



A descriptive case study of the impact of social learning experiences on adult female inmates
by Jerry Douglas McKinney

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree. of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

Over the past 20 years the number of women inmates in the United States has increased dramatically. Approximately 60% of these women have not finished high school or received GED certificates. Because a relationship may exist between incarceration and various types of learning, the purpose of this study was to investigate learning patterns of adult, female inmates at a small correction center in Montana. The study involved interviewing 31 women regarding their formal, informal, and social learning experiences. It utilized a qualitative case study method and participant observation. The interviews were unstructured, and the observations were made in a natural setting to obtain holistic, lifelike descriptions. The women were divided into six groups based upon educational backgrounds.

Of the 31 women interviewed 28 claimed abuse, all suffered loss of self-esteem, and all related negative learning experiences. The conclusions were based upon abuse and learning. Abuse was broken down into psychological and physical/sexual abuse involving deep-seated psychological problems of parents; observation of abuse; escaping mechanisms; the self-fulfilling prophesy; getting even or controlling others; sexual abuse by family members or other authority figures; physical abandonment or neglect; spousal abuse; incidental sexual abuse such as rape or gang rape; and substance, or self-inflicted physical, abuse.

Learning was categorized into positive and negative learning within four environments: (a) the home; (b) school; (c) self-learning; and (d) learning from peers and other environments. Learning revolved around positive or negative caregivers, escape into positive or negative pursuits, school or other alternative environments, caring or non-caring teachers, recognition of individual learning styles or classroom problems such as learning disabilities or boredom, peer pressure, self-realization and learning from past mistakes or isolationism and continuing on a road to self-destruction.

The conclusions led to the major recommendation that a holistic, critical problem-solving approach be utilized in modifying the corrections system. This plan would replace negative learning and supplant it with positive attitudes and learning. This plan should also be adapted to and utilized in non-corrections environments as a means of preventing or inhibiting negative learning.

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EXPERIENCES ON ADULT FEMALE INMATES

by

Jerry Douglas McKinney

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of the requirements for the degree

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This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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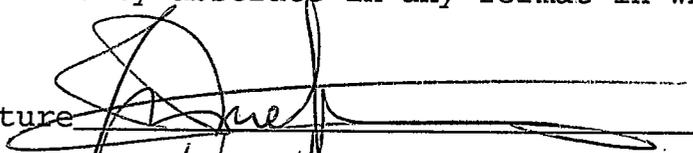
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To Starwoman, a composite of all of the women in this study, and to all children, especially my own.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years the number of women inmates in the United States has increased dramatically. Approximately 60% of these women have not finished high school or received GED certificates. Because a relationship may exist between incarceration and various types of learning, the purpose of this study was to investigate learning patterns of adult, female inmates at a small correction center in Montana. The study involved interviewing 31 women regarding their formal, informal, and social learning experiences. It utilized a qualitative case study method and participant observation. The interviews were unstructured, and the observations were made in a natural setting to obtain holistic, lifelike descriptions. The women were divided into six groups based upon educational backgrounds.

Of the 31 women interviewed 28 claimed abuse, all suffered loss of self-esteem, and all related negative learning experiences. The conclusions were based upon abuse and learning. Abuse was broken down into psychological and physical/sexual abuse involving deep-seated psychological problems of parents; observation of abuse; escaping mechanisms; the self-fulfilling prophesy; getting even or controlling others; sexual abuse by family members or other authority figures; physical abandonment or neglect; spousal abuse; incidental sexual abuse such as rape or gang rape; and substance, or self-inflicted physical, abuse.

Learning was categorized into positive and negative learning within four environments: (a) the home; (b) school; (c) self-learning; and (d) learning from peers and other environments. Learning revolved around positive or negative caregivers, escape into positive or negative pursuits, school or other alternative environments, caring or non-caring teachers, recognition of individual learning styles or classroom problems such as learning disabilities or boredom, peer pressure, self-realization and learning from past mistakes or isolationism and continuing on a road to self-destruction.

The conclusions led to the major recommendation that a holistic, critical problem-solving approach be utilized in modifying the corrections system. This plan would replace negative learning and supplant it with positive attitudes and learning. This plan should also be adapted to and utilized in non-corrections environments as a means of preventing or inhibiting negative learning.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the 10 years between 1980 and 1991, the prison population has more than doubled for both men and women in the United States (Bureau of Justice Statistics Sourcebook, 1992, p. 634). In this period, the number of people under some type of correctional supervision has risen to over 4.3 million. This means that over 2.3% of the adult population in the United States is in jail, in prison, or on either probation or parole (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992, p. 5). Approximately 14%, or 602,000 of this number are female offenders (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992, front cover). Of this, 44,234 females were in state or federal prison at the end of 1990 (p. 85), and of these, 21,081 were Caucasian and 21,182 were Black. The representation of Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, and miscellaneous grouping totalled 1,971 females (p. 85).

These figures indicate that the problem of incarceration has increased drastically during the past decade. Furthermore, since the early 1970s the number of people incarcerated in federal and state prisons has more than quadrupled, rising from approximately 200,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics Sourcebook, 1992, p. 634) to over

880,000 in 1992 (Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 1993, p. 1). Most of this increase has come since 1980, when there were just over 300,000 men and women incarcerated in state and federal prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992, p. 634).

