization that are directly impacted by the issue. This media project adds an urgent and missing dimension to the story of mass incarceration, which is important given the vast amount of literature indicating the significant impact of media on public perception of crime and the criminal justice system, and the corresponding implications for public policy development in a representative democracy.

Through high profile media coverage anchored in personal stories of life after release, this project intends to inform and engage a broad public and influential thought leaders and policymakers, and provoke a conversation grounded in the actual personal and social impact of prison on the futures of inmates and their children.

Our purpose for conducting this state-wide case study is to measure the effect of the dissemination and impact of the *Frontline* and *New York Times* 55-minute documentary "Life on Parole" (LOP) and related *New York Times* materials (a.k.a., "On the Outside"). Specifically, we explore how documentary storytelling about reentry can best be used to: (a) empower communities and individuals impacted by mass incarceration; (b) inform public attitudes and organizational practices that influence the trajectories of returning citizens and their families; and (c) influence / promote 'best-practice.'

# Distribution and Engagement Strategy: 'On the Outside'

The following stakeholder groups were invited to play a meaningful role at all stages of this project: representatives from CT nonprofit providers, advocacy groups, victims' organizations, returning citizens, legislators, criminal justice system personnel, academics, business and community members whose work relates to reentry. First, 38 individuals were contacted via e-mail by IMRP Director, Andrew Clark. Sixteen responded, one of which was not able to attend due to a scheduling conflict. Participants (n = 15) attended one of two focus groups during June

and July of 2017. The first focus group was held at the IMRP in New Britain and the second focus group was held in Hartford's City Hall. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes. After the focus groups were conducted, results were shared with *Purple States*. Weeks later, focus group participants were invited to join the OTO Project Leadership Team if they wanted to play an active role in the project. Eight individuals joined the leadership Team and became responsible for assisting in developing a distribution strategy for disseminating the OTO materials locally as well as nationally, developing and providing supplementary materials, and measuring the impact of these efforts. Detailed descriptions and findings of each of these stages are described in the following section.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the distribution and engagement strategy of the OTO materials IMRP conducted a case study of this effort. The data collection methods used in this study include: observations and documentation of project meetings, conducting a series of focus groups, analyzing the impact of OTO dissemination in the media, facilitating and coordinating public screenings and community conversations, surveying attendees and panelists, and interviewing the PO's and parolees filmed for OTO. Results of these methods are described below.

**Stakeholder Focus Groups.** In the first phase of the project, IMRP's director Andrew Clark and Project Evaluator Jacob Werblow co-facilitated two 90-minute focus groups - one in New Britain and the second in Hartford - to engage stakeholders in helping define the measure of the project's success. These focus groups attempted to capture the perspectives of representatives from CT nonprofit providers, advocacy groups, victims' organizations, returning citizens, legislators, criminal justice system personnel, academics, business and community members whose work relates to the transition from incarceration to the community. Specifically, the following organizations were invited to join the focus groups:

- Malta Justice Initiative;
- Juvenile Justice Alliance;
- Wesleyan Prison Education Program
- CT Nonprofit Alliance
- Office of the Victim Advocate
- Cities of Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven re-entry offices
- Connecticut Business and Industry Association
- Connecticut State University System
- Yale Justice Collaborative
- CT Juvenile Justice Alliance
- Former legislators and criminal justice agency heads
- Vera Institute Reimagining Prison Project
- Probation and Parole staff

The focus groups were held prior to both the July 2017 airing of the PBS Frontline "Life on Parole" episode, as well as the related NY Times media. During the focus groups, the overall goal, scope, and background of the OTO media project was presented to participants, along

with the anticipated roles of both *NY Times* and *Frontline*. Participants were given the opportunity to: (a) provide input on what they believe would be the *potential measures of success* for the documentary, including the potential impact on residents and policy makers in CT and, where relevant, national PBS and NYT broadcast audiences; and (b) discuss and explore possibilities for how they might be able to use the content of the OTO project for educational, training, and advocacy purposes. Feedback gathered from the focus group was used to shape the evaluation criteria used to measure the impact of the OTO rollout in CT and to shape the content to be included in supplemental OTO resources (learning modules), designed and produced by IMRP. See **Appendix A** for the full results of the focus groups.

**OTO Project Leadership Team**. After the stakeholder focus groups were held during the summer of 2017, IMRP invited all attendees to serve as members on the OTO Project Leadership Team. This Leadership Team (see **Appendix B**), representing a diverse group of stakeholders, met monthly from October 2017 to June 2018, and then periodically during Fall of 2018. Upon first meeting, the Leadership Team reviewed results of the previous focus groups and developed an engagement and distribution strategy, which included: (a) general screenings followed by discussions throughout the state (short term), and (b) working with selected partners to develop more in-depth usage of LOP in specific settings (long term).

IMRP then contracted with *Malta Justice Initiative* to implement the general screenings strategy (see **Appendix C** for work plan). Over a year, the Project Team coordinated over 17 public screenings of the *Frontline and NY Times's* documentary 'Life on Parole.' Screenings were held at the following locations: Bloomfield, Manchester, Southport, Enfield, Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU – Willimantic), New Haven Public Library, Hartford Public Library, Farmington, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (Hartford), Best Video (New Haven), UCONN (Hartford), and Manchester Public Library. An even distribution of urban and suburban locations was selected to engage a representative cross-section of Connecticut. With exception of the screenings at ECSU, all events were followed by a 45-60min discussion led by facilitators contracted by IMRP and / or IMRP staff. The discussions at ECSU were facilitated by Dr. Teresa Severance, Professor of Sociology.

A **project website** has been created to provide background materials for screenings, as well as keep the public informed about project related activities.

### Stakeholder's Define the Measures of Success

The first phase of this case study was to analyze the data from the two stakeholder focus groups to determine the extent to which the content of the OTO media release (LOP and the accompanying *NY Times* media coverage) met the measures of success as identified by the stakeholders. Given the depth of this analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, the content of the OTO media project is an accurate portrayal of the complexities of parole through the lens of multiple viewpoints. Stakeholders felt that the stories / backgrounds of the sample of the 12 individuals recorded were representative of the state's parole population, not only in terms of demographics, but more importantly in content and context as they capturing the complexities from the viewpoints of both the P.O. and the parolee.

It should also be noted that focus group participants also agreed that LOP appears to capture the complexity of the issue accurately, given the time constraints of producing a 55-minute documentary. Specifically, participants commented that the topics/themes of drug addiction, the stress of parole, the stipulations are made to be broken, PO's unilateral decision-making, but their tendency to show restraint are all accurate portrayals of the issue. In addition, the importance of family supports, effective drug treatment, extreme childhood trauma, CIP perspectives, pressure to ensure public safety, the likelihood that parolees will recidivate, storytelling and providing generalizable data, and the humanity of the issue, and highlighting opportunities for policy changes are all portrayed as well. Identifying these themes in advance of the release will allow us to facilitate better community conversations at the public screenings. For the full report of these focus groups, see **Appendix D**.

# **Engaging Stakeholders**

Throughout the project, the Project Leadership Team made efforts to engage multiple-levels of stakeholders, including: the Connecticut State Department of Correction, state policymakers, higher education, national stakeholders, parolees and parole officers featured in the OTO materials, as well as the general public (various communities across the state). These efforts are described below.

**Engaging the General Public:** Throughout this project, we made a concerted effort to engage the general public by holding screenings in public spaces, such as libraries, community centers, local non-profits, and institutions of higher education. Additionally, after each screening, we distributed a participant survey, giving audience members the opportunity to provide feedback and to provide their contact information if they would like to: (a) remain involved in this project, (b) help with advocacy, and / or (b) to learn more about the issue.

**Engaging Higher Education**. To assist with curriculum ideas and to expand the distribution of the screenings, the OTO Project Leadership team coordinated two meeting with academics from across the state at the UCONN downtown campus in Hartford. The first meeting was held on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and the second on April 5, 2018. Eleven people attended both meetings, representing IMRP, UCONN Social Work, ECSU Sociology, CCSU Educational Leadership, Malta, CCSU Communications, UCONN Service Learning, CT ACLU, and Leadership of Greater Hartford.

Highlights of the outcomes of the first meeting (1/25/2018) include: (a) encouraging the CT DOC to write a statement to articulate the recent parole reforms that they have enacted and what they are currently proposing to implement; (b) exploring the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance on-line tool kits as a possible curriculum resource; and (c) considering ways to help strengthen support networks for parolees (volunteer advocates) through the planned reentry center. During the second meeting (4/5/2018), highlights include the discussion of forming a *Building Bridges Fellowship*, where college students, recent graduates, and / or individuals with direct experience with parole / reentry would be recruited to serve as paid Fellow, completing a 1-year intensive research and teaching fellowship that aims to inspire policy change with the

justice system through education, advocacy, and coalition building. The group was supportive of the Fellowship proposal, IMRP planned to start the program early summer 2018, but FY2018 funding from the state wasn't determined until the state budget was signed at the end of the legislative session, and the plan was tabled.<sup>6</sup>

**Engaging CT DOC**. From the inception of this project, the OTO Project Leadership team operated under the belief that the DOC deserved to be directly involved in the leadership and direction of this project. If nothing else, we wanted the DOC staff to have their perspectives included in the dissemination and engagement strategy for this project. For over a year, we sent multiple invitations to DOC administration and staff to serve as panelists, attend public screenings, provide a statement that we could share with the public, be interviewed, and / or provide more details about the new training that PO's are receiving, but in all cases, except one (described below), the DOC declined to participate.

In 2017, IMRP Director Andrew Clark and OTO Project Evaluator Jacob Werblow requested to interview the PO's that were featured in the film. Initially, the DOC stated that they would not participate without the project being approved by a human studies council (HSC), thus, Jacob Werblow, the project lead evaluator, submitted a proposal through the HSC review. In early 2018, the review committee deemed the project proposal to be 'exempt'. Several months later, the authors (Andrew and Jacob) were invited to meet with members of the DOC administration, as well as the POs featured in the documentary. At the meeting, DOC administration indicated that they were not willing to be interviewed nor willing to provide a public statement related to LOP. With the exception of Joe Haggan serving as a panelist at the April 2018 Building Bridges Conference, all subsequent offers for collaboration were declined by the DOC.

Additionally, a few months after the airing of LOP, two former CT Directors of Parole - Bob Gillis (LOP Leadership Team Member) and Randy Braren (Director of Reentry Initiatives, Family Reentry)- both met with DOC Commissioner Scott Semple and members of his staff. At that meeting, the Commissioner is reported to have said that he has no concerns with parole and that the PO's presented in the film "did a great job."

As the time of writing this report, both Gillis and Braren indicate that they would welcome the opportunity to meet with the new DOC administration to conduct a screening and review of *LOP*.

**Engaging Parolees.** One Year After OTO, co-producer Jeff Arak shared the contact information of the 12 returning citizens who were filmed on parole for LOP. Of the 12 returning citizens, four were featured in the Frontline documentary and a fifth was featured in one of the *NY Times* vignettes. As of November 2017, six of the 12 returning citizens were either still on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> IMRP's budget from the state legislature was finally allocated at close of the 2018 session, but then about ½ was rescinded in the early summer, so the Fellowship Proposal is currently tabled indefinitely.

parole or incarcerated. Five appeared to successfully integrate - they were no longer under the supervision of the DOC.

Dr. Werblow attempted to contact several of these individuals, however, his attempts were unsuccessful. Because of the rapport established between the film producers and the parolees, Arak agreed to contact each of the individuals and seek their participation in a follow-up interview. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the impact of their participation on them, how they perceive the relevance of their experience to the trajectories of others, and what changes they believe would improve their prospects, and the wellbeing of their families. After multiple attempts, Jeff was able to complete two follow-up interviews (Jessica and Bobby) with two individuals who were filmed. These interviews are now available as an MP3 audio files on the IMRP website (http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/projects/OntheOutside.html).

At the time of this report, regarding the four returning citizens featured in LOP, only three of the four remain on the outside. On December 6, 2018, Jessica was sentenced for violating parole. She was convicted of a misdemeanor (< ½ oz of marijuana) and was most likely put back because of her special parole status. Of the other three parolees featured in LOP, Errol is the only one currently 'on the outside' and is serving parole until May 2019. Robert was re-arrested for operating a motor vehicle under the influence and is currently serving in Willard-Cybulski Correctional Institution. Vaughn, charged with violating parole, is currently serving time at the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution. These results are disappointing, but they are a fairly accurate portrayal of the outcomes that can be expected by the current parole system in Connecticut.

**Engaging State Policymakers.** By mid-April, over 150 individuals, who attended one of the LOP screenings, indicated that they wanted to stay informed / be involved. In an effort to re-engage this group, IMRP invited all participants to attend the inaugural CT Reentry Reform Day at the State Legislative Office Building in Hartford, on April 25<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 250 people attended the event, including many individuals who had attended the LOP screenings. More information on the event can be found at: <u>www.ctreentry.org</u> In November 2018, Andrew Clark was invited to speak at the Chrysalis Center about reentry and the OTO project along with Judge Erika Tindill, Ana Maria Rivera-Forastieri of the CT Bail Fund, ACLU Connecticut *and law professor Peter Edelman. The event was featured on WNPR.*<sup>7</sup>

**Engaging National Stakeholders**. OTO was developed through a partnership between the *New York Times and Frontline,* which is a unique collaboration worthy of mention. The *Times* ran a front-page story related to an individual featured in the "Life on Parole" documentary the week before the *Frontline* release. The *Times* also ran several articles and which accompanied video vignettes on its website, which went further into the themes, sub-stories, and issues raised in the LOP broadcast. Although this project was not the first collaboration between the *Times* and *Frontline,* such projects are obviously unique and display the commitment that both outlets

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> http://www.wnpr.org/post/connecticut-criminal-justice-advocates-focus-life-after-jail

gave to bringing attention to the rich and diverse experiences of those directly involved with parole.

IMRP reached out to several national organizations to further engage them with the LOP resources. Of note, IMRP collaborated with the Stowe Center to host a "Life on Parole" screening as well as coordinating to bringing seminal author and nationally known academic, Michelle Alexander to CCSU on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This event was attended by over 1,500 people. In December 2017, IMRP also supported CT justice involved individuals to present LOP at the Association for Justice Involved Females and Organizations (AJFO) in California in December 2017, which is the only national conference dedicated to women coming home from prison.

In October 2017, Andrew Clark participated in the *Moving Justice Forward Conference* at Yale, and spoke with national groups about the OTO project, including Vera and the Sentencing Project. Andrew contacted Mike Clark from the Justice Affairs Council of State Governments Justice Center regarding this project. More recently, Deborah Cowan-Wattree, a Reentry Affairs Coordinator, with the Federal Correction Institution in Danbury, CT contacted Andrew about holding film screenings of LOP for federal inmates.

LOP received two prestigious national media awards in 2018. In December 2018, *Frontline* was awarded the DuPont-Columbia Gold Baton Award, a prestigious award for excellence in journalism that hasn't been given in over a decade. LOP was specifically mentioned in the award letter from the DuPont-Columbia Award committee. Also, this year LOP was awarded the winner of the 2018 Media for a Just Society in the TV/Video category.

# **Learning Modules & Tool Kits**

Initially, the OTO Project Leadership team proposed to create three supplementary learning modules for higher education, parole, and the general community, and to pilot one public screening of each and to offer one train-the-trainer workshop for individuals and organizations to facilitate LOP screenings and community conversations. After several months of facilitating public screenings, community conversations, and attempting to build a network of involved stakeholders, we chose to modify our initial plan for the following reasons: (a) the public screenings were consistently well attended, audience survey results were very positive and public libraries were supportive in providing us with space and marketing, so we decided to expand the public screenings well beyond the three as contracted; (b) the DOC showed no interest in using the film for training purposes, so developing supplementary materials for this audience would not be useful; (c) after holding two meetings with higher education faculty, they expressed that supplementary materials were not necessary as their course curriculum was already set, but there was interest in showing LOP to their class; (d) we did, however, develop supplementary material for the general community. We offered a train-the-trainer workshop during the summer of 2018, but due to a lack of interest, we canceled the workshop and have continued running the public screening instead.

As the scope and direction of our engagement strategy was dependent on shifting relationships, some of our original plans had to be modified or completed reconstructed. The main modifications we made to the original proposal include: (a) conducting over 17 public screenings and community conversations of LOP (we were initially contracted to host only three); (b) replacing the train-the-trainer workshop with more film screenings of LOP; (c) spending weeks completing a Human Subjects Committee research proposal, as requested by the DOC, only for them to decline to participate in the interviews; (d) creating a <u>project website</u> to provide background materials for screenings, as well as keep the public informed about project related activities, which we were not contracted to do. In all, these changes demonstrate that we acted in good faith and, although our project changed from what was initially proposed, we believe that the scope of our work is thorough and comprehensive.

Based upon feedback from the initial screenings and community conversations, OTO Project Leadership Team member Richard Frieder developed a film-screening and community conversation discussion guide (see Appendix E) to provide greater structure and consistency to the LOP film screenings and community conversations. In addition to the discussion guide, IMRP added several related resources to its website, including a schedule of public screenings and community conversations, links to related reports about reentry, the 60 *Minutes* feature "Behind Bars", and the OTO coverage from the *New York Times, among others.* These resources were eventually, consolidated into the 'Deeper Learning' toolkit.

#### "Deeper Learning' Toolkit Resource

Based on the representativeness and appropriateness of the OTO media releases (Appendix D), feedback received from key stakeholders at the public screenings (see Appendix F) and conversations with academics and community professionals at UCONN Hartford, the LOP Leadership Team invited all screening attendees who stated that they wished to be involved a train-the-trainer workshop (n = 138) to participate in a train-the-trainer workshop in Summer 2018, approximately 13 people responded that they wanted to attend the workshop, but then once a date and location was secured, only 3 participants confirmed. Because of the lack of participation, the LOP Leadership Team decided to explore developing an on-line mini-course for the train-the-trainer a model. This product seemed more appropriate as it would be universally accessible and available to an unlimited number of users (stakeholders) versus spending our resources on developing a full-day workshop to only three individuals. During the summer of 2018, IMRP hired a student worker to work with Jacob Werblow in developing a mini-course utilizing Frontline's documentary "Life on Parole" (LOP) and related OTO New York Times materials and other resources. After consulting other members of the LOP Leadership Team and considering our projected budget, we decided to narrow the scope by creating a toolkit / resource for any individual interested in hosting a screening or simply wanting to know more about issues related to parole and reentry in CT. The Toolkit, called "On the Edge of Possibility: Life on Parole and the Justice System in CT and Beyond: A Resource Guide for Public Screenings" was piloted at the follow up focus group to stakeholders in November 2018 and received positive reviews.

