

## Research Statement

As evidenced by my curriculum vita, I have a strong interdisciplinary research agenda with high potential for external funding which makes me an excellent candidate for an Assistant Professor position at Arizona State University. My research interests are founded upon a critical concern for the overlap between criminal and social justice. Criminal offenders and the previously incarcerated are a growing population faced with reduced access to housing, employment, and social services along with other forms of social exclusion. One in four Americans has been arrested for a criminal offense, and arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates are significantly higher among black Americans, the poor, and both legal and illegal immigrants. Low income and minority-populated communities also experience increased risk of violence and victimization as a result of crime.

Crime rates and justice policies are inextricably linked to social and economic conditions which are the purview of social work. While criminal justice has been an historic focus of the social work profession, modern social work scholarship rarely reflects the importance or urgency of addressing these issues through our profession's unique lens of social and economic justice. *My research agenda is dedicated to strengthening the link between social work and criminal justice by addressing the policies and systemic practices contributing to mass incarceration, racial and class disparities in the justice system, and human rights violations of offenders and victims, as well as those policies and practices offering restorative and innovative justice alternatives.*

My dissertation uses statutory analysis, ordinal probit regression of national datasets, and two in-depth legislative case studies to shed light on a recent wave of policy adoptions providing statutory support for the use of restorative justice in state corrections. Restorative justice is a community-based paradigm for responding to crime that emphasizes repairing harm and restoring relationships between victims, offenders, and their affected communities. Associated practices include victim offender mediation, sentencing circles, and reparative boards. My interdisciplinary work in the nascent arena of restorative justice policy addresses a gap in practice knowledge and empirical literature, and it is important because it helps advocates and policymakers understand how and why new justice policies are considered and when they are most likely to succeed. In fact, my dissertation study and related work have been largely prompted by my partnerships with practitioners and scholars in the restorative justice community and the National Association for Community and Restorative Justice.

I started my work with restorative justice in 2011, when I began to study under Dr. Marilyn Armour at the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. Under her supervision, I was trained in rigorous qualitative research methodologies and took a lead role in developing a theory of change for an in-prison restorative justice program. Subsequent work with professors of social work, law, criminal justice, and political science honed my skills in statutory and content analysis as important tools for understanding policy. My most recent partnerships have further shaped my

research trajectory by increasing my ability to use national secondary datasets as community level indicators essential to measuring policy change.

In addition, I developed a strong focus on community-based and agency-based research through my work with the Center for Advocacy, Nonprofit, and Donor Organizations at UTA. In this setting, I was able to use my practice background in community organization and nonprofit administration to build partnerships with community agencies, identify systemic issues requiring intervention, and develop solutions that focus on the translation of research to practice. I see community-based and translational research as a key responsibility of the social work academy, and my work is focused on practical assessment and viable solutions in the outer rings of the systems framework.

In the next three to five years, I am eager to extend my work on restorative justice policy by studying the implementation of restorative justice statutes and their impact on system-level indicators such as incarceration rates and recidivism rates. In addition, I wish to reach beyond restorative justice to the determinants and impacts of other burgeoning justice policies and systemic practices with the potential to help or harm victims and offenders. The state of Arizona presents a unique opportunity to connect this work with immigration and border issues, as recent research suggests that sentencing disparities for both legal and illegal immigrants are severe. My long-term body of work will be coordinated to create meaningful translational research for policymakers, advocates, and administrators engaged with ensuring justice in the wake of crime. I wish to legitimize through high quality research those approaches which reflect social work's commitment to social justice and the inherent worth of each person.

I am prepared and well-equipped to secure external funding to sustain my research agenda. National discontent with the criminal justice system is now yielding increased opportunities to study crime policy and justice alternatives with funding from the National Institute of Justice and the National Institute of Corrections, and I have already identified current RFAs which are consistent with my research goals. I have a demonstrated history of winning competitive public grants as a nonprofit administrator and consultant. I have sole authored three federal SAMHSA grants, overseeing two of these as the principal investigator and one as the program evaluator.

My publication record reflects my commitment to scholarship, both independently and in collaboration with colleagues across disciplines. I have six articles published or in press, including four as solo author, and I have presented papers at national and state conferences in a variety of fields and settings. My past and current research partnerships include colleagues in schools of law, criminal justice, and political science and reach across three institutions of higher education. The study of justice policy lends itself to interdisciplinary analysis, and I am eager to work with ASU's Office of Forensic Social Work as a means of connecting with faculty, students, and community partners addressing the issues of crime and punishment.

Through both partnership and personal innovation, I believe I can make a lasting contribution to the Arizona State University School of Social Work.