

## Correctional Education Association

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Author(s): Stephen Duguid

Source: *Journal of Correctional Education* (1974-), Vol. 48, No. 2, Fire and Ice: The Tumultuous Course of Post-Secondary Prison Education (JUNE 1997), pp. 56-68

Published by: [Correctional Education Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23294133>

Accessed: 23-10-2015 12:50 UTC

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# Cognitive Dissidents Bite the Dust—The Demise of University Education in Canada's Prisons

Stephen Duguid

In March, 1993, the Deputy Commissioner for the Correctional Service of Canada in the Pacific Region, Mr. John Duggan, wrote to the Dean of Arts at Simon Fraser University informing him that after twenty years of continuous university programming in federal prisons in British Columbia, the government had decided "...not to retender the post secondary program following the expiration of our contract with you."

In a world of aspirations toward lean, mean government one might argue that cutting such an apparent 'frill' as university courses for prisoners should be expected—indeed many members of the public might applaud and assert that 'it's about time'!<sup>1</sup> This particular program, however, had some depth of import to it, and the origins of its demise are worthy of further examination. The result of pioneering work at the University of Victoria (1972-1984) and a decade of innovative praxis at Simon Fraser University (1984-1993), this prison education program attracted world-wide attention, indeed was seen as a 'model program' in England, Australia, the Netherlands, the United States and many other countries. The program consistently attracted a significant body of students (from 10-20% of the population of the prisons it was in), had demonstrated success in reducing recidivism amongst its students, had spawned two important community-based projects involving ex-offenders, and for over two decades had contributed positively to the smooth running of several prisons. It was cost-effective, productive, and cooperative—a lot to ask for in the world of prison interventions. So what went wrong?

Officially, the program was the victim of financial constraints and shifting priorities. In the words of the Deputy Commissioner, "...as we identify and prioritize the needs of our offender population, we conclude that we must reallocate our scarce resources to priority needs such as programming for violent offenders and substance abusers which more directly targets the criminogenic factors facing offenders." Here we get close to the crux of the matter: scarce resources, targeted needs, and 'criminogenic factors'. The university program cost money—about \$400,000 per year—was open to all prisoners not just those with targeted needs, and—worst of all—addressed at best only one or two of the recently

discovered six criminogenic factors.

More about the 'factors' and how they came to be, but first we can dispose of the weakest link in the chain of arguments, namely scarce resources. Long-time activist for prison programs and prisoners' rights Claire Culhane argues eloquently and persuasively that money is never the central issue when governments resist meeting needs or cancel programs. There is *always* money for what government *wants* to do. The real issue centres on priorities, policies, preferences and, unfortunately, sometimes even politics—what we might describe as the 'corrections context' as opposed to the 'fiscal context'.

Corrections in Canada underwent several transformations and periods of fiscal restraint during the period 1973-1993, during all of which the university program in British Columbia maintained a remarkably consistent curriculum and pedagogy. When the University of Victoria first suggested offering university courses in English and history to selected prisoners at the British Columbia Penitentiary the operative context was still the 'medical model'. A product of the scientific optimism of the post-war era, the medical model was based on a number of theories about human change, behaviour, and development, the most salient being behaviourism or operant conditioning, therapeutic communities, and various drug/chemical interventions.<sup>2</sup> The University of Victoria program itself entered the prisons in the guise of a classic component of this type of programming, proposing to apply a specific educational 'treatment' to a selected group of prisoners who suffered from certain 'deficits'. The following is from Dr. T.A.A. Parlett whose Ph.D. research formed the basis of the initial experiment at the B.C. Penitentiary in 1972:

...there is a small but positive correlation between moral knowledge and moral acts; it, therefore, seemed reasonable to us to postulate that if we taught morality then the number of moral acts should increase and immoral acts should decrease. It was obvious, though, that an attempt to bluntly teach moral knowledge would be rejected by the inmates. Therefore, the moral implications must be hidden inside a suitable vehicle. It was decided that the most suitable vehicle would be university classes.<sup>3</sup>

While this overtly 'experimental' approach really only characterized the university program in its first 'project' years (1972-1974), for several years after that staff at the university continued to probe via tests and interviews for evidence of moral shifts amongst the students.

In the Spring of 1974, this 'medical' or treatment approach to corrections received a near fatal blow with the appearance of Robert Martinson's conclusion that "Nothing Works" in his review of prison programs.<sup>4</sup> This classic 'the emperor has no clothes on' revelation stated in print what had become self-evident, that prison interventions were not nearly as effective as they had claimed to be. While many prison programs disappeared in the policy carnage following Martinson's work, the

university program, never properly 'medical' in its orientation, survived quite easily by focussing its research and *raison d'état* on 'development' and 'habilitation' rather than on 'cure' or 'rehabilitation'.<sup>5</sup>

Two conclusions or lines of argument emerged from this experience with 'cures' and 'grand theories'. The first was that the social scientists had got the diagnosis right but were all wrong in their prescriptions or that they were just overly optimistic and needed to rein in their expectations. The second, the preferred conclusion of the more sociologically inclined, was that prisons were too hopelessly authoritarian to nurture any positive human change and anyway the problem was best analyzed and addressed in social rather than individual terms. The first view led to searches for more refined interventions, while the second led to prison abolitionism, community corrections, or proposals for the radical reform of prison systems.

Within the Correctional Service of Canada the 'nothing works' hypothesis did not carry the day as pervasively as it did in the United States. Throughout the 1970s CSC officials, particularly those in the Education and Training Division, persisted in talking about education in prison being a means of "...moral reformation" and necessary to "...prepare inmates, upon discharge, to assume their responsibilities as citizens and to conform to the requirements of the law."<sup>6</sup> These assumptions existed, however, within a much more modest correctional context, one characterized by the label 'opportunities model'. Responding to Martinson and to the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission of Canada, the CSC opted in the early 1980s to provide prisoners with opportunities to improve their educational, vocational and social skills. "Rather than transforming inmates, it is recognized that corrections should not be expected to do more than provide an environment conducive to offenders making responsible choices among reasonable opportunities to help themselves."<sup>7</sup> Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a muted state of tension between the advocates of the opportunities model, who basically argued that the prison should as far as possible seek to minimize the damage it might cause and allow prisoners to help themselves if they so chose, and those stubborn advocates of a more proactive intervention in the lives (and minds and morals) of the imprisoned.

The university program had a foot in both camps, so to speak. On the one hand, it was clearly an 'opportunity' in that it was open to all prisoners who could qualify and, having strong links with external institutions, it could maintain some 'distance' from the prison. To that degree it was simply an off-campus program of the university. On the other hand, the university program in British Columbia persistently maintained a theoretical and research agenda based on the advancement of individual cognitive and moral development (if not transformation) through education. Within the program both camps had advocates, leading to a kind of creative tension that made the program particularly vibrant.

