



UNESCO Chair of applied Research
for Education in Prison



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Chair

**CÉGEP
MARIE-VICTORIN**

Newsletter

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SUMMARY

A Word From the Editorial Desk	p. 3
Community of Interests	p. 5
Portrait of a Researcher	p. 13
Education and Raising Awareness	p. 19
Research and Practices Overview	p. 21

A Word from the Chairholder



Julie Hautin

Chairholder of the
UNESCO Chair in Applied Research for Education in
Prison

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. Allow me to introduce myself: Julie Hautin, Chairholder since 2022. For the past twenty-five years, whether early in my career in the community, in education, 16 in Ontario, and now at the college level, I've worked closely or remotely with marginalized clientele, in life transition, in career transition. I have observed that education has always been a key element in the success of these people's projects and aspirations, particularly in the prison environment. For me, education in prison is an important vector for success on the road to social and community reintegration.

Today, I'm delighted to update you on the Chair's activities, as well as on news and other scientific advances surrounding applied research for prison education. We would also like to inform you that we will be hosting the first *Rencontres internationales de Montréal sur l'éducation en prison* from October 16 to 18, 2024, at the Université du Québec de Montréal (UQAM). In collaboration with the department of education and professional training of the Université du Québec (UQAM), the school of criminology of the Université de Montréal (UDEM), the Société de Criminologie du Québec, the Association des services de réhabilitation sociale du Québec (ASRSQ), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and the Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA), we are proposing an event that is not, strictly speaking, just a scientific conference, but a public and cultural event that will open up this field of research and practice, bringing together practitioners and researchers to raise awareness among public decision-makers of the essential role that educational practices, in all their forms, play in the social and community reintegration processes of people in prison. More information and registration details will be available soon.

Once again, this year, we had the privilege of presenting an award for educational innovation in prisons. Two projects received the award in recognition of the outstanding work of teachers in Quebec's provincial and federal prisons.

We also offer an overview of international prison education initiatives, with inspiring examples from France, Italy, Belgium and Quebec, highlighting a variety of approaches and programs. You'll also discover community initiatives, such as networks like the Incarceration NationsNetwork and the *Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal en milie*

A Word from the Chairholder



carcéral, which support prison reform and education efforts around the world. Finally, we invite you to read the portrait of a researcher and the inspiring stories of prison learners.

We hope that reading this will shed some light on the Chair's activities and encourage the sharing of knowledge and discussion on the subject of prison education, for the benefit of the entire community with an interest in this field.

Community of Interests

Chair Activities

Final Research Report – Meaning and Effects of Prison Edu-

As part of the 91st ACFAS congress, researchers Frédéric Armstrong, co-chairholder, and Lyne Bisson, social work professor at CÉGEP Marie-Victorin, presented their final report on the study, Sens et effets de l'éducation en prison : expériences et perspectives d'apprenant-es incarcéré-es dans le réseau provincial au Québec, conducted from 2021 to 2022 in a number of provincial prisons across Quebec.

→ [Find out more in the presentation video \(available in French only\).](#)

Collaborer avec des personnes ex-détenues: un soutien précieux pour une recherche sur l'éducation en prison
Lyne Bisson et Frédéric Armstrong
Cégep Marie-Victorin – Chaire UNESCO de recherche appliquée pour l'éducation en prison

Colloque de l'ARC dans le cadre du 89^e Congrès de l'ACFAS, en ligne, 9 mai 2022

1. Résumé
Huit personnes ex-détenues participent à notre recherche qualitative sur le sens et les effets de l'éducation en prison en tant qu'« experts et expertes » du terrain. Le projet n'est pas terminé, mais on constate déjà les effets bénéfiques de ces échanges tant sur le plan méthodologique et épistémologique qu'en termes d'empowerment pour les personnes expertes-terrain.

2. Contexte
• Recherche qualitative sur le sens et les effets de la participation à des programmes d'éducation en prison tels que perçus par les personnes apprenantes incarcérées
• Innovation sociale: en collaboration avec des partenaires
• Cinq (5) prisons provinciales et 40 entretiens
• En cours de réalisation – fin prévue 2023

3. Explication de la démarche
Principe: Le savoir expérientiel de ces personnes constitue une source de connaissance importante pour l'équipe de recherche. Cette méthode de recherche met la démarche de personnes marginalisées au cœur du projet en valorisant leur expérience.
• Recrutement de 8 personnes de divers profils à l'aide d'organismes partenaires
• Des « expertes terrains »: une démarche d'empowerment et de reconnaissance de la diversité des connaissances
• Quatre (4) rencontres individuelles tout au long du projet

4. Résultats préliminaires
• Les personnes « expertes terrain » ont accepté de participer au projet pour contribuer à l'amélioration des conditions de détention, améliorer l'offre d'éducation et faire avancer les connaissances.
• Les rencontres offrent un point de vue inédit sur l'objet d'étude.

