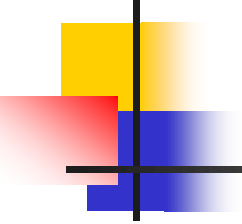


Exploring prisoners' experience of education in Ireland – a life history approach

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- Background of Project
 - Historical and Current Context of the Prison and Prison Education
 - Link between prison and educational disadvantage
 - Theoretical Foundations
 - Origins of Life History as Method
 - Methodological framework
 - Challenges



Mountjoy Prison, Dublin



Historical and Current Context of Prison Education

- The Birth of the Prison
- Punishment and Rehabilitation
- International figures for imprisonment
 - There is general agreement that prison populations are growing in many parts of the world



Rates of Imprisonment:

Country	Prison Population Rate Per 100,000
■ USA	738
■ Canada	107
■ Norway	66
■ Ireland	72
■ England & Wales	148
■ Scotland	139

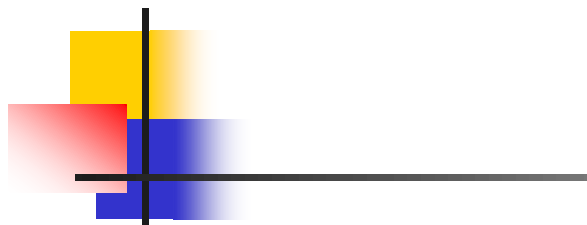
Source: Walmsley (7th Ed) World Prison Population List

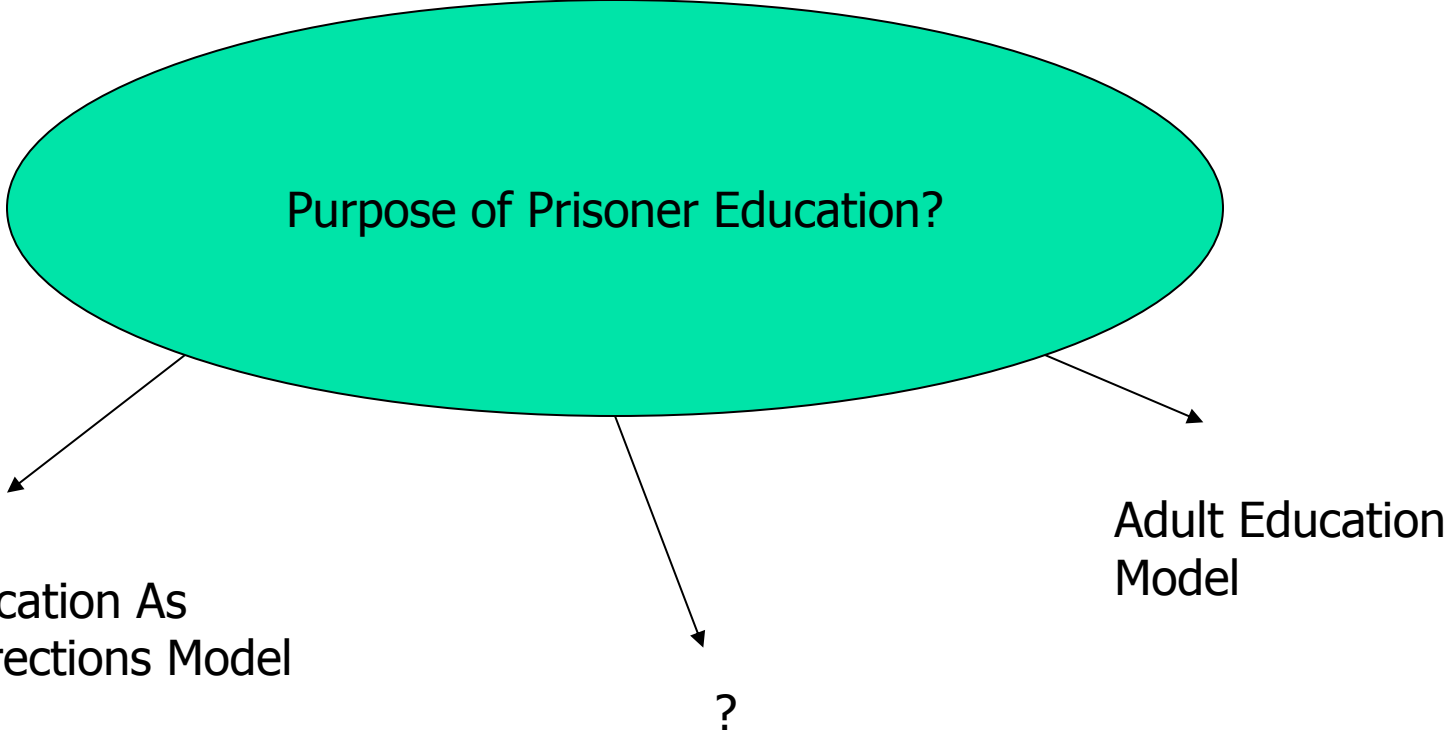
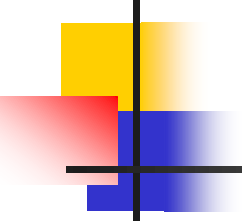


