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9-1-2013

## Book Review: Education in prison: Studying through distance learning

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Peterka-Benton, Daniela, "Book Review: Education in prison: Studying through distance learning" (2013).  
*Department of Justice Studies Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works*. 80.  
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also reflected in both its misleading title—it is not obvious what about the book “Beyond Suppression” is meant to express—and its bromide conclusion: “Epidemiological research and the examples of violence prevention described in this book confirm that violence among young people is a significant and pervasive problem” (p. 227). Even in the foreword to the book by G. R. Newman, we read the platitude that “The authors of this book effectively demonstrate that youth violence occurs in many different forms” (p. xi)!

Overall, this book does not offer anything new to those already familiar with the field of youth violence. There is nothing in this book that has not been mentioned before in the massive literature covering youth violence around the world. All the known determinants of youth violence are reintroduced in this volume: culture, poverty, neighbourhood protection, family problems, mental disorders, gun availability, and so on. Various preventive measures or public policies related to youth violence (criminal justice, mental health departments, community-based programs, social workers, etc.) are also recycled. However, if the reader is interested in knowing about specific approaches taken by specific cities/countries/regions to youth violence, and the reasons for choosing those approaches, then this book has a few things to offer. Some of the articles shed light on some interesting socio-economic and cultural variables for country-specific approaches to youth violence. The article on Iraq, where “CeaseFire” method of reducing violence is discussed, is noteworthy in this regard. This book is primarily suited for those new to the field of youth violence. It would make an informative, well-written, methodologically sound, and highly accessible undergraduate-level course book.

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Emma Hughes. (2012).

*Education in prison: Studying through distance learning*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate. vii, 198 pp. \$99.95, ISBN 978-1-4094-0993-9.

**Reviewed by:** Daniela Peterka-Benton, SUNY Fredonia, Fredonia, NY, USA

DOI: 10.1177/1057567713496816

In her book, *Education in Prison: Studying Through Distance Learning*, Emma Hughes examines the varied motivations of prison inmates undertaking distance education learning, by evaluating the students’ educational and personal backgrounds. Her arguments are based primarily on a qualitative study, which included 76 questionnaires and 47 semistructured, one-on-one interviews at selected prisons in England. Research participants were identified by sending out short-answer questionnaires on educational experiences to inmates at correctional facilities that offered courses funded by the Prisoners’ Education Trust, a U.K.-based charity that serves as the primary grant provider for distance learning courses in England and Wales.

After an initial introduction on distance learning in the context of prison education and a more detailed look at the nature of the underlying study, Hughes delves into the motivations that drive prisoners to participate in classroom-based or distance learning during their incarceration. One of the influential variables in regard to educational participation appears to be educational experiences prior to prison. A considerable number of inmates were identified as not having had enjoyable experiences in school when they were younger; however, some of them have started to regret this lack of education later on in their adult life, which put them at a great disadvantage on the job market. Hughes notes that almost half of the participants in the study began some form of education program after coming to prison, a choice that was frequently linked to the desire to find better employment upon release. For a smaller number of inmates, education in prison becomes part of

a larger “reassessment” process of their lives and the future directions they want to take. Others simply seek a way to pass the mundane prison time with something constructive and stimulating, or found growth in academic self-confidence only after a general process of maturation addressing underlying personal issues such as drug or alcohol addiction.

In contrast to these motivational factors, Hughes goes on to describe the most common disincentives for education in prison. The most frequently cited personal difficulties inmates face are a lack of self-confidence and substance abuse issues. A lack of academic self-confidence is not unusual with adult learners, but it seems to be particularly relevant to prison inmates with low previous academic achievements. At the same time, addiction can hinder academic achievements, while substance abuse treatment may lead to an interest in the educational process. Aside from personal factors, inmates also cited three common institutional factors, which can disrupt participation in education programs: “reduced wages for education compared to other prison work, the limited curricula offered by education departments, and difficulties involved in pursuing distance learning” (p. 55). Finally, the influence of others, inmates as well as prison staff and administrators, can also serve as significant demotivators for educational success. Distance learning can help overcome some of these disincentives, by providing more advanced educational opportunities that allow students to focus on particular interests, and by allowing inmates to participate in full-time work programs, while still pursuing their educational goals on the side.

