



THE
SAMUEL DUBOIS COOK
CENTER ON SOCIAL EQUITY

AT DUKE UNIVERSITY

Young Scholars Summer Research Institute

3rd Year Cohort

Research Papers

Summer 2017



Samuel DuBois Cook

The Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity (Cook Center) was named after Dr. Samuel DuBois Cook, a distinguished political scientist, scholar, educator, author, administrator, civil and human rights activist and public servant. Dr. Cook, a professor in the Duke University political science department became the first African-American to hold a regular and/or tenured faculty appointment at a predominantly white southern college or university. He went on to serve 22-and-a-half years as president of Dillard University in New Orleans.

Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity

The Duke University Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity is an interdisciplinary research center within Trinity School of Arts and Sciences that is comprised of faculty and scholars from across Duke and a diverse international group of affiliated universities, research centers and non-governmental organizations. Its mission is to promote equity, across all domains of human interactions, through interdisciplinary research, teaching, partnerships, policy, and practice. The Cook Center seeks to employ the innovative use of new and existing data, develop human capital, incorporate stakeholder voices through civic engagement, create viable collaborations, and engender equity-driven policy and social transformation at the local, national and international levels.

Young Scholars Summer Research Institute

The Young Scholars Summer Research Institute is sponsored by the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University in partnership with Durham Public Schools (DPS) in Durham, North Carolina. It is a three-week program that provides middle and high-school students enrolled in DPS with training to enhance their writing, research and presentation skills. In keeping with the Samuel DuBois Cook Center's central mission as a community of scholars engaged in the study of the causes and consequences of inequality, program participants will be exposed to curriculum related to the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of inequality.

During the Young Scholars Summer Research Institute, students receive instruction from distinguished middle and high-school teachers, university professors, and leaders from community organizations. The program's main focus is on the development of the students' research, writing, presentation and critical-inquiry skills, culminating in a capstone presentation of the student's research topic and findings before institute peers, university scholars, and Durham community members.

Rehabilitation versus Criminal Control: Education in Prisons

By: Boluwatife Ajasa

Abstract:

This paper examines the impact that education within the prison system has on reincarceration rates. It looks at how the lack of education programs in prison promotes recidivism, as well as the ways that education can help inmates change the way they used to live into something positive and beneficial to them. Lastly, the paper will investigate how the United States can promote education in prison through government policies.

Introduction:

Background:

Recidivism is the tendency for ex-convicts to relapse into criminal behavior. Data from the Department of Justice shows that prisoners who do not have access to educational programs while they are incarcerated are more likely to return to prison. Over 650,000 inmates are released each year without proper education and resources. More than three quarters are arrested again within five years: 56.7% return in the first year, 67.8% return in three years, and 76.6% return in five years.¹

This study led me to question how the lack of education continues the Prison Industrial Complex, which is “the overlapping government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems.”² Prisons often spend

¹ “Prisoners and Prisoner Re-Entry,” *The United States Department of Justice*, accessed on July 27, 2017, https://www.justice.gov/archive/fbci/progmenu_reentry.html.

² “What Is The Prison Industrial Complex? What Is Abolition?,” *Critical Resistance*, accessed on July 27, 2017, <http://criticalresistance.org/about/not-so-common-language/>.

more time, effort, and money on criminal control rather than educational programs for criminal rehabilitation. This relates to the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), a major problem in the prison system; prisons should focus on rehabilitation in order to reduce recidivism and prevent further crimes.

Methodology and Review of Literature:

I decided to research the nature of education in prison. I decided to use Duke Perkins library, a scholarly search engine, graciously provided to us by the directors of the Young Scholars Summer Research Institute. Through this, I found many articles containing various statistics that correspond to my research question, including the fact that forty percent of inmates do not have a high school diploma or a GED.³

A major reason I decided to study this topic is because of the economic drain caused by the Prison Industrial Complex. The average taxpayer spends \$31,286 per inmate which totals, roughly, \$39 billion per year.⁴ After finding articles that aligned with my inquiry question and ensuring that the data was relevant to my hypothesis I began to organize my findings, which I broke down as follows: the history of education in U.S. prisons, contemporary policies in prisons under the Prison Industrial Complex, the effect of education in prison, and prison education.