This purpose of the "On the Edge of Possibility" toolkit is to give individuals, organizations, and communities a deeper understanding of incarceration, parole, and reentry in Connecticut and beyond. This document is freely available to the public, but was developed for the purpose of preparing individuals to hold a screening of the *Frontline and The NY Times* documentary *Life on Parole.* A copy of the toolkit is available in Appendix F. and is posted on the IMRP website's LOP page.

After coordinating several general screenings in the community, the Project Leadership Team arrived at the conclusion that the libraries were happy to host but did not have the same level of interest to facilitate the film themselves. Given the topic and the sensitivity around the issue of incarceration and reentry, several of our library contacts indicated that they were not comfortable facilitating the dialogue alone. Higher education, however, was far more willing to use the materials, as several professors who teach related content were happy to use the resources themselves. During the Spring of 2018, 47 students from ECSU watched LOP and completed the survey (see p.72). During the Fall of 2018, 51 UCONN students in Social work watched LOP and completed the survey (see p.86). In January of 2019, over 300 social work students attended LOP screenings.

### RESULTS

### **OTO Content: An Accurate and Compelling Depiction of Parole**

In the summer of 2017, *The New York Times* and Frontline released seven articles and videos related to the OTO media project. All seven media were analyzed for common themes, which were then compared to the themes that emerged in the focus group results. The following section presents brief description of the analysis for each theme identified (for the full findings, see Appendix D).

**Drug Addiction / Substance Abuse.** Drug addiction, specifically heroin, is a common theme in LOP materials and is highlighted in five of the seven OTO media releases. The short video '*What happens after prison...*' states that 74% of parolees have drug / alcohol problems. Rob struggles with cocaine as takes two bags thinking that it would 'end his life, but it didn't happen.' Erroll and Dave both struggle with heroin. All three are shown to be in and out of treatment clinics. Errol returns to prison because he went on a binge while changing drug prescriptions. Vaughn returns to prison because he was caught drinking alcohol in the halfway house. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Parole is a Stressful & Exasperating Experience**. Five of the seven OTO releases present evidence that parole is a challenging, stressful and (possibly) exasperating experience. Several of parolees featured state that that prison is easer that parole. Dave says, "That's camp cupcake in there (prison), it's hard out here (parole)." Erroll says of his first experience on parole, "I was frightened. I didn't know what to expect. Another parolee states that he felt 'frustrated and cornered.' According to 'What happens after prison...,' 53% of inmates have mental health problems. Given this fact, the stipulations of parole appear to exacerbate the stress and anxiety of a population of individuals who already have mental health needs. In LOP, after being sent to

a halfway house and given a GPS monitor, Erroll states, "I just want to keep talking and go back to jail...my life is pretty much ruined for 3 years." *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Parole Stipulations: Made to be Broken**. Four of the seven OTO releases show that parole stipulations will likely be broken by the parolee. For Erroll, he is told that he can have no contact with his girlfriend, his residence and support system, because she was considered a previous crime victim. Parolees are expected to have no alcohol or drug use, but it is not clear whether or not all parolees that need treatment receive it. In addition, the efficacy of the treatment provided is unclear / unknown. All parolees shown violate at least one of the stipulations, and are given punitive consequences and in some cases, support (treatment). *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**PO's Unilateral Decision-Making**. On several occasions, PO's appear to make decisions regarding the treatment, punishment, and discipline of their parolees without consultation with other staff or third parties. Officer Pawlich, appears to assign Erroll to a halfway house and then tags a GPS monitor on him, in what appears to be a rash decision... "you are also going on GPS today...I have 65 cases and one flaming asshole." One concern raised by Prof. Doherty as well as focus group stakeholder's is the wide discretion in decision-making among POs. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**P.O.'s Behavior is Inconsistent**. In LOP, PO's Montoya and Pawlich are also shown having flexibility and restraint for their parolees. Montoya says, "I'm trying to save your ass", "I make a living on second chances... I do a lot of thinking after hours, it's hard.. If I rearrested everyone in her situation, I wouldn't have a case load." Pawlich describes how in the past he would have locked up a parolee like Erroll for his violations, but this time he gave him other punitive consequences to avoid prison. This not only shows the difficult decisions that PO's often have to make, with limited resources, but also that they are humans as well. Officer Lisa Brayfield (Vaughn's PO), seems to come off as less understanding and (perhaps) condescending. Of Vaughn, Brayfield said, "He was disrespectful. It seemed like he had a little bit of an anger problem when I was meeting with him—which is, initially, the reason really why I took the phone." *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

*Supports: Family & Intimate Relationships*. In six of the seven OTO media releases, supportive relationships of parolees are highlighted. In two cases, the relationships are non-platonic (Erroll and Dave's partners), and in two cases they are about CIP (Jessica and her son, Rob and his daughter). This humanizes both the parolee and their family members. Humanizing the issue is something that stakeholders deeply were concerned about. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

*Supports: Continuing Education.* Despite the strength of the correlation between educational attainment and incarceration, little attention is given to this relationship and the role that continuing education plays in reentry success. Jessica's educational success was highlighted in the LOP documentary, but this role of education / job training wasn't a part of other parolee's

stories, and only appears in two of the seven OTO media releases. *This <u>may not be</u> an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

Supports: Effective Drug Treatment. Access to drug treatment was displayed in five of the seven OTO media releases. This is appropriate, due to the high rates of substance abuse among parolees; however, it is less clear how effective these drug treatment plans are. Are there other models that are more effective? The viewer is left with the impression that parolees have access to drug treatment, yet in each case, the individual relapses. In the NY Times articles, 'What stat's can't explain...' and 'Opioid users...,' illustrate that CT has one of only 30 methadone prison programs in in the nation, but inmates in CT can be kicked out of the program due to disciplinary reasons. This fact raises question about the efficacy of the program - how many parolees / inmates complete the program? How many due not finish due to disciplinary reasons (not related to program participation)? If the reality is that parolees who need it are provided with access to drug treatment programs, but the programs may not be effective, then *this is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

Supports: Social and Emotional Therapy. Given the strong associations between childhood trauma and incarceration, and incarceration and mental illness, the OTO released materials give the impression that parole is an incredibly stressful experience, but social emotional supports / therapy is not provided to parolees. In the LOP documentary, it is mentioned that Officer Montoya started a special unit dedicated to female parolees, but it's not clear what additional social-emotional supports these women receive. In 'What happens after prison..' A counselor is depicted listening to Erroll's frustrations with not being allowed to see his girlfriend. Otherwise, it is unclear if parolees depicted in the OTO releases have any access to therapy and social emotional supports at all. This may not be an accurate portrayal of the issue.

*Supports: Employment Assistance.* Five out of seven OTO media releases depict parolees finding employment. Erroll gains employment in a restaurant. Rob gains employment with an undisclosed company, and another gains employment in a mattress warehouse. On several occasions, parolees are told by P.O.'s that they must secure employment. The struggle for some parolees to even find employment is also acknowledged. For example, in *'Opioid Users..."* it is mentioned that Dave never held a steady job; however, state and national data indicates that parolees are far less likely to find meaningful employment that what is depicted in the OTO material. *This <u>may not be</u> an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

*Link to (Extreme) Childhood Trauma.* The correlation between childhood trauma and likelihood of incarceration is well documented. In five of the seven OTO media releases, parolee's traumatic childhood experiences are highlighted. In most cases, these experiences are extreme – Vaughn watched stabbings, beatings, etc. as a child. Erroll's aunt, her son, and her boyfriend were murdered by the aunt's ex-boyfriend when he was a youth. Rob scored a 9/10 on the Adverse Childhood Experience (A.C.E.) childhood trauma survey - his father was a drug dealer, his mother and sister overdosed on methadone. A.C.E. childhood trauma survey. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

*CIP Perspective.* Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) has emerged as a field worthy of study in the literature and it a widespread phenomenon in the U.S. Specifically in CT, 54% of those incarcerated are caregivers to an average of 2.19 children, this equates to approximately 62,000 children in CT have a caregiver who has been arrested.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is appropriate that CIP youth are highlighted in four of the seven OTO media releases. Some of the depictions in LOP, include: As a child, Jessica's son thought that his aunt was his 'bio-mom' - "The only thing that I knew was that she was locked up,' he said about his biological mother. For Reanne, having her father (Rob) in and out of prison during her entire childhood was 'routine.' She says, "he missed my 10-year old birthday, but will be here for my 11<sup>th</sup>." By the end of the film, Reanne and her father are no longer speaking. In "What happens after prison,' six out of the 10 parolees filmed had parents who were incarcerated. The *Times Facebook video* implies that children want to see their father come home, which is often, but not always the case. In 'Gun to his head..'. it is mentioned that Rob only communicated with one of his four children. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

**Urban Poverty.** As with childhood trauma and educational attainment, there is a strong correlation with incarceration and living in an urban poverty. This relationship was exacerbated in the 1980's with the spike in drug-related arrests due to the 'war on drugs' being exclusively fought in poor, urban communities. Although the viewer might infer about the economic class of the parolees by their portrayal in the OTO media, the issue of homelessness is only presented in the Dave and Dani story (not featured in LOP). Otherwise, neither poverty nor the overrepresentation of persons of color in the justice system is depicted directly. *This <u>may not</u> be an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Pressure on P.O. to Ensure 'Public Safety.'** Stakeholders acknowledged that there is immense pressure on P.O.s to ensure public safety and if a parolee were to commit a violent crime, the first person to be scrutinized (or scapegoated) will be the P.O.. Three of the seven OTO media releases acknowledge this pressure. When describing his frustration with Erroll, Officer Pawlich mentions the need to "dot your i's and cross your t's" in his documentation of his parolee. In one of the NY Times articles, it mentions the Cheshire murders and the fact that both men were on parole. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Prison / Parole does not Prepare for Reentry Success.** Among the stakeholders, there was widespread agreement that the DOC does not effectively prepare returning citizens for reentry success. In LOP, the narrator states that 1/3 of parolees in CT violate their parole terms and are re-incarcerated. But according to 'What stats can't explain..' and the Facebook video, six of the 10 individuals followed in the project were re-incarcerated. In 'Life After Prison..." the narrator states that 43% of those released from prison will return.' *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Needs Created in Children's Daily Lives by the Arrest of a Caregiver, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, Central Connecticut State University, Conway, Provencher, & Keays. (2016)

**Balance Storytelling with (Generalizable) Data.** Several stakeholders indicated that for a film to be successful, it would need to balance the telling of stories of individuals with the larger context and trends that are identified in the literature. In five of the seven OTO media releases, generalizable research is used to support the stories of the parolees. For example, in LOP the narrator states 'For many parolees, CT requires drug treatment.' In 'Gun to His Head..", the narrator generalizes Rob's ACE survey results with the literature. These examples give the impression that the filmmakers are aware of the trends related to this issue and are concerned with ensuring representativeness. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Show the Humanity of the Issue.** LOP illustrates the humanity of the issue from multiple perspectives. A range of differing emotions are displayed in nearly all OTO releases. PO's are showing wanting their cases to succeed and / or are frustrated when they don't. Some P.O.'s work towards building a relationship with their cases, while others struggle to de-escalate tense interactions with their parolees. All of the individuals on parole struggle. It's clear to the view that these individuals are frustrated, but they want to succeed. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Expectations: Success vs. Failure vs. 'Rugged Individualism'.** In LOP, Officer Montoya states of Jessica, "I think she will make it." But otherwise, the viewer is not given a strong impression that the PO expects their parolee to succeed. In LOP, Mike Lawlor states that 'it's not uncommon for parolees to return (to prison)...the challenge is how to keep them from returning to prison." Note: Stakeholders mentioned the need to measure reentry success vs. recidivism. In several of the OTO releases, the parolee's state that they would rather go back to jail because it is easier than parole. On the other hand, P.O.'s give the impression that parolees simply need to make better decisions and simply giving them more opportunities will help them do that. This flawed logic is likely an accurate perspective driving DOC policy, but it contradicts brain science. Given the apparent stress that many parolees appear to be under in addition to having mental health needs, it is not surprising that, over time, many would seek other means to help them feel better, whether it be dangerous behaviors, pharmaceuticals or recreational drugs. When Rob was fired, it nearly took him over the edge - he got fed up and left halfway house to take his daughter to get sneakers, he bought enough dope 'thinking I would die, but it didn't happen..' *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

**Opportunities for Policy Change.** Montoya says, ""We often see them get rearrested after treatment ends, because they can't get a job and they don't know anything else." Prof. Doherty recommends specific policy changes. She states, "The key to reforming the parole system in Connecticut is changing the dynamics of the invisible meetings that happen all over the state between parolees and their parole officers. If the atmosphere in those rooms is reflective of the reform vision of the top, then change in Connecticut will happen. And if it's not, it will be very hard to make change stick...The closer the oversight, the more violations you are going to find." Doherty's perspectives are mirrored by a few interactions between PO's and their parolee's that can be best described as condescending (ex. Why are we seeing each other today? Erroll – "I'm not sure." Pawlich -"Yeah, you are...")

LOP also highlights the punitive consequences of limiting parolee's earned pay - Rob's Money is controlled by the half-way house staff, he receives \$1/hr that he earns. According to Rob, "I feel that it's not worth it to work." Parolee's need permission to go anywhere other than work and the half-way house. Erroll is not allowed to live with his girlfriend / fiancée because she was identified as a victim.

The punitive rules of parole appear to create a lot of tension, resentment, and anger among parolees towards their PO's. In addition, it appears that the Parole staff, at times, does not have regard for parolee's personal space and possessions – After returning from work and learning that one of his housemates overdosed, Erroll states "Because of the overdoes and the death here today, parole came here and trashed my stuff." *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

# **OTO Impact: A Tool for Empowering Stakeholders & Communities**

To what extent can OTO, as form of documentary storytelling about reentry, best be used to empower communities and individuals impacted by mass incarceration? We explored this question through four levels of analysis: parolees, DOC, higher education, the general public, and the media. The impact of our distribution strategy for each group is described below.

**Impact on Parolees**. From the perspective of the four parolees interviewed for this project, the OTO media release is an accurate portrayal of the parole / reentry experience and can be a useful tool for engaging the public.

During Jeff's interview of Bobby, whose experiences on parole were filmed but his story was not included in the final cut, he said that the documentary was "pretty good," and that it "could be used to show it to people who have never really been in the system, to know what it's like..." Bobby further stated, "It's oppressive....Once you've made that bad choice, it's really difficult to turn it around....It's about choices you make, it's about good consequences and bad consequences....and "once you get arrested...(people) think there's no future once you get in the system..." Regarding being filmed for the documentary, Bobby said, "I enjoyed your company. I was a good feel'n to be followed and filmed. I really enjoyed it. I appreciated being followed for the film...it was a good experience for me. Ya'll good people, man. I respect what you all are doing."

Jessica's experiences on parole were a major focus of the LOP film. She remained on the outside and even served on a LOP screening panel at the 2018 New Haven Film festival, until her re-arrest for violating parole in early 2019. Before the film screening, Jessica was interviewed by Jeff Arak. Of her experienced being filmed for LOP, Jessica said "I felt like (the documentary) was awesome. I got a lot of positive feedback about it. I felt like a lot was left out, but it was seen by a lot. Maybe it made a difference to some people...there are people in authority who are willing to give help and not just lock someone up. Whereas though beforehand, I didn't experience it. I wasn't willing to accept the help. I hope (the documentary) will be used for educational purposes, to educate the public on people go through things in life. You know, things happen and it's all up to that person and society to better ourselves. I've had people stop me and thank me and say that I'm an inspiration and wish me luck on my journey.

That makes me feel good." Jessica also spoke about the importance of trying to steer her son away from the same mistakes that she made. "My son: I'm doin the same thing to wit him, trying to stop him from livin the live that I lived."

"I have an excellent parole officer who is behind me, who is behind every decision I make in my life. She gives me the positive and the negative of every situation." – Jessica

Project evaluator Jacob Werblow interviewed two former parolees ('Warren' and 'Keith'), who also served as panelists for the community conversations after the film screenings. Regarding their response to the OTO materials, both men felt that the film was accurate and portrayed the challenges that parolees and POs are under. They said that they were both encouraged of IMRP's effort in hosting public screening in various communities around Connecticut. Regarding LOP, Warren commented that although it's impossible to cover every issue in one hour, he felt that one thing missing from the film was more of a focus on the trauma that the parolees had experienced. He felt that if the cause of the trauma is not addressed in prison or reentry, then it is unlikely that the returning individual will ever be able to successfully reintegrate into society. On the other hand, Keith felt that the most important factor in determining the success of returning individuals is making better choices and learning to ask for help. According to Keith, "when parolees are ready to follow the rules and decide to change, they will be successful."

Although the parolees interviewed for this project felt that the OTO materials were accurate and beneficial, it is difficult to stay that the OTO media release led to a greater sense of empowerment. Given the complexity of the lives of many individuals in reentry and the high rates of reincarceration in Connecticut, it was difficult to involve parolees in this project or even gather their perspectives on it. As stated previously, of the 12 individuals filmed for the OTO media project, only two agreed to be interviewed, and only one participated in public screenings.

**Impact on DOC**. As previously stated, the CT DOC deserves praise for allowing unprecedented access to the DCTV filmmakers to capture the realness and complexity of parole in CT. This shows clear openness and leadership from the top levels of the administration. According to Jeff Arak, a co-producer of the OTO, when the DOC was shown the final cut of the film, they were pleased with it, calling it "very accurate" and "balanced." Months later, however, after the documentary was aired nationally, Andrew Clark and Jacob Werblow met with the DOC administration, and received a more reserved response. At this time, the DOC indicated that they were not interested in: (a) using the film for any educational or professional development purposes within the DOC, (b) participating in public screenings or community conversations, (c) nor in providing a public statement about the film and its impact. Because of this response, the OTO project might have actually had a *disempowering* impact on the CT DOC. Initially, the Leadership Team planned to develop curriculum and learning modules for screenings within the DOC, but because of their lack of interest, we chose to focus our efforts on expanding the public screenings.

**Impact on Higher Education.** From the perspective of institutions of higher education in Connecticut, OTO has had a very positive impact. At the time of writing the report our distribution strategy, has and continues to successfully impacted universities across the state of Connecticut. Thus far, we have screened LOP to over 500 university students at Eastern Connecticut State University, Central Connecticut State University, and UCONN, and have received very positive results in the audience surveys. Future screenings in 2019 are planned at Quinnipiac School of Law. In most cases, audience surveys have been collected at each of the screenings. Results are provided in the following section.

**Impact on the General Public.** Given IMRP's objective to use the *Life on Parole* (LOP) documentary to inform the public about the complexities of reentry, the LOP leadership Team developed a brief survey to capture attendees' perspectives on the film and the issue of parole in general. This survey was developed through several iterations, which emerged from topics discussed in the two stakeholder focus groups. Out of approximately 250 participants, 232 completed the surveys for an 92% completion rate. At the time of writing this report, seven more screenings across CT are confirmed through April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Below is a summary of all results for the data available, including higher education. Results of individual screenings to date are provided in Appendix F.