The decade from 1975 to 1985 was a low point for morale within the correctional service and conversely a heady era for advocates of alternatives to the corrections agenda. The university program, while always able to cooperate with the administration of the prison system, nonetheless became subversive of this corrections agenda. Deliberately moving away from both the psychology-based 'disease' model and the disempowering determinism of the sociological model, the university program put its emphasis on understanding the criminal as a 'rational decision-maker', on individual responsibility but responsibility seen in a specific social, cultural, and psychological context.<sup>8</sup> Norman Jepson captured a sense of this after his visit to British Columbia:

This is the starting point of the Canadian experiment, in which a university sought to introduce into a penitentiary a programme of study, based on the humanities, which aimed *not* at reforming the prisoner but rather at challenging the framework within which he makes decisions. It seeks to provide him or her with the opportunity to look and react to situations in a variety of frameworks rather than exclusively within the framework to which he has been accustomed.<sup>9</sup>

The key notion here is that of 'framework' or the context for decision making, the words implying not just a social dimension but also a cultural, cognitive, and ethical dimension. Implicit here is the recognition that social environments and economic realities can restrict the range of choices open to individuals, but need not be determinative of specific choices.

Several threads contributed to the dynamic notion of decision making that came to characterize the university program's approach to the prisoner-student. The commitment to creating a radically alternative cultural milieu within the university program was informed in part in Luria's observations that "...sociohistorical shifts not only introduce new content into the mental world of human beings; they also create new forms of activity and new structures of cognitive functioning."<sup>10</sup> Thus while Robert Ross was developing his argument that it was the cognitive *ability* of the prisoners that needed addressing rather than the *content* of their thinking, the university program was placing primary emphasis on the content and on the socio-cultural context in which the thinking took place.<sup>11</sup>

The work in moral development theory and praxis by Lawrence Kohlberg, Jack Arbuthnot, Peter Scharf and others provided additional support for the crucial role of the context within which work on decision making could take place. They argue that to achieve development or growth in both the cognitive and moral domains, one must create an educational setting that is isolated from the remainder of the prison in as many aspects of daily life and governance as possible and which allows for practice in translating one's highest level of cognitive skills into thinking about very real, everyday conflicts or dilemmas:

We would argue that experience-based activity involving conflict resolution, problem-solving, participation in decision-making and role taking opportunities beget compliance and independence of more than an uncritical law and order sort. Educational experiences of conflict and participation extend the human's capacity to differentiate and integrate and to contemplate different points of view, in other words, to develop principles for evaluating 'right' and 'wrong' and perfecting a sense of responsibility, obligation, law, and justice.<sup>12</sup>

Just as persuasive was research into the effects of higher education which argued that "...the most important contribution to a student's intellectual and moral development comes not from the curriculum, but from the realization of community...."<sup>13</sup> If 'campus climate' in fact plays the "...crucial role in changing the values and attitudes of students....,"<sup>14</sup> and if the "...two most powerful determinants producing change in the students are their roommates and the intellectual atmosphere and traditions of the college,"<sup>15</sup> and if prisons are the authoritarian 'cognitive slums' that "...teach dependency, not self-reliance or personal growth....,"<sup>16</sup> then something had to change if university in prison was to be in any way successful.

Given this thinking about the conditions necessary for individual cognitive and moral development to occur, the central 'problem' shifts from the prisoner to the prison. The prison, whether by its very nature or via the criminal subculture imported by the inmates, thus is seen as overwhelming any attempt at change or rehabilitation. "Whatever is gained by the rehabilitative programs and treatment efforts is greatly overshadowed and diminished by the counterproductive forces operating within the prison community."<sup>17</sup> This fundamental contradiction between the mission of the prison and the desires of the imprisoned (the "...prisoner's need to live and the system's need to live for him..."<sup>18</sup>) was the fatal flaw in the treatment approach:

Even in a treatment-oriented prison, they are not convinced that the institution is being run to treat or help them, rather than to punish them. They are being held against their will; that is the basic reason for their opposition to incarceration. They do not believe that necessary rules are for their benefit and consequently have no personal, internalized sense of duty to keep the institution running, work hard, or be cooperative. Neither are inmates convinced that they need the treatment offered. They cooperate with employees not to get treatment, but to avoid institutional punishments and to secure a release from the punitive aspects of imprisonment as soon as possible.<sup>19</sup>

Taking this critique to heart, the staff of the university program worked to maximize the physical and cultural distance between the program and the prison as the only

means of achieving an impact on the thinking and decision making of the students and at the same time preventing automatic 'contamination by association.'<sup>20</sup> The prison system itself, responding in part to increasing fiscal pressures and in part to this deconstruction of its sense of mission, began a systematic process of privatization or 'contracting-out' for services. A new generation of managers took over from the 'subject specialists' of the earlier era and large sectors of prison operations and prison programming were contracted out to community or private agencies. Thus in academic and vocational education local school districts, colleges, institutes, universities, and private companies took over activities at one time handled by corrections staff.

For the university program, constructing an alternative community within the prison meant experimenting with democratic decision making within the program, offering classes that focused on controversial subjects, creating a fine arts/theatre program with opportunities for performance and role-taking, and importing into the prison as many personalities as possible from the university community. Accomplishing this required from the prison a degree of autonomy that in many respects was unprecedented in its liberality and cooperativeness.<sup>21</sup> The results were impressive. Research in 1980 into the post-release lives of prisoner-students showed a recidivism rate of only 14%, high rates of employment, strong evidence of social change and social satisfaction, and personal stability.<sup>22</sup> The response of the men to the opportunities offered in the program was what one might have expected:

One of the most important aspects of the SFU prison program is the atmosphere of mutual respect that develops as the students and the professors struggle together to accomplish the task of learning. Real learning is not about indoctrination or intimidation so often used in prison; it is about discovering the truth, finding it, testing it and using it to develop the tools to better understand and operate in the world. Rehabilitation really means expanding the awareness of choice that we each have as individuals within society so we are not doomed to repeat old patterns.<sup>23</sup>

During this period of relative stability and quiescence on the part of corrections, the university program struggled to keep centred on this dimension of education and mutual respect, fending off the potentially corrosive effects that direct engagement with student personal development and excessive concern about post-release behaviours could have on the commitment of the program to education per se. Asserting that "...education is seductive, socialization therapy is not," the staff of the program insisted that "...while it is admittedly important from the perspective of society and corrections that this program help reduce recidivism and change lives, this can only be accomplished by offering a credible education program."<sup>24</sup>



As long as the correctional service itself remained unsure or at least undecided as to its mission or objectives, sub-sets of corrections like the university program could prosper by carving out their own 'space' while serving a variety of masters. Thus the program contributed to institution management, provided a high status educational opportunity in a setting relatively aloof from the prison, maintained a research program that supported the possibility of positive change in prisoners, and by its institutional links became involved with community corrections. Throughout much of the 1980s this condition of bureaucratic neutrality (or paralysis) within corrections generally contributed to the steady growth of programs like this. Even a threatened cancellation due to fiscal restraint in 1983 was overturned thanks almost completely to the strength of the program, the energy of its staff, and the quality of its supporters in the community. In a world in which very little of a positive nature seemed to be happening in prisons, experiments like this seemed worth keeping.