These growing numbers represent a national catastrophe. This is especially true for women. The 602,000 women under some form of correctional supervision in 1990 was more than double the combined total of 300,000 men and women who were in prison in 1980. When comparing the rise in female incarceration alone, the figures have skyrocketed since the early 1970s, when there were just over 5,000 women incarcerated in the United States. By 1992, the number of incarcerated women totalled over 50,400 in state or federal prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, 1993, p. 4). Furthermore, when including the number of women held in local jails and in state and federal prisons, the number increases to 84,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993, front cover).

These figures show that incarcerated women constitute only about 14% of the total prison population. However, the number of incarcerated women has risen approximately 500% during the past 20 years just for state and federal populations (Bureau of Justice Statistics Sourcebook, 1992, p. 634). When including those women who are in local jails, the increase is more than 1,000% (Bureau of Justice

Statistics, 1993, front cover). In addition, "approximately 50% of the women fall into the age range of 25-34, and 22% are between the ages of 18-24" (Ross, 1992, p. 14).

Moreover, "the majority of incarcerated women are single, although more than 75% are mothers, and approximately 57% of the women in state prisons have not finished high school" (p. 14). Thus, considering the rise in the numbers of incarcerated women and the apparent low level of education, a link may exist between the number of incarcerated women and the learning experiences encountered while growing up.

Learning and Development

Learning experiences proceed throughout life from birth to adulthood. Within this process there are presumed to be cognitive as well as behavioral and social facets.

Learning, so central to human behavior yet so elusive to understanding, has fascinated thinkers as far back as Plato and Aristotle. Indeed, the views of these two men underpin much modern-day research on learning conducted by psychologists and educators. The fact that so many people have thought about, investigated, and written about the process of learning over the years suggests the complexity of the topic. Learning defies easy definition and simple theorizing. (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 123)

However, "learning is a personal process" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 1), and "learning is a function of the interaction of the person, the environment, and the behavior" (p. 139). Within this interaction there is also an emphasis on what the learners know and how they behave,

especially in peculiar situations. For example, "In the inner cities, where weapons are treated like household appliances, the lessons of cruelty start at home" (*Time*, 10/26/92, p. 51).

Many educational and psychological theorists, such as Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg, argue that learning and/or development follow certain stages from infancy to adulthood (Slavin, 1991). Learning experiences may also proceed from negative to positive learning and be in the form of instincts as well as internal and external learning. Leading theorists supporting this position were Freud and Skinner. Freud believed that internal forces, or instincts, predetermine people's behavior, and Skinner stressed that external forces in the environment were primarily responsible for behavior (Low, 1983). This learning process can be greatly affected by one's environment. A person's experiences may be in the form of social, behavioral, cultural, and environmental learning according to Pavlov, Thorndike, Skinner, Bandura, and others (Slavin, 1991). Furthermore, the course of cognitive development is shaped by social, cultural, and historical forces of human consciousness (Vygotsky, 1962). In addition, Piaget supported the concept that the environment affected learning when he proposed that:

One's internal cognitive structure changes partly as a result of maturational changes in the nervous system and partly as a result of the organism interacting with the environment and being exposed

to an increasing number of experiences. (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 129)

These "increasing number of learning experiences" (p. 45) are part of social learning. Social learning theory emphasizes "the many ways that people learn new behaviors merely by observing the behavior of others, without directly experiencing any conditioning" (Berger, 1991, p. 45). Furthermore, from a Vygotskian point of view, "the child's world is a world of social institutions and artifacts. Thus, cognitive development is the outcome of the child's understanding and mastery of this world" (Goetz, et al., 1992, p. 49).

Ethology studies "the evolutionary origins of behavior and how certain behaviors typical of a species promote the survival of that species in its natural environment" (Berger, 1991, p. 58). This line of inquiry also supports the influence of social learning on one's development and is congruent with theories of human development as stressed by Freud, Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike, Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, and others.

Psychoanalytic theories have made us aware of the importance of early childhood experiences and the impact of "hidden dramas" that influence our daily lives. Learning theories have shown us the effect that the immediate environment can have on behavior. Cognitive theories have brought us to a greater understanding of how our thinking affects our actions. And the ethological perspective has broadened our view of influences on contemporary human behavior. (Berger, 1991, p. 60)

The importance of environment and development are summed up in the following manner:

Paradoxically, the more scientists learn about genes, the more they recognize the importance of nongenetic influences on human development. Just as no human characteristic is untouched by heredity, no genetic instruction is unaffected by the environment. (Berger, 1991, p. 68)

In addition, Vygotsky agrees that "social interactions determine the course of cognitive development as adults help the child master the language, customs, tools, and toys of the culture" (Goetz, et al., 1992, p. 49).

Development may also affect aggression. Low (1990) presents the following scenario:

One interesting finding is that violent people have more brain abnormalities than we thought true in the past. The cause of these brain abnormalities has been tracked back to the first two years of life when the individual's brain was growing very quickly. During the first two years of life, if an individual is deprived of physical expressions of affection (i.e., touching, cuddling, holding, being carried about), the hypothalamus does not fully develop. Since the hypothalamus is the control center for aggressive impulses and it has not fully developed, it cannot control the aggression of the individual. . . . A cold or isolating early socialization experience can affect the development of the central nervous system and result in individuals who biologically cannot control aggression. (p. 10)

Analogous to the negative socialization suggested by Low is the caging or isolation of a young puppy so that it is not allowed positive human socialization with the introduction to noises, touching, and day-to-day human interaction. Even though the puppy may be brought out of confinement or isolation and subsequently exposed to

positive socialization, that puppy may not be able to adjust completely, since the confinement was laden with negative experiences at a crucial age between birth and six months. This time period may be equated to the early developmental period of a child when most of the child's learning experiences are believed to occur. When a puppy is negatively socialized, the owner is faced with a potential problem, depending on the degree of negative socialization. The same may be said of a child, especially if the negative socialization and learning experiences are not overcome or replaced by positive socialization. Even so, the best learning experiences that can be arranged may not be good enough to reverse the negative socialization.