Apports de cette collaboration
• Compréhension accrue de la réalité des sujets de l'étude
• Confirmation des attitudes à adopter avec une population privée de liberté et habituée aux « interrogatoires »: écoute active et bienveillante, considération comme apprenantes et non comme détenues, valorisation de la valeur de leur contribution au projet
• Bonification du processus de recrutement
• Amélioration de schéma d'entretien
• Préparation de l'équipe à recueillir des récits de vie difficiles
• Corroboration de plusieurs éléments présents dans la littérature
• Clarification des thèmes pour l'analyse des données
• Identification de défis potentiels
• Méfiance des personnes détenues à notre égard
• Confusion entre les programmes d'éducation et le programme correctionnel
• Absence de distinction claire entre l'expérience fédérale et provinciale

Limites et biais potentiels
La méthode de sélection induit deux biais:
• La majorité des personnes qui ont accepté de participer désiraient partager leurs réussites et l'impact positif de l'éducation en prison sur leur parcours à elles. Bref, il peut y avoir un biais de sélection
• Recrutement plus difficile des personnes pour qui l'expérience a été plus négative ou moins significative

Limites:
• Le terme « expert terrain » pourrait paraître exagéré, mais nous assumons son caractère politique et normatif
• Maintenir le contact pour les prochaines étapes sera difficile

5. Conclusion
La collaboration avec des personnes qui ont une connaissance expérientielle d'un objet d'étude est judicieuse tant pour les chercheurs que pour les expertes terrain. L'équipe de recherche bénéficie du savoir des « experts et expertes » dans l'élaboration de ses outils de collecte et d'analyse. Les experts et les expertes retiennent, quant à elles, un sentiment de fierté et apprécient qu'on leur donne du pouvoir en participant à l'amélioration des services d'éducation en prison. Ces personnes ont aussi insisté pour que la voix des personnes incarcérées soient entendues. Nous croyons que cette démarche pourrait être pertinente dans d'autres contextes, particulièrement avec des populations marginalisées ou vulnérables. La recherche elle-même s'en trouverait enrichie, alors même que la voix des populations trop souvent ignorées seraient reconnue et valorisée.

6. Remerciements et contact
Nous tenons à remercier les personnes expertes-terrain, les organismes qui nous ont aidé à les recruter, le CRNSG et l'ARC.
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UNESCO 2024 Chair Award

Each year, the UNESCO Chair, in collaboration with the Centre de services scolaires de la Rivière-du-Nord and the Centre de services scolaires des Mille-Îles, awards the UNESCO Chair Prize for an innovative project, material or teaching strategy in the prison environment. The award is presented as part of the annual Spring School event for educational services in prisons, held on April 10 at the Sheraton Laval. The aim of the Chair's award is to highlight and recognize the exceptional educational work done by prison teachers on a daily basis in Quebec's federal penitentiaries and provincial detention facilities. This year, the award was presented in person by Marc-André Lacelle and Camille Trembley.

Community of Interests



The Chair was pleased to present the UNESCO Chair 2024 award to Marie-Hélène Davidson, Christine Le Page, Laurie Pilote, Jean-René Provencher and Annie Tousignant from the Trois-Rivières detention centre (provincial) for “Cooking beyond the walls”. Their project creatively combines academic and social skills, informal education and social integration, through a unifying activity involving the preparation of recipes. Cooking together enables participants to acquire academic knowledge (integrating mathematics and French), develop culinary skills, improve their knowledge of healthy eating and lifestyle habits, and experience positive social fulfillment.

↓ Poster of the « Cuisiner au-delà des murs » projet and the Trois-Rivières team.
© Marc-André Lacelle



Community of Interests



The award was also presented at the federal level to Carole-Anne Lord-Brochu, Marie-Andrée Kendall, Diane Balthazar, Maxime Messier-Lacharité and Diane Lalancette from the Drummondville detention centre for the project “ Journal Le Passage: création, collaboration et partage au sein de l'école ”. An inclusive and collective project, which enables students to express their know-how and skills to the full, with a view to transferring knowledge and sharing expertise. Journal le Passage has been published since the winter of 2021. Since its inception, the Journal has been published four times a year, at the start of each season. With each publication, the Journal features about ten articles, including informative texts, reflections and artwork by students wishing to share their thoughts and talents. The Journal also features entertainment activities, such as sudoku, riddles, quizzes and more. All articles are translated into either English or French. The content is edited, revised and laid out by the teachers, who are also responsible for computer graphics (on Canvas), colour printing and distribution.

Congrats to all!



↑ Poster of the « Journal Le Passage: création, collaboration et partage au sein de l'école » et the Drummondville team.
© Marc-André Lacelle

Community of Interests



News

In France

Last January, Quebec radio and TV host Pénélope McQuade appeared on Ici Première with Margaux Velten, the French Ministry of Justice's national referent for cultural policy, to talk about the Prix Goncourt des détenus. An enlightening interview with the person in charge of culture in the French prison system, about readings and jury activities leading to the prestigious literary prize awarded by incarcerated people, still little known in France and internationally.