By the mid-1980s, this situation began to change. Correctional staff in Canada and the United States were increasingly discontented with being merely humane keepers, passive providers of opportunities, caretakers of programs that 'didn't work', or managers of successful programs linked to other institutions. A CSC report on offender programs in 1985 heralded the dawn of a new era:

The opportunities model is a primary contributor to the instability [in correctional programming]. Because this model assumes the offender to be responsible, the staff have, regrettably, all too often seen their responsibility as being only to ensure that the offender is afforded program opportunities of his choice. The result of this orientation has seemingly created a 'window-shopping mentality' where inmates 'wander' or 'drift' in and out of programs without addressing key areas of need or seeing a particular program through to its completion.<sup>25</sup>

Already in the language of this report one can hear the birthing of criminogenic factors in the reference to "key areas of need" and in the annoyance that prisoners might actually be 'free to choose' programs. Above all, there is the powerful disempowering of the prisoner as person in the rejection of the idea that he/she is "responsible" and hence able to make choices. From the initial insight made by Ayers, Duguid, Parlett, Feuerstein, Ross and others that prisoners frequently made bad choices due to underdevelopment of certain cognitive and moral abilities came the quite extreme conclusion that they were actually incapable of making correct choices. Thus the process of infantilization of the adult prisoner began again.

One can also hear in the words of the Sawatsky Report the beginning of the end for the university program. It is referred to in passing as useful to long-term and/or maximum security inmates "...who seem to find it ego-

gratifying..." and thus use it to "...constructively occupy time..." but while it is perceived by some staff to be a "...nice program to have, it is not essential—not 'core' and could be reduced if necessary."<sup>26</sup> A classic 'trial balloon' that needed puncturing but, due to negligence or lack of foresight by the supporters of university education in prison, it was allowed to float unmolested.

The Sawatsky Report did not spring forth in isolation. It was, however, the first powerful indication from the correctional bureaucracy that a change was coming and that 'nothing works' was over. Ironically, the origins of these initiatives came in part at least from the university program they were eventually to bury. In 1979, at the instigation of local CSC staff, a research study was undertaken which showed that students from the then UVic Program had a significantly lower rate of recidivism than those of a comparison group of non-students. At the same time, Robert Ross at the University of Ottawa and his colleagues Paul Gendreau and Elizabeth Fabiano were engaged in an exhaustive study of the effectiveness of prison programs in general—a sort of 'Martinson revisited'. In reference to the university program in British Columbia, Ross stated in 1985 that: "Nowhere else in the literature can one find such impressive results with recidivistic adult offenders."<sup>27</sup>

Having conducted at 'autopsy' of the death of the behaviourist model in corrections in a 1978 article, Ross and his colleagues subsequently used the university program and several others as the cornerstones for their argument that 'something works' with 'some people' and that the basic element of success is the attention paid to thinking—or cognitive factors. By 1985 this research had been codified in the seminal text *Time To Think: A Cognitive Model of Delinquency Prevention and Offender Rehabilitation* and Ross and Fabiano had begun the process of actually creating model programs that utilized the cognitive approach.<sup>28</sup> Observers outside Canada were already talking about the new Canadian paradigm of correctional education, linking research connected with the UVic/SFU program with the contributions from Ross, Fabiano, Gendreau and others.<sup>29</sup> Unlike within Canada itself, where there was already a gulf between education programs that focused on cognitive and moral development and the growing interest in cognitive living skills programs, in the United States people like Thom Gehring saw the two as approaches inextricably linked.

The next step in this process of policy definition was the internalization of the 'cognitive model' by the Correctional Service—the appropriation of a paradigm. By 1988, Elizabeth Fabiano had left the University of Ottawa and joined the CSC, charged with designing and implementing a cognitive living skills program. That same year, citing the Sawatsky Report and an earlier review of life skills programs, the CSC began a pilot project to examine and assess the efficacy of using the Cognitive Social Competence model as a core curriculum for Living Skills programming within the CSC. Later that year, with the help of the CSC's Evaluation and Research Office in Ottawa, the Living Skills project was

underway in B.C. and in the Atlantic Region. Already, directives within the CSC were indicating that *all* education programs in the future would be directed toward (a) increasing anti-criminal thinking; (b) increasing sensitivity to, and acceptance of, conventional rules; and (c) decreasing perception of limited opportunity for success in legitimate enterprises.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly the CSC had overcome Martinson's pessimism and found renewed faith in things 'working'. Criminal thinking 'problems' had become the centrepiece of a renewed justification for prisons, imprisonment, and especially for programs in prisons. One might suppose that a university program with a focus on cognitive and moral development might truly prosper in such an environment, and indeed it seemed that way to many of the staff in the Simon Fraser University program, but two things prevented that from happening. The first was in the nature of a 'blind-side' attack in 1987 in the form of the Solicitor General of Canada's discovery of literacy or, more accurately, illiteracy. Quite independent of the cognitive living skills phenomenon, the CSC's literacy initiative was based on the probably simplistic notion that illiteracy led to unemployability and that in turn led to crime.<sup>31</sup> Massive testing was undertaken and high rates of illiteracy were discovered in the prisons, and as a result, monies were diverted from every conceivable source toward funding mandated levels of ABE graduates. A national conference on "Offender Literacy" was held in Ottawa in May, 1987, at which the Solicitor General expressed his shock at how many prisoners lacked basic education and promised that in the first year of the new literacy program ABE completions would jump by 400%.<sup>32</sup> When it should have been looking to the cognitive skills initiative on its right, the university program was preoccupied with meeting the challenge on its left, namely surviving in a system that had suddenly adopted a single-minded focus on literacy.

The literacy initiative was to run its course, predictably ebbing with the disappearance of the Minister (and the International Year of Literacy). The cognitive skills juggernaut, however, was research driven and bureaucratically vested and hence impervious to mere ministerial changes. Throughout 1988 and 1989 research papers appeared in academic journals extolling the efficacy of matching offenders' needs with programs, supporting the predictive powers of the new regimen of social science tests, and further buttressing the cognitive model.<sup>33</sup> By 1990 the results of the pilot project had been widely distributed, focusing on the modular approach, the use of CSC staff in program delivery, the strong theoretical and research-driven basis of the project, and the promising (but still inconclusive) results. That year 'cog-skills' programs were given a major position in the CSC's Pacific Region's Corporate Objectives for 1990-1994 and, correspondingly, the post-secondary program was hardly mentioned. The prestigious American journal *Corrections Today* featured in August 1991 an article by Fabiano and Porporino headlined "Canada's Cognitive Skills Program Corrects Offenders' Faulty

Thinking," a conclusion which was at best premature and at worst dangerously Orwellian.