Nevertheless, "of the three areas of content, learner, and process, there are fewer dramatic differences between adults and children in the learning process than in the other two areas" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 309). As a matter of fact, Houle argues that "the process of learning is fundamentally the same for adults as for children" (p. 309). This is not to say that there are not differences, as subsequent research has proven, but rather that the ways of learning are basically the same. To illustrate this point, Bradshaw (1988b), a noted psychologist and writer, maintains that "sensory perception is our most immediate way of knowing" (p. 168). Another way of knowing is through the reality of experience. These

methods become "our sensory and intellectual ways of knowing" (p. 168). "Every thought we think carries sensory data with it. . . . Concepts trigger sensory images--either visual images, auditory self-talk, or feelings (kinesthetic) responses" (p. 168). Experience, then, is essential to both childhood and adult learning. In addition, "the nature of experience differs: Adults are dealing with different development issues than children; and there are differences in what motivates adults to participate in learning activities" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 306). However, J. R. Kidd (1973) argued that "adults have more experiences, adults have different kinds of experiences, and adults experiences are organized differently" (p. 306). The importance of experiences in learning is summed up by the statement that "The need to make sense out of one's life experience is often an incentive for engaging in a learning activity in the first place" (p. 307). Therefore, according to the Goetz interpretation of Vygotsky, "If social environment determines the source of cognitive development, then improvements in the social environment should lead to improved cognitive development. The advances of each generation can lead to a higher level of intellectual functioning by the next" (Goetz, et al., 1992, p. 49).

A Model to Effect Change

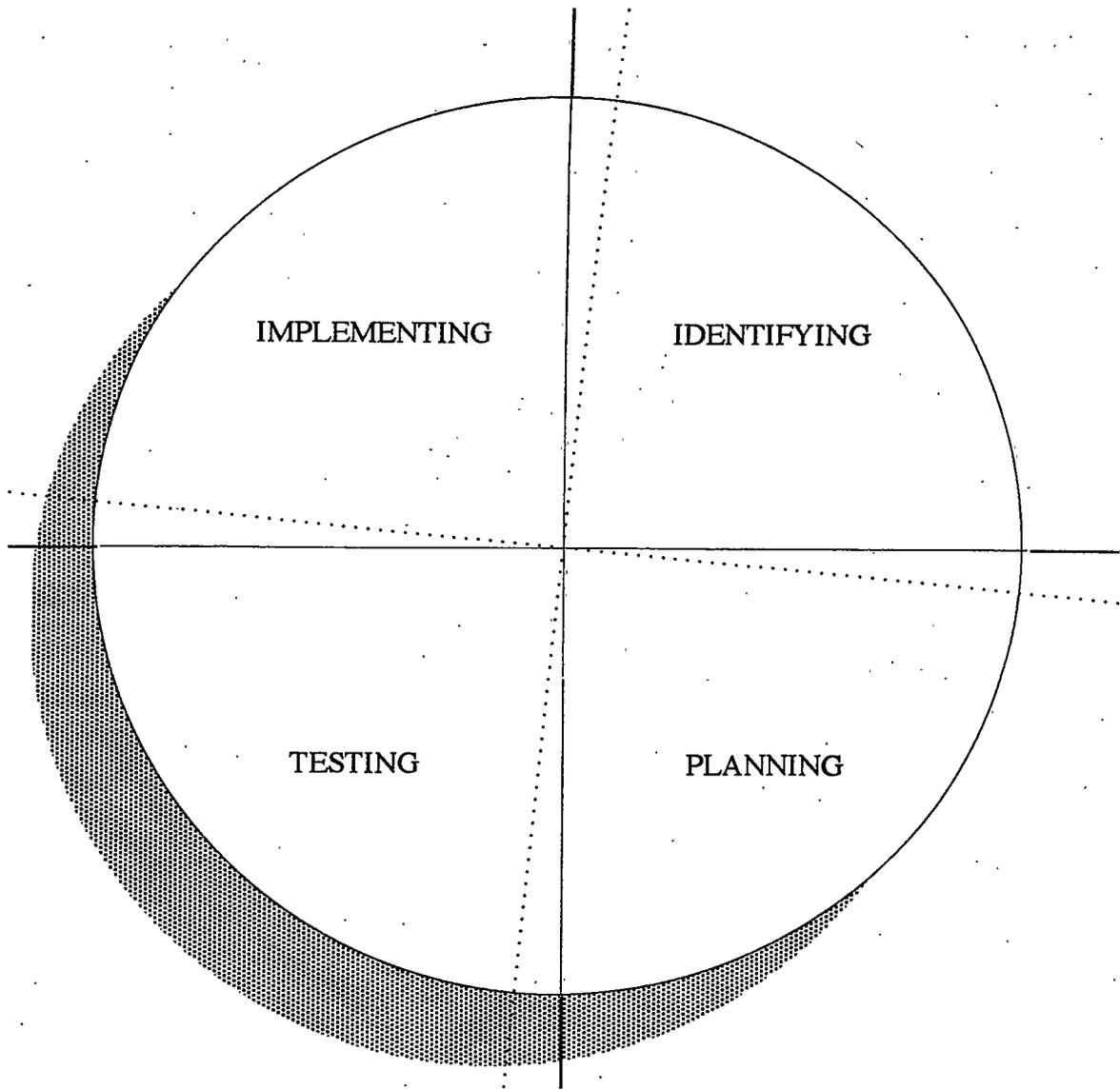
Learning experiences while in prison can have a positive effect on inmates to the degree that the emotional, mental, physical, and educational needs of the inmates are met on a positive basis so they can re-enter society as productive citizens. Therefore, if the social learning experience can be changed from negative to positive, a person in the correctional system may have a better chance of re-integrating into society. One of the past and current problems is that this is not being done effectively; present recidivism rates for all inmates is 60-70% (Holup, Personal Communication, MAACE Conference, 1992).