[More about this.](#)

In Italy

In April 2024, the Vatican took part in the Venice Biennale and decided to install its pavilion in the garden of the women's prison on the island of Giudecca. The exhibition, "Avec mes yeux" (With my eyes), is the result of a meeting between artists who have based their work on the testimonies of incarcerated women. In her article, English journalist Naomi Rea questions the relationship between art and creation in the prison environment, and the elements required to set up a genuine, structuring and lasting co-creation.

[More about this.](#)



A mural by artist Maurizio Cattelan is seen outside the Giudecca women's prison, which houses the Holy See's pavilion, during the pre-opening of the 60th Venice Biennale.

18 April 2024, Photo by Gabriel Bousys / AFP via Getty Image.
Photo taken from the above article.

Community of Interests



In Belgium

La Ligue's magazine features a series of articles popularizing various aspects of continuing education in prisons in the Belgian context, including transition and restorative justice. As the editorial nicely puts it, "education is a right in perpetuity".

[More about this.](#)

In Quebec

In December 2023, Radio Canada reported on a reintegration program with the community of La Tuque in the Mauricie region. It featured the Sokkerimowin project. The Centre d'amitié autochtone de La Tuque now offers an alternative resource that relies on nature to promote the community reintegration of offenders. This project is a promising example of reintegration that includes history and territory.

[More about this.](#)

Community of Interests

Community initiatives

Incarceration Nations Network (INN): Students in Prison

Incarceration Nations Network (INN) is a global network and think tank that supports, promotes and popularizes reform efforts in prisons worldwide. It collaborates with researchers, international prison education practitioners and students to establish a global network of prison learners: the INN Global Student Network. The main objectives are to support prison education initiatives worldwide, empower incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students, foster partnerships between universities and prisons, and create a community to transform prison education policies.

If you are interested in the project, you can join the network and receive further information by filling in [the registration form](#).

RIDM in Prison (Quebec)



(c) Emily Laliberte

Since 2012, the Montreal International Documentary Festival (RIDM), in partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec, has been implementing an initiative entitled **RIDM in Correctional Facilities**. The activity consists of a series of documentary film screenings, followed by a discussion with the team and a critical writing workshop. The event takes place at the Leclerc detention centre (women's provincial prison), the Bordeaux detention centre (men's provincial prison) and the Thérèse Casgrain (women's) and Charlemagne (men's) halfway houses. In conjunction with these screenings, RIDM also selects an inmate jury at the Joliette women's detention centre (federal). This jury of five women screens eight films from the festival's program to award the Inmates' Prize at the festival's closing ceremony.

As part of the Chair's reflections on informal educational practices and their implementation, the team wanted to gain a better understanding of the motivations, challenges and issues specific to cultural and artistic activities in prisons. In collaboration with Marie-Anne Sergerie, current head of Audience Development, the Chair's team gathered testimonials from both project practitioners and participants. We constructed two separate questionnaires: the first for participants, aimed at gathering information on informal education

Community of Interests



in prison (such as learning by being present at a vocational, cultural or therapeutic (drug addiction) activity), and the second for practitioners, to gather information on so-called informal education practices in prison. The following is a summary. Both from the point of view of the participants and that of the facilitators, the questionnaires reveal that the occasional gathering around an artistic object (in this case, a documentary film) brings new perspectives on oneself and one's situation in a prison environment, as well as opening up to new visions of the world. The collective viewing and exchange of impressions after the screening provides a framework that fosters new links and learning for the participants. The cultural object enables participants to reveal themselves indirectly by transmitting their points of view and ideas, first through words and then through writing. This "unveiling" is extremely difficult in a prison environment. Indeed, to reveal oneself is to show one's vulnerability. In the context of a cultural mediation activity, this unveiling becomes possible through the mediatization of the object itself. Documentaries lend themselves particularly well to this exercise, offering "real people", "real stories" in a less standardized form, as in the case of creative documentaries, for example. Although it's possible to stage a documentary, this guarantee of authenticity makes it easier to direct the discussion towards introspection and feedback on real-life experience, while confronting on-screen realities and stories that are different from one's own.

As Marie-Anne Sergerie notes, the activity helps to create connections and bonding between participants who didn't know each other, for instance. This framework also gives participants access to certain skills: the ability to analyze, to formulate an opinion, to manage interpersonal relationships by listening to what others have to say, drawing inspiration from it or confronting it. The mediator's position also plays an important role in providing access to the work and its content. Indeed, the mediation posture (as an interpreter of the work or a guide) offers the possibility of supporting and "enhancing the experiential knowledge of the participants," as Émily Laliberté, a cultural mediator who took part in the activity, points out. Through discussion and argumentation, participants learn to form new perspectives on different aspects of reality, according to the film's theme, and also through the various encounters: with the film, with the mediators, and with the filmmakers. The latter are often surprised by the quality of the discussions: "I found the exchanges rich and profound. The very lively experience also helped me to give meaning to my work as a filmmaker," points out Jean-François Lesage, director of *Prière pour une mitaine perdue* (2019). Camille Trembley of the Chair team, coordinator of the activity from 2018 to 2020, also remembers being impressed to find herself in front of such a dynamic, involved and receptive audience. Another important aspect of these encounters: challenging our preconceptions and prejudices.