³ Carolina Wolf Harlow, "Education and Correctional Populations," *Bureau of Justice*, April 2003, http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/collateralconsequences/images/resources/Educational_and_Correctional_Populations.pdf.

⁴ Marc Santora, "City's Annual Cost Per Inmate Is \$168,000, Study Finds," *The New York Times*, August 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/24/nyregion/citys-annual-cost-per-inmate-is-nearly-168000-study-says.html>.

Data Analysis:

History of Education in United States Prisons:

The U.S. prison system historically has used education for rehabilitation purposes. The Walnut Street Prison, a penitentiary located in Philadelphia, introduced one of the nation's first education programs for its inmates in 1790. The program, and others like it, encouraged inmates to reflect on what they have done, with the expectation that they were less likely to return to a life of crime. In 1890, correctional education gained public and political support due to the growing popularity of the Reformatory model, which placed emphasis on rehabilitation and education.

In 1907, David Snedden wrote a book named *Administration and Educational Work of American Juvenile Reform Schools* about prison education and also about how educators in public schools could learn from correctional educators.⁵ Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Higher Education Act into law in the mid-1960s. The law permitted inmates to apply for Pell Grants to finance their college education. These grants for prisoners were a cost effective way to reduce the prison population and prevent repeat offenses. The savings in tax dollars were enormous and the value for public order and safety is uncountable.

By 1982, 350 college-in-prison programs served 27,000 prisoners.⁶ These colleges-in-prison programs include English as a second language, continuing adult education,

⁵ "A Brief History of Prisons and Prison Education," *Prison Education*, December 13, 2012, accessed July 27, 2017, <http://www.prisoneducation.com/prison-education-news/2012/12/13/a-brief-history-of-prisons-and-prison-education.html>.

⁶ Kenneth Parker, "Access to Pell Grants For Incarcerated People," *Saint Louis University*, https://www.slu.edu/Documents/arts_sciences/theology/Parker_AccesstoPellGrantsforIncarceratedPersons.pdf.

correspondence education, parent classes, wellness education, library services, and instruction in leisure time activities.⁷

Contemporary Policies in U.S. Prisons:

Today, however, public opinion and official policy in the United States have shifted away from rehabilitation toward hard criminal control. This is largely due to the rise of the Prison Industrial Complex, which started in the early 1990s when crimes rates were at a historical high. Politicians have been promoting the Prison Industrial Complex to get votes, which is why the electorate has not perceived it negatively. The Prison Industrial Complex targets inmates in mass incarceration who have been put into jail for a long time and have no chances of coming out.

Although the Prison Industrial Complex is supposed to affect everyone equally, it has a larger effect on blacks and Latinos than whites. As a matter of fact, there are about 1,408 blacks, 378 Latinos and about 278 whites in prison per 100,000.⁸ The prison system is forcing them to do hard labor for little compensation, which will not benefit them in the long run, since it does not give the inmates the education needed to look for employment afterwards, not return to any of their old habits.

Private companies tap into \$35 billion a year spending on prisons.⁹ This shows that the Prison Industrial Complex is benefiting the companies more than the inmates because the

⁷ “A Brief History of Prisons and Prison Education,” *Prison Education*, December 13, 2012, accessed July 27, 2017, <http://www.prisoneducation.com/prison-education-news/2012/12/13/a-brief-history-of-prisons-and-prison-education.html>.

⁸ Ashley Nellis, “The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons,” *The Sentencing Project*, June 14, 2016, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/>.

⁹ Adam Bluestein, Tapping the Prison Market, <https://www.inc.com/magazine/201202/ecotensil-cutlery-prison-bound.html>

companies are forcing the inmates to do their job. Prisons focus resources on hard criminal control because they want to profit off of inmates rather than spending money to rehabilitate them.

The Prison Industrial Complex:

The Prison Industrial Complex has negatively affected inmates' ability to access education while in prison. They are a property of the government because individuals who are imprisoned do not have full citizenship; even though slavery has been abolished, the current enforcement of criminal justice seems to restore slavery.¹⁰ Prisoners are taken by the company for mandatory labor because states release prisoners to private bidders to be housed and employed in conditions that resemble slavery. They also work and live in inhumane conditions. They are in shackles, the tasks they are given are dangerous, and they work for long hours. Inmates are paid 19 cents per hour with no benefits.¹¹ If they refuse to work they are put in solitary confinement, lose parole and are excluded from programs. They are paid close to nothing while corporations profit off of their hard labor. The system dehumanizes incarcerated individuals by selling them, as if they were commodities, to corporations that treat them like slaves.