A holistic approach to problem solving from an ecological standpoint has been suggested by Savory (1988). This type of approach has been used in analyzing ecological problems whereby all factors concerning the ecosystem are taken into consideration. Instead of just solving an immediate ecological problem, the model of holistic resource management (Savory, 1988) is more appropriate for managing the whole ecological process. In the past, many presumed cures which were reactionary in approach have been used to control or eliminate certain noxious weeds and/or insects. These reactive "cures" have, in actuality, proven more noxious or destructive for the surrounding environment than the original problem. For example, a weed killer used to

eliminate a stand of thistles in a meadow often turns out to be more destructive to the whole environment because over a period of time it has not only killed the thistles but also the water life in a nearby pond. Therefore, this solution has caused more of a problem for the environment.

A more suitable alternative is to consider the whole environment, to identify the various problems and processes involved, and to plan and test better ways to implement a sustainable solution. From Savory's model, a circular, holistic management model can be derived which also includes the processes of identifying, planning, testing, and implementing the holistic resource management ideas in a sociological environment (see Figure 1). By utilizing a more systematic, systemic, and proactive approach, the same ideas could be used as a more productive means of problem solving in the future for both organizations and individuals. This approach, which is a conceptual framework of ideas, could help eliminate so called "band-aid" repair practices which are so prevalent in current agencies and institutions. It could also assist in dealing with individual problems in a more holistic and humanistic manner. This model could also help in identifying problems and solutions once the whole set of circumstances is known.

The holistic model ties directly to the educational and criminal justice systems. It more specifically relates to



Holistic Management Model

Figure 1. Adaptation of Savory's Holistic Resource Model

correctional institutions. Here, the presumed goal, "to correct," is written within the word correction and implies some form of "correcting" (Snarr, 1992, p. 43). Despite this title, the term institutional corrections has most generally come to mean punishment with an occasional attempt at rehabilitation. As Hammonds-White stated:

The history of corrections has been full of contradictions. Waves of hope and desire for change have been followed by periods of stagnation and despair. Most attempts to rehabilitate the offender have been repeatedly met with overcrowding and lack of financial support. The same process can be observed today as we have two opposing schools of thought about corrections. On the one hand, we hear the cry for bigger and better prisons (brick and mortar) while on the other hand we hear reform, rehabilitate, and reintegrate. (Lacayo, 1987, p. 60)

Thus, corrections suffers from a contradiction of goals and objectives. "As the number of inmates grows nationally at approximately 1,000 a week, how can we keep building bigger and better prisons?" (Lacayo, 1987, p. 60) Why can we not acknowledge this as a problem, establish more relevant goals and objectives, and implement better solutions for the future?

Statement of the Problem

Learning experiences are relevant to both childhood and adult learning. They may be developmental through stages (Erikson, 1980; Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1973) and either positive or negative with a direct relationship to behavior (Bradshaw, 1988a, 1988b; Miller 1983, 1984). Since negative

learning experiences may be related to negative behavior, one way to understand this behavior is through analyzing the personal experiences of the individual. Oral histories, which are "the recollection and reminiscences of living people about their past" (Sitton, MeHaffey, & Davis, 1984, p. 4), have shown that people are capable of reflecting upon their past behaviors. Therefore, looking at the forces influencing learning in individuals through oral history case studies of their learning experiences can be a holistic approach to a better understanding.

One place where this holistic approach may be effective is in the correctional environment. Correctional settings house some of the most disadvantaged, disaffected, and dysfunctional people in society. Their behavior is assumed to be negative, since they are imprisoned or confined in some form of incarceration. However, little is known about how these individuals assimilate learning, what their reaction is to the learning process, and how their learning experiences impact their behavior. There may be a direct relation between behavior and moral reasoning, *i.e.*, "ethics of justice" versus "ethics of care" (Gilligan, 1982). These ideas may be present in all individuals who think about their lives either in terms of "rights and fairness" or "responsibility to self and others" (Gilligan, 1982). Both sets of ideas may be valid, but the possibility exists that each side may miss the other's point of view. This often

occurs in the criminal justice system, where the system is based upon "justice," which is assumed to be blind, impersonal, and impartial. On the other hand, this system could be based on care rather than punishment. This is less prevalent in society and could give consideration to personal care and the well being of others. This concept of care versus punishment is at the center of the holistic model, which has the primary concern of the better understanding of people through all the forces that have impacted their behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the learning patterns of females who were incarcerated in a small, rural corrections center in Western Montana and to make recommendations based upon the conclusions drawn from the investigation. Thus, the study explored how learning experiences throughout their lives affected the negative, deviant, and criminal behavior of these adult female inmates. This was accomplished by interviewing the women about their formal, informal, and present learning experiences.