When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)", 232 individuals responded:

I didn't know well	much about it	Somewh	Somewhat knowledgeable		Yes, I know it
0	1	2	3	4	5
8% (n=18)	18% (n=41)	11% (n=26)	31% ( <i>n=72)</i>	13% ( <i>n=31)</i>	13% ( <i>n=29)</i>

The data presented above illustrates that 1/4 of all attendees felt that they were *less than* "somewhat knowledgeable" about the issues of reentry and incarceration and that 1/4 felt that they know the issues well or that they were knowledgeable of the issues. This shows that our efforts were successful in engaging a cross-section of CT residents, both those with and without a great deal of knowledge of the issues. In the following sections, we present the themes that emerged across the responses.

When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", the following themes emerged in the attendees' responses: \* = rated themselves as 'knowledgeable' on the topic of incarceration and reentry.

*The system is broken / doesn't work.* The most popular response was about how the "system is broken / doesn't work". Out of 232 comments, 30% were related to this theme. Within this theme, one subtopic was that participants felt "the system is setup fail and take advantage of parolees." This comment only hints at a belief that they system is inadequate but that it is designed to further punish parolees by taking advantage of them. Others commented that the

system needs to be 'rethought,' 'reformed' or that it simply 'needs to improve.' Others acknowledged that the system is challenging for both the parolee and the PO – 'both (people) are suffering' and that 'it's complicated.'

- "to unflexible"
- "parole is very difficult and often seems unreasonable"
- "It was difficult to understand how the parole changes a person's behavior in the felon"
- "parole has too many rules / way for parolees to fail"
- "there is no easy solution to the justice system"
- "how difficult"
- "How hard it is for some people to live a "normal life", the deck is stacked against them. they (parolees) just don't stand a chance"
- "how our CJ system needs to improve"
- "The system is set up to fail & take advantage of parolees"
- "The system needs help"
- "penal system needs to be rethought. Look to other countries for ideas, what appears to work"
- "there are many reasons why people cannot survive parole. No one magic bullet'
- "It is very difficult for many to go halfway and that is frustrating for all. perhaps all the reviews are in place."
- \*"people are suffering"
- "the power & control dynamic is still so powerful. Very tough to see"
- "conduct issues should not mean re-incarceration." \*
- "parole needs to be reformed."\*
- "The importance of knowing parolee's support system. Cannot be told 'Get a job & stay out of trouble."
- "The great difficulty of living under the parole system."
- "The harsh conditions / expectations of early release, lack of tools available to parolees to succeed."
- "It's a systemic problem that we don't know how to fix. No one is perfect."
- "Hard to change the system"\*
- "The system isn't working & needs to be changed"
- "Changing incarceration from punitive to rehabilitative"
- "Difficulty in reforming the CJ system' difficulties on both sides parolees held to standard they're likely to have a hard time meeting; parole officers having a really tough job."
- "that the rules are too rigid & not individualized for helping people succeed"\*
- "how difficult it is to succeed while on parole"
- "how negative and angry one of the PO's was. The culture of prison is destructive"
- "how hard it is to be in this situation"
- "how unrealistic the expectations are on parolees. It seems like they are set up to fail."\*
- "its so complicated, no easy fixes"
- "how difficult parole is, I'm exhausted after viewing it..."

- "men and women on parole can be violated and returned to prison without committing any NEW crimes – the supervision is complicated and frustrating for everyone" \*
- "structural supports (or barriers) that are interconnected we are all responsible and affected (powerful film, presenters, & good discussion)"
- "parole is impossible to succeed at"
- "parole is difficult"
- "re-entry is hard"
- "parole = inmate, many challenges that they face when transitioning from prison to the 'real' world"
- "parole sets convicts up for failure, they are people with lives and futures, who deserve a chance to be successful"
- "we need to make it easier for parolees to be able to reenter society. The current system makes it impossible to succeed. We must take some action to change it."
- "you are at risk of going back to jail if you violate parole"
- "parole may be more difficult that prison itself"
- "parole restrictions aren't designed to help people coming out of jail and violations are too strict."
- "The parole system is just as flawed as the courts and police departments. There are different perspectives about parole; POs see it as a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance and parolees see it as a tool that makes it difficult for them to adjust to society"
- "A lot of individuals go back to drugs or violate their parole, which causes them to go back to prison. This indicates a lack of (successful) rehab for inmates in prison"
- "parole needs to get fixed b/c it's really there to put people back in jail"
- "how easily people abuse parole when it is designed to help reacclimatize people"
- "(Parolees) need to be given a chance. Sending people back to prison doesn't help. Taking parolee's money wastes their time."
- "parole is almost worse than just being in prison. A lot of them just want to do their time and get out without parole hanging on them."
- "when in the halfway house, the parolees don't get any freedom"
- "how unsupportive the state, i.e. POs are in helping folks be successful"

*Life on Parole is an accurate portrayal of the system.* 15% of participants commented that the film is an accurate portrayal of parole in Connecticut. Specifically, people commented that the film presents a 'clear understanding of the complicated lives of parolees', (parolees) don't always change (succeed) at the first try,' and that is 'easy to violate parole.' Note: It is also important to state that *no participants indicated that the film was an inaccurate portrayal* of parole or biased towards either the DOC or parolees.

- A refresher course of what I left when I was working at HPD for 10 years" \*
- "informative" \*
- "it's imperative to listen to the voice of reentrants to understand the challenges / successes of the experience of someone returning home" \*
- "How the parole system works" \*
- "clear understanding of the complicated lives of the parolees"
- "parole is a way for re-entry into the community"\*

- "the system of parole in CT and how it operates"
- "parolees don't get as much freedom as expected, their basis of living is very different and they have many restrictions."
- "Just b/c a person is released does not mean that they are free when assigned parole."
- "trying to get these people back on track and giving them a few chances. People don't always change at the first try"
- "the levels and rules and concepts POs try to push for. How easily the slightest thing can send someone back to parole or jail, away from loved ones."
- "the struggle of parole is just as hard as prison for some people"
- "(parolees) have no privacy. Every little thing they do can affect parole"
- "it's extremely easy for people on parole to be sent back to jail; the rules are very strict. Jessica's story was also important b/c she was able to succeed."
- "how hard it may be for some people to follow the rules and how long some may have to stay on parole"
- "How ex-prisoners are treated & how no matter how small or insignificant the infraction is, they can (return to jail) for not complying"
- "how easy it is to violate parole"
- "how easy it is for parolees to violate their terms"
- "seeking all the challenges they face, but most importantly the chances they get after a slip up"
- "to not give up on parolees, people need second chances"
- "how strict the rules are while on probation, even if the action didn't seem like a big deal"
- "how hard it is for parolees to follow the rules on parole"
- "how easy it is to break parole. The structure of parole is important but does not give them much freedom, which causes them to break their parole anyways. Some see going back to prison as an easier choice."
- "the struggle for both parolee & PO when it comes to having the parolee get used to everyday life with the restrictions"
- "Variety of opinions on how it is presented, great interest in subject."\*

Life on Parole screening & discussion humanizes the issue. The second most popular theme was that the film humanizes the issue of parole. 13% of respondents made a comment related to this theme. Specifically, some comments touched upon that it's difficult for parolees to 'cope', parole is 'frustrating,' etc. Regarding solutions, several participants commented that POs 'should take more of an emotional / psychological' approach, they need to show 'empathy', be less 'condescending,' and address the reason why a parolee (or inmate) is there in the first place.

- "that everyone is human and have feelings/emotions. Very had to change behavior (hard job for the parole officers also)"
- "It is harder for some people to cope with parole and living in the community. it takes time and patience"

- "the suggestion that parole leaders should take more of an emotional psychological (approach)"
- "Necessity of relationships working with paroles. Need people who want to help parole."
- "never give up on those in need"
- "People's lives are complicated and parole is hard."
- "Parole officer difficult position, need training ."
- "All individuals in film were traumatized, the missing piece of the puzzle is getting them help to resolve this karma."
- \*"We have to dig deep, it to the 'why' (reason) the person is there in the first place."
- "Apparent diminished respect for parolees who try but mess up somewhat."
- "Empathy & purpose drive success"
- "need to humanize everyone in the incarceration system"\*
- "the complexity of the problem & the fact that some people are engaged & sincere in making change"
- "hardship on the family"
- "the human side of people who were incarcerated"\*
- "Naturally people are going to get frustrated when they are told they are free, but have strict curfews, and not allowing them to have access."
- "PO's need to talk to parolees, not at that or down to them. The way parolees are treated by their PO's has a huge impact on whether or not they go back to prison."
- "the challenges people experience during parole"
- "the frustrations of being on parole."
- "some of the POs speak to their clients in a condescending manner. Individuals on parole are human beings and deserve to be treated as such. It is important that parole be used as a rehabilitative tool, and POs help their clients as best they can."
- "parole is rough on many people, they feel free, yet, have many restrictions and temptations that make abiding by all the rules very tough"
- "how some parolees intensely care about violating their parole while others could seem to care less"

Supports are unknown / insufficient. 11% of participants commented that the film screening and discussion shows a need for more supports – either that supports are needed or that it is not clear what supports are available to parolees. Specifically, participants commented that parolees need more 'transitional support,' better drug and alcohol treatment,' and counseling, and that the current programs are 'inadequate.'

- "If there are support systems for prisoners on parole they can enter society successfully"
- "people leaving prison need transitional support"
- "the government needs more help"
- "the emphasis and need for strong drug and alcohol support programs and family or significant other support"

- "That working towards counseling and integration goes along way to help those exiting prison."
- "I understood from the film & the panelists that respect for human dignity and compassion are the important factors in successful reentry"
- "we need peers / lived experience volunteering w/ parole"
- need for treatment"
- "empathy & compassion to and from parolees"
- "states need to make rules and hire/ train POs so they have some discretion to favor rehabilitation over punishment"
- "disparity in who went back to jail for breaking parole & who got opportunities / perks...parole seems like a system set to fail more often than not."
- "That changes have occurred within the DOC but so much more needs to be done."\*
- "Need for drug & mental health treatment"\*
- "Complicated issue, reentry requires more support, addressing underlying issues & trauma"
- "relationships are essential for successful reentry"\*
- "drug(s) ruin people's life"
- "drug addicts do not belong in prison"
- "importance of programs for treatment vs. incarceration"
- "that these are programs available for parolees (but not enough)"

*POs are inconsistent, need better training.* Five percent of participants commented that POs have too much 'discretion', 'not enough education / training', and is a large variation of the quality between them.

- "PO's have a lot of discretion as to how they enforce the terms of parole & whether they care more about rehabilitation vs. punishment"
- "treatment from PO and how each react different thur experience or no experience"\*
- "more education for parolees"
- "more education for parolees"
- "that (they're) different levels to parole and how they can handle different parolees."\*
- "There is much to do in order to reduce recidivism. It seems the effectiveness of parole varies a lot depending on the parole officer."
- "The discretion that parole officers have. The difference in style (and quality) of parole officers"
- "discretion of POs"
- "How much discretion the POs have"

*POs: tension between helping vs. punishing.* Five percent of participants also commented on the tension that PO's have between serving as a support system, like a 'social worker', vs. serving as a disciplinarian or police. This dual role may create difficulty for both the parolee and for the PO in their interactions and enforcement of the stipulations of parole vs. advocacy and support for the parolee's rehabilitation.

- "That parole needs to decide if it's role is to help offenders or supervise them"\*
- "P.O. role / social work vs. disciplinary role"
- "public safety is most important"

- "To be a PO, you need to have several outlooks onto the parolees so they can help the parolee and the community around them.."
- "The job of a PO isn't to look up everyone who makes mistakes, but to help them along the process of rehab."
- 'Where's the line draws between POs helping and catching the parolee for doing wrong?"
- "PO's are torn between catching people and being POs and also being helpful & sending them to rehab.."
- "PO's job is to be a social worker & enforcer of the law they need to help the parolee as well as protect the community"
- "should POs focus on actually helping these individuals, rather than focusing on changing bad behavior?"

*Hopeful - There's an effort to change the system.* Five percent of participants indicated that they felt that 'changes will happen', 'success is possible'

- "Things can change" \*
- "believe people can change"\*
- "success is possible"\*
- "changes will happen"\*
- "the continued changes we need to compete"\*
- "the new ideas in CT for parole"
- "that there is hope for success in getting out of prison & leading a responsible life, but is still a way to go"
- "That there is effort to make changes"
- "the idea of parole"

*If parolees work hard, they can be successful.* Six participants made comments supporting the belief that success requires 'determination' of the parolee to turn his/her life around, that that need to follow the rules, and 'take it seriously.' These comments display a belief in meritocracy and that by simply being determined and following the rules, parolees will be successful; however, these comments are in the extreme minority, less than 4% of participants expressed these views.

- "It takes a lot of determination to turn lives around"
- "That they can have a different & better life if they work out when they get paroled"
- "life on parole is not life anyone (wants). There are rules with consequences."\*
- "second change program can work for those who take it seriously"
- "People on parole need strict guidelines with POs who are knowledgeable and know how to appropriately deal with situations that occur."
- "as long as you follow the rules during parole, the criminal will be fine. But the rules are strict"

When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

\* = rated themselves as 'knowledgeable' on the topic of incarceration and reentry.

*Nothing missing.* The most common response (8% of participants), was that there was 'nothing' missing from the film screening and discussion and that they did not have any suggestions.

*Need for models that work (other states / countries).* The next most common response (7% of participants) was that there was need for other examples or models that work, specifically from other states or countries.

- "a comparison of what works and does not work in other states /countries"
- "I would have liked to see some positive programs that are in the system"
- "a complete success story, reintegration start to finish"
- "success stories?"
- "more focus on positive aspects (film)"
- "future possibilities"
- "could have been more in depth as to how the rehabilitation really works too surface"
- "Comparison with (openund?) justice system that don't have parole system or federal system. "
- "(other) options"
- "what are other progressive states? And how to maintain forward momentum?
- "these stories were about inmates who all violated the rules of parole. Maybe talk about one individual who did follow the parole rules and how they were able to do it. Treatment programs? Support systems?
- "How to help people avoid getting into trouble while on parole"

*Better discussion / facilitation.* 6% of participants commented that the discussion needed better facilitation. Note all of these comments came during the first three screenings, while IMPR was working out the best structure and format given the time and resources allowed.

- "more time for questions, discussions"
- "need more questions & discussion"
- \*norms at beginning of discussion- I felt like some people took over the commentary"\*
- "Structure, more information / different perspectives."
- "More sensitive moderations"
- "some of the context that was explained & expanded on in the discussions afterwards also, how the parolees think about their lives – how they approach live – what they want & hope for & what options are possible – like if Jesse could be hired as a nurse."
- "film = excellent, better management of discussion needed"
- "needed better facilitation, warren dominated too much"
- "more time for discussion"
- "A better set up for discussion after the film."
- "more discussion regarding parole & probation"

*Need for more diverse perspectives in the film (esp. women).* Five percent of participants commented that more diverse perspectives are needed in the film and discussion, specifically more perspectives of women, victims, and parolees at work.

• "I would have liked to see more (coverage of) female incarceration"\*

- "Rob's PO. Also their history"\*
- "victims"\*
- "offenders completing time in prison and being released to be homeless in the world."\*
- "women on parole"
- "more cases of women"
- "it would be interesting to see the parolees at work, and see what they are entailed to do on a daily basis."
- "I would like to see their thoughts while incarcerated"
- "maybe how officers handle those who don't follow any rules"
- "A funders' view, an employee's view, legislator's comments on how important and effective advocacy can be."\*

*Need to see impact of parole / incarceration on youth / families.* Five participants commented that they would have likes to see more perspectives from parolee's kids, children, and family.

- "I would have liked to see more from the parolee's kids, spouses, and family and how it has directly affected their lives"
- "youth & teens who are at-risk"
- "family view (film)"
- "I'd like to see more how parole impacts the offender's family"
- "I wonder if the families get any help during their family members parole experience like the mom & daughter the girlfriend?"

*Need for more diverse perspectives of parolees (panel).* 21 participants commented that they would have liked to see / hear different perspectives on the panel, especially having POs on the panel (note: We invited DOC throughout this process, but they did not want to be involved).

- "the experience on the panel of the African American male"
- "more people from the community"
- "only giving parolees (perspectives) who have been successful with job placement & staying clean"
- "more people who were on parole on the speakers' panel"
- "Health care specialists in attendance."
- "more people"
- "more views from parolees"

*CT PO trainings? How to improve?* Eight participants commented on their interest to learn more about how PO are trained.

- 'how to improve resources & opportunities available for parolees"
- "how POs receive training?"
- "POs need better training before beginning their first year on the job"
- "maybe, more examples of how there are other ways to help parolees see the bigger picture."
- "how to incorporate a more helpful program into parolee that actually helps reintegration."
- "A depiction of empathy by parole officers (other than Montoya). "
- "What training to parole officers (currently) receive?"

• "How PO's are trained." \*

More information needed (general)

- "statistics and numbers"
- "perhaps statistics on the # of people in prison & they're crimes"
- "would be nice to know what happened to everyone next."
- "halfway houses location contracts ½ house operation (agency) length of parole? Concur" supervision of parole officers 'policing their own". Must be nasty ones out there. It must attract power hungry people."
- "some specific ideas of different ways to get involved in these issues & make a difference"
- "Have a program given by halfway houses."
- "the parole side, not just the victims"
- "which supervisions are PO's under? Are they starting to focus more of helping parolees instead of serving them no guidance? Do judges ever dismiss violations POs bring parolees in for?
- "Do POs think the system is too harsh on certain offenders?"
- "I think what is missing is what these people went through to get parole"
- "Criminal: lack of insight in behavior"
- "work together"
- "what happens to those who were re-incarcerated or giving another chance at parole? How they cope? What new goals they seek?"
- "the effects of placement on individual's residence sometimes some neighborhoods result in breaking or violating terms of parole"
- "more of the POs struggles and experiences"

**Representativeness of the Panelists**. In nearly all public screenings, individuals with direct experience with parole (as a parolee, researcher, or former DOC staff member) were contracted to participate on panel discussions after the film. In this way, the perspectives of those directly involved always played a meaningful part of the conversation. Throughout the two years of this project, several members of the LOP Leadership Team contacted the CT DOC and invited them to participate. With the exception of the film screening at the <u>2018 Building Bridges Conference</u>, when CT DOE Director of Parole Joe Hagan joined the panel, on all occasions the DOC declined to be involved.