The Effect of Education in Prison:

The lack of education inside and out of prison has prevented many inmates from finding a job. Money CNN states that 76% of inmates found it very difficult to find a job because of past

¹⁰ Lawrence Freidman, "Turning the Table: Slaves and Criminal Law," Review of *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia*, by Philip Schwarz, *Law and Social Inquiry* (Summer 1990): 611-613.

¹¹ "Responding to the Prison Industrial Complex," *By Their Strange Fruit* (blog), September 20, 2015, <http://bytheirstrangefruit.blogspot.com/2015/09/responding-to-prison-industrial-complex.html>.

problems with the law. Around two out of three inmates are unemployed or underemployed five years after being released.¹² This phenomenon, while supporting prison companies' profits, can cause an increase of recidivism, when the goal of incarceration should be to decrease it. It can cause some inmates to be homeless, suicidal and return to the activities that led to their imprisonment in the first place.

Prison Education:

Prison education certainly has a positive impact, i.e. it supports inmates in finding employment once they are released, as it can make them feel normal, better about themselves and less likely to commit offenses again. 41% of the prisoners who didn't participate in education returned back to prison compared to 33% who didn't participate in correctional education.¹³ It keeps the inmates busy, since some inmates do not perceive working as helpful in following the right path to getting out prison and not being incarcerated again. It also reduces recidivism because the rates of the inmates getting a job and succeeding into higher studies will increase. It will benefit society in general as we would not be wasting public funds on programs that are actually counterproductive.

Conclusion:

The government has also been trying to help promote prison education; for instance, there was a 43% reduction in arrest among those who participate in an educational program while

¹² Tanzina Vega, "Out of Prison and Out of Work: Jobs Out of Reach for Former Inmates," *CNN Money*, October 30, 2015, <http://money.cnn.com/2015/10/30/news/economy/former-inmates-unemployed/index.html>.

¹³ Richard J. Coley and Paul E. Barton, "Locked Up and Locked Out: An Educational Perspective on the U.S. Prison Population," *Educational Testing Service*, February 2006, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PIC-LOCKEDUP.pdf>.

incarcerated.¹⁴ It has uplifted the congressional ban on financial aid for prisons that was put in place in 1994. President Barack Obama and his administration helped by selecting 67 colleges to begin the second chance Pell Point program to assist inmates in earning their Associate's and Bachelor's degree.¹⁵ The program also creates better college level and high school education programs for prisoners; as education increases, the chances of being reincarcerated is decreased.

Brian Hill created the jail education solutions (JES) which provided tablets for inmates who want to receive an education or develop vocational skills.¹⁶ Based off of the research, I came to the conclusion that we need to invest more in inmates' education and not put more resources into security dimensions of a prison system that will not benefit society as a whole. Some states have already taken part in putting education back in prison like Cumberland County in North Carolina.

We need to give inmates better chances to earn a high school diploma, GED, etc. To be able to do this we need to work together to make or force prisons to enforce education; for example, we can peacefully protest around a prison and demand for them to make education a main point, we can call the government or write an essay to them, we can interview an inmate about his experience, life outside of prison etc.

¹⁴ Christy Visser, Sara Debus, Jennifer Yahner, "Employment after Prison: A Longitudinal Study of Releasees in Three States," *The Urban Institute Justice Policy Center*, October 2008, <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32106/411778-Employment-after-Prison-A-Longitudinal-Study-of-Releasees-in-Three-States.PDF>.

¹⁵ Danielle Douglas Gabriel, "12,000 Inmates to Receive Pell Grants to Take College Classes," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/06/24/12000-inmates-to-receive-pell-grants-to-take-college-classes/?utm_term=.e7b936998fcd.

¹⁶ Karis Hustad, "What Chicago Jail Education Entrepreneurs," *Chicago Inno*, June 16, 2015, accessed on July 27, 2017, <https://www.americaninno.com/chicago/what-chicago-jail-education-entrepreneurs-learned-working-in-philadelphia-prisons/>

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