Significance of the Study

Correctional institutions and support agencies may need a holistic approach to problem solving in the correctional

system to better define the goals and objectives of custody and care. When utilizing the results of this research, a better definition of this type of an arrangement can be made which will benefit correctional environments specifically and the criminal justice system generally. It would appear that, through a more systemic, humanistic approach to the administration of these agencies, goals and objectives can be established from a more holistic point of view. If this is possible, then this approach will better enhance the interactions of the individual agency and society. In addition, from this standpoint the research would also benefit social workers, educators, alienated children, and organizations concerned with providing human care and services. Moreover, the incarcerated individuals could be better assisted by these agencies in addressing both the personal and external elements and conditions that have affected their incarceration. Some of these conditions may also affect individuals who are not incarcerated, but who may be similarly dysfunctional and/or disadvantaged.

Administrators and corrections personnel need not only to look at all the factors that have affected their clients in the past, but they also must provide the required treatment and educational services to assist them in re-integrating into society. A better understanding of inmate learning patterns will enable them to do this. These personnel must also consider what changes and policies need

to be in place most effectively to assist inmates and to change the overall objectives and goals of their organizations.

As far as youth and children are concerned, new learning and care strategies need to be provided within the social infrastructure to better deal with the trend toward negative, deviant, and criminal behavior. The individuals both in the system and in society in general will benefit by utilizing the holistic, humanistic approach to identify where these problems begin and then by planning, testing, and implementing better solutions.

The field of adult education would benefit as well, because education in correctional environments has become a significant part of that field. Program planners, teachers, and adult education administrators in corrections utilize various aspects of adult education, such as ABE, GED, and various business and computer programs. They also teach minority and learning disabled students. Therefore, more appropriate teaching methods and skills could be derived by using holistic approaches to learning.

Limitations of Study

This study was limited to women's corrections in Montana. The Women's Correction Center provided an accessible population which was small in nature, yet reflective of ethnic variances.

Another limitation of the study is that the data collection relied on the residents' perception of their own experiences. The revelation of these events may be clouded by their incarcerated experiences. Thus, even though the descriptions of their experiences might be perceived as logical and rational to the inmates, the facts as so construed may not be subject to substantiation.

Substantiation of information or veracity of the residents was not a major part of this study. However, the researcher was aware of the element of "con-games" that may be present in correctional environments. In many ways this may be somewhat different than on the street. Even though prison could be construed as "an attractive alternative to the uncertain ties of street life" (Fleisher, 1989, p. 132), the "street hustler," whether male or female, "may simply take up . . . the hustle once again in prison" (Johnson, 1987, p. 105). As one prisoner described this activity, "I hustle, I swag, same on street" (Johnson, 1987, p. 105); another intimated "it's like I said--if you look, you see two sides to every story" (Burkhart, 1973, p. 205). Therefore, the primary intention for this study was the resident's perception with the understanding that it may be influenced by her present incarceration.

Definition of Terms

Corrections: "A generic term that includes all government agencies, facilities, programs, procedures, personnel, and techniques concerned with intake, custody, confinement, supervision, or treatment . . . of alleged or adjudicated offenders" (Inciardi, 1993, p. 737). Ideally, it is "the professional discipline which applies the knowledge of criminology to the control and treatment of criminally deviant behavior" (Carney, 1974, p. 5). However, "American corrections is built on an ideology of incarceration" (Doig, 1982, p. 22) and "remains a world almost unknown to law abiding citizens, and even those within it often know only their own particular corner" (Task Force on Corrections, 1967, p. 1). Nevertheless, "the word corrections itself implies change" (Travis et al., 1980, p. 13), not only to society but to the offender. Therefore, corrections "must be viewed in relation to the social forces and the value system of the society" (Carney, 1974, p. 8). Furthermore, "corrections is the responsibility of all citizens. . . . Prisons and jails belong to society" (American Correctional Association, 1983, p. 241).

Disaffected: The condition of having or expressing alienated affections (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 1971, p. 518). See also, dysfunctional.

Dysfunctional: The "impaired or incomplete functioning" by a person or thing (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 1971, p. 568). Thus, if a person or thing is dysfunctional, a part is, or parts are, out of synchronization with the normal functioning of that person or thing. See also, functional.

Experience: First, "doing something; second, doing something that makes a difference; third, knowing the difference it makes" (Lindman, 1961, p. 87). Therefore, "experience is the adult learner's living text book" (p. 7).

Experiential Learning: Knowledge is not fixed but is created and recreated through experience (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Experiential learning is a holistic, integrative process that combines these experiences with the "thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving . . . of the total organism" (p. 31).

Functional: The performance of a specific requirement by a person or thing in the course of work or activity (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 1971, p. 741). Therefore, "to say something is functional is to say that everything works" (Bradshaw, 1988a, p. 41). See Dysfunctional.

Informal Learning: A process whereby "teacher and learner" cannot be distinguished (Page & Thomas, 1977, p. 174). "One manifestation of informal adult education [is] self education" (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p. 152).

Moreover, "informal adult education . . . goes beyond self-directed learning. . . . [It] is not confined to courses, workshops, lecture series, or other activities sponsored by organizations. Adults can and do learn on their own through private instruction, and in loosely structured, informal groups" (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p. 153). Other examples include learning derived in "'natural' social settings," life-long learning, experiential learning, or "private instruction" such as is found in "networking" or informal groups, such as counseling programs (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, pp. 152-53). Informal learning experiences may also be defined as social learning experiences. See Social Learning.

Learning: "The process people use to make sense out of and gain control over the ever changing world" (Wilson & Morren, 1990, p. 27). Furthermore, "the process of learning is located at the interface of people's biography and the sociocultural milieu in which they live, for it is at this intersection that experiences occur" (Jarvis, 1992, p. 17). "A student 'learns' what he or she perceives to be necessary, important, or meaningful. The meaning one gleans from a subject depends upon personal goals, interests, attitudes, beliefs, etc. . . . A positive or negative self-concept can promote or inhibit learning. . . ." (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 126) Thus, "Learning is a function of the

interaction of the person, the environment, and the behavior" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 139).