# Impact on the Media

To investigate the landscape of US media coverage on issues of re-entry and to follow the conversation generated by the *Frontline* broadcast and the *New York Times* Coverage, *Media Cloud* was used to analyze the impact of the broadcast of the OTO media release. *Media Cloud* is a system for tracking discourse in digital media. Although many other systems look at how frequently a post or message is shared or viewed, *Media Cloud* looks at something subtler — the capacity and variety of language used to describe a specific issue. This information can be compared with the national and local CT pre-and post-coverage of such topics.

As part of the case study, IMRP responded to the analyses conducted by *Media Cloud*. A description of our response is provided here:

It is interesting that the media covers 'parole' far less than 'recidivism' and 'reentry.' The landscape analysis concludes that 'parole' only appears to get the media's attention as an anomaly or a case-by-case basis (ex. O.J. Simpson, the Cheshire Murders) and not as a policy/program. Thus, the media provides little context and content on this issue. This is similar to the 'racial profiling' media coverage in Connecticut, each year the media widely cover's the list of towns that are flagged for racial profiling in the traffic stop analysis; however, the secondary analysis follow-up report receives almost no media attention, even though it goes deeper into the data by identifying when, how, and why the racial profiling is occurring in each town.

When exploring the *Media Cloud* Analysis during the distribution of the *On the Outside* releases, unfortunately, it does not appear to have drastically changed the trend in media coverage on the issue of 'parole.' Although this is somewhat disappointing, it leaves us with an opportunity to measure the extent to which the case study rollout in Connecticut can change the depth and breadth of media coverage on the issue of 'parole' as well as measure if our efforts spark a national conversation.

Given the lack of attention that 'parole' receives in the media, we see two opportunities: (a) to bring attention to the efficacy of parole as a program in the media, to draw attention to what's working, what should be improved, and to identify models of best practice; and (b) to better cultivate relationships with state, local, and national media outlets so that when a high-profile case do occur, we might be able to help provide more of a context and background, especially when the stories are planned around parole review boards (ex. in Connecticut, former governor John Rowland going up for parole).

Although it is interesting to a see a visual of the rates of sentences / day of 'recidivism' and 'reentry' in the media, it would be more helpful to include comparisons to this rate vs. other concepts ('crime', 'incarceration', 'arrest,' 'parole', etc.) in the same graph. This would allow us to have a better understanding of how much attention is given to differing sides of the issue of incarceration and reentry. Just by reviewing the analysis, we see that 'parole' gets thousands more coverage hits in the media per day than does 're-entry' / 'recidivism.' Although the coverage for both terms is relatively small, it would be useful to compare rates of 'recidivism' vs. 'reentry' in the same graph, as they are not synonymous.

In the justice system, language means something and language has changes significantly over the past twenty years. If there were people from the justice

system involved in the coverage of an article than it is more likely that the article would contain terms such as 'returning citizen' or 'formerly incarcerated individual' vs. 'ex-convict' or 'parolee.' But these linguistic differences, have not always taken place in the media. By separating these terms in future analyses, we can better isolate the lens of analysis used in the media.

Additionally, it would be interesting to analyze how these topics are presented differently in various media outlets. For example, on p.7, *The Atlantic, The NY Times,* and *USA Today* are the three media outlets with the most Facebook shares and some of the most coverage of the issue; however, these media outlets vary in their readership, quality, and, arguably, positionality. Thus, it would be valuable to note if the substance of these topics is covered differently.

**OTO storylines & Reorienting the Issue**. *Media Cloud's* landscape analysis found that parole is often covered in the state and national media as a news media and event driven topic, while 're-entry' and 'recidivism' are covered as policy issues. Given this important finding, it is clear that OTO addresses this gap at both the state and national level. In addition, the LOP documentary appears to humanize the issue of parole from both the viewpoints of parolees, their family members, and POs, as the products were widely praised from individuals representing the DOC, reentry community, and academia. Therefore, OTO appears to provide an entry point for multiple stakeholders to further explore this issue.

#### Follow-Up Stakeholder Focus Group

Ten individuals participated in a follow-up focus group on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at IMRP. In attendance were individuals representing the Malta Justice Initiative, the Reentry Roundtables, IMRP, the Department of Corrections (retired), and Family ReEntry.<sup>9</sup>

Of the items discussed, participants agreed that LOP was an accurate portrayal of CT's current system of parole. Attendees expressed that the frustration of the POs that was depicted in the film was "clear and real," and acknowledged that "Parole officers have a difficult job with limited supports."

Regarding positive policy changes, which may or may not be as a result of the film, two individuals stated that PO's are now making referrals to the local Alternative in the Community Programs (AIC), of which there are 19 in the state. Since September, it was reported that Hartford PO's have made at least 25 referrals, which participants found commendable. There is concern, however, that risk and needs assessments are not being conducted when individuals are given parole, so parolees are being referred to AIC only after they have committed a violation. Participants also expressed the need for better communication between the DOC and support networks during reentry. One individual expressed, "There is little connection between the good things that (inmates do) during incarceration and when (they are) on parole. Programs need to have better

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Interview via telephone after the meeting along with one staff member from IMRP.

knowledge what each returning citizen has accomplished (during incarceration). If it's not followed up in the community, how can they be successful?"

In addition, there was a general consensus that all CT PO's should have the same supports that exist in the TRUE Unit. Regarding halfway houses, participants were frustrated with the lack of oversight. One individual, with a great deal of experience working within the DOC, stated that the "state has never evaluated the effectiveness of halfway houses." Another individual, who was formerly employed by the DOC, agreed. Another participant stated that "In some ways, the DOC is using halfway houses as a holding area, regardless of what people's needs are. People who could best succeed in a halfway house are people with long sentences." Another expressed frustration that, "There isn't a lot of hope for people in reintegration centers because the community involvement has decreased in recent years."

In general, participants agreed that "There's a lot of good talk about CT doing well (related to this issue), but the practices and policies of the DOC don't see to support the narrative." There was a general frustration with the lack of willingness of the DOC to support this project and to support meaningful change in parole / re-entry. One individual expressed frustration – "In the film (LOP), the DOC is (expletive) embarrassing," and that the current DOC leadership shows little motivation to make meaningful change. The Cincinnati model was mentioned - "They (the POs) are just doing it to show that they are doing something, but most PO's treat it like a joke.... If the new commissioner isn't disgusted by (the film), then he / she is not a good fit for the position."

Regarding the toolkit, participants felt that it was an excellent resource and could be an excellent resource for incoming Governor Lamont's transition team. Participants suggested to: Link to CT Reentry Collaborative Site – "How I can get involved?" and add the Quinnipiac, Trinity, & Wes prison projects. All suggestions were incorporated into the final copy of the Tool-Kit, which is now available on the IMRP website.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

This project is unique in the complexity of its content, engagement strategy, and multi-layered evaluation. It is important to note that stakeholder perspectives were central to this project's direction. Specifically, multiple stakeholders were involved in: (a) determining the measures of success of the evaluation and appropriateness of the project; (b) serving as panelists following film screenings; and (c) assisting in the coordination and the dissemination of the engagement strategy.

Stakeholder perspectives were essential in determining the significant gaps that the OTO media release did not adequately address, so that we could provide supplementary resources to the general public as well as organizations or individuals interested in facilitating a film screening

and community conversation. For example, stakeholders repeatedly stated (both in the focus groups and in screening participant surveys) a desire to know more about 'what works' or 'best-practice' in reentry. Thus, among other topics, we have identified and provided supplementary resources highlighting the German / Finnish models, as they are widely recognized as two of the most successful prison and reentry systems in the world. These, along with other useful resources are provided in **Appendix E.** 

**Awards and Recognition**. According to numerous conversations, interviews, and surveys with multiple stakeholders (e.g., former parolees, former DOC administrators, academics, reentry service providers, and members of the general public), LOP appears to be an accurate and robust portrayal of parole in CT. By exploring the topic of parole in this way, LOP brings attention to an issue of national importance, one that has directly impacted tens of millions of people around the nation, yet has historically received little, if any, national media coverage. Since the summer of 2017, LOP has aired twice nationally and received two prestigious national media awards. In December 2018, *Frontline* was awarded the *DuPont-Columbia Gold Baton Award*, a prestigious award for excellence in journalism that hasn't been given in over a decade. LOP was specifically mentioned in the award letter from the DuPont-Columbia Award committee. LOP was also awarded the winner of the *2018 Media for a Just Society* in the TV/Video category.

Perhaps most importantly, the parolees interviewed for the film gave it glowing reviews. Of the two individuals we were able to interview, Jessica found that the experience "was awesome. I got a lot of positive feedback about it...Maybe it made a difference to some people..." Jessica was enrolled in the Parole Women's Reentry Unit. For Bobby, whose experiences on parole were filmed but his story was not included in the final cut, he said that the documentary was "pretty good," and that it "could be used to show it to people who have never really been in the system, to know what it's like...it's oppressive." Throughout over a year of public film screenings, we held numerous conversations with approximately 15-20 other citizens who had experienced serving on parole in CT. There was unanimous agreement that LOP was an accurate portrayal of the issue.

Given the depth of this analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, the OTO media project is an accurate portrayal of the complexities of parole through the lens of multiple viewpoints. Stakeholders felt that the stories / backgrounds of the sample of the 12 individuals recorded were representative of the state's parole population in terms of demographics, content, and context, and adequately captured the complexities of reentry from the viewpoints of both the P.O. and the parolee. Stakeholders strongly agreed that the specific topics of drug addiction, stress, that stipulations are made to be broken, PO's unilateral decision-making balanced with a tendency to show restraint, are all accurate portrayals of the issue. In addition, the importance of family supports, effective drug treatment, childhood trauma, CIP perspectives, pressure to ensure public safety, likelihood that parolees will recidivate, storytelling and providing generalizable data, humanizing the issue, and highlighting opportunities for policy changes are all notable topics given attention in the OTO materials. In this way, LOP sufficiently captures the complexity of 'parole' accurately, from the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders, which is, in

itself, a commendable task in a 55-minute time period. As a result of public screenings of LOP and OTO materials, we were further able to strengthen the impact of this effort by being able to expand and promote effective conversations on this sensitive, important, and timely topic.

*Media Cloud's* landscape analysis found that parole is often covered in the state and national media as a news media and event driven topic, while re-entry and recidivism are covered as policy issues. Given this important finding, it is clear that the OTO media addresses this gap at both the state and national level. In addition, the LOP documentary appears to humanize the issue of parole from both the viewpoints of parolees, their family members, and POs, as the products were widely praised from individuals representing the DOC, reentry community, and academia. Therefore, OTO appears to provide an entry point for multiple stakeholders to further explore this issue. As IMRP will begin piloting screenings of LOP in Hartford and New Haven in December and January, we will have a more complete understanding the effectiveness of OTO as a tool for reorienting the current conversation.

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Frontline rebroadcast LOP to a national audience. Although we cannot quantify the extent to which our case study and dissemination plan played a role in that decision, we can attest to the importance that the rebroadcast plays in helping us keep this issue in the local and national discourse.

#### **Recommendations for the CT Department of Corrections**

First, we want to acknowledge that parole is a challenging experience for both PO's and parolees. The CT DOC should be commended for providing access to the film producers, allowing the nation to see into the daily interactions and experiences of parolees and their POs, which is an experience that often receives little attention from the mainstream media. The current outcomes of parole in CT, however, are disappointing. When 60% of parolees return to CT prisons within three years, systemic reform is worthy of consideration. Despite the improvements that CT has made or attempted to make, it is concerning that some parolees would rather go back to jail and finish their sentence because of the frustration they feel towards their PO. The punitive rules of parole appear to create a lot of tension, resentment, and anger among parolees towards their PO's. In 2019, the CT Reentry Collaborative and the CT Office of Policy and Management co-authored an independent analysis of parole and reentry in the state, and calls for a number of policy changes, including a shift in the relationship between parole officers and supervised people from "confrontational and authoritarian to more helpful interactions."<sup>10</sup>

In addition, when speaking with Jessica one year after the film, she makes a strong case that the DOC should consider more flexible parole stipulations for parolees who have demonstrated that they are being successful. For example, she mentioned that the curfew should be taken away if parolees can demonstrate that they can demonstrate good behavior, by actions like

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> CT Reentry Collaborative (2019). *Planning for Successful Reentry: Strategies to Continue Connecticut's Second Chance Initiatives.* 

staying clean and maintaining successful employment. We encourage the CT DOC leadership to make a serious commitment to improve reentry outcomes and to explore other models of bestpractice, of which Norway and Germany are models worthy of our attention. In addition, we call upon the CT DOC to engage local stakeholders, bring both PO's and Parolees together to explore possibilities. As our work demonstrates, there is value in engaging stakeholders, especially those most impacted by the issue, in a meaningful way. As the popular phase states, "nothing about us, without us."

#### **Recommendations for Future Material & Media Coverage**

Based on our case study findings, we make the following recommendations for future media coverage on the issue of parole / reentry:

- Job training / continuing education What type of programs exist for parolees to have to effective job training and / or continuing education? How many individuals are provided access to them? How affective are these programs in helping individuals find and maintain employment?
- Social and emotional supports, counseling, therapy Given the social and emotional needs of parolees, what services are provided? How many individuals have access? How effective are the programs?
- *Effective therapy* / support to ensure parolee success The majority of individuals who are returning to society have severe social-emotional / mental health needs and / or substance abuse needs, to what extant do the individuals who need treatment get it? How successful is the treatment that they do received?
- Noting about us, without us Include both DOC and parolees (and families affected) in exploring best practices in parole / reentry. More attention needs to be given to other models that produce the best outcomes in the world. What the US can learn from our peers?
- CIP Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) has emerged as a field worthy of study in the literature and it a widespread phenomenon in the U.S. Approximately 62,000 children in CT have a caregiver who has been arrested.<sup>11</sup> As research suggests that both children and their incarcerated caregivers have better outcomes when they have and maintain a relationship, is paramount that perspectives related to CIP are given more attention in the media.

IMRP is currently seeking potential funding sources to will help supplement the costs associated with producing the *Building Bridges Documentary: Point of Contact: What does Prison Re-Entry look like in a Rehabilitative-Centered Prison System*?, which will involve documenting the experiences of small group of stakeholders from Connecticut (DOC staff, former CT parolees and family members, policymakers, scholars, and students, etc.) in touring some of the world's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Needs Created in Children's Daily Lives by the Arrest of a Caregiver, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, Central Connecticut State University, Conway, Provencher, & Keays. (2016)

most successful prison re-entry systems. This documentary will have state and national implications.

#### APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP AGENDA AND RESULTS

- 1. Welcome / introductions
- 2. Purpose of Today's Discussion / Powerpoint Presentation
  - Description / summary of OTO project and the CT rollout
  - o Describe rollout what is it? When? How? What is possible?
  - Frontline is deep dive into the experiences of returning citizens and their experiences on probation / parole and are using CT as the setting.
  - In a series of articles / separate stories, NY Times will explore different themes that have to do with these policies. Times coverage will include reporting that complements short-form documentary narratives. We expect these stories to appear online over the several weeks leading up to the Frontline broadcast.
  - Description of IMRP, DCTV, and Purple States
  - Description of the role and capability of Media Cloud Media Cloud's ultimate goal is helping organizations with a social agenda to use media effectively to influence conversations about important issues. It lets these organizations track how frequently mainstream media talks about an issue the organization cares about and helps them determine whether their efforts are impacting coverage or opinion. Through this partnership with Purple States, the Media Cloud team has developed an evaluation plan to investigate issues surrounding re-entry post-incarceration.
  - We are not here to talk about the content of the documentary or to give ideas / directions to the film producers. We are, however, here because we all work in areas that are directly affected by this issue. Your perspectives will help gain a better understanding of how your organizations might be able to use these resources and how we can better use these materials to facilitate meaningful conversations with stakeholders in CT and beyond.
  - How can we use this material to fuel conversations? how we measure the success of this project locally and nationally.
  - Specifically, today's meeting will allow you the opportunity to: (a) provide input on what you believe would be the *potential measures of success* of the OTO project, specifically the potential impact on CT residents and policy makers and beyond; and (b) discuss and explore possibilities for how you might be able to use the content of the OTO project and what supplementary material would be useful for your educational, training, and advocacy purposes. Feedback gathered from the focus group will be used to shape the evaluation criteria used to measure the impact of the OTO rollout in CT and to shape the content to be included in supplemental OTO resources (learning modules), designed and produced by IMRP.

#### 3. Discussion

#### Questions about *potential measures of success* of the OTO project:

- a) First, let's discuss your view on criminal justice policy in CT. In your opinion, how does the general public currently view the issue of incarceration and reentry? Where do develop these views? Are viewpoints different in different towns/ cities/ communities?
- b) What assumptions / myths currently exist about the topic of justice –involved individuals in general? How about with regards to re-entry? Where do these assumptions come from and how are they currently reinforced?
- a) Do you think this content (Frontline documentary and Times Reporting) distributed via the media and in face-to-face settings (facilitated community conversations, professional development trainings, educational curricula, etc.) can influence public awareness and challenge misperceptions? If so, how do you think this could be measured?
- b) There are several other films and documentaries related to incarceration that have gained national attention recently, have you watched such a film? Attended a screening? If so, was there a facilitated conversation that followed? Was the conversation affective? What recommendation do you have?
- c) Does a documentary have the potential to influence the outcomes (e.g. policies) for families of those who have experienced incarceration? What would need to be included in such a film?
- d) To what extent do you believe this project has the potential to achieve this goal?
- e) How well do you believe that this concept has the potential to capture the human impact of incarceration, and to make the challenges of reentry relatable? Does the mix of participants reflect the demographics and criminal and reentry profile of the state's prison population? Does the scope appear believable? Accurate? Honest? Explain.
- f) In your opinion, are the stories presented in the documentary well positioned to illuminate and reframe the state/national debate? Are the storylines relevant to and strategically placed to reorient the current conversation?
- g) How well do you think this project has the potential to secure the attention and interest of key influencers and leaders from various sectors and across the political spectrum?
- h) What indicators would tell you that the project has been successful? What potential barriers / road blocks do you foresee?
- i) What would be the takeaway that you would like the public to have after reading / viewing this content?

Questions about how you might be able to use the content of the OTO project:

- j) The Frontline documentary captures a representative sample of the population in CT that are typically on probation / parole. Given your experience and intimate knowledge of the stories that these individuals experience, what would you do with this material? How could you use these resources in your organization?
- k) What elements / perspectives would need to be included in such a documentary if it were to be able to shape public opinion towards a more honest, accurate, and complex understanding of the justice system, particularly prison re-entry? Are the stories well positioned to illuminate and reframe the state/national debate?
- I) Who else needs to see this material? Why?
- m) In your opinion, in what context could this project be adapted and to do what (used for what)?