The problems raised in the answers to our questionnaires are mainly the difficulty of ensuring access (the activity can be cancelled without notice) and seamless communication with staff, often resulting in a lack of knowledge of the exact nature of the team's presence and mistrust on the part of the guards. In some cases, staff make comments about participants that are not very complimentary, which does not establish a relationship of trust with the team. The one-off format of this type of activity was also discussed. Although this format is interesting, as it's logistically easier to set up, one of the participants points out that it should

Community of Interests



either be multiplied, or developed over time. Indeed, perpetuating this type of artistic and cultural practice could provide an important space for reflection, support and socialization for incarcerated people. This is all the more important at provincial level, where sentences are of short duration.

Comments from participants gathered by Marie-Anne Sergerie during the screenings of *MÁ SÀI GÒN (Mother Saigon)* by Khoa Lê (2024), *Novembre* by Iphigénie Marcoux-Fortier and Karine van Ameringen (2023) and *Éviction* by Mathilde Capone (2024):

« The greatest strength of this documentary is that it shows LGBTQ diversity with such authenticity, humour, resilience, resourcefulness and mutual support. Thank you, Khoa Lê, for this beautiful documentary. » (Mother Saigon)

« The greatest strength of this documentary is that it talks about a subject that is not yet well seen by society. It also shows us the positive side of coming to terms with one's homosexuality. » (Mother Saigon)

« The greatest strength of this documentary is that it shows me what is the difference between what I know and what I don't know. » (Mother Saigon)

« I think it's the first time I've actually seen real people, on screen, who are intoxicated and victims of extreme physical and mental poverty. » (Novembre)

« I found it interesting to see all the positive things that following through on my dreams and believing in something can bring me and help me move forward. » (Novembre)

« The greatest strength of this documentary is that it shows us how important it is to get involved. » (Éviction)

Comments from Marie-Anne Sergerie (cultural mediator), Emily Laliberté (cultural mediator), Jean-François Lesage (filmmaker) and participants in the prison activity.

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims



Leanne Trapedo Sims,
Assistant Professor of Peace and
Justice and Co-Chair at Knox
College

Leanne Trapedo Sims is an Assistant Professor of Peace and Justice and Co-Chair at Knox College. She has conducted transdisciplinary research at the sole women’s prison in Hawai’i between 2012 and 2016. Her work interrogates the intersections of gender, Indigeneity, violence and state power in colonized Hawai’i. Her book—***Reckoning with Restorative Justice: Hawai’i Women’s Prison Writing***— was published with Duke University Press in September 2023. At Knox College, Trapedo Sims is shaping a new, interdisciplinary program in Peace and Justice studies with a focus on critical carceral studies and abolition with a desire to internationalize the program. She is embarking on a Bachelor’s degree Prison Education College program with the proximate Henry Hill Correctional Center. We had the opportunity to chat with her about certain aspects of her career and her work. She was kind enough to our questions in writing.

Camille Trembley and Marc-André Lacelle: Tell us about your background and current research. What led you to work on prisons? And, more specifically, tell us about your latest publication on Hawai’i’s Women’s Prison.

Leanne Trapedo Sims : I was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa: Apartheid was the early ferment for my political and social commitments. I consider myself an activist-scholar. As a young person, I was active in the anti-apartheid movement, as well as feminist and queer movements. I have rigorous training across the Humanities and Social Sciences: American Studies, Creative Writing/Literary Studies and Performance Studies. I am currently the Daniel J. Logan Assistant Professor of Peace and Justice and Co-Chair at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. My interest in the carceral was magnified when I taught in the school-to-prison pipeline in New York high schools. There I witnessed the devastations of disinvestment from black and brown communities, as well as the apartheid state in the United States.

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims

From 2012 to 2016, while a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, after taking a feminist methodologies course, I conducted transdisciplinary research as a feminist ethnographer at the sole women's prison in Hawai'i— Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC). My work interrogates the intersections of gender, Indigeneity, violence, and state power in the colonized zone of Hawai'i. I have extensive training and expertise in qualitative research and restorative justice praxis, particularly in working with vulnerable communities. From 2012 to 2015 I was a researcher, participant ethnographer and guest, and in 2015-2016 a creative writing teacher at WCCC which warehouses approximately three hundred women of mixed security levels. My book, *Reckoning with Restorative Justice: Hawai'i's Women's Prison Writing* (Duke University Press), rooted in these experiences, addresses a relative scholarly lacuna in a tradition that privileges male prison writing by examining women's prison writing in two gender-responsive programs: the Kailua Prison Writing Project (KPWP) and its adjacent Prison Monologues. The majority of women in my writing classes at WCCC represented a range of Pacific intersections, and the philosophy of the writing program itself is rooted in Hawaiian practices of ho'oponopono (reconciliation and forgiveness) that resist state-sanctioned inscriptions on Indigenous bodies. My work on expressivity (poetry, life writing, and performance) with the inside (incarcerated) women counters the demarcation of a civic death for those incarcerated and emphasizes the specificity of inside women's voices in Hawai'i. The story that unfolds is a cartography—a bridge between social justice advocacy and scholarship that interrogates social justice failures in the contemporary carceral archipelago. The introduction of the book—*The American Gulag and Indigenous Incarceration in Hawai'i*—traces the troubled state of Indigenous incarceration in the US and the globe; as well as the origins of the KPWP. Then Warden Mark Kawika Patterson introduced Hawaiian programming in his trauma-informed care initiative to address the various kinds of trauma experienced by the women inside, ranging from personal to collective historical trauma. Historical trauma is particularly deleterious for Native Hawaiian women, who are disproportionately represented among the prison population. State violence is the malefactor in Hawai'i as the linkages of multiple forms of interpersonal violence and trauma with settler colonialism are palpable in the contemporary landscape.