Learning Style: "The individual's preferred ways of grasping and transforming information" (Dixon, 1985, p. 16).

Resident(s): The women residing at the Women's Correctional Center (WCC) or Butte Pre-Release Center (BPRC). Since WCC is not a prison in the purest sense of the word, and since it is officially called a "corrections center," the women typically refer to themselves as residents. Once leaving WCC for BPRC, they are referred to officially as residents.

Self-Inflicted Abuse: For purposes of this study, abuse which, for whatever reason, was inflicted upon the victim by herself. The principal examples in this study are alcohol and drug abuse, as well as other self-destructive behaviors engaged in by the residents of WCC.

Social Learning: "Interaction with and observation of others in a social context" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 138, citing Bandura & Rotter). Therefore, social learning can be defined as the knowledge or abilities that one acquires during the "process of socialization or living in a social situation" (Page & Thomas, 1977, p. 314).

Toxic/Toxicity: "Of, pertaining to, affected by, or caused by . . . a poison" or "a poisonous quality or state" (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 1971, p. 1931). As related to learning, for example, toxic shame/pain is an

excruciatingly internal (poisonous) experience of unexpected exposure (Bradshaw, 1988b, p. 3). Moreover, "a toxically shamed person has an adversarial relationship" with herself/himself. . . " (p. 10). As such, toxic shame "is experienced as the all-pervasive sense that I am flawed and defective as a human being" (p. 10).

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The Correctional EnvironmentHistorical Overview

While crime and punishment have been around for thousands of years,

Only in the last two centuries has confinement in penal institutions become the basic penalty for criminal behavior. In earlier times, offenders were sentenced to a wide range of punishments: execution, tortures, banishment, slavery, transportation to penal colonies, public flogging, or exposure to public ridicule in the stocks. (Alexander, 1991, p. xi)

Not surprisingly, the idea of penal institutions developed in America. However, given the historical background, "the United States government had virtually no penal institutions until the early twentieth century" (p. xi). Until then "persons convicted of federal law violations were housed in state institutions" (p. xi). "In the 1700s the death penalty was still, in theory at least, the principal penalty for serious crime. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, many people viewed the old system as barbaric and the prison was invented as a means of punishment" (Feeney, cited in Palmer, 1992, p. viii), and crime came to be

defined as offenses against the state rather than against the individual (Thomas, 1987, p. 63). During "the past two hundred years, penal systems have undergone substantial evolution, impacted by emerging social and economic developments, legislative reform, drastic effects of war, new insights evolving from management experience, and research in the social and behavioral sciences" (p. xi). "Thus, American prisons, whether called penitentiaries, reformatories, or correctional institutions, have been part and parcel of the history of America" (McKelvey, 1977, p. xi).

As new disciplines such as psychiatry, psychology, and sociology emerged in the 1800s, there developed an interest in rehabilitation which made it "seem less costly, more humane, and ultimately more effective to reform rather than simply punish" (Feeney, cited in Palmer, 1992, p. viii).

Emerging was the day when we would view offenders as persons driven to criminal conduct, as persons who deserved to be viewed by the state as individuals whose harmful conduct pointed to the need for efficient, effective, and highly individualized treatment. (Thomas, 1987, p. 68)

Between 1910 and 1960, "while in theory most correctional systems were rehabilitative, in practice most were largely retributive" (Feeney, cited in Palmer, 1992, p. viii). However, during the 1960s there was considerable "interest in putting rehabilitation into practice" (p. viii). Nevertheless, "rehabilitation's reign as a dominant correctional theme was short-lived [and] by the end

of the 1960s crime was rising," and many people felt that this was due "to the system's 'softness on criminals'" (p. viii). Subsequently, because of public concern, increased political pressures, and a "get tougher" policy on crime, the emphasis shifted away from rehabilitation to stronger approaches (p. viii). As a result,

The 1980s were mainly an era of incapacitation and short term behavior control. This was corrections' chief response to the public's concern with safety now. It was a response that reflected a hope and belief that emerged in the mid to late 1970s, namely, that swift and certain punishment, by itself, could provide enough deterrence to produce high levels of immediate protections, and perhaps long-term safety as well. Further, this response reflected a correctional philosophy called the justice model. This model, which began to dominate corrections by the mid-1970s, emphasized punishment and down played rehabilitation as well as alternatives to incarceration. (Palmer, 1992, p. 1)

In addition, "Throughout the 1980s, American corrections struggled with issues of institutional crowding, rising costs, and controlling offenders' behavior" (Palmer, 1992, p. xiii). There were also issues of race, prejudice, ethnicity, and "the young and already socially disadvantaged" (Hudson, 1987, p. 38).

In the early 1990s, the level of crime remained high. The justice model has not produced the "desired level of protection," nor have crowding and costs declined (Palmer, 1992, p. 1). Regardless, the model "will probably remain dominant during the 1990s, with incapacitation fines,

intensive supervision, restitution, etc., remaining as corrections' main strategy" (p. 1).

Rehabilitation, which is sometimes referred to as habilitation, is a major form of intervention which "emphasizes the goal of internal change and growth," and which recognizes that "the need of external controls . . . is sometimes called treatment. . . . This process tries to build--and build on--an individual's skills and interests rather than rely on punishment, fear of public humiliation, physical pain and discomfort, or incapacitation" (Palmer, 1992, p. 3). It is here that the education process in corrections begins.