- n) What could your organization use this project for? How would audiences that are involved with your organization best interact with this content? What supplemental material might be helpful to increase the potential of this work? What else would be needed (extra materials) to help you facilitate a meaningful conversation about this topic?
- o) How could this be used for public awareness? Education?
- p) This would be successful if it helps my organization do X?
- q) What would it take to make that happen?
- r) The business community often views the issue of incarceration and recidivism as an economic waste of human capital (i.e., individuals who are repeatedly incarcerated throughout their lives for non-violent crimes and an incredibly economic cost to taxpayers), how do you view this issue? What do you believe are the most significant economic and non-economic costs to also consider?
- s) If you were to design a rollout of the project, what would it look like? Who would the audiences be? Would the rollout differ across different sectors/communities? What are the best venues for screening a project such as this? Should other information be included?

Life on Parole Focus Group Results

June 29<sup>th</sup> 2017

Jacob Werblow, Ph.D.

Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP)

The purpose of this research is to engage CT stakeholders in helping define the measures of success and inform the distribution strategy of the *Life on Parole (LOP) Frontline* Documentary and *NY Times* related coverage on the experiences of returning citizens on Parole in Connecticut.

#### Background / Context

Description: Two 90-minute focus groups were carried out with representatives from CT nonprofit providers, advocacy groups, victims' organizations, returning citizens, legislators, criminal justice system personnel, academics, business and community members whose work relates to the transition from incarceration to the community. Special attention was given on the experience of incarcerated parents, community caregivers and their dependent children.

During this focus group, the overall goal, scope, and scenes of the OTO project were presented as well as role of *NY Times* and *Frontline*. Participants were given an opportunity to: (a) provide input on what they believe would be the *potential measures of success* for the documentary, including the potential impact on residents and policy makers in CT and, where relevant, national PBS and NYT broadcast audiences; and (b) discuss and explore possibilities for how they might be able to use the content of the OTO project for educational, training, and advocacy purposes. Feedback gathered from the focus group will be used to shape the evaluation criteria used to measure the impact of the LOP rollout in CT and to shape the content to be included in supplemental LOP resources (learning modules), designed and produced by IMRP.

#### Sample

A purposeful sample what used to ensure both expertise and diverse perspectives were included in the focus groups. Andrew Clark developed a list of individuals who were representatives from CT nonprofit providers, advocacy groups, victims' organizations, returning citizens, legislators, criminal justice system personnel, academics, business and community members whose work relates to the transition from incarceration to the community. 38 individuals were contacted via e-mail, and 16 responded, one of which was not able to attend due to a scheduling conflict. The participants (n = 15) represented a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g., Malta Justice Initiative, Juvenile Justice Alliance, Wesleyan Prison Education Program, CT Nonprofit Alliance, Office of the Victim Advocate, Cities of Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven re-entry offices, CT Business and Industry Association, Connecticut State University System, Yale Justice Collaborative, CT Juvenile Justice Alliance, Former legislators and criminal justice agency heads, Vera Institute, and probation and parole staff.

#### Method

Two 90-minute focus groups were held, the first on June 8<sup>th</sup>, the second on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The workshops were facilitated by Andrew Clark, Director of the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, and Jacob Werblow, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Central Connecticut State University. During the focus group, summaries of the findings were shared and participants were asked to clarify any areas they believed had been misinterpreted and to affirm that their responses were portrayed accurately. The focus groups were audio recorded and were played back the following day to check for accuracy of the notetaking. Comments were transcribed anonymously. The transcribed notes from both focus groups were then deconstructed, labeled, and then selectively categorized into emergent themes.

#### Results

CT DOC Should be Commended.

• "The transparency and willingness of the CT DOC to allow this filming to happen without pre-selecting participants or using the private footage to prosecute the individuals involved should be celebrated."

Representativeness of Returning Citizens Featured in Documentary.

- returning citizens featured are an accurate portrayal
  - "Description of individuals (returning citizens, listed in appendix) are an accurate portrayal of a snapshot of individuals (in the state) who are on parole."

- "Bullets listed are tremendous...these themes are what the DOC see all the time."
- race portrayal is concerning
  - "Everyone white (as listed in the Appendix) is drug offender, everyone black & brown is violent crime."
  - *How will this project portray race? Color of Justice* "The story didn't feel like it was about black people (even though they all were), it felt about *people*..."
- Isolate the difference in trajectories of long- vs. short-sentences.
  - "Character J is interesting as a female and was in there for a long sentence. We should be sure that individuals like her (long sentences) are always included on panels as their experiences are different from frequent offenders who are given short sentences, often multiple times."

Background / Context of the Issue of Reentry.

- Need for better coordination from arrest to reentry
  - "If we look at this as a systemic issue parole, probation, halfway houses, etc., you have no idea what resources were available during the time they were incarcerated."
  - "Reentry without support, correction, etc. leads to reentry."
- Need for addiction supports / services
  - "If someone is actively doing drugs, they don't make good employees."
  - "I don't view a new arrest as failure, if all of you have prior records, all I have to do is catch you dirty.
- Reentry & employability
  - "We've just finished a survey of 300 CT employers, it's largely positive in their willingness to help / hire others. So, we are wondering what effect this will have on the industry."
  - o "If they all recidivate, that doesn't help our efforts to create job employers."
  - o "If they all recidivate, it doesn't matter."
  - "Businesses are looking for a reason why not to hire ex-offenders. So, I hope this documentary doesn't give them more reasons."
  - "97% are getting out (of prison), would you rather have them with a job when they get out or without out one?"
- Current problems with reentry / parole
  - "Parole basically states the instances (criteria) to which individuals will be rearrested."
  - "Once this has happened, is this how they should be prepared for release?"
  - "Just dissect the word 'reentry.' It can't simply start when you walk out of prison

     'we cannot help you until you are (out)' but it helps to know what it set up
     for individuals, when (they are) reentrying. Parole time is controlled, but is
     unstructured."
  - $\circ$  "We don't invest when people go out (of prison), only when they go in."
  - "We don't measure the outcomes of how well people do when they are reintegrated."

- "CT has closed prisons, but did not reinvest the money in transition programs to support individuals who are reintegrating."
- Current problems with halfway houses
  - "Halfway houses are businesses because (they get) federal \$ for flipping beds, when we talk about recidivism –employment, etc. these (issues) are missed – mental health, drug, abuse, there are a lot of compounding issues"
  - "The parole officer doesn't run the house, but they come once a month. The first thing you do when you get a phone, is sign a release that they will give up the phone when asked / searched. You don't have much interaction with parole, all of it comes through the house staff. Small staff, large house. The human tendency is to not follow protocol. Step-forward- and a step back. I've seen men choose to violate so that they can go back to prison and get a different house (where they will be treated better)."
  - "Halfway houses are an extension of the prison. They don't promote rehabilitation. Onerous restrictions of someone who wants to maintain employment."
- Myths / public misconceptions: halfway houses
  - "when we talk about recidivism –employment, etc., (we don't talk about how halfway houses are run like a business, paid \$ for flipping beds)
  - "we treat (employees) worse in halfway houses that we do (inmates) in prison.
     Some of the individuals who work in halfway houses are on public assistance!"
- Myths / public misconceptions: parole officers
  - "As a parole officer, you will get in trouble if a returning citizen gets in trouble during your term. So, there is motivation for to be (especially strict)."
  - "There could be all sorts of issues in (returning citizen's) histories. There are all sorts of power that probation officers have over the lives of their...the public likely believes that this is done fairly and consistently."
  - "The basic parole stipulations have not changes since 1968... We still have judges that use stipulations that say 'no cell phones, no beepers..'"
  - "The perception of parole = they are armed, they are cowboys, put them back in jail. The perception of probation = they are counselors, they are understanding, they are going to help..."
  - "A simple thing such as what the uniforms look like, the staff looks like storm troopers...the system is reflecting public attitudes."
  - "DOC is a field, where you have to consciously self-care. Otherwise, you become part of the system (part of the problem)."
- *Myths / public misconceptions: reentry supports* 
  - Myths "people are released and they are prepared to be successful, people released have supports to be successful, commitment to parole / probation, obstacles you can face, losing rights,"
  - "The system is set up to be risk averse. The myth is that there is fluid communication between agencies (court, prison, parole, probation, halfway house, etc.)."

- "the public has no idea that (returning citizens) are 'human beings' they are smart like me, we have done such a marvelous job of dehumanizing these individuals."
- "When that person steps out, they need to have the skills organizations, supports."
- "Some people learn how to 'stuff it' in jail."
- "90% are addicted or have a mental health issue, most every family has an addict or mentally disabled person... (this is a public health issue). it's a public health issue, change internal policy..."
- Further complicating the issue (misc.)
  - "The experiences of individuals in for drug offenses vs. violent crime are different. Shouldn't they be separated (in the film)?"
  - "Shoplifter is a way of life, a murderer usually did it once."
  - "It would be nice (more interesting) if (the documentary included) someone who killed someone...people would have very different views of parole for someone who was a murderer."
  - "Recidivism is measured in different ways in different states it could be any arrest."

Screening Suggestions: Who to Involve.

- Returning citizens / formerly incarcerated individuals must be involved in rollout (creation of supplementary materials, community conversations, etc.)
  - "In the (film) *The Mothers of Bedford,* they followed the women for 4-5 years, 96 min. They had screenings, and maybe we can have the individuals in the documentary sit on panels. Having them on panels reinforces the emotional impact. Having older youth parent-child interaction gets at the human element as well."
  - "People cycle through sometimes before they get it right...and they age out...time will allow you to do something like that – where the actors are present to discuss (what has happened since the film)."
  - "Got to have former offender (involved with screenings). They are wonderful people, deeply passionate about the issue. They have been very influential in these community dialogues. Bring these people back to wardens. It was a great experience, 10 wardens and 10 ex-offenders, it was a remarkable experience. One of the wardens actually cried." "Screening should include 1-2 people in the film, film maker, and community provider."
  - "(including returning citizens in rollout), gotta do it!"
  - Invite the commissioner & service providers to screenings / community conversations
    - "It might be useful to invite service providers who are in the film as well."
      - "it would be interesting to see whether or not the service providers have a different perspective on this after they see the film."
      - "Get the commissioner and the training staff involved, who are responsible for community service and parole."

Screening Suggestions: Structure & Location

- Tailor each screening to the context of the community
  - "What if we have these screenings in the suburbs and then we talk about opioid additions?"
  - "Do a screening for the parole staff members / interviews, etc."
  - "We know there are different drug use patterns in different communities (Whites do everything), Blacks don't – seeing a video of that was very powerful."
  - "The curriculum needs to be tailored why does this issue matter to them (that specific population), people need to understand how this issue affects their quality of life. Younger generation is interested in sustainability financial implications? Funding for schools, etc. what it costs to lock someone up in CT the way to fix the budget in CT is to change the system of incarceration. 2/3 of inmates today will be back in the system. You (taxpayers) aren't getting as much \$ for k-12 schools because of what (they) are paying for incarcerating individuals. state implications this destabilization is impacting the whole state (budget, etc.). For individuals, this undermines community stability, difficult to get a job, pay taxes, etc.,
- Make it a collaborative effort
  - "Any easy trap is screening (preaching) to the choir. Screening it in high schools, suburbs, organizations, etc."
  - "...Rotaries, loins clubs, chambers of commerce, churches, high schools, labor unions, trade organizations (plumbers), CRM programs at universities"
  - "Screen the premiere Real ArtWays? Building Bridges?"
  - Maybe you can find universities to pair screenings with reentry organizations –
     "get a couple different organizations co-sponsoring it."
- Make it interactive
  - "You present the screening to the audience and they have an opportunity to engage with this – what was going on when this was happening? Bring it from the screen to the chair, and have the people talk..."
  - "Put people thorough an exercise, give people the goal of the system, 'what do you think should happen?' given this situation, what should it look like?"
  - "Is what you see consistent with what you expect with public safety managing risk / reducing risk? Reducing is hard? Reducing is changing behavior?
     Empowering people to change their behavior is difficult."

Potential to Expand this Effort.

• "Comparing LOP to another film might help create other stories / narratives / etc. look for making a film series vs. a single screening..."

Potential for LOP Screenings to Change (Internal) Policy.

- "So much (policy) can be changed without the public input, this can be an opportunity for policy changes (internal) with DOC staff, there a lot of people who should not be in this field."
- "Some staff will see this and chuckle, some will be horrified. You have to get rid of the chuckler."

• "Sensitizing the plight of this issue to the general public is good, but changing the policy issues is what matters – the culture was quite different 35-40 years ago. We used to focus on correction. Now, the focus is to lock 'em up."

Supplementary Materials: Considerations.

- Keep in mind, how all stakeholders are being portrayed (humanized / dehumanized)
  - "And educational consideration to keep an eye on who is presented as the 'good guy' and the 'bad guy.'"
- Shine a light on potential solutions / alternative models
  - "We need to show 'what can be' show other examples (of what's working)..."
  - "We should do a follow-up reentry (film) on individuals leaving prison in Norway / Germany" (to compare).
  - "The documentary does not cover why people are in the system to begin with – What if we ignore why they are in there, but just say 'They are in there, so what do we do now..?"
  - "Showing a film that only shows the realities can be really discouraging. So, have a portion of the film dedicated to something hopeful, something that can be done to help make change..."
  - "Go beyond exposing personal experiences, people will feel more empowered to learn what has actually been done (policy changes) to make this issue more successful – give examples of other states, other models, that are working. Ex., Band the box, cert. of employability, public policy overlay..."
  - The (current) system is not necessarily focused on success...what if we pair this with screenings of other models – Norway, Germany, etc. (where people are) treated like adults in the justice system?"
- Other perspectives to consider
  - "It would have been interesting to (film) people who are EOSing (End of Sentencing)....50% of the population isn't even here – they get no services at all. But in some circumstances, EOSing is better. perhaps we need a more voluntary access reentry model.
  - "Could we do a follow-up and then capture the thoughts of providers, parole officers, etc. give them an opportunity to explain things as well?"
  - *"The Return* 90 min. documentary it might be interesting to get their experience about what they thought was effective."
  - "Look at the performance of parole officers."
  - o "...Dr. Seuss' (book) Pale Green Pants."
- Balance storytelling with data / visuals
  - "Statistical Information is needed to show what is happening everyday..."
  - "(Show) the cycle of the halfway houses back to prison understanding systems failure (a visual map of %)."
  - "(show) a day in the life a one page snapshot of individual experiences in a half-way house."
  - "Show a list of parole rules / violations"
- Teach / acknowledge the context of systemic racial injustice

- "Pre-release / judicial context "(show) the crime of the justice system: (the 'war on drugs' being exclusively fought in Black & Brown communities)"
- Provide resources to help those in the community who are reentrying
  - "We need better resource guides to help education people who are reentrying. If they film can become a vehicle for crowdsourcing reentry guides...reentry is disorganized, difficult, if building guides and resources would help us be more successful..."

Potential Outcomes.

- *'humanize' the issue of parole / reentry* 
  - "The fact that they humanize this issue is tremendous helps people empathize with this issue more"
  - o "(this film has) potential to be an empathic experience..."
  - "We are humanizing people (returning citizens)..."
  - "Important not to just label the system as unjust weave in the reality to what probation officers expect their position to be."
  - "Help those in these roles (probation officers / service providers) stay in touch with their humanity..."
- Improve internal policy & practice
  - "Educating officers and reentering citizens. Sometimes the PO will use his authority in ways that disempower the individual."
- Help my organization...
  - "Help other people see how their behaviors can have an impact, burnout is so real in our business, we all need to be reminded about the humanity."
  - "Help the public understand some of the barriers people face once they are released – employability, being in a halfway house poses its own challenges ---life is a marathon, some folks are starting at different places..."

#### Media Cloud Background terms needed to contextualize information:

Reentry, parole violation, probation, probation officer, halfway house, heroine / opiate, methadone, mental health treatment, homelessness, homeless shelter, recidivism, community supervision, post-release, job training, repeat offender, nonviolent offender, high-risk offenders, low-risk offenders, violent offender, drug offender, drug use/ abuse, substance abuse, methadone, Domestic violence, trauma, ptsd, heroine, incarceration, incarcerated, convict, felon, repeat offender, re-arrest, re-conviction, re-incarceration, legislation, department of corrections, parole system, public safety, criminal justice reform, , rehabilitation, inmate population, jail-related reforms, crime, communities of color, jail diversion, inmates,

### *Media Cloud: What ideas and / or phrases regarding this topic would you like to see more frequently in the media?*

• Returning citizen, returning citizen employment, criminalizing addition, mental health vs. criminal justice, prison impact / incarceration impact on family / community, collateral consequences of conviction, second chance society, evidence-based practices

/ reform / reimagining (related to parole, incarceration, probation), navigating reentry, childhood trauma, unfair / unjust parole policies / probation policies, excessive parole policies, probation / parole reforms, presumptive parole, unfair bail system, reintegration centers, fair sentencing

Local Media Outlets:

Hartford Courant, New Haven Register, New Haven Independent, CT Fox News 61, CT CBS, NBC-CT, CT Mirror, CT Newsjunkie, CT, WTNH- channel 8, CT Post, Nutmeg TV, CTN, For a more complete list, visit: <u>http://www.ctcapitolreport.com/</u>

#### APPENDIX B: IMRP OTO PROJECT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Andrew Clark, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy Cynthia Clooney, Malta Justice Initiative Jacob Werblow, CCSU / Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy Kathleen Taylor, Malta Justice Initiative (former DOC employee) Kia Boreland, IMRP Student-Intern (Hampshire College) (started summer 2018) Richard Frieder, UCONN, Community Capacity Builders Robert Gillis, Malta Justice Initiative [former Director of Parole for the CT DOC] Rati Kumar, CCSU Professor, Communications

#### APPENDIX C: MALTA JUSTICE INITIATIVE 6-MONTH DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

General Advisory Board Team Responsibilities:

- 1. Meet periodically with Advisory Board Team
  - Schedule meetings
  - Prepare agenda
  - Prepare minutes
- 2. Maintain email and telephone contact with Advisory Board Team members
  - Follow up with individuals regarding progress an agreed upon individual responsibilities
  - Be available for consultation and support
  - Provide technical assistance as needed
- 3. Assure that all members of the Advisory Board Team are in the "communication loop" through periodic and timely updates

Development and Execution of screenings/presentations for the general public:

- 1. Initiate inquiries throughout the state for possible venues to OTO/LOP including but not limited to the following:
  - Public libraries
  - Houses of worship
  - Service groups (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis)
  - Community organizations (e.g., re-entry roundtables)
  - Student groups
- 2. Provide speakers/panels for presentations
  - Maintain working contact with Phoenix Project and other parolees or former parolees
  - Maintain working contact with Division of Parole Services
  - Develop a cadre of "professionals" to moderate presentations (e.g., members of the advisory board team, retired criminal justice people, academics)
- 3. Work with community partners where/when presentations take place
  - Determine technical needs at each venue (e.g., laptop, speakers, screen)
  - Provide copies of written materials (e.g., NYT articles, other articles/studies as applicable)
  - Provide refreshments as needed
  - Provide publicity as needed

- Provide appropriate follow-up/thank you after presentations
- 4. Maintain listing of all presentations to include the following:
  - Name of venue
  - Address of venue
  - Contact person
  - Contact email and telephone number
  - Date/time of presentation
  - People involved in presentation (parolees, parole professionals, moderator)
  - Number of people in attendance

Development and Execution of ways in which OTO/LOP may be used in a higher education setting:

- 1. Contact those academics around the state with whom Malta Justice Initiative has relationships
- 2. Convene a meeting of those people, plus others to be named, to discuss the following:
  - Best use of documentary and related materials in classroom settings
  - Ways in which attendees may be able to assist one another in developing curricula using documentary and related materials
  - Sharing how OTO/LOP can support academic efforts (providing speakers, materials)
- 3. Facilitate continued communication amongst those interested in pursuing OTO/LOP in their classrooms as follows:
  - Maintain list of names and contact information
  - Schedule meeting places and times
  - Prepare agenda
  - Prepare minutes
  - Prepare appropriate materials
  - Keep engaged through regular email and/or telephone calls between meetings

Development and Execution of ways in which OTO/LOP may be used in a secondary education setting:

- 1. Develop list of teachers throughout the state in related disciplines (e.g., history, current affairs, economics, local affairs)
- 2. Contact teachers regarding their interest in using OTO/LOP in their classrooms
- 3. Proceed as with higher education (above)

The above work plan will be executed through June 2018.