The university program, in the meantime, was being slowly strangled by annual cuts to its budget, none of them fatal but all injurious. In 1989-90, staff from the program had become involved in hosting a major international conference of prison educators and were, ironically, defending themselves from criticisms by European colleagues that too much attention was being paid to 'correctional' issues like recidivism at the expense of a central focus on education.<sup>34</sup> The combination of a four-year struggle to justify higher education in a community obsessed with literacy, the shrinkage of program vitality due to budget cuts, the distractions of external projects, the concern to keep the principles of liberal education at the forefront, and the increasingly pervasive ennui characteristic of a twenty-year old activity meant the program was ill-positioned to meet the challenge of criminogenic factors (the new diagnosis) and 'cog-skills' (the new cure).

Finally, in 1992, the beginning of the end for the university program was in sight. The "nation-wide Correctional Strategy" was being implemented, with resources being assessed and reallocated according to the degree to which a program met "inmate needs" and meshed with the objectives of the CSC's mission. With the opportunities model and pessimism about prisons as reformatory institutions far behind them, the new correctional system could proclaim that "Good corrections is...the successful reduction of the risk of recidivism."<sup>35</sup> The correctional mission was directly linked to changing inmate beliefs, attitudes and behaviours and this was in turn linked to the criminogenic factors that led to crime and imprisonment, namely substance abuse, anti-social and violent behaviour, illiteracy, mental illness, sexual deviancy, and strong pro-criminal orientation. "Programming must be linked to meeting offenders needs, and particularly those needs which if addressed will result in pro-social behaviour....All programs should have a correctional orientation and correctional goals."

Suddenly, it seemed, an era was at an end. The university, representing education as perceived in the community, was now being asked to adopt 'correctional goals' and to identify the criminogenic factors that it thought its courses addressed. The tension that had existed within the program between those who stressed the 'pure' educational goals of the program and those who were interested in its habilitative or developmental objectives was now irrelevant. The task, should the educators have chosen to accept it, was to embrace overtly correctional goals and in doing so transform the curriculum in ways that would address behaviours such as violence, sexual deviancy, and drug addiction. Abandoned along with this embrace would be the idea of an alternative community within the prison and most of the theoretical constructs that had given the program its rationale and explained its effectiveness. Mercifully, the decision or the confrontation was aborted by the CSC's arbitrary decision to terminate the program by the

convenient excuse of fiscal shortages.

The prison thus retreats in upon itself, abandoning one by one the links with community institutions established over the past twenty years. By embracing holistically a program designed to be only one part of a more complex system, the correctional enterprise is validated and thereby emerges in full flower from the crisis generated by the earlier revelation that 'nothing works.' The evidence that authoritarian realms can evoke only compliance, that the imprisoned will not accept keepers as models, and that rehabilitation succeeds only when linked to the 'real' community is passed over in order to conserve resources, provide a positive and reinforcing role for correctional staff, and bring quantifiable change to politicians and a public that demand hard evidence.

Several 'lessons' spring from this experience. First, it is apparent that educational initiatives like the UVic/SFU program, have an internal 'clock' or life span that needs to be acknowledged. After twenty years of more or less continual and consistent operation, institutional or program renewal is essential if such a program is to meet the inevitable challenges to its well-being and survival. This program for some reason lacked the will and/or the means to carry out that renewal during the final crisis and as a result succumbed rather too easily.

Second, there is an almost irresistible tendency in bureaucratic systems to look for simplistic solutions to complex problems and a corresponding mandate for educational institutions to combat that tendency. Cognitive factors are important in predisposing some individuals to commit crimes just as illiteracy is a factor in unemployment, but in neither case do they stand alone. The dissidence referred to in the title of this paper is directed to the singularity of focus and the over-confidence about prediction, not to the idea that thinking and crime are related. Processing large numbers of individual humans through set-piece modules taught by well-meaning volunteers and designed to re-design thinking is one of those ideas sure to create numbers and just as sure to fail if carried out in isolation. Supported by a variety of other programs, including advanced and vocational education, on the other hand, the skills and insights offered through cognitive living skills could be very effective.

Third, prison systems have a tendency to convert rehabilitative efforts into conformity-producing, system-maintaining mechanisms and then justify their continued existence by shutting out the larger community. The prison doors that opened in Canada in the 1980s must remain open for the benefit of prisoners, the community, and the correctional system itself.

Finally, the primary lessons to be learned from the demise of the university program in British Columbia is that when contracting into government systems for delivery of service awareness of policy shifts is crucial, accountability a constant reality, and research into effectiveness and efficiency a necessity. The university program survived a first attempt at execution in 1983 by having at hand research results based on the 1980

follow-up study that offered clear evidence of effectiveness. The program and its network in the community used that research to force a reassessment by the government and eventually re-instatement of the program. The battle was lost—in fact never joined—in 1993 in part because the program was without weapons or armour, having undertaken no substantive research in the intervening decade. And this at the precise time when its most immediate contender for scarce resources was claiming effectiveness based on extensive government-funded research.

Ironically, just as the program was being canceled, almost precisely the same time in fact, a group of scholars at Simon Fraser University and Leeds University in England received funding for a three-year study of 'The Effectiveness of Prison Education', the research to be based on the twenty years of data in the UVic/SFU program. This research, underway now, will it is hoped provide substance to the case made by Robert Ross in 1981, that this program does work; is effective in affecting the thinking, valuing and acting of a broad cross-section of the prison population; and is, therefore, worthy of inclusion in the range of programs available to prisoners.

**Postscript 1997—From a speech given at the Region VI Correctional Education Association Conference, Ellensburg, Washington, October 1996**

In the research project referred to at the conclusion of my 1993 paper describing the demise of the post-secondary education program in British Columbia's federal prisons, we have followed up the post-release lives of 654 federal inmates released during the period 1973-1993. All were men who completed at least two university courses for credit while in one of several federal prisons in British Columbia over those two decades. In terms of their biographies and criminal histories they match quite closely the Correctional Service of Canada's 1993 "Canadian Prisoner Profile." All of the participants in the study were released from prison prior to 1994 thus all had the potential to be considered "successful" in the sense of avoiding re-incarceration for at least three years following release on parole, mandatory supervision or expiry of sentence (in general 49% of prisoners return to prison within 36 months after release).<sup>36</sup>

Utilizing a recidivism prediction system devised for the Correctional Service of Canada, the Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR), we were able to compare how groups of prisoner-students were predicted to perform with how they actually performed after release.<sup>37</sup> The SIR Score is a numerical value assigned to an individual offender. It is calculated using indicators of such as marital status, type of offence, number of offences, and age at first arrest. For example as common sense might suggest, an offender who has stronger ties with his community, does not have a lengthy record of offences, and is likely to be employed once he has served his



sentence constitutes less risk for re-offence after release than a long-term, transient, habitual criminal.