C.T. & M.A.L.: In the context of your research practice, what observations have you made in the field during the creative writing courses (participants' motivations, impact at different levels: social, psychological, cognitive, etc.)? In your opinion, what would be the effect of these informal education practices on education in general?

L.T.S.: The gravity and dedication with which the women at WCCC invested themselves in the writing classes were striking. Writing functions for them as an evolutionary narrative of freedom that lets them access memories and past traumas and record them as a continuous living document, which, even though painful, serves as a guide to a "life worth living." Thus writing becomes radical and therapeutic. Lahela (pseudonym) conveys how the discipline of writing and reading—a restraint of form—tethers her to a present rather than dwelling on her past and keeps her intellectually and emotionally resilient. She claims the institution as her "teacher"—a pedagogical guide: "We all have our breaking points sitting in prison. My breakthrough is my goal. My mind is a sponge. I want to soak up

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims



everything the place has to offer me.” Gemmi (pseudonym) refers to writing as a painful document of memory—a guide that is both a constraint and an opening: “I have perfected the art of hating my past so much. I have to let it go, but never forget it, because it pushes me forward.”

The writing class performs concurrently as a healing and a disciplinary space where the reinscription and rejection of programmatic and institutional neoliberal narratives coexist. While this classroom shares tropes and pedagogical praxes with other US prison classrooms, it is not representative of them. In the class with its multifarious interruptions, we attend to a community of writers that counters but never escapes the constraints of prison life. To watch these classroom performances is to confront anxious questions: In what context is writing liberating or therapeutic? If writing works as reinjury, how can it be simultaneously transformative? Writing as self-discovery is a redemptive script and is embroidered into the program philosophy. Similarly, it is a recurrent theme in literature by arts practitioners working in prisons, and in the women’s writings. How do we find ourselves through writing? The question assumes a reverence for the literary arts as a means of catharsis and healing. Yet can writing heal?

All educators struggle with the classroom as a troubled space, rife with spoken and unspoken hierarchies, power dynamics, and vested interpersonal relationships. Feminist critic bell hooks posits the classroom as an erotic space and conjoins epistemological passion with erotic passion. Classrooms can be spaces of violence, love, and consummate potential. If classrooms are challenging sites, imagine the classroom in an extended institution—the locked-up/locked-down landscape of a prison. The KPWP is both resistant to and complicit with dominant carceral tropes. Incarcerated classrooms and those in the “free” world are volatile sites, spawning pedagogical encounters and relationships impossible to enclose. What transpires in any classroom exceeds the boundaries of narrative infiltrations—those of the educator/institution, as well as interpersonal exchanges between the participants and writers. The women at WCCC form a community of witnesses who elude, and sometimes claim, redemptive scripts. A facilitator can elicit acts of imagination in a pedagogical space, but the direction in which imagination blooms cannot be harnessed.

As ethnographic research projects in prisons are less frequent these days (due to security, ethical or financial constraints), and given your privileged access, what can you tell us about sharing this type of approach (methodology, relevance, impact) in the context of prison education? How has this approach enabled you to better understand the object of your study?

My site-specific feminist ethnography and experience as a creative writing facilitator in a women’s prison in Honolulu taught me the importance of critical self-reflectivity. The fraught trajectory of outsider ethnographers conveying disenfranchised voices is politically charged. Native Alaskan academic Eve Tuck cautions outsider researchers and educators in Indigenous communities “to reconsider the long-term impact of ‘damage centered’ research—research that intends to document peoples’ pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression.” Tuck urges “a moratorium on damage-centered research to reformulate the ways research is framed and conducted and to

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims

reimagine how findings might be used by, for, and with communities.” Clearly, this collaborative model—concerned with “understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives”—is fraught in an incarcerated setting.

As a privileged guest from the “free” world and a non-Indigenous, non-Pacific Islander woman, my positionality was an obstacle I spent years negotiating. Participating in KPWP Director Pat Clough’s writing classes and developing relationships over several terms facilitated my interviews with the inside women.