#### APPENDIX D: REPRESENTATIVENES AND APPROPRIATENESS OF OTO CONTENT

Jacob Werblow Andrew Clark

#### Sampling

In the two stakeholder focus groups, when provided with a brief description of the 12 parolees filmed for the project, participants agreed that the description of the 12 individuals recorded for the film were an accurate portrayal of returning citizens on parole. One said, "Description of individuals (returning citizens, listed in appendix) are an accurate portrayal of a snapshot of individuals (in the state) who are on parole." Another stated, "Bullets listed are tremendous...these themes are what the DOC sees all the time."

Analysis OTO Media vs. Stakeholder Perspectives on the Issue

To conduct this analysis of representativeness, first all seven OTO media released to the public were analyzed for common themes. These themes from the OTO media were then compared to the common themes that emerged in the focus group results and general knowledge on the topic. The following section presents brief analysis for each theme identified.

#### Drug Addiction / Substance Abuse

Drug addiction, specifically heroin, is a common theme in LOP materials and is highlighted in five of the seven OTO media releases. The short video '*What happens after prison...*' states that 74% of parolees have drug / alcohol problems. Rob struggles with cocaine as takes two bags thinking that it would 'end his life, but it didn't happen.' Erroll and Dave both struggle with heroin. All three are shown to be in and out of treatment clinics. Errol returns to prison because he went on a binge while changing drug prescriptions. Vaughn returns to prison because he was caught drinking alcohol in the halfway house. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Parole is a Stressful & Exasperating Experience

Five of the seven OTO releases present evidence that parole is a challenging, stressful and (possibly) exasperating experience. Several of parolees featured state that that prison is easer that parole. Dave says, "That's camp cupcake in there (prison), it's hard out here (parole)." Erroll says of his first experience on parole, "I was frightened. I didn't know what to expect. Another parolee states that he felt 'frustrated and cornered.' According to 'What happens after prison...,' 53% of inmates have mental health problems. Given this fact, the stipulations of parole appear to exacerbate the stress and anxiety of a population of individuals who already have mental health needs. In LOP, after being sent to a halfway house and given a GPS monitor, Erroll states, "I just want to keep talking and go back to jail...my life is pretty much ruined for 3 years." This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.

#### Parole Stipulations: Made to be Broken

Four of the seven OTO releases show that parole stipulations will likely be broken by the parolee. For Erroll, he is told that he can have no contact with his girlfriend, his residence and support system, because she was considered a previous crime victim. Parolees are expected to have no alcohol or drug use, but it is not clear whether or not all parolees that need treatment receive it. In addition, the efficacy of the treatment provided is unclear / unknown. All parolees shown violate at least one of the stipulations, and are given punitive consequences and in some cases, support (treatment). *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### PO's Unilateral Decision-Making

On several occasions, PO's appear to make decisions regarding the treatment, punishment, and discipline of their parolees without consultation with other staff or third parties. Officer Pawlich, appears to assign Erroll to a halfway house and then tags a GPS monitor on him, in what appears to be a rash decision... "you are also going on GPS today...I have 65 cases and one flaming asshole." One concern raised by Prof. Doherty as well as focus group stakeholder's is the wide discretion in decision-making among POs. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### P.O.'s show Flexibility / Restraint

In LOP, PO's Montoya and Pawlich are also shown having flexibility and restraint for their parolees. Montoya says, "I'm trying to save your ass", "I make a living on second chances... I do a lot of thinking after hours, it's hard..If I rearrested everyone in her situation, I wouldn't have a case load." Pawlich describes how in the past he would have locked up a parolee like Erroll for his violations, but this time he gave him other punitive consequences to avoid prison. This not only shows the difficult decisions that PO's often have to make, with limited resources, but also that they are humans as well. Officer Lisa Brayfield (Vaughn's PO), seems to come off as less understanding and (perhaps) condescending. Of Vaughn, Brayfield said, "He was disrespectful. It seemed like he had a little bit of an anger problem when I was meeting with him—which is, initially, the reason really why I took the phone." *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Supports: Family & Intimate Relationships

In six of the seven OTO media releases, supportive relationships of parolees are highlighted. In two cases, the relationships are non-platonic (Erroll and Dave's partners), and in two cases they are about CIP (Jessica and her son, Rob and his daughter). This humanizes both the parolee and their family members. Humanizing the issue is something that stakeholders deeply were concerned about. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Supports: Continuing Education

Despite the strength of the correlation between educational attainment and incarceration, little attention is given to this relationship and the role that continuing education plays in reentry success. Jessica's educational success was highlighted in the LOP documentary, but this role of education / job training wasn't a part of other parolee's stories, and only

appears in two of the seven OTO media releases. *This <u>may not be</u> an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### Supports: Effective Drug Treatment

Access to drug treatment was displayed in five of the seven OTO media releases. This is appropriate, due to the high rates of substance abuse among parolees; however, it is less clear how effective these drug treatment plans are. Are there other models that are more effective? The viewer is left with the impression that parolees have access to drug treatment, yet in each case, the individual relapses. In the NY Times articles, 'What stat's can't explain...' and 'Opioid users..,' illustrate that CT has one of only 30 methadone prison programs in in the nation, but inmates in CT can be kicked out of the program due to disciplinary reasons. This fact raises question about the efficacy of the program - how many parolees / inmates complete the program? How many due not finish due to disciplinary reasons (not related to program participation)? If the reality is that parolees who need it are provided with access to drug treatment programs, but the programs may not be effective, then *this is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Supports: Social and Emotional Therapy

Given the strong associations between childhood trauma and incarceration, and incarceration and mental illness, the OTO released materials give the impression that parole is an incredibly stressful experience, but social emotional supports / therapy is not provided to parolees. In the LOP documentary, it is mentioned that Officer Montoya started a special unit dedicated to female parolees, but it's not clear what additional social-emotional supports these women receive. In *'What happens after prison..'* A counselor is depicted listening to Erroll's frustrations with not being allowed to see his girlfriend. Otherwise, it is unclear if parolees depicted in the OTO releases have any access to therapy and social emotional supports at all. *This may not be an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### Supports: Employment Assistance

Five out of seven OTO media releases depict parolees finding employment. Erroll gains employment in a restaurant. Rob gains employment with an undisclosed company, and another gains employment in a mattress warehouse. On several occasions, parolees are told by P.O.'s that they must secure employment. The struggle for some parolees to even find employment is also acknowledged. For example, in 'Opioid Users..." it is mentioned that Dave never held a steady job; however, state and national data indicates that parolees are far less likely to find meaningful employment that what is depicted in the OTO material. This <u>may not be an accurate portrayal of the issue</u>.

#### Link to (Extreme) Childhood Trauma

The correlation between childhood trauma and likelihood of incarceration is well documented. In five of the seven OTO media releases, parolee's traumatic childhood experiences are highlighted. In most cases, these experiences are extreme – Vaughn watched stabbings, beatings, etc. as a child. Erroll's aunt, her son, and her boyfriend were murdered by the aunt's ex-boyfriend when he was a youth. Rob scored a 9/10 on the Adverse Childhood Experience (A.C.E.) childhood trauma survey - his father was a drug dealer, his mother and

sister overdosed on methadone. A.C.E. childhood trauma survey. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### **CIP** Perspective

Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) has emerged as a field worthy of study in the literature and it a widespread phenomenon in the U.S. Specifically in CT, 54% of those incarcerated are caregivers to an average of 2.19 children, this equates to approximately 62,000 children in CT have a caregiver who has been arrested.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is appropriate that CIP youth are highlighted in four of the seven OTO media releases. Some of the depictions in LOP, include: As a child, Jessica's son thought that his aunt was his 'bio-mom' - "The only thing that I knew was that she was locked up,' he said about his biological mother. For Reanne, having her father (Rob) in and out of prison during her entire childhood was 'routine.' She says, "he missed my 10-year old birthday, but will be here for my 11<sup>th</sup>." By the end of the film, Reanne and her father are no longer speaking. In "What happens after prison,' six out of the 10 parolees filmed had parents who were incarcerated. The *Times Facebook video* implies that children want to see their father come home, which is often, but not always the case. In 'Gun to his head..'. it is mentioned that Rob only communicated with one of his four children. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Urban Poverty

As with childhood trauma and educational attainment, there is a strong correlation with incarceration and living in an urban poverty. This relationship was exacerbated in the 1980's with the spike in drug-related arrests due to the 'war on drugs' being exclusively fought in poor, urban communities. Although the viewer might infer about the economic class of the parolees by their portrayal in the OTO media, the issue of homelessness is only presented in the Dave and Dani story (not featured in LOP). Otherwise, neither poverty nor the overrepresentation of persons of color in the justice system is depicted directly. *This <u>may not be an</u> accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### Pressure on P.O. to Ensure 'Public Safety.'

Stakeholders acknowledged that there is immense pressure on P.O.s to ensure public safety and if a parolee were to commit a violent crime, the first person to be scrutinized (or scapegoated) will be the P.O.. Three of the seven OTO media releases acknowledge this pressure. When describing his frustration with Erroll, Officer Pawlich mentions the need to "dot your i's and cross your t's" in his documentation of his parolee. In one of the NY Times articles, it mentions the Cheshire murders and the fact that both men were on parole. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### Prison / Parole does not Prepare for Reentry Success

Among the stakeholders, there was widespread agreement that the DOC does not effectively prepare returning citizens for reentry success. In LOP, the narrator states that 1/3 of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Needs Created in Children's Daily Lives by the Arrest of a Caregiver, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, Central Connecticut State University, Conway, Provencher, & Keays. (2016)

parolees in CT violate their parole terms and are re-incarcerated. But according to 'What stat's can't explain..' and the Facebook video, six of the 10 individuals followed in the project were re-incarcerated. In 'Life After Prison..." the narrator states that 43% of those released from prison will return.' *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue.* 

#### Balance Storytelling with (Generalizable) Data

Several stakeholders indicated that for a film to be successful, it would need to balance the telling of stories of individuals with the larger context and trends that are identified in the literature. In five of the seven OTO media releases, generalizable research is used to support the stories of the parolees. For example, in LOP the narrator states 'For many parolees, CT requires drug treatment.' In 'Gun to His Head..", the narrator generalizes Rob's ACE survey results with the literature. These examples give the impression that the filmmakers are aware of the trends related to this issue and are concerned with ensuring representativeness. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Show the Humanity of the Issue

LOP illustrates the humanity of the issue from multiple perspectives. A range of differing emotions are displayed in nearly all OTO releases. PO's are showing wanting their cases to succeed and / or are frustrated when they don't. Some P.O.'s work towards building a relationship with their cases, while others struggle to de-escalate tense interactions with their parolees. All of the individuals on parole struggle. It's clear to the view that these individuals are frustrated, but they want to succeed. *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Expectations: Success vs. Failure vs. 'Rugged Individualism'

In LOP, Officer Montoya states of Jessica, "I think she will make it." But otherwise, the viewer is not given a strong impression that the PO expects their parolee to succeed. In LOP, Mike Lawlor states that 'it's not uncommon for parolees to return (to prison)...the challenge is how to keep them from returning to prison." Note: Stakeholders mentioned the need to measure reentry success vs. recidivism. In several of the OTO releases, the parolee's state that they would rather go back to jail because it is easier than parole. On the other hand, P.O.'s give the impression that parolees simply need to make better decisions and simply giving them more opportunities will help them do that. This flawed logic is likely an accurate perspective driving DOC policy, but it contradicts brain science. Given the apparent stress that many parolees appear to be under in addition to having mental health needs, it is not surprising that, over time, many would seek other means to help them feel better, whether it be dangerous behaviors, pharmaceuticals or recreational drugs. When Rob was fired, it nearly took him over the edge - he got fed up and left halfway house to take his daughter to get sneakers, he bought enough dope 'thinking I would die, but it didn't happen..' *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### **Opportunities for Policy Change**

Montoya says, ""We often see them get rearrested after treatment ends, because they can't get a job and they don't know anything else." Prof. Doherty recommends specific policy changes. She states, "The key to reforming the parole system in Connecticut is changing the

dynamics of the invisible meetings that happen all over the state between parolees and their parole officers. If the atmosphere in those rooms is reflective of the reform vision of the top, then change in Connecticut will happen. And if it's not, it will be very hard to make change stick...The closer the oversight, the more violations you are going to find." Doherty's perspectives are mirrored by a few interactions between PO's and their parolee's that can be best described as condescending (ex. Why are we seeing each other today? Erroll – "I'm not sure." Pawlich - "Yeah, you are...")

LOP also highlights the punitive consequences of limiting parolee's earned pay - Rob's Money is controlled by the half-way house staff, he receives \$1/hr that he earns. According to Rob, "I feel that it's not worth it to work." Parolee's need permission to go anywhere other than work and the half-way house. Erroll is not allowed to live with his girlfriend / fiancée because she was identified as a victim.

The punitive rules of parole appear to create a lot of tension, resentment, and anger among parolees towards their PO's. In addition, it appears that the Parole staff, at times, does not have regard for parolee's personal space and possessions – After returning from work and learning that one of his housemates overdosed, Erroll states "Because of the overdoes and the death here today, parole came here and trashed my stuff." *This is an accurate portrayal of the issue*.

#### Conclusion

#### Are the stories well positioned to illuminate and reframe the state/national debate?

Given the depth of this analysis, it can be concluded that, overall, the On the Outside media project is an accurate portrayal of the complexities of parole through the lens of multiple viewpoints. Stakeholders felt that the stories / backgrounds of the sample of the 12 individuals recorded were representative of the state's parole population, but in terms of demographics, but more importantly content and context, capturing the complexities from the viewpoints of both the P.O. and the parolee. Specifically, drug addiction, the stress of parole, the stipulations are made to be broken, PO's unilateral decision-making, but their tendency to show restraint are all accurate portrayals of the issue. In addition, the importance of family supports, effective drug treatment, extreme childhood trauma, CIP perspectives, pressure to ensure public safety, the likelihood that parolees will recidivate, storytelling and providing generalizable data, and the humanity of the issue, and highlighting opportunities for policy changes are all accurate portrayals as well. OTO seems to capture the complexity of this issue accurately, from the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders, which was likely difficult to do in a relatively short about of time. As a result of public screenings of LOP and OTO materials, we were able to support effective conversations on a sensitive and important topic around the state and nation.

#### Are the storylines relevant to and strategically placed to reorient the current conversation?

*Media Cloud's* landscape analysis found that parole is often covered in the state and national media as a news media and event driven topic, while re-entry and recidivism are covered as policy issues. Given this important finding, it is clear that the OTO media addresses this gap at both the state and national level. In addition, the LOP documentary appears to humanize the issue of parole from both the viewpoints of parolees, their family members, and POs, as the products were widely praised from individuals representing the DOC, reentry community, and academia. Therefore, OTO appears to provide an entry point for multiple stakeholders to further explore this issue. As IMRP will begin piloting screenings of LOP in Hartford and New Haven in December and January, we will have a more complete understanding the effectiveness of OTO as a tool for reorienting the current conversation.

### What issues may not have been accurately covered? What Future Material could fill in the Gaps?

Some elements, however, may not have been adequately covered. Continuing education may not be an accurate portrayal of the issue as LOP did not touch upon the amount of access parolees have to job training and / or continuing education, with the exception of Jessica's story. As the same is true for social and emotional supports / therapy. Although urban poverty is depicted, it's not clear how its relationship with incarceration is presented. Also, it should be noted that in several cases, CT is referred to as being a leader in the nation in making changes, but in the OTO materials presented, it is not clear what, if anything, CT is doing to be a leader on this issue.

#### Future Material: Coverage Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, the following recommendations are provided for future media coverage on this issue:

- Job training / continuing education what type of programs exist for parolees to have to job training and / or continuing education? How many are provided access to them? How affective are these programs in helping individuals find and maintain employment?
- Social and emotional supports / therapy given the social and emotional needs of parolees, what services are provided? How many have access? How effective are the programs?
- Urban poverty and the role on drugs Although urban poverty is depicted, it's not clear how its relationship with incarceration is presented. CT is a leader on racial profiling data collection and accountability. To what degree is this program working? How has this policy changes police behavior?
- Noting about us, without us Follow up footage should be collected of the 10 participants, what is there opinion of the OTO footage? How would they like this material to be used? How do they feel about their experiences now? Etc.
- CIP Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) has emerged as a field worthy of study in the literature and it a widespread phenomenon in the U.S. Approximately 62,000 children in CT have a caregiver who has been arrested.<sup>13</sup> As research suggests that both children and their incarcerated caregivers have better outcomes when they have and maintain a relationship, is paramount that perspectives related to CIP are given more attention in the media.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Needs Created in Children's Daily Lives by the Arrest of a Caregiver, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, Central Connecticut State University, Conway, Provencher, & Keays. (2016)

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#### APPENDIX E: LOP TOOLKIT & SCREENING AND COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GUIDE

"On the Edge of Possibility" Life on Parole and the Justice System in CT and Beyond: A Resource Guide for Public Screenings

This purpose of this document is to give individuals, organizations, and communities a deeper understanding of incarceration, parole, and reentry in Connecticut and beyond. This document is freely available to the public, but was developed for the purpose of preparing individuals to hold a screening of the *Frontline and The NY Times* documentary *Life on Parole*.

#### **Pre-Screening Resources**

The following resources are recommended prior to hosting a screening of *Life on Parole*.