An important point about SIR however, is that it *does not* predict individual behaviour. It only predicts behaviour of a group of prisoners within a particular SIR category. There are five such categories, ranging from A—low risk to re-offend, to E—high risk to re-offend. SIR puts the case positively, so that of a group of “A” category offenders, 80% are predicted to not re-offend within three years of release compared with a group of “E” category offenders, of whom only 33% are predicted to *not* re-offend. (See Column Three, Predicted Success Rate, Table 1.) While many practitioners do not like such systems and express some doubt as to their accuracy, like public opinion polls, they have proven to be much more accurate than any other attempts at prediction—as long as they confine predictions to groups and not try to predict the behaviour of individuals.<sup>38</sup>

An immediately interesting fact about the prisoners in this study is that as a group they did better than the norm in that only **25%** of the 654 subjects recidivated in the three years following their release—a 50% reduction compared to the Canadian recidivism rate. Although a success rate of 75% is an impressive finding, it is possible that the result may have little to do with the program being evaluated. It could, for instance, be explained by the phenomenon of “self-selection.” By the mere fact of choosing to participate in a prison program like the Prison Education Program, these prisoners may be setting themselves off from their peers, self-selecting as it were into a cohort of soon-to-be successful parolees. It is argued by many that it is the act of selection, not the experiences within the program itself, that is responsible for post-release success—the program in this sense is the passive receiver of success-bound participants. On the other hand, the self-selection process may only account for a small part of the success rate; the actual post-selection experience, i.e., the program itself, may be the primary contributing factor to post-release success. It is unlikely that either case can be definitively proven.

More central to the substance and spirit of this research, however, is the comparison of the actual 75% post-release success rate of the 654 subjects in the study with their SIR-predicted rate of success as a group rather

than with the Canadian norm or a specially constructed control or comparison group of prisoner non-students. Since SIR is based on the prisoners’ own biographies, our primary research question is “Do they beat history, or repeat history?” In the case of our total group, because it contains more lower risk than higher risk subjects (see Table 1, Column Two), the averaged predicted rate of success for the group as whole is **58%**, higher than the Canadian norm of 50%, but still well below the *actual* success rate of the group (75%). Thus even taking into account self-selection by more lower risk subjects than is to be found in a cross section of the prison population, the program participants still achieve outstanding success, beating SIR—that is, history—by an average of 17%.

The central objective of this research is to identify particular ‘Sub-Groups’ of prisoner-students who not only “out-perform” their prediction—beat SIR as it were—but out-perform their fellow prisoner-students in the same sub-group. The next step therefore is to examine why and under what conditions they did so. If, for instance, a sub-group—say 30 armed robbers from broken homes who complete two courses on Shakespeare—have an averaged SIR prediction of a 44% success rate, but actually remain free of prison for three years after release at a rate of 64%, this may give us some ideas about Shakespeare, some insights about armed robbers, and some hints about future programming. If we then find with another sub-group of armed robbers from broken homes who did not take courses on Shakespeare and that enjoy a success rate closer to their prediction, then we may be onto something. The evaluation exercise, then, is an attempt to penetrate two black boxes, the education program and the student, and thereby discover *what works for whom and why*.<sup>39</sup>

But let’s back up a moment before testing what works for whom. We began the process by exploring a number of hypotheses generated from previous research and from extensive interviews with prison teachers and administrators about the success of the university program. The intention is to tap into the “folk wisdom” of those who work on a daily basis with offenders. In this brief summary of the research we can only give an indication of the depth of analysis provided by this research tool. As an example, we can look at the results

**Table 1**  
**Predicted and Actual Rates of Parole/Release Success, N=654**

	Number in Category	Predicted Success Rate	Actual Success Rate	Difference	Relative Improvement
A (4 out of 5 will not re-offend)	214	80%	98%	18%	23%
B (2 out of 3 will not re-offend)	110	66%	82%	16%	24%
C (1 out of 2 will not re-offend)	108	50%	73%	23%	46%
D (2 out of 5 will not re-offend)	98	40%	57%	17%	42%
E (1 out of 3 will not re-offend)	124	33%	45%	12%	36%

of an initial exploration of the “Sub-culture Hypothesis,” the idea that prison programs will have a particularly difficult time causing or facilitating post-



release changed behaviour among those who are predisposed to desire or need identification with a criminal sub-culture, people sometimes referred to as "career criminals."

The total group of 654 prisoners contains a large number individuals that could fall into this group, individuals whose repetitive crimes, immersion in deviant subcultures, and seemingly deliberate choice of a life as "out-law" make them particularly resistant to any attempts to provoke change, reformation, or rehabilitation. Many, though not all, of the higher risk individuals identified by SIR would fit this description. Early on in the research project it was hypothesized by program staff that prisoner-students who fit this description would likely show poorer post-release results than other more tractable groups. As a first attempt to test this hypothesis, we constructed a working group of individuals deemed likely to fit the career criminal description,

102 violent offenders with three or more convictions who were judged to be addicted to opiates.

The group as a whole did show some improvement (see Table 2) over its predicted post-release success rate, but as would be expected, its success rate fell far short of the averaged performance of the total group of 654 (17%). Still, a 22% relative improvement is a hopeful sign given the high risk nature of these individuals.

To get a closer look at this working group, we examined them by age at conviction (Table 3), knowing from the literature that the younger members of career criminal type are particularly resistant to any attempts at change while older members often suffer from "burn out" because of the stressful nature of the lifestyle and the debilitating effects of the drugs and as a result are more open to change.

The striking result here is not the dramatic success of the six individuals in the oldest sub-group—all the

literature tells us they should succeed at that rate—but rather the exceedingly difficult sub-group of 36 men in their mid to late twenties. The distinctive qualities of this sub-group of career criminals is made all the more evident when we compare them with the same age group from the total group of 654 (Table 4):

With the "problem" now identified more precisely and the difficult nature of the working group compared to the total group confirmed, we can now turn to a search for SIR-beating sub-groups. Turning first to a measure of immersion in the academic program, we can examine whether the number of university credits earned by members of this working group gives us any clues about effectiveness. Once again, we have some surprises in store (Table 5).