The author then continues to look more thoroughly at what education means to students themselves and how participation in education programs can change prisoners’ self-perception. One group of students views education as a strategy to cope with the mundane facts of prison life. Not only does education give them some kind of purpose while they are incarcerated but also engagement and stimulation of the mind. Additionally, participation in education can return some level of self-autonomy to inmates who otherwise are strictly regimented by the prison schedule. Finally, education encourages students to establish and work toward personal and professional goals, particularly in regard to their future outside the prison system. Hughes also describes that students comment on increased self-confidence as one of the most common outcomes of education.

The prison as a learning environment is somewhat unique and can create opportunities or obstacles for learners, which are specific to that environment. Of particular importance to incarcerated learners are reactions from others about their educational goals and process, which can either encourage or hamper the learning process of inmates. Prison officers and staff, other prison inmates, incarcerated students all serve as important feedback providers and can greatly impact a student’s perception of and success in learning. Likewise, family and friends on the outside, as well as external contacts, such as distance learning institutions, can affirm the identity of a student or do the opposite. Unfortunately, learners in the prison environment still encounter negative attitudes by prison authorities and staff, antagonism from other inmates or different treatment by external educational institutions, which can all lead to difficulties with the educational process. Finally, the prison environment with all its rules and regulations adds another layer of influence that students have to navigate through. Whether its dealing with the noise on the wings, security regulations that reduce access to certain equipment or materials, tension between prison departments or educational restrictions tied to full-time work assignments involving outside contracts, prison provides many obstacles to learning.

Emma Hughes concludes with a brief look at recidivism studies regarding the impact of educational programs and while most of this literature is based on evaluation of U.S. or Canadian programs, Hughes contends that education in prison offers a way to face the many obstacles released inmates face in our society.

*Education in Prison* provides readers with a very interesting interpretivist analysis of inmates participating in distance learning programs, their motivations, successes, and obstacles they face.

Due to the fact that prison-based educational research has been limited, Hughes presents a nice addition by particularly focusing on the distance learning dimension, even though some readers may find the lack of quantitative data analysis of Hughes' study curious. On a positive note, the book also provides many personal accounts of students, which makes *Education in Prison* a lively and approachable read for practitioners, students, and academics alike.

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Dan Simon

*In Doubt: The Psychology of the Criminal Justice Process* New Jersey: Rutgers, 2012. p. 405. \$45. ISBN 978-0-674-04615-3

**Reviewed by:** Astrid Birgden, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia

DOI: 10.1177/1057567712475295

*In Doubt* has been produced by Professor Simon, Law and Psychology, the University of Southern California. The book examines the investigative (pretrial) and adjudicative (at trial) aspects of the criminal justice process in the United States utilizing the cognitive and social psychology literature. This review is written in the context of the reviewer being a practitioner based in Australia. Being a practicing forensic psychologist means that the reviewer has generally avoided this particular topic, deliberately sidestepped because of its emphasis on experimental psychology. However, Professor Simon has managed to produce a book that nicely dovetails the experimental literature with practice. Each chapter is set out with real-world examples, supported by experimental evidence, and completed with best practice recommendations. Being an Australian means that the author views the dire consequences for offenders who are directed into the U.S. criminal justice system with some alarm. Professor Simon has particularly highlighted the problem with faulty investigative and adjudicative practice resulting in false convictions; “the steady flow of exonerations in recent years has turned a spotlight onto the accuracy of the criminal justice process” (Simon, 2012, p. 4). This is therefore an important book for legal actors—law enforcement officials, lawyers, judges, researchers, and students—to digest.

Chapters 2–5 address the investigative phase of the criminal justice process. One case example is that of Robert Cotton who was tried twice and convicted for sexual crimes against two women and sentenced to life plus 54 years in prison but was then proven innocent upon the basis of DNA testing after serving 10 years. Poor investigative dynamics included the mounting confidence between the victims and the investigator that Mr. Cotton was the perpetrator despite faulty victim memory, hesitant identification in a lineup, and misidentification in a lineup which served to escalate the initial error. Problems with eyewitness identification included one victim basing two identifications of Mr. Cotton on false recognition together with misidentifications by multiple witnesses. Problems with eyewitness memory included one victim falsely identifying a red flashlight stolen by the perpetrator as that found in Mr. Cotton's apartment. Last, interrogating suspects is fraught with the inability to detect deceit (i.e., the TV series *Lie to Me* is misleading!), the application of interviewing techniques that lack empirical support, and the practice of aggressive interrogation techniques that rely upon psychological pressure leading to false confessions.

Chapters 6–7 address the adjudicative phase of the criminal justice process. Fact-finding at trial includes problems with the integrity of evidence, drawing inferences from testimony, and complicating factors such as racial stereotyping and courtroom persuasion. The case of Mr. Cotton