In summary, Hammonds-White (1989), citing Bartollas, (1985), states that the history of corrections in the United States is "full of contradictions. Waves of hope and desire for change" have been "followed by periods of stagnation and despair. The striking feature of this history" has been "the way in which attempts to work with the offenders" has been "repeatedly destroyed by overcrowding and lack of financial support. This same process can be observed in corrections today as the cries for reform and concurrent cries for more and bigger prisons continue" (p. 16).

Education in Women's Corrections

While there has been much research conducted on education and learning, there is relatively sparse research

in prison environments, especially those confining women (Ross, 1992, p. 1), and even less concerning education of women in prison. Furthermore, data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and other sources indicate that "of the 25,000 women in state and federal institutions in 1989 many had learning disabilities which may be related to criminal behavior (Fink, 1991, p. 1). However, "female inmates were slightly better educated in 1989 than in 1983. An estimated 50.6% of the women had completed high school or had some college education, compared to 47.0% in 1983" (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report, 3/92, p. 3). They were also slightly better educated than males (45.8%) (p. 3).

Historically, "at the turn of the century, education in prisons was practically unknown" (Eyman, 1971, p. 3), as "wardens, in self-righteous agreement with the more or less law-abiding majority, frowned on 'coddling' their charges" (p. 44). However, "progressive institutions in the early 1900s offered courses in domestic skills such as sewing and house keeping to prepare women for domestic life" (Fink, 1991, p. 1). Early studies attributed female criminal educational underachievement to "feeble-mindedness" or "deprivation" (p. 1). A 1964 research study involving 1,400 inmates received at a reception center in New York State found that "33 percent were functionally illiterate; that is they scored below the fifth grade on standardized tests" (Eyman, 1971, p. 44). "Of all the men and women committed

to federal prisons, no less than 96 percent are school dropouts" (p. 44). Moreover, given the low level of education and the high dropout rate (Ross, 1992, p. 14), it is not surprising that over 50% of the women were unemployed prior to incarceration or that those who were employed were in service-oriented or poorly paid positions (Glick & Neto, 1977).

Recently, "correctional education has become a much more structured and prominent component of correctional treatment, but little information exists on which to design or evaluate programs" (Fink, 1991, pp. 1-2). In conclusion, Eyman (1971) calls attention to the Glaser study published in 1964 wherein he "has shown that students in the schools of poorer neighborhoods, who predominate our correctional populations, tend to have a background from early childhood of feeling that others are hostile and unappreciative towards them and that they have to be hostile in response" (pp. 44-45). This hostility may, in fact, lead to their subsequent imprisonment.

Female Corrections in Montana

As far as incarcerated women in Montana are concerned:

The adult female inmate population has increased steadily since 1981. At the calendar year end in 1981, there were 24 female inmates; in 1988 there were 48 inmates and on May 9, 1989, there were 52 inmates. These numbers represent a 141% increase in population since 1981. The female population has increased an average of 14.1% per year since 1981. (Byorth, 1989b, p. 1)

The current 1991 average daily population for women in Montana is 58.2 residents (Corrections Division Report, 1992, p. 22).

Originally, female residents were housed in separate quarters in and around the former men's facility in Deer Lodge. This practice was maintained from 1871 to 1970, when the State of Montana began transporting women to various locations in Montana, Nebraska, California, and other states due to the lack of facilities and accommodations. The Montana sites were used as holding facilities until the women could be transported to more permanent quarters. In 1977, the new men's facility, Montana State Prison, was opened in Deer Lodge, and there are no records showing any women at the men's facility after 1977 (Byorth, 1989a, pp. 1-2).

From 1977 to 1982, the Missoula Life Skills Training Center was an option for housing women. The Billings Life Skill Center was opened in 1978 and provided a minimum security facility for 12 inmates. With the decision to develop a system of pre-release centers for male inmates, the possibility of housing women in Missoula was eliminated, and other women were transported out of state or were housed at a number of county jail facilities in Montana (Byorth, 1989a, p. 2).

As of January 1992, correctional programs in Montana have included both the men's and women's facilities at Deer

Lodge and Warm Springs, along with five pre-release centers. The latter facilities are supervised by the Community Corrections Bureau, while the pre-release center residents are classified as inmates since they have not been paroled. There are two centers in Billings; one is for women and the other is for men. The other centers are located in Butte, Great Falls, and Missoula. Two centers are state operated and the other three are administered by private, nonprofit corporations under contract with the state to provide services for the residents (Department of Corrections Report, 1/92, p. 8).

The Butte Pre-Release Center Incorporated, a private, non-profit residential community-based correctional facility, opened in December of 1983. Originally created as a male facility to provide various services to a mixed population of 30 individuals, the center has undergone several structural and expansion phases in the past 10 years. One of the most noteworthy changes is the addition in August of 1992 of a 21-bed women's facility for adult female felons from the local, state, and federal systems. Residents arrive periodically from the Women's Correctional Center at Warm Springs, Montana. The center now maintains a nonresidential program for day reporting of both male and female felons (S. McArthur, Counselor Supervisor, personal communication, 10/26/93).