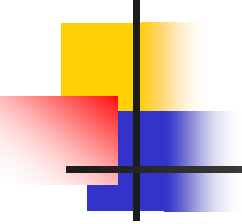
Situation in Ireland:

According to the latest Irish Prison Service Annual Report (2006):

- The average daily number of prisoners in custody is 3,191
- 29% of prisoners attended more than 10 hours per week of classes

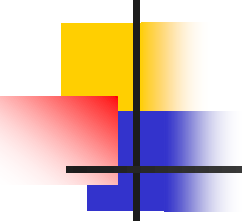




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- Link between prison and educational disadvantage
 - A number of quantitative studies have drawn attention to the link between educational attainment and imprisonment.

 - In Ireland:
 - 77% of prisoners had never sat a public exam
 - 80% had left school before the age of 16
 - 71% currently or had been users of hard drugs
 - 81% had never married
 - 72% had fathered children

(O'Mahony, 1997)

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- The International Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in Ireland in 1995
 - It reported that 25% of the population in Ireland had literacy levels at the lowest level (Level 1)
 - It noted that the older you were the more likely you were to have lower levels of literacy



Literacy Levels in Irish Prisons

	Males	Females
Pre-Level 1	22.7	16.7
Level 1	30.1	36.7
Level 2	18	16.7
Level 3	14.1	13.3
Level 4 & 5	15.2	16.7

Table 1.1 (The Prison Adult Literacy Survey as cited in Morgan, 2003)



Theoretical Foundations

- Erving Goffman
 - *Asylums (1961)*
 - Symbolic interactionists

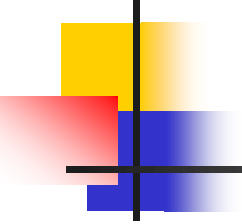
- Anthony Giddens
 - Identity
 - Structuration Theory



Origins of Life History as a method

- What is a Life History?
 - Definition: “an extensive autobiographical narrative, in either oral or written form, that covers all or most of a life” (Chase, 2005)
- *‘In life stories, individuals speak of themselves and give meaning to their experience’.*

Ari Antikainen et al (1996)

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- The rise and fall of Life History as a Method
 - Impact of postmodernism
 - Why choose a life history approach?



Challenges

- Ethical Issues
- The role of the researcher: The researcher as narrator
- Retrospective: the reliability of recall
- Impact of location



Challenges

- *I know that I cannot 'collect' a life.Instead, my understanding of a life history suggests that we need to attend to the silences as well as what is said, that we need to attend to how the story is told as well as what is told or not told, and to attend to the tensions and contradictions rather than succumb to the temptations to gloss over these in our desire for 'the' story.*

Petro Munro (1998)



The Next Stage

- Pilot Study October-November 2008
- Fieldwork to begin in January 2009

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