### TIMESVIDEO What Happens After Prison

The Times, in collaboration with the PBS series "Frontline," followed 10 recently released inmates struggling to succeed on the outside.

By KASSIE BRACKEN July 16, 2017

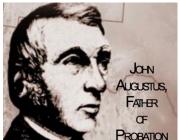
Probation in the United States: A Historical and ModernPerspectiveA brief history of parole and probation inthe United States.By Ryan M. Labrecque2017What is the history of parole and probation in the U.S.?This 22-page report aims to answer that question.

<u>CT Toughens Law Against Home Invasions. CT's policy changes</u> to parole six months after a deadly home invasion in the town of Cheshire. By Alison Leigh Cohen Jan. 24, 2008









How did Connecticut's Department of Corrections change after the Cheshire home invasion? This article provides some explanation.

Prison Life 'After Cheshire' Suspensions Increase, Parole Opportunities, Decrease and Understanding is Stalled. An inmate's perspective on how the Cheshire home invasion has changed parole in CT and beyond. By Chandra A. Bozelko Aug. 2, 2009.

<u>The Rules that Parolees Must Follow.</u> <u>States set their own rules for parole; here are Connecticut's.</u> <u>By CT Department of Corrections</u> <u>May 6, 2008</u>







<u>"Life on Parole" Sparks Real-Life Ideas.</u> <u>A short article covering a *Life on Parole* screening and community conversation at the New Haven Public Library, CT. <u>By Marisha Hicks</u> <u>Dec. 20, 2017</u></u>

<u>Parole Holds Key to Reentry Puzzle.</u> <u>A brief background on how the film *Life on Parole* was produced. Also includes an interview with producer Cynthia Farrar by the "Criminal Justice Insider" By Thomas Breen April 10, 2018</u>

Life on Parole Discussed. A short article covering a *Life on Parole* screening and community conversation at the Manchester Public Library, CT. By Annie Gentile April 10, 2018







The "Insane" Ways Our Prisons Handle the Mentally III. A review of Alisa Roth's work that explores the way the criminal justice system makes the sick even sicker. By Sam Dolnick

<u>May 22, 2018</u>



Screening & Community Dialogue Resources

Below are resources to assist you in hosting a screening and facilitating a community conversation.

Life on Parole. (55-min. documentary).

FRONTLINE and The New York Times go inside an effort to change the way parole works in Connecticut and reduce the number of people returning to prison. The film follows four former inmates as they try to find work, stay sober and keep out of trouble while navigating their first year on parole. View the video transcript.



Screening and Community Conversation Guide. IMRP has developed an outline to assist individuals and organizations Interested is hosting a screening of *Life on Parole*. By Richard Frieder Summer 2018



#### Post-Screening Resources: The Path Forward

Below are a selection of alternatives and possibilities to help explore what CT and the nation could be doing differently?

## What Statistics Can't Explain About Life on Parole

While covering inmates re-entering society, Shaila Dewan saw how people can be locked into the complex justice system, no matter how enlightened that system tries to be.

By SHAILA DEWAN July 17, 2017

Despite recent changes, Connecticut's parole system continues to fail most individuals during reentry. Why?

<u>60 Minutes Presents: Behind Bars. The prison system</u> that emphasizes rehabilitation over punishment, a bank robber who became a law professor; and beautiful music inside the "waiting room of hell."

<u>\*You must create an account to view the video.</u> <u>By CBS News</u> <u>March 2018</u>

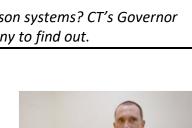
What can the United States learn from one of the world's best prison systems? CT's Governor and the Department of Corrections administration goes to Germany to find out.

# Opioid Users Are Filling Jails. Why Don't Jails Treat Them?

Getting methadone in jail gave a Connecticut heroin user a firmer foothold in recovery. But fewer than 1 percent of jails and prisons allow it.

By TIMOTHY WILLIAMS Aug. 4, 2017

Connecticut has a methadone prison program that works, but most prisoners and parolees do not have access. Why?





# A Gun to His Head as a Child. In Prison as an Adult.

Taking childhood trauma into account means asking inmates "What happened to you?" instead of "What is wrong with you?"

By AUDRA D.S. BURCH Oct. 15, 2017

How does childhood trauma followed by years of being in and out of Connecticut prisons as an adult affect a father's relationship with his daughter and her relationship with him?

Parole Revocation in Connecticut: Opportunities to Reduce Incarceration In 2015, the CT Board of Pardons and Parole asked Yale University's Criminal Justice Clinic to present recommendations to improve the parole revocation process. By Asli Bashir, Rachel Shur, Theodore Torres, & Fiona Doherty Sept. 2017

By Asli Bashir, Rachel Shur, Theodore Torres, & Fiona Doherty Sept. 2017 Connecticut law provides parolee's the opportunity to appeal when they are removed from parole and sent back to prison. How affective is the process? How can it be improved? The

report attempts to answer these questions.

Michael Moore Visits Norway's Prisons. A short clip of Norway's prison system provides a shocking alternative to America's system of "corrections." Taken from the full-length documentary *Where to Invade Next.* By Michael Moore 2015

What makes Norway's prisons one of the best in the world? Michael Moore attempts to find out.

IMRP's Case Study of Life on Parole. After holding three focus groups with stakeholders, and over 15 public screenings followed with community conversations, find out what IMRP learned about *Life on Parole* in CT. By Jacob Werblow & Andrew Clark [attachment forthcoming] 2018











#### Want to Get Involved?

#### Contact your Local Connecticut Reentry Community

The Prison Project at Quinnipiac University <u>https://www.quprisonproject.org/</u>

Center for Prison Education at Wesleyan University <u>https://www.wesleyan.edu/cpe/</u>

Trinity Prison Seminar Series <u>https://www.trincoll.edu/Academics/SpecialPrograms/HumanRights/Pages/Trinity-Prison-</u> <u>Seminar-Series-(TPSS).aspx</u>

> Authored by: Jacob Werblow & Andrew Clark Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) New Britain, CT.

Send questions / comments to: werblowjac@ccsu.edu

Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) e-mail: <u>werblowjac@ccsu.edu</u>

#### Life on Parole Toolkit - for Planning Screenings of LOP By Richard Frieder

#### 1. Before Screening

- Arrange location, date, time
- Make plans with host
  - Publicity
  - Plan room set up (different furniture arrangements may be needed for screenings in contrast to discussions)
  - Arrange projector, laptop, and screen (whenever possible try to get host to provide and set it up)
  - Internet connection (have DVD as backup just in case)
  - Microphones (as needed)
  - Light refreshments (optional)
  - Sign-in table
- Work out "run of show" (agenda/schedule)
  - Generally plan on 10 minutes for welcome and intros, 54 minutes to show the film, and a minimum of 20 minutes for discussion (more discussion is better)
- Arrange moderator
  - Prep the moderator
    - Review run of show
    - make sure he/she has everything needed
- Arrange panelists try to get someone to speak from these perspectives:
  - Former parolee
  - Parole officer
  - Film maker
- Survey
  - Have copies on hand
  - Have pens/pencils
  - Decide in advance when to distribute surveys, who will explain them, where completed surveys should be left
  - Prepare to explain purpose of survey
  - Remind/announce more than once
- Sign in sheet
  - Prepare in advance; should include name, phone, email address
  - Have copies on hand
  - Have pens/pencils

- Figure discussion format
  - Possibilities include large group discussion (more than about 20 people), small group discussion (fewer than about 20 people), or another approach
  - Factors to consider: who is the audience, how much time is available, how much and what kind of space space is available
- Do publicity
  - Flyer (see <a href="http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/">http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/</a> for samples)
  - Web sites (your site, the host's site, and the IMRP site)
  - Social media
  - Possible blurb that can be used in publicity:

Life on Parole, produced in Connecticut with the cooperation of the Department of Corrections and in collaboration with the New York Times, follows several former prisoners released on parole, showing in stark detail the punitive rules under which they live. For more than a year, "Frontline" and The New York Times followed newly released prisoners as they tried to find homes and jobs, reconnect with loved ones and avoid temptation, sometimes discovering that the system created to help them can also hold them back

#### 2. At Screening

#### Run of Show template (can be adapted)

(Plug in times depending on the specifics of each screening)

- 1. Sign in, distribute survey to each person as they sign in, light refreshments (optional)
- 2. Welcome
  - Provide some background/context on Life on Parole. Here are some basic points (for more details go to http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/):
    - Tonight we'll be viewing Life on Parole
    - A new 54 minute documentary produced by Purple States
    - With Frontline and New York Times
    - Aired on Frontline this past July
    - Purpose: to bring the re-entry and parole experience to life through the stories of four people returning from prison and their families and their parole officers
  - After the film we'll hear from a great panel and have a conversation with you
  - Ask audience about their familiarity with the CJ system and parole Either yourself or a family member or a friend?
  - Mention survey: We are doing screenings around the state to get feedback from a wide diversity of people. So we are doing a survey tonight. Please make sure to fill it out and give us your feedback. Thanks in advance.
  - Thank cosponsors

- 3. Show documentary (54 minutes)
- 4. Introduce panel
  - Brief comments from panel
  - 5. Q & A/discussion with audience/panel:

Suggested questions (feel free to use or not; feel free to add others; note that the specific questions used should be tailored to the audience - consider the experience and perspective of who is in the room):

- What did you learn from the documentary that you didn't know before?
- What is your understanding of the purpose of parole?
- What are some of the challenges of re-entry to formerly incarcerated people?
- What can have a positive effect on success while on parole and beyond?
- What are some of the challenges of supervision for parole officers?
- Do you have questions for the people on the panel?

Especially if you anticipate that the discussion may be controversial or spirited, you may want to introduce some ground rules before the discussion begins. Here are some possible ground rules:

- Listen carefully and with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
- It's okay to disagree, but be sure to show respect for one another.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.
- Some of the things we will say in the study circle will be private (personal). We will not tell these stories to other people, unless we all agree that it is okay.

Many more examples of ground rules may be found at <u>http://ncdd.org/rc/item/1505</u>. Choose the ones that work for you, or create your own. Using ground rules is optional.

Here are some facilitator tips that may help in managing the discussion:

(still to be added)

If you need help with ground rules or facilitator tips, please contact IMRP at xxxxxxxxxx.

- 6. Wrap-up:
  - Thank you for coming; thanks to our panelists and host
  - Please make sure to fill out your survey and give them to/leave them xxxxxxx.
  - On the survey there's a place to indicate your interest in receiving more info or getting involved. You may be interested in:
    - addiction and/or mental illness as well as other health related issues

- effect of imprisonment and parole on families and children
- having more dialogue and taking action
- If you fill out this portion we will be in touch to discuss this further
- For those interested, we can help connect you with information or services
- We may also have further dialogue, so if you're interested make sure to indicate this on your survey
- For more info visit http://www.ccsu.edu/imrp/
- 7. Final thanks, survey reminder, end

#### APPENDIX F: RESULTS OF 17 PUBLIC SCREENINGS OF LIFE ON PAROLE

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation New Haven Public Library December 19, 2017 6pm-8:40pm

### IMRP

Overall: There were 28 attendees, 12 completed the surveys (42%), but a few left the event before the surveys were administered. The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)", 12 individuals responded:

I didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat kno	Yes, I	
0	1	2	3	4	5
0%	20% ( <i>n=3)</i>	8% ( <i>n=1</i> )	20% ( <i>n=3)</i>	16% ( <i>n=2)</i>	20% ( <i>n=3)</i>

# 2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- "People's lives are complicated and parole is hard."
- "Parole officer difficult position, need training ."
- "That changes have occurred within the DOC but so much more needs to be done."
- "Add individuals in film were traumatized, the missing piece of the puzzle is getting them help to resolve this karma."
- "We have to dig deep, it to the 'why' (reason) the person is there in the first place."
- "The great difficulty of living under the parole system."
- "Need for drug & mental health treatment"
- *"Apparent diminished respect for parolees who try but mess up somewhat."*
- "Variety of opinions on how it is presented, great interest in subject."
- "The harsh conditions / expectations of early release, lack of tools available to parolees to succeed."
- "Complicated issue, reentry requires more support, addressing underlying issues & trauma"
- "It's a systemic problem that we don't know how to fix. No one is perfect."

## 3. When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

- "What training to parole officers (currently) receive?"
- "Criminal: lack of insight in behavior"

- "A funders' view, an employee's view, legislator's comments on how important and effective advocacy can be. "
- "Health care specialists in attendance."
- "A better set up for discussion after the film."
- "A depiction of empathy by parole officers (other than Montoya). "
- "How PO's are trained."
- *"Comparison with (openund?) justice system that don't have parole system or federal system."*
- "Structure, more information / different perspectives."
- "More sensitive moderations"
- "Good discussion afterwards"
- "nothing"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation Hartford Public Library January 25, 2018 6pm

### IMRP

Overall: There were 28 attendees, 12 completed the surveys (42%), but a few left the event before the surveys were administered. The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)", 12 individuals responded:

I didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat knowledgeable			
0	1	2		3	4	5
13% (n=2 20% (n=3)	)	13% ( <i>n=2)</i>	20% ( <i>n=3)</i>	20% (n=3)	13%	(n=2)

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- "that (they're) different levels to parole and how they can handle different parolees."\*
- "That parole needs to decide if it's role is to help offenders or supervise them"\*
- "life on parole is not life anyone (wants). There are rules with consequences."\*
- "conduct issues should not mean re-incarceration." \*
- "parole needs to be reformed."\*
- "It is harder for some people to cope with parole and living in the community. it takes time and patience"
- "P.O. role / social work vs. disciplinary role"
- "second change program can work for those who take it seriously"
- "that everyone is human and have feelings/emotions. Very had to change behavior (hard job for the parole officers also)"
- "the suggestion that parole leaders should take more of an emotional psychological (approach)"
- "disparity in who went back to jail for breaking parole & who got opportunities / perks..parole seems like a system set to fail more often than not."
- "The importance of knowing parolee's support system. Cannot be told 'Get a job & stay out of trouble."
- "Necessity of relationships working with paroles. Need people who want to help parole."

- "never give up on those in need"
  - 3. When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:
  - \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.
- "a larger audience"\*
- "victims"\*
- "more people"
- "youth & teens who are at-risk"
- "more people who were on parole on the speakers' panel"
- "would be nice to know what happened to everyone next."
- "halfway houses location contracts ½ house operation (agency) length of parole? Concur" supervision of parole officers 'policing their own". Must be nasty ones out there. It must attract power hungry people."
- "offenders completing time in prison and being released to be homeless in the world."\*
- "very good"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation Farmington Public Library, March 28, 2018 6pm

### IMRP

Overall: There were 18 attendees, 9 completed the surveys (50%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it			Somewhat know	Yes, I		
know it well						
0	1	2	3	4	5	
11% ( <i>n=1</i> )	22% ( <i>n=2)</i>	11% ( <i>n=1</i> )	44% ( <i>n=4)</i>	0% ( <i>n=0)</i>	11% ( <i>n=1</i> )	

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

\* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

- "Empathy & purpose drive success"
- "There is much to do in order to reduce recidivism. It seems the effectiveness of parole varies a lot depending on the parole officer."
- "Hard to change the system"\*
- "That there is effort to make changes"
- "The system isn't working & needs to be changed"
- "Changing incarceration from punitive to rehabilitative"
- "Difficulty in reforming the CJ system' difficulties on both sides parolees held to standard they're likely to have a hard time meeting; parole officers having a really tough job."

## **3.** When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

- "a comprehensive list of volunteer opportunities to support inmates & their families"
- "nothing"\*
- "options"
- "what are other progressive states? And how to maintain forward momentum?

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation Best Video, New Haven February 6, 2018 5:30pm

Overall: There were 12 attendees, 5 completed the surveys (41%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

l didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat know	Yes, I	
0	1	2	3	4	5
0% ( <i>n=0</i> )	40% ( <i>n=2)</i>	0% ( <i>n=0)</i>	40% ( <i>n=2)</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )	20% ( <i>n=1</i> )

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question). \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

- "that the rules are too rigid & not individualized for helping people succeed"\*
- "how difficult it is to succeed while on parole"
- "how negative and angry one of the PO's was. The culture of prison is destructive"
- "how hard it is to be in this situation"

## **3.** When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

- "some of the context that was explained & expanded on in the discussions afterwards also, how the parolees think about their lives – how they approach live – what they want & hope for & what options are possible – like if Jesse could be hired as a nurse."
- "no!"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford March 15, 2018 5:30pm

strendees 15 completed the surveys (60%)

Overall: There were 25 attendees, 15 completed the surveys (60%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat know	Yes, I	
0	1	2	3	4	5
13% ( <i>n=2</i> )	6% ( <i>n=1)</i>	20% ( <i>n=3)</i>	33% (n=5)	13% ( <i>n=2)</i>	13% ( <i>n=2)</i>

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- "how unrealistic the expectations are on parolees. It seems like they are set up to fail."\*
- "need to humanize everyone in the incarceration system"\*
- "relationships are essential for successful reentry"\*
- "the complexity of the problem & the fact that some people are engaged & sincere in making change"
- "its so complicated, no easy fixes"
- "drug ruin people's life"
- "how difficult parole is, I'm exhausted after viewing it..."
- "men and women on parole can be violated and returned to prison without committing any NEW crimes the supervision is complicated and frustrating for everyone" \* (gus)
- "the idea of parole"
- "structural supports (or barriers) that are interconnected we are all responsible and affected (powerful film, presenters, & good discussion)"
- "parole is impossible to succeed at"
- "The discretion that parole officers have. The difference in style (and quality) of parole officers"
- "hardship on the family"

- "Lift up the screen. All I could see was the head above me."\*
- \*norms at beginning of discussion- I felt like some people took over the commentary"\*
- "film = excellent, better management of discussion needed"
- "needed better facilitation, warren dominated too much"
- "I wonder if the families get any help during their family members parole experience like the mom & daughter the girlfriend?"
- "some specific ideas of different ways to get involved in these issues & make a difference"
- "women on parole"
- 'The difficulty of finding a job"
- "did not explain the opportunities well. what kind of support is offered? Would like to have seen the progress /regression...followed more than 1-year. Recidivism success maybe followed longer."