I employ autoethnography as a reflective practice to consider the transformation involved in reverse ethnography for both ethnographers and collaborators. Autoethnography is a mobile site that encourages an intersectional way of seeing and engaging with carceral culture and a useful tool for examining a space where unjust systems are interrogated. An integral component of feminist ethnography within a collaborative model is the ethical responsibility to exchange work with the community. Reading and writing in interaction with “subjects” is a central aspect of life writing and feminist ethnography. Feminist ethnography insists on working through relationships across boundaries of differential power—in my case, the borders between those inside and outside. It was difficult to share my manuscript with Clough. As an educator, I am aware that opening one’s classroom to a guest involves vulnerability, particularly if a critical lens is employed. Yet critique is an essential component of academic work. Before submitting my manuscript to Clough, I reread each chapter, imagining her as my reader. This altered lens let me rethink my initial critique. One feminist methodological praxis I incorporated is parenthetical notes to Clough that are an invitation to an extended conversation: an invitation that echoes circle pedagogy or Indigenous epistemologies. Clough’s responses, which I incorporate throughout, confirm the unique and transformational journey we undertook together and reinforce the process of feminist ethnography: its collaborative nature, vulnerability, and limitations. Her response employs the personal and the political:

“I’m not sure how to respond appropriately to such extensive analysis and storytelling. I think we both knew when we were talking that our conversations mattered—mattered most because I was ‘unpacking’ a program that grew from no plan, no particular curriculum... the writing, the women themselves became deeply important to me. I didn’t know that would happen. You seem to have captured much of that personal connection that unfolded for so many—first with their relationship with themselves and then with the witnesses to that unfolding—the other students and me.”

C.T. & M.A.L.: Could you briefly describe the *Inside-Out Prison Exchange* program that you have set up with the Henry C. Hill Correctional Center and the Restorative Justice Laboratory at Knox College? What have you observed so far? In terms of community reintegration, for example?

L.T.S.: One reason the US is the world’s leading incarcerator with over two million people locked up—is that what transpires behind the walls is largely invisible. To combat this invisibility, Lori Pompa—Criminology Professor at Temple University, Philadelphia—founded the *Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program* in 1997. *Inside-Out* facilitates dialogue and education across profound social differences — through courses held inside

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims

prison, involving students from a higher education setting and incarcerated students. Inside-Out is grounded in the belief that society is strengthened when higher education is made widely accessible and, concurrently, participants encounter each other as equals, often across profound social barriers. Bringing inside and outside people together for engaged, informed dialogue facilitates transformative learning experiences, inviting participants to take leadership addressing crime, justice, social and racial inequity, and other issues of concern. The *Inside-Out* pedagogy creates these collaborative, creative contexts.

In spring 2023, I started an *Inside-Out* course with ten inside students and ten outside students at Knox College—a liberal arts college with proud abolitionist roots—in Galesburg, Illinois, a small rural town. I taught Life Writing as Social Engagement at the proximate Henry Hill Correctional Center—a medium-security prison warehousing 1,500 men. All Knox students were required to take my *Prison Education: A Practicum* class, which prepared them to enter the facility. Inside-Out was transformative for both the inside and outside students. We read Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*. It was astounding to see how much Soweto resonated for men deported from Chicago to rural Galesburg. The intertwined collateral effects of colonialism and racism were palpable. The students produced a zine of writing and artwork that addressed the intersectionality between gender, race, identity, place, and culture. *Reflections Across Borders: Henry Hill and Knox College in Conversation* was presented at the National Peace and Justice Studies Association.

« My time inside has greatly transformed my perspective going into law. It put me face to face with people and issues I will work with one day as a lawyer. The prison-industrial complex now has faces. Because of going inside, I plan to minor in Peace and Justice to continue learning about social justice.” — **Eli (Knox student)**

« You are doing abolitionist work. Coming in here to engage with us in conversation when you could be doing anything else in the world means so much to us. These classes are transformative for all of us.” — **Emmitt (Hill student)**

I am shaping a new, interdisciplinary program in Peace and Justice foregrounding critical carceral studies. I have dreams to establish a Restorative Justice Laboratory—an incubator for activists, artists, advocates, impacted families, and the inside community to address reparative justice and mass incarceration in Galesburg and Chicago. I invite returning citizens—now working as legislators and public policy shapers—to my classes and college-wide forums. I have organized panels and large-scale arts and public humanities events addressing prison education as abolition, the racialized landscape of mass incarceration, and the challenges of re-entry. I hope to disrupt the distorted, racialized narratives of criminality in Galesburg.

- <https://www.wcbu.org/local-news/2023-10-03/knox-college-pilot-program-gives-students-henry-hill-prisoners-an-opportunity-to-learn-together>

Portrait of a Researcher

Leanne Trapedo Sims



C.T. & M.A.L.: Finally, do you have any upcoming projects or research activities related to prison education (whether formal, non-formal or informal) that you'd like to share with our readers?

L.T.S.: I have applied for a Fulbright US Scholar's Award 2024-2025 in Western Cape, South Africa. I have passed the peer review. If I am awarded the Fulbright, my academic affiliation will be with Stellenbosch University and the Ubuntu Learning Community.