More is obviously not always better when dealing with members of this working group! Indeed, prolonged immersion in a prison education program is correlated to doing worse than one is predicted to do by SIR. On

**Table 2**

Opiate Addicted Violent Offenders with 3 or More Convictions (n=102)

Working Group	Predicted	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
N=102	45%	55%	<b>10%</b>	<b>22%</b>

**Table 3**

Opiate Addicted Violent Repeat Offenders by Age at Last Conviction (n=102)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
Age 17-24 (n=28)	41%	54%	13%	31%
Age 25-30 (n=36)	47%	44%	-3%	-6%
Age 31-40 (n=32)	45%	63%	17%	38%
Age 41+ (n=6)	48%	83%	35%	73%

**Table 4**

Total Group by Age at Last Conviction (n=654)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
Age 17-24 (n=161)	53%	72%	19%	35%
Age 25-30 (n=205)	54%	65%	<b>11%</b>	<b>20%</b>
Age 31-40 (n=207)	60%	78%	18%	30%
Age 41+ (n=81)	71%	98%	27%	38%

**Table 5**

Opiate Addicted Violent Repeat Offenders by Age at Last Conviction (n=102)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
Age 17-24 (n=38)	45%	63%	<b>18%</b>	<b>39%</b>
Age 25-30 (n=30)	46%	60%	14%	31%
Age 31-40 (n=34)	44%	41%	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-5%</b>

the other hand, completion of a very few courses (in this case one to five) seems to have a fairly significant impact.

These results support some early speculations made by the research team about the relationship of more serious or "career" criminals and the university program. Unlike other groups in the program such as younger or less experienced offenders, it seemed unlikely that very many of these career criminals would be able to utilize their educational experiences to transform their lives or break dramatically from the criminal or drug subcultures to which they were so strongly attached. Rather, it was hypothesized that post-release success would more likely develop from an ability to resist the more dangerous attributes and attractions of those cultures, an ability that might be aided by the improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and "cultural literacy" attained in part as a result of participation in the university program. Our search for successful sub-groups, therefore, shifted from academic engagement or advancement to activities that might more directly (or indirectly) foster self-esteem.

Sticking with the academic side of the education program, we looked at the issue of the trend in grade point averages (GPA), the assumption being that a steady improvement in academic performance, even if only in a few courses, could lead to important advances

in self-esteem for individuals with little prior educational accomplishment.

The results here seem to bear out the assumption that a steady improvement in one's academic performance, independent of the actual grade point average, is strongly correlated with surpassing one's predicted post-release success. These data may indicate that in dealing with serious repeat offenders, especially those who come from educationally deprived backgrounds, success is less about final achievement than about progress or improvement. Likewise, as might be expected, those subjects who were scored as being more intensely engaged with the education program did better than those who were deemed average or below average in their degree of engagement, the former improving by 25% over their prediction and the latter succeeding only at the rate SIR predicted.

The university program in these prisons was, however, much more than a collection of credit courses. It consisted as well of an active theatre program involving students and faculty; opportunities for student employment as clerks, librarians, and teaching assistants; a student government structure; and a variety of non-credit seminars and activities. Just as at a "normal" university campus, many students are much more affected by these ancillary activities than they are by the formal participation in academic courses. Given the

likely paucity of academic goals or dramatic career changes for most members of this working group, we decided to turn to this area of the university program in the search for sub-groups that might experience gains in self-esteem or self-confidence through participation in this dimension of university life.

The theatre program seemed the most likely candidate since it was widespread throughout the program and tended to attract students less engaged with coursework. Of the 102 members of this working group, 26 participated in theatre activities.

For the total group of 654, there is no difference in post-release success between participants in the theatre program and non-participants. Supporters of theatre in prisons have long asserted that opportunities for role-playing, the gains in self-esteem flowing from public recognition by peers and others, and the participation in the kind of

**Table 6**

Opiate Addicted Violent Repeat Offenders by GPA Trend (n=102)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
Age 17-24 (n=27)	47%	56%	8%	18%
Age 25-30 (n=52)	44%	52%	8%	18%
Age 31-40 (n=23)	44%	61%	<b>17%</b>	<b>37%</b>

**Table 7**

Opiate Addicted Violent Repeat Offenders Participation in Theatre (n=102)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
None (n=76)	45%	51%	7%	15%
Participation(n=26)	46%	65%	<b>20%</b>	<b>43%</b>

**Table 8**

Opiate Addicted Violent Repeat Offenders by Release (n=100)

Sub-groups	Predicted %	Actual %	Difference	Relative Improvement
Age 17-24 (n=28)	41%	54%	13%	31%
Age 25-30 (n=36)	47%	44%	-3%	-6%
Age 31-40 (n=32)	45%	63%	17%	38%
Age 41+ (n=6)	48%	83%	35%	73%

collective effort intrinsic to theatre are potentially therapeutic and are especially relevant for hard core, career criminals. The data from this research appear to support these contentions.

Finally, as a check on the impact of the correctional system itself on the potential post-release success of members of this working group, we compared one sub-group released on either Mandatory Supervision or Sentence Expiry—men held in prison as long as was practically or legally possible—and those released on either Day or Full Parole (Table 8).

While there were no doubt reasons the Parole Board felt it necessary to refuse parole to the 49 individuals in the first sub-group—44% of them were judged by SIR to be high risk compared to 30% in the paroled group—the dramatic difference in post-release success for the two sub-groups should give one pause to reconsider the issue of transition from prison to community for this type of offender. Of the 51 individuals in the sub-group who were paroled, 41 or 80% were paroled to halfway houses while only eight of the other sub-group spent time in such a transitional facility. As in the case of the Second Chancers who continued their education after release and those who were released within two years of completing the education program, the effectiveness of the prison program experience seems highly affected by the nature of the transition to the community.

### Conclusion

In following up on the post-release lives of the students in this prison education program, information has been collected on over sixty variables concerning the biographical, academic, correctional, and post-release lives of the 654 subjects. Thirteen testable hypotheses were generated during the course of the research, each of which can be explored utilizing various combinations of variables, as is illustrated in this look at just one example. Having enjoyed for three years virtually unlimited access to correctional records and having had full access to twenty years of academic and program records, the researchers involved with this project have only begun the process of locating the insights and revelations that remain embedded in the numbers, words, and patterns collected.

From this first trial it does seem clear that the methodology being utilized does "work" in that it produces on the one hand new insights and new ideas and on the other confirms many hypotheses, assumptions, and beliefs. The sub-groups do enable us to move from facing a Black Box to moving around inside a Gray Box, our understanding of the actions of individuals still clouded by multiple factors of which we can know only a fraction. Through the sub-groups we can begin to draw conclusions about what works for whom—and what does not work, and for whom. And we can begin to reason about why specific components or aspects of the education program are effective for certain groups, insights which in turn can provide valuable advice to program providers.

Finally, we can it would seem demonstrate that this particular prison education did "work" for a wide variety of prison inmates in a wide variety of ways. It was effective in attracting students and helped them to succeed in their post-release lives at rates significantly higher than the correctional system (and their own history) predicted. For some prisoners continuing on with education after release may have been decisive, for others it was the theatre program, or academic achievement, or simple longevity in the program. In each case, however, the cause is not an accident, a random occurrence or an essential feature. The 654 subjects in this study are not an amorphous group of "prisoner-students" but are members of coherent, identifiable sub-groups who find their own chain of cause and effect in linking (or not) their participation in a program with their post-release lives.