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation Manchester Public Library April 2, 2018 6pm

Overall: There were 15 attendees, 11 completed the surveys (73%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

l didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat knowled	Yes, I	
0	1	2	3	4	5
27% (n=3)	9% ( <i>n=1)</i>	9% (n=1)	36% ( <i>n=4)</i>	9% ( <i>n=1)</i>	9% (n=1)

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question). \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

- "drug addicts do not belong in prison"
- "importance of programs for treatment vs. incarceration"
- "that these are programs available for parolees (but not enough)"
- "parole is a way for re-entry into the community"\*
- "the system of parole in CT and how it operates"
- "the human side of people who were incarcerated"\*
- "parole is difficult"
- "re-entry is hard"

### 3. When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

- "more discussion regarding parole & probation"
- "work together"
- "programs offered by parole"\*
- "Have a program given by halfway houses."
- "nothing other than video glitch, it was really well done"\*
- "nothing significant"
- "film more positivity, discussion great"

• "more time for discussion"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screenings & Conversations ECSU Students of Prof. Teresa Severance Spring, 2018

**J**MRP

Overall: There were 47 attendees, 47 completed the surveys (100%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it know it well			Somewhat knowled	Yes, I	
0	1	2	3	4	5
(n=0)	2% (n=1)	23% ( <i>n=11)</i>	59% ( <i>n=28)</i>	12% ( <i>n=6)</i>	2% (n=1)

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- "parole = inmate, many challenges that they face when transitioning from prison to the 'real' world"
- "public safety is most important"
- "parole sets convicts up for failure, they are people with lives and futures, who deserve a chance to be successful"
- "we need to make it easier for parolees to be able to reenter society. The current system makes it impossible to succeed. We must take some action to change it."
- "you are at risk of going back to jail if you violate parole"
- "parole may be more difficult that prison itself"
- "Naturally people are going to get frustrated when they are told they are free, but have strict curfews, and not allowing them to have access."
- "PO's need to talk to parolees, not at that or down to them. The way parolees are treated by their PO's has a huge impact on whether or not they go back to prison."
- "To be a PO, you need to have several outlooks onto the parolees so they can help the parolee and the community around them.."
- "parole restrictions aren't designed to help people coming out of jail and violations are too strict."
- "The parole system is just as flawed as the courts and police departments. There are different perspectives about parole; POs see it as a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance and parolees see it as a tool that makes it difficult for them to adjust to society"

- "A lot of individuals go back to drugs or violate their parole, which causes them to go back to prison. This indicates a lack of (successful) rehab for inmates in prison"
- "The job of a PO isn't to look up everyone who makes mistakes, but to help them along the process of rehab."
- "parolees don't get as much freedom as expected, their basis of living is very different and they have many restrictions."
- "Just b/c a person is released does not mean that they are free when assigned parole."
- "parole needs to get fixed b/c it's really there to put people back in jail"
- "how easily people abuse parole when it is designed to help reacclimatize people"
- "the challenges people experience during parole"
- "the frustrations of being on parole."
- 'Where's the line draws between POs helping and catching the parolee for doing wrong?"
- "some of the POs speak to their clients in a condescending manner. Individuals on parole are human beings and deserve to be treated as such. It is important that parole be used as a rehabilitative tool, and POs help their clients as best they can."
- "PO's are torn between catching people and being POs and also being helpful & sending them to rehab.."
- "(Parolees) need to be given a chance. Sending people back to prison doesn't help. Taking parolee's money wastes their time."
- "People on parole need strict guidelines with POs who are knowledgeable and know how to appropriately deal with situations that occur."
- "PO's job is to be a social worker & enforcer of the law they need to help the parolee as well as protect the community"
- "parole is almost worse than just being in prison. A lot of them just want to do their time and get out without parole hanging on them."
- "when in the halfway house, the parolees don't get any freedom"
- "should POs focus on actually helping these individuals, rather than focusing on changing bad behavior?"
- "trying to get these people back on track and giving them a few chances. People don't always change at the first try"
- "the levels and rules and concepts POs try to push for. How easily the slightest thing can send someone back to parole or jail, away from loved ones."
- "the struggle of parole is just as hard as prison for some people"
- "(parolees) have no privacy. Every little thing they do can affect parole"
- "it's extremely easy for people on parole to be sent back to jail; the rules are very strict. Jessica's story was also important b/c she was able to succeed."
- "how hard it may be for some people to follow the rules and how long some may have to stay on parole"
- "How ex-prisoners are treated & how no matter how small or insignificant the infraction is, they can (return to jail) for not complying"
- "parole is rough on many people, the feel free, yet, have many restrictions and temptations that make abiding by all the rules very tough"

- "the struggle for both parolee & PO when it comes to having the parolee get used to everyday life with the restrictions"
- "how some parolees intensely care about violating their parole while others could seem to care less"
- "discretion of POs"
- "How much discretion the POs have"
- "how easy it is to violate parole"
- "how easy it is for parolees to violate their terms"
- "seeking all the challenges that face, but most importantly the chances they get after a slip up"
- "to not give up on parolees, people need second chances"
- "how strict the rules are while on probation, even if the action didn't seem like a big deal"
- "as long as you follow the rules during parole, the criminal will be fine. But the rules are strict"
- "The system is set up to fail & take advantage of parolees"
- "how hard it is for parolees to follow the rules on parole"
- "how easy it is to break parole. The structure of parole is important but does not give them much freedom, which causes them to break their parole anyways. Some see going back to prison as an easier choice."

- "nothing missing"
- "both inmates and POs struggle"
- "the parole side, not just the victims"
- 'how to improve resources & opportunities available for parolees"
- "which supervisions are PO's under? Are they starting to focus more of helping parolees instead of serving them no guidance? Do judges ever dismiss violations POs bring parolees in for?
- "these stories were about inmates who all violated the rules of parole. Maybe talk about one individual who did follow the parole rules and how they were able to do it. Treatment programs? Support systems?
- "how to incorporate a more helpful program into parolee that actually helps reintegration."
- "Do POs think the system is too harsh on certain offenders?"
- "more cases of women"
- "how POs receive training?"
- "POs need better training before beginning their first year on the job"
- "it would be interesting to see the at work, and see what they are entailed to do on a daily basis."
- "I think what is missing is what these people went through to get parole"
- "I would like to see their thoughts while incarcerated"
- "maybe, more examples of how there are other ways to help parolees see the bigger picture."
- "How to help people avoid getting into trouble while on parole"
- "I would have liked to see more from the parolee's kids, spouses, and family and how it has directly affected their lives"

- "maybe how officers handle those who don't follow any rules"
- "what happens to those who were re-incarcerated or giving another chance at parole? How they cope? What new goals they seek?"
- "the effects of placement on individual's residence sometimes some neighborhoods result in breaking or violating terms of parole"
- "more view from parolees"
- "how hard it is to get a job with a criminal record"
- "I'd like to see more how parole impacts the offender's family"
- "more of the POs struggles and experiences"
- "how parolees act and do at work"
- "more about what living is a halfway house is like"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screening & Conversation [Bloomfield, Manchester, Southport, Enfield] Spring, 2018



Overall: There were xx attendees, 44 completed the surveys. The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)", 44 individuals responded:

I didn't know much about it			Somewhat kno	Yes, I			
know it well							
0	1	2	3	4	5		
2% (n=1)	32% (n=14)	4% ( <i>n=2)</i>	18% ( <i>n=8)</i>	22% (n=10)	20% ( <i>n=9)</i>		

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.
- "to unflexible"
- "people leaving prison need transitional support"
- "parole is very difficult and often seems unreasonable"
- \*Things can change"
- "It was difficult to understand how the parole changes a person's behavior in the felon"
- "If there are support systems for prisoners on parole they can enter society successfully"
- \*A refresher course of what I left when I was working at HPD for 10 years"
- "parole has too many rules / way for parolees to fail"
- "the government needs more help"
- "there is no easy solution to the justice system"
- "how difficult"
- "How hard it is for some people to live a "normal life", the deck is stacked against them. they (parolees) just don't stand a chance"
- "The system needs help"
- "penal system needs to be rethought. Look to other countries for ideas, what appears to work"
- "there are many reasons why people cannot survive parole. No one magic bullet'
- "the emphasis and need for strong drug and alcohol support programs and family or significant other support"
- "It is very difficult for many to go halfway and that is frustrating for all. perhaps all the reviews are in place."
- "That working towards counseling and integration goes along way to help those exiting prison."

- \*"informative"
- \*"people are suffering"
- \* "believe people can change"
- \*"it's imperative to listen to the voice of reentrants to understand the challenges / successes of the experience of someone returning home"
- "I understood from the film & the panelists that respect for human dignity and compassion are the important factors in successful reentry"
- \* "the power & control dynamic is still so powerful. Very tough to see"
- "PO's have a lot of discretion as to how they enforce the terms of parole & whether they care more about rehabilitation vs. punishment"
- "how unsupportive the state, i.e. POs are in helping folks be successful"
- \* "success is possible"
- \* "we need peers / lived experience volunteering w/ parole"
- \* need for treatment"
- \* "changes will happen"
- \* "the continued changes we need to compete"
- \* "empathy & compassion to and from parolees"
- \* "the treatment from PO and how each react different thur experience or no experience"
- \* "how our CJ system needs to improve"
- "the new ideas in CT for parole"
- "states need to make rules and hire/ train POs so they have some discretion to favor rehabilitation over punishment"
- "It takes a lot of determination to turn lives around"
- "more education for parolees"
- "more education for parolees"
- \* "How the parole system works"
- "that there is hope for success in getting out of prison & leading a responsible life, but is still a way to go"
- "That they can have a different & better life if they work out when they get paroled"
- \* "clear understanding of the complicated lives of the parolees"

- \*"I would have liked to see more (coverage of) female incarceration"
- "how prison helps inmates find jobs"
- "a comparison of what works and does not work in other states /countries"
- \*"nothing"
- "religion"
- "I would have liked to see some positive programs that are in the system"
- "more time for questions, discussions"

- "it was perfect"
- \* "need more questions & discussion"
- \* "a complete success story, reintegration start to finish"
- \* "the experience on the panel of the African American male"
- "nothing very interesting"
- "might have been interesting to have a PO on the panel as well"
- "success stories?"
- \* "more focus on positive aspects (film)"
- \* "future possibilities"
- \* "more people from the community"
- \* "Rob's PO. Also their history"
- \* "family view (film)"
- "statistics and numbers"
- "nothing"
- "nothing"
- \* "only giving parolees (perspectives) who have been successful with job placement & staying clean"
- "could have been more in depth as to how the rehabilitation really works too surface"
- "perhaps statistics on the # of people in prison & they're crimes"

#### Life on Parole: Film Screenings & Conversations Simsbury Public Library May 24, 2018



Overall: There were 10 attendees, 7 completed the surveys (70%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it			Somewhat knowled	Yes, I know it well	
0	1	2	3	4	5
14% ( <i>n=1)</i>	29% ( <i>n=2)</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )	29% ( <i>n=2)</i>	14% ( <i>n=1)</i>	14% ( <i>n=1)</i>

#### 2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

\* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

- "we've got to change attitude towards incarceration from punishing / • protection of probation to stopping it in the first place. Learn from other countries."
- "a better understanding of what it's actually like to be on parole and how easy it is to fail"
- "things need to change" \*
- What is happening to paroles how 2 guys succeed to overcome"
- "talk" \*
- "things need to be changed"

#### 3. When asked, "Suggestions: What's missing from tonight's film and discussion?", individuals responded:

- "I thought it had a lot of information" \*
- "none that I am aware of"
- "more people"
- "It was very full"
- 1. Taking action: 6 of the 7 (87%) indicated that they would like to get involved: \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

#### Life on Parole: Film Screenings & Conversations UCONN Hartford (Master's in Social Work Program) October 6, 2018



Overall: There were 24 attendees, 24 completed the surveys (100%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it			omewhat knowl	Yes, I know it well	
0	1	2	3	4	5
0% ( <i>n=0</i> )	25% ( <i>n=6)</i>	12.5% ( <i>n=3)</i>	42% ( <i>n=10</i> )	12.5% ( <i>n=3</i> )	)

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question). \* = rated a 4/5 on question #1.

- "Unrealistic caseloads and the lack of training of workers"\*
- "There is a lot in the need in the area of prison reform and re-entry programs"
- "parole system needs to be reformed in a direction to more accountability"
- "parole system is failing individuals and reincarcerating people coming out of jail. The lack of support makes them feel hopeless and fail to succeed. We need to create a system that helps individuals to feel supportive and be able to succeed in the community."
- "language is very important when working with people on parole & acknowledging the humanity in them is critical for their success in the 'free world.'
- 'The reform of prison"
- "the Parole system is flawed and is broken; it holds former prisoners to higher standards than others. Humanistic development is very important"
- "there is no support for individuals leaving prison"
- "idea of integrating parolees into society is good ideas but manner in such system implements it is not helpful need to go back to the drawing board"
- 'I've read about it, but this film gives a name and a face to people whose stories I rarely hear...abolish prions and corrections system of control. drug addiction is an illness not a crime. Halfway houses are oppressive systems of control and are not the support systems that people need."\*
- "The most important idea that I will take away from the presentation is being extremely mindful and aware of the system, how it works, and how I can play my role as a social worker."

- "A better need for understanding the underlying issues, such as: addiction and trauma. We need to worry less about what is left or right politically but have actual conversation about how to fix the problems."
- "Continuously asking myself what knowledge these parole officers have and how to provide them with the right knowledge"
- "education about this topic is extremely important and helpful. Panel was helpful"
- "lack of strength based perspective in the treatment of parolees"
- "The importance of having a collective agency. We need to continue to advocate and be change agents."
- "different approaches of POs / SW's sets significant precedent on the outcome of cases – very complicated system, hard to realize rights in a system of prison in the outside world"
- "Lack of training on understanding and on empathy, dignity of inmates"\*
- "The system lacks compassion, it needs to be reformed multi-level failure on system and state"
- "How the systemic & structural issues & history of discrimination and oppression "plays out' on-the-ground (e.g. micro-aggressions among parole officers). \*
- "The importance of education trainings / advocacy for service providers and students, or parole officers"\*
- "Create ore funds to help the system"
- "the importance of communication"

- "I think a discussion & possibility on assignment on how to make it better. everyone thinks it's wrong but how do we fix it?\*
- "nothing to change" 3x
- "the viewpoints and experiences of parolees"
- "how can we each make a difference?"\*
- "could elaborate further on breakdown of costs/finances involved in what prisoner owes / how they get paid."
- "the "ordinary" of micro-aggressions reflection on the training, culture, acceptance even among lay people"\*
- "brainstorm alternatives to incarceration"
- "more macro picture of the parole system. A better idea of key players who designed the system & ways to advocate for change"\*
- "Beatrice Codianni for a women's perspective CT activist and former prisoner with national council of incarcerated women and girls).burn down this fucking system\*
- **"Engage a PO in the discussion and overall program (8x)** follow up on successful parolees and when they make different & follow up on unsuccessful parolees.
- "Guidelines developed for service providers"

- "The way the system & culture is set up for minorities to be incarcerated. Implicit messages to communities that will end up in jail.
- "Police officer or PO, or corrections officer participate on the panel"
- "I really enjoyed learning about Germany's prison system & what the US can take away from how they work with people in prison to reenter from the beginning of their sentence."
- 4. Taking action: 18 of the 24 (75%) indicated that they would like to get involved.

#### Life on Parole: Film Screenings & Conversations UCONN Hartford (Prof. Newport's class) November 14, 2018

### IMRP

Overall: There were 27 attendees, 27 completed the surveys (100%). The conversation was positive, individuals were highly satisfied with perspectives presented in the documentary.

1. When asked, "Before tonight's event, how much did you know about the issues of incarceration and reentry? Rate your answer (O = I didn't know much about it; 5 = I know this well.)"

I didn't know much about it			Somewhat knowled	Yes, I know it well	
0	1	2	3	4	5
15% ( <i>n=4)</i>	33% ( <i>n=9)</i>	7% (n=2)	37% ( <i>n=10</i> )	11% ( <i>n=3)</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )

2. When asked, "What is the most important idea that you will take away from tonight's presentation?", participants answered the following (italics for individuals who rated themselves 4/5 on the previous question).

- "CT is taking the initiative to reduce prison population by allowing inmates to go into parole...also vaughn's PO is very annoying, people like her should not be hired"
- "Just because your out of jail doesn't mean your punishment is over...parole is a second chance"
- "Don't judge a book by its cover"
- "Parole should be more about reintegration and less about punishment"
- "There does not seem to be easy answers for how to solve the problems posed by the film."
- "The system is flawed, but it can work"

- "You need to give parolees second chances and the opportunity to make the right choice, so they stay out of trouble"
- "Every person is different. Parolees and parole officers all come at the job in different ways"
- "Sometimes having important people in your life supporting you can help you stay out of jail"
- "The need to change parole officer's role from punisher to protector"
- "People can change their lives around to the degree Mr. Mcbrane(sp?) did...how different things work for different people"
- "Change is possible...how do you help people find that inner feeling of purpose?"
- "People get these second changes but may not always follow through. Parole seems a little not as good as it seems / worse than prison according to the parolees"\*
- "To speak of parole and rehabilitation program in order to help them"
- "The way that the speakers felt during their own life and viewpoints"
- "Extremely eye opening to hear different perspectives on life on parole"
- "There are many unrealistic expectations placed on parole officers and parolees"
- "The communication between the Parolee and the PO is very important. Parolees has to have clear understanding of their rights but also seriousness of restrictions"
- "How POs are primarily geared to re-incarcerate the parolees"
- "The parole system is not as corrupt as I'd expected"
- 'PB has a difficult job with a lot of pressure. They have to consider every person's case and decide what it is best for that specific person."
- "People can get back up. Even from being imprisoned multiple times and being in and out of prison, there is still hope for you to get back on your feed and make a difference in your community"
- "How much recidivism is a challenge for states"\*
- "Life after prison is serious. Individuals after prison need / desire serious counseling"
- "That a major issues is not knowing the difference between whether parolees should be constantly monitored and how it effects their everyday life"\*
- "I learned that being a PB is equally as hard as being the inmate..."
- "Environment plays a huge role in someone's involvement with the system."
- 'The system does not work as well as it should"\*

- "Only focused on parole in CT, should look at other states."
- "Discussing the lives of PO. I feel like their personal lives impact the way they care for their parolee"

- "I want to go more indepth w/the POs lives"
- "I think more perspective on the effect on the family life."\*
- "I think the presentation covered all aspects of parole"
- "nothing was really good"
- "What happened to the other offenders besides Errol?"\*
- "The discussion was great, although could have been more engaging"
- "more detail on the individuals lives when it comes to their past / childhood."
- "training of parole officers...do certain parole officers have a higher rate of successful reform? What are they doing differently?"
- "Both were well rounded and diverse"\*
- "Discussion and film were amazing to hear. Also loved hearing from people involved with all walks of life from different and interesting backgrounds"\*
- "A little more focus on the history of parole, it being a history class."
- "More intelligent questions from us...however, still the best class of the semester"
- "nothing missing" (5x)
- "access to halfway houses"
- "Perhaps some input from someone currently experiencing the parole system, a current parolee, though I am not sure how difficult this would be to achieve"
- "all of the elements were present"
- "This was a great discussion, very organized...This discussion makes me want to switch to criminal justice / political science to create better policy.."

#### 4. Taking action: 13 of the 27 (48%) indicated that they would like to get involved.