I have been invited to work with Stellenbosch's Criminology Department under the auspices of Dr. Mary Nel, head of Criminal Law and Teaching and Learning. I will participate in Nel's Criminal Justice in Action module: a collaborative model of faculty teaching across disciplines in the Ubuntu Learning Community (ULC) at the Brandvlei Correctional Center in Worcester. Worcester, 120 kilometers from Cape Town, is plagued by violence, poverty, and drug addiction. Nel founded ULC in 2019—a counterpart to the US *Inside-Out Prison Exchange program* in which I have been trained and which I direct at Knox College. Nel's vision is to disrupt the boundaries between the inside (students in Brandvlei) and the outside (students at Stellenbosch).

My research project at Stellenbosch will be a comparative study between two geographical loci—Hawai'i and South Africa, both sites of Empire and intervention with a fraught political and colonial history. Incarcerated communities in Hawai'i and South Africa are direct victims of that history and are located in a genealogy of political and personal trauma. I completed my doctorate at the University of Hawai'i and lived on O'ahu for over a decade where I was entrenched within the community—studying at a Hula Hālau, paddling traditional canoe, and learning from a community of Indigenous activists, scholars and elders. Based upon my long-term site-specific research and subsequent book, I argue that it is problematic to collapse the Indigenous model of ho'oponopono with the Christian modality of forgiveness and reconciliation. Furthermore, some Native Hawaiians are contesting the cultural appropriation of ho'oponopono in restorative justice circles, particularly outside of Hawai'i.

I will conduct a critical comparative study exploring how the concept of Ubuntu is similarly appropriated outside of South Africa and outside of black communities. Frequently, both cosmologies are facilitated by white restorative justice practitioners. For example, I attended an International Peace Conference in Trinidad last spring, where many panels utilized Ubuntu in their work. This appropriation eventuates in a distillation and reduction—a removal from cultural specificity and context. Drawing from critical Indigenous scholarship—Eve Tuck, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Audra Simpson, I will examine the fraught terrain of this cultural theft. Furthermore, I plan to analyze the racial and gender dynamics in prison education programs. I have for many years been troubled by the fact that most outside students who study behind the walls with the inside community—are white women. It is imperative to interrogate the gendered and racialized landscapes of the prison-industrial complex and the prison education class.

I am exceptionally positioned to conduct this research as someone who was raised in South Africa during apartheid and spent over a decade learning from Indigenous communities in the Pacific. I have a unique, complicated, and embedded personal trajectory within these geographical landscapes.

Education and Raising Awareness

Portrait of a Learners: Luiz Carlos Paulino and Mauricio Monteiro



Thanks to researcher Sergio Grossi, we were able to send a few questions to Luiz Carlos Paulino and Mauricio Monteiro former inmates of Carandiru prison in São Paulo, Brazil. A prison notorious for the South America's largest penitentiary, housing over 8,000 inmates. It is also known for a tragic event, the «Carandiru Massacre» in 1992, when over 111 inmates lost their lives in a mutiny related to prison overcrowding and unsanitary conditions. The facility was demolished in 2002. The learners' answers were translated from Portuguese.

Camille Trembley and Marc-André Lacelle: What made you want to take a training course in a prison environment? An encounter? Something else?

Luiz Carlos Paulino: The reason that inspired me to take a higher education course after prison was so that I wouldn't be just another commodity for the state.

Mauricio Monteiro: At first, it was about passing time, changing the routine. These were the first steps of a marathon I am still in today; soon after, came the thirst for knowledge.

C.T. & M.A.L.: What programs/courses have you taken?

L.C.P.: I studied theology, pedagogy, law, postgraduate studies in applied constitutional law and criminal procedure. And mediation and judicial conciliation.

M.M.: I took the National High School Exam (Enem) because I needed a high school diploma. After that, I did a technical course in environmental studies, spent 2 years in Environmental Engineering but didn't finish, and I graduated in Environmental and Sanitary Management. I also recently dropped out in the 5th semester of Physical Education. I worked for a long time with selective waste collection, had a scrap metal business, and acquired expertise in a field where I wouldn't need to knock on any doors looking for a

Education and Raising Awareness



job, knowing that with my background I would face difficulties. Physical Education also fits this mindset; I can teach boxing, be a personal trainer, open a gym.

C.T. & M.A.L.: What did the courses and training bring you (socially, psychologically, in terms of knowledge, experience, etc.)?

L.C.P.: The academic course brought me a parity of power, to overcome cultural, educational and intellectual problems.

M.M.: The studies included me, made me understand my rights and why many people don't want this inclusion, helping me in survival strategies and arguments.

C.T. & M.A.L.: What impact have these various training courses had on your life today?

L.C.P.: The courses give me focus, strength and faith.

M.M.: The positive impact was huge, when I compare myself to other ex-prisoners who couldn't follow this path of education. Many fell back into crime, ending up imprisoned again, dead, or tied to organized crime.