### Notes

- 1 Indeed not just the public. In responding to a letter expressing concern at the cancellation of the university program, the Acting Deputy Commissioner John Sawatsky referred to it as a "...bit of a luxury that we can no longer afford...." Sawatsky to Stephen Steurer, 2 July 1993.
- 2 Cressey notes that under the medical model "...the prison attempts to attain the objective of reformation through individualized treatment. With the adoption of this conception psychiatrists, social workers and sociologists have been employed in some prisons to provide treatment services which are more directly aimed at altering criminals' personalities than are academic classes and vocational training." Cressey, "Limitations on Organization of Treatment in the Modern Prison," in Richard Cloward, et al., *Theoretical Studies in Social Organization of the Prison*, New York: Social Science Research Council, 1960, p. 86.
- 3 T.A.A. Parlett, "The Criminal As Moral Philosopher," *The Journal of Correctional Education*, v.26:4, 1974, p. 19.
- 4 Robert Martinson, "What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," *Public Interest*, Spring 1974.
- 5 At Matsqui Institution, a prison built in 1965 as a drug rehabilitation centre featuring amongst many other experimental approaches transcendental meditation, token economies and behaviourism, the university program was shifted in 1976 from makeshift quarters next to the hobby shop into a luxurious (by prison standards) building that had been, in the era of the medical model, a special 'treatment unit' for drug addicts.
- 6 D. Griffin, "Report to the OISE Review," 1978, p. 62 and CSC Education and Training *Calendar of Studies*, 1982-83, p. B-2.
- 7 MacPhail, D., "The Moral Education Approach in Treating Adult Inmates," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, v.16:1, 1989, p. 11. In the UK, following the 'May Report', the idea of education for 'character reform' was abandoned but education was encouraged as an



aspect of "positive custody." Implied in this notion was the acceptance that there was little the prison could do to help a prisoner become law-abiding, but rather "...regimes should be designed to help the prisoner attain or regain positive attitudes towards himself and towards the society to which he will eventually return." Parkinson, Eleanor, "Educating Adults in Prison," *Studies in Adult Education*, v.15, 1983, p. 70

8 This approach would agree then with Diana Scully who in her new book, *Understanding Sexual Violence*, demands a shift from a method or mode of 'understanding' that has led to attempts to excuse or even justify rape to one that focuses on male responsibility. Thus while historically rape has been seen to spring from psychopathology, sexual frustration, overwhelming impulse, an unsatisfactory relationship with the mother or childhood abuse, Scully is determined to show that men who rape are usually all too normal and in charge of their faculties, that *rape is a choice they make* in societies whose patriarchal system effectively gives them permission to do so.

9 Jepson, Norman, *Stone Walls Do Not A Prison Make: Institutional Challenge to Education and Social Work*, Leeds, England: Dept. of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Leeds, 1986, p. 27

10 A.R. Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, Harvard University Press 1976, p. 163

11 See Elizabeth Fabiano and Robert Ross, *The Cognitive Model of Crime and Delinquency: Prevention and Rehabilitation*, Planning and Research Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services, 1983, v.1, p. 9. Ross recognized the power of this approach when he focused on the importance of the teaching method in the university program: "Courses are taught primarily in intensive small group discussions in which the student's view on many controversial, historical and current social issues is continually challenged by his peers and the faculty. Through such exchanges the students learn to sharpen their thinking and communication skills, acquire the realization that there are alternative ways of viewing social and interpersonal problems and issues, and come to recognize that their egocentric view is not necessarily the only, or the best one." Robert Ross, *Time To Think: A Cognitive Model of Delinquency Prevention and Offender Rehabilitation*, Johnson City, Tennessee: Institute of Social Sciences and Arts, 1985, p. 90.

12 June Tapp and Lawrence Kohlberg, "Developing a Sense of Law and Legal Justice," *Journal of Social Issues*, v.27:2, 1971, p. 86. See also Jack Arbuthnot, "Moral Reasoning Development Programmes in Prison: Cognitive-Developmental and Critical Reasoning Approaches," *Journal of Moral Education*, v.13:2, 1984; Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Just Community Approach to Corrections," *Journal of Correctional Education*, v.37:2, 1986; Peter Scharf, "The

Prison and the Inmate's Conception of Legal Justice: An Experiment in Democratic Education," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, v.3:2, 1976; and Norma Gluckstern, "The Model Program at Berkshire," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, v.53:2, 1974. Towards the end of the Second World War the Americans began attempts to inculcate notions of democracy into German prisoners of war, with little success at first. They discovered that "...the only way of developing democratic responsibility and spontaneity is to live and work in situations where democratic practices can be applied. In the artificial atmosphere of PW camps such situations had to be created and this was done by submitting to the prisoners problems that were of immediate concern to them as a group. Since they were on the eve of repatriation, questions of reconstruction, discussed as concretely as possible, were particularly likely to arouse student participation in the debate, and to provoke the loosening up process which would prepare the men for showing initiative once they were turned back to the status of citizens." Henry Ehrmann, "An Experiment in Political Education: The Prisoner-of-War Schools in the United States," *Social Research*, v.14, 1947, p. 313.

13 William Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, (NY: Holt, 1970), cited by R. Morrill, *Teaching Values in College*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980, p. 37

14 Edward Eddy, *The College Influence on Student Character*, (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1959), cited in Paul Dressel and Irvin Lehman, "The Impact of Higher Education on Student Attitudes, Values, and Critical Thinking Abilities," *Educational Record*, v.46:3, 1965, p. 249.

15 D. Heath, *Growing Up in College: Liberal Education and Maturity*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968, p. 197

16 Gluckstern, p. 153.

17 Daniel LeClair, "Community-Based Reintegration: Some Theoretical Implications of Positive Research Findings," Massachusetts Dept. of Correction, Pub. #11625, Nov. 1979, p. 1. One must not forget the impact of 'being' a prisoner, of being imprisoned: "To describe what it means to be a prisoner, how it feels to be confined, is impossible for one who has not experienced it. The psychological state of complete passivity and dependence on the decisions of guards and officers must be included among the pains of imprisonment, along with the restriction of physical liberty, the possession of goods and services, and heterosexual relations. The frustration of the prisoner's ability to make choices and the frequent refusals to provide an explanation for the regulation and commands descending from the bureaucratic staff involve a...threat to the prisoner's self-image and reduces the prisoner to the weak, helpless, dependent status of childhood." Andre Furtado, "Education and Rehabilitation in a Prison Setting," *Journal of Offender Counselling, Services and Rehabilitation*