Currently the typical female resident is:

A 27 year old, caucasian with a chronic substance abuse problem, and a lengthy criminal history. The typical offender generally has charges of battery, another crime against a person, or a drug related offense. Offenders excluded from this program are any offender of violence and/or arson related crimes. . . . [The] program is composed of approximately 25% minorities. (S. McArthur, Counselor Supervisor, personal communication, 10/26/93)

Montana State Prison historical records provide a count of women inmates from July of 1943 until 1977. Between 1943 and 1969 the women inmate population never exceeded 17 inmates (Byorth, 1989a, p. 6). During the 1981 calendar year, the female inmate population reached 37. This prompted the state legislature to appropriate funding for 41 women offenders to be housed in a vacant nurses' dormitory on the campus of the Montana State Hospital (MSH) in Warm Springs. This later became known as the Women's Correction Center (WCC) and it received its first resident on May 5, 1982 (Byorth, 1989a, p. 3). The facility was opened "to cope with an increasing inmate population and the decreasing availability of out-of-state housing (Corrections Division Report, 1992, p. 6). The design capacity of WCC is 30, and the emergency bed capacity is 45 (Byorth, 1989a, p. 3). Since 1989 there have been no fewer than 50 residents in the facility at one time; the high of 69 was in 1992 (S. MacAskill, Prison Warden, personal communication, 11/2/92). Subsequently, "an expansion unit [EU], comprising 15 high security beds, was opened in another abandoned MSH building in November, 1989" (Corrections Division Report,

1992, p. 6). Needless to say, overcrowding was still a problem.

Presently, the female resident population in Montana is primarily a mixture of Whites and Native Americans. Other ethnic groups represent only a small portion of the population. White women outnumber all others approximately three to one. The total female resident population at the end of 1989 was 64 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991, p. 66). This was an increase of approximately 25% since 1988, when the female inmate population was only 48 (Byorth, 1989b, p. 1). By 1991, the population had risen to 76 inmates (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992, p. 85), which includes 7 residents in the pre-release center, not normally considered part of the regular number at WCC (T. Donahue, Facility Manager, personal communication, 10/18/93).

Even though these figures might seem insignificant in relation to other states and national averages, they do reflect that the rise in female inmates in Montana is proportionally similar to other localities. However, there are other things to take into consideration when speaking of the small numbers of female inmates in Montana. Other factors to consider are the rural character of the state and the small population base. However, when compared to the population, the numbers are not significantly different than the national average. Moreover, the women's present facility is only 10 years old and extremely overcrowded. At

the time of the study, the site itself was located in a very rural area on the grounds of the state mental hospital.

Ross (1992) creates a fitting description for present living conditions. This description also mentions the expansion unit (EU) which is located on the periphery of the campus.

In the general-population building, there were four isolation cells. These were reserved for prisoners with severe behavioral problems--those who could not mix in either the general-population or maximum-security unit. Prisoners in isolation lived in small cells with no windows and the sparse furniture bolted to the floor. On the periphery of the campus, there was a relatively new building that housed maximum-security prisoners. All doors were locked and women were imprisoned in individual cells. The smell of urine throughout the building was overwhelming. Previously this building was the forensic ward for the state mental hospital, and guards and prisoners both said that the prisoners urinated everywhere. (p. 71)

She further stated that this building was initially designed as a classification center for men, but later:

This unit was only for females and could comfortably imprison 11 in maximum-security and 4 in isolation cells. Prisoners segregated in this facility were there, not for certain crimes they may have committed, but for behavioral problems--that is, for breaking prison rules. They had fewer privileges than those in general population; however, they had more privileges than those in isolation cells. Prisoners in maximum security were guaranteed 1 hour of recreation five times a week, and three showers per week as mandated by Federal law. The lights were turned off at 8:00 p.m. in isolation, versus lights off in the maximum-security section at 10:00 p.m. (pp. 71-72)

One possible effort by the State of Montana to overcome these problems of rural setting, labeling, and providing

more services was the opening of a new women's facility in Billings in 1994. This space allows for the anticipated rise in incarcerations based on yearly average increases of 14% between 1981 and 1989 (Byorth, 1989b, p. 1). Finally, the new site hopes eventually to provide a full range of treatment, vocational, and educational services (S. MacAskill, Prison Warden, personal communication, 11/2/92).

Learning and Development

The Environment

The influence and development of the adult may be seen in the development of the child, and vice versa. One area of commonality between childhood and adult learning is stage development (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, pp. 96-97), which is encompassed in the realm of human development. The idea of positive and negative development may also be included in the area of human cognitive development.

There are three major theories of human development: Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development; Erik Erikson's theory of personal and social development; and Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. For Slavin (1991), Piaget's theory is one of cognitive development which suggests that "people progress through a series of four stages beginning with birth and ending in adolescence"

(p. 53). Piaget "suggested that schemes are patterns of behavior that children and adults use in interpreting events in their words . . . through assimilation . . . and accommodation" (p. 53). "Erik Erikson believed that during each stage of personal and social development people are faced with a psychosocial crisis that results from interaction with the social environment . . . which becomes a life long process" (p. 53). Kohlberg's theory of moral development is a refinement of Piagetian theory and "is based on children's responses to moral dilemmas" (p. 54). "Adults can help children advance to the next stage of cognitive or moral development by allowing them to freely explore problems, at the same time challenging their reasoning by introducing concepts from the next higher stage" (p. 54).

Another theorist was Vygotsky, whose work was suppressed in Stalinist Russia, causing some delay in his influencing theory on cognitive development (Goetz, et al., 1992, p. 48). Vygotsky believed that, in addition to personal, moral, and social development, the process of cognitive development is influenced by cultural and historical forces (Vygotsky, 1962). Collectively, the four theorists argue that cognitive development is affected by (a) assimilation of behavior; (b) interaction with the social environment; (c) personal, moral, and social development; and (d) cultural and historical forces. The