C.T. & M.A.L.: What could be improved about the training courses you have attended (e.g., subjects taught, teaching methods, length of courses, etc.)?

L.C.P.: To be able to improve the integral education of the individual.

M.M.: Inside prisons, learning about pressure is very complicated, but providing incentives through improvements aimed at the families of these individuals would be a very important differential! In freedom, financial support would be the most important!

Research and Practices Overview



Book Chapter

- **Farley, H., et Ware, J. (2023). Supporting Frontline Educators in the Carceral Space. Dans F. F. Padró, J. H. Green, & D. Bull (Éds.), Widening Participation in Higher Education (p. 1-23). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9553-8_23-1**

Helen Farley and Jayson Ware's study focuses on the burnout of correctional educators in penitentiaries housing Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Maori people in a Covid-19 context. By analyzing the data presented, starting with correctional staff, followed by general education and ending with prison educators, they found various issues present in this context.

In particular, the difficulty of finding manpower, the lack of support from the administration, the presence of misogyny on the part of correctional officers towards educators, most of whom are women, the dehumanization of correctional educators, work overload and lack of recognition. The result is increased stress and a heightened risk of burnout. As a result of these findings, they put forward a number of suggestions, such as allowing educators to have a say in decision-making, increasing administrative support within the educational framework, with zero tolerance for misogyny, honouring autonomy, increasing support for lending to aboriginal educators, and improving the profession's three key competencies.

Scientific Papers

- **Annamma, S. A., Cabral, B., Harvey, B., Wilmot, J. M., Le, A., et Morgan, J. (2023). "When We Come to Your Class ... We Feel Not Like We're in Prison" : Resisting Prison-School's Dehumanizing and (De)Socializing Mechanisms Through Abolitionist Praxis. American Educational Research Journal. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312231198236>**

This study, which focuses on the experience of racialized girls with disabilities (Disabled Girls of Color), is the result of interviews and observations in a maximum-security juvenile detention facility in the midwestern United States. The facility is referred to as a "prison-school" to highlight the inextricable links between this place of detention and the school it houses, where participation in educational programs is mandatory for all inmates. After contrasting the dehumanizing and (de)socializing effects of the prison-school on the subjects with the effects of sociocritical literacy training, the authors discuss the limits of the latter's pedagogy. In particular, they note that it is impossible to escape prison logic completely, even in training that attempts to apply an abolitionist praxis. They conclude that a broader abolitionist approach is the only way to counter the dehumanizing and (de)socializing nature of prison schools.

Research and Practices Overview

- **Pompoco, A. (2023). Examining the Black Box of Prison Education Programs : A Descriptive Study of Statewide Correctional Education Practices. Dialogues in Social Justice: An Adult Education Journal, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.55370/dsj.v8i2.1588>**

In this article, Pompoco presents the results of an analysis of the characteristics of over 200 literacy, general education, vocational and college programs in 28 state prisons in one US state conducted in 2011 and 2012. The aim of the research was to identify similarities and differences between different types of prison education programs and, in a way, to open the “black box” of prison education. The various educational activities were compared along five axes - leadership and support, staff characteristics and training, student evaluation, educational practices and quality assurance - and Pompoco found several commonalities and divergences, a useful description even if based on a small sample. Pompoco notes in passing that there is virtually no link between criminological intervention practices based on the assessment of incarcerated people’s risk of recidivism and educational practices. This shows, among other things, that these two aspects of social rehabilitation are still too often separated, which makes it difficult to accurately measure the effects of prison education programs on the broader process of social reintegration, even though we know that these programs are a low-cost strategy for improving this process.

To find out more about the study presented here, see: [Identifying Dimensions of Prison Education Programs Most Effective for Reducing Deviance During and After Incarceration](#)

- **Stickle, B., et Schuster, S.S. (2023). Are Schools in Prison Worth It? The Effects and Economic Returns of Prison Education. American Journal of Criminal Justice. DOI:10.1007/s12103-023-09747-3**

Stickle and Schuster provide a meta-analysis based on 79 studies published between 1980 and 2023 that measured the effects of prison education. To determine the “return on investment” of these programs, the authors focus on three sets of effects: recidivism, job placement rates and hourly wages. In short, a dollar invested in prison education will yield a greater return if it reduces recidivism (and the costs associated with re-incarceration), increases job placement rates and hourly wages. While many meta-analyses on the subject have been hampered by the lack of high-quality publications on the subject and the problem of selection bias, Stickle and Schuster draw on a wealth of more recent research and once again demonstrate the positive impact of formal education in prison, in all its forms (adult basic education, secondary education, college education and vocational training). Prison education significantly reduces recidivism (-14.8%), improves employment prospects (+6.9%) and modestly increases wages (\$131 per quarter). Even if they find slightly smaller effects than other meta-analyses, Stickle and Schuster remain convinced that it pays to invest in prison education, especially as their study doesn’t even take into account all the societal benefits of lower recidivism rates (cost of repression and judicialization, negative externalities, costs for victims, etc.).



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