- tion, v.4:3, 1980, p. 250.
- 18 H. Cantine and D. Rainer, eds. *Prison Etiquette*, Bearsville, NY: Retort Pr., 1950, cited in Cressey, p. 100
  - 19 Cressey, p. 100.
  - 20 This approach was supported by Seashore in the evaluation of the seven Project Newgate university programs in prisons in the United States. "Building insularity is motivated in the prison context by still another reason: to preserve a separate identity. Convicts have a basic distrust of persons working for the prison, a deep-seated suspicion of bureaucratic practice, and a cynicism about treatment programs that are part of the prison rehabilitative process....," Marjorie Seashore, et al., *Prisoner Education: Project Newgate and Other College Programs*, New York: Praeger, 1976, p. 172.
  - 21 In discussing the issue of motivation, the *Council of Europe Report on Education in Prison* highlights the attainment of "a degree of autonomy for the education sector" as a crucial factor in persuading prisoners that taking part in education will not require them to "...capitulate psychologically to the prison system...." In addition to being structurally apart from the prison, teachers must have some leeway or discretion in the way they approach their work. "Clearly, crime cannot be condoned and the futility of a criminal life may well be raised as an issue in class, but there are aspects of the prisoner's culture which the adult educator must respect, or at least accept. These aspects may include a critical view of authority, anger at social injustice, solidarity with one another in the face of adversity, etc. As in any field of adult education, respect and acceptance of the students and potential students are crucial to motivation and participation." *Council of Europe Report on Education in Prison*, July 1989, p.19.
  - 22 J. D. Ayers, et al., *Effects of University of Victoria Program: A Post-Release Study*, Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada, 1980.
  - 23 Robert Marshall, in WHOS Program. *Mad Dog Blues*, a play by Sam Shepard.
  - 24 UVic Staff Document, "The Scholarly Community Within the Federal Prisons in the Pacific Region," 1982.
  - 25 John Sawatsky, *Review of Offender Support Programs*, Correctional Service of Canada (Pacific Region), 1985, p. 14
  - 26 Sawatsky, p. 34
  - 27 Robert Ross, *Time To Think: A Cognitive Model of Delinquency Prevention and Offender Rehabilitation*, Johnson City, Tennessee: Institute for Social Sciences and Arts, 1985, p. 89.
  - 28 See Paul Gendreau and Robert Ross, "Correctional Treatment: Some Recommendations for Effective Intervention," *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, v.34:4, 1984 and "Revivification of Rehabilitation: Evidence from the 1980's," *Justice Quarterly*, v.4:3, 1987. The programs focused on "...modifying the impulsive, egocentric, illogical and rigid thinking of the offenders and on teaching them to stop and think before acting, to consider the consequences of their behaviour, to conceptualize alternative ways of responding to interpersonal problems and to consider the impact of their behaviour on other people." Elizabeth Fabiano, Robert Ross and Crystal Ewles, "Reasoning and Rehabilitation," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, v.32:1, 1988, p. 3-4.
  - 29 Thom Gehring, "The Connection between Democracy and Cognitive Processes in Correctional Education," *Journal of Correctional Education*, v.39:2, 1988.
  - 30 "Developing A Conceptual Model for Living Skills: Discussion Paper," CSC 1988. I wrote to Bob Ross in Nov. 1988, and expressed my concern about the optimism being expressed by these experts concerning their ability to diagnose the specific needs of individual prisoners. He shared my misgivings but noted that "...they are a long long way away from having any realistic method of assessing folks and slotting them into the 'right' programs." R. Ross to Duguid, 16 Nov. 1988.
  - 31 "While it cannot be stated that there is a correlation between the crime rate and illiteracy, there is a correlation between unemployment and the crime rate. A major cause of unemployment is a lack of basic educational skills." Rhéal LeBlanc, Commissioner CSC, report to James Kelleher, Solicitor General of Canada, *Adult Basic Education (Literacy)*, 17 December, 1986, p.3.
  - 32 James Kelleher, Speech to the National Conference on Offender Literacy, Ottawa, May 19, 1987.
  - 33 See D. Andrews, et al., "Does Correctional Treatment Work? A Clinically-Relevant and Psychologically-Informed Meta-Analysis," Dept. of Psychology, Carleton University, July, 1989; D. Andrews, "Rejoinder—Personality and Crime: Toward Knowledge Construction," *Justice Quarterly*, v.6:3, 1989; D. Andrews, et al., "Classification for Effective Rehabilitation: Rediscovering Psychology," *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 1989.
  - 34 The Europeans tended to approach the subject from the perspective of adult educators. Thus: "It is essential that all engaged in providing education in prisons should be encouraged to see those in their classes as adults involved in normal adult education activities. The students should be approached as responsible people who have choices available to them. In other words, the prison context should be minimized and the past criminal behaviour of the students should be kept to the background, so that the normal atmosphere, interactions and processes of adult education can flourish as they would in the outside community. Fundamental to such an approach is that the educational programme should be based on the individual needs of those taking part." *Council of Europe Report on Education in Prison*, July, 1989, p. 17.



- 35 The Correctional Strategy, 20 Sept. 1991, p. 1.
- 36 The CSC and this research study utilize the following definition of recidivism: "A recidivist is defined as any released federal offender who is convicted within a three-year period following release of a new indictable offence that led to a custodial sentence." Correctional Service of Canada, "So you want to know the recidivism rate," *Forum on Corrections Research*, v.5:3, 1993, pp. 22-26. Thus not included as release failures are parolees who are re-arrested or even re-convicted but not re-incarcerated.
- 37 The SIR scale is useful for this study because it is recognized by the Correctional Service of Canada and regularly calculated to assist in penitentiary placement, program recommendation, and parole decision making. The validity of the SIR scale was tested by the CSC in 1989 and found to be "...clearly positive with respect to both the Nuffield Scoring System and the general risk effectiveness of recent Parole Board Decision-making" Most other correctional jurisdictions utilize a prediction scale of some sort and it could be substituted for the SIR. See, for instance, the Salient Factor Score (SFS) used by the U.S. Parole Commission and the Criminal History Score used by the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Hann, R.G. and Harman, W.G., *Release Risk Prediction: A Test of the*

*Nuffield Scoring System*, a Report of the Parole Decision-Making and Release Risk Assessment Project, Ottawa: Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada, 1988.

- 38 Thus Nuffield (1982) asserts with confidence that "...statistical devices with all their acknowledged limitations are apparently still more accurate than human judgment, even where this human judgment is clinical or professionally informed." Nuffield, J. *Parole Decision-Making in Canada: Research Towards Decision Guidelines*, Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada, 1982.
- 39 Pawson, R., *A Measure for Measures: A Manifesto for Empirical Sociology*, London: Routledge, 1989.

#### Biographical Sketch

Stephen Duguid, Ph.D., taught post-secondary courses in several prisons in British Columbia from 1973-1980. He was the Director of Simon Fraser University's Prison Education Program from 1984-1993 and has been active in researching the impact of education on post-release lives of prisoners. For the past five years he has been the Director of the Graduate Liberal Studies Program at Simon Fraser.

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