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.
A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES ON ADULT FEMALE INMATES

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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APPROVAL

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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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Date 4/18/95
To Starwoman, a composite of all of the women in this study, and to all children, especially my own.
I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who have helped me in the completion of this study. First, many thanks to the residents and staff of the Women's Correctional Center in Billings, Montana for their participation and cooperation. I would also like to thank the many individuals whose technical assistance was a tremendous aid in completing the research and mechanics of this project, including the personnel at Renne Library, Montana State University; Charlie Orchard and Pete Stoltz; word processors, Kathy Schweigert, Anne Weyermeier; and, in particular, Barbara Brooks. My greatest appreciation goes to Barbara Hamblet, without whose assistance and encouragement this project could not have been completed. I am also grateful to my advisor, Dr. Gary Conti, whose patience, help, and kindness guided me through some very difficult times. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Robert Fellenz, Dr. Douglas Herbster, Dr. Clifford Montague, Dr. Robert Harvie, and Dr. Norm Millikin for their support. Finally, much gratitude goes to my children, Marjé, Jason, and Mark, and my father for the love, support, and time they afforded me in finishing this task.
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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.

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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
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 textbook" (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.

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 Environment

Historical 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 or 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 housekeeping 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"
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
underlying element among these effects may be the environment.

**Negative Family Influences**

One area within stage development theory that may relate to learning is the family system. This environment takes on a more personal basis as there are interactions among various members of the family.

As children, we had needs that depended on others for fulfillment. Children are dependent and needy. They need their parents for 15 years. Their dependency needs can only be satisfied by a caretaker. Children need someone to hold them and touch them. They need a face to mirror and affirm their feelings, needs and drives. Children need a structure with limits; they need predictability. They need a mutually trusting relationship; they need to know there is someone they can count on. Children need to have space and be different. They need security; they need to have enough nutritional food, clothing, shelter and adequate medical care. Children need their parents' time and attention. Children need direction in the form of problem-solving techniques and strategies. (Bradshaw, 1988b, p. 56)

Problems may exist when needs, love, and structure are not met or when they are met inappropriately.

Much of this needs theory is based on Maslow's theory of human motivation and hierarchy of needs, wherein the lowest level of needs, including hunger and thirst, must be met before one can deal with the other needs. These include safety/protection, belonging, and self-esteem. Finally, the need for self-actualization, the highest level, "emanates
from the learner" and "is the goal of learning according to Maslow" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 133).

Thus, learning can be connected not only to positive learning and behavior, but also to negative learning and behavior. Conceivably, an individual begins to learn at an early age, and if continued negative learning results, negative behavior will follow. In a recent study in New Jersey, Rovee-Collier noted that babies "can remember almost anything" (USA Today, 9/24/93, p. 1D). She bases this on extensive observation of 300 infants from ages 2-6 months. The babies soon learned to kick gleefully in familiar rooms. However, when they were put in unfamiliar surroundings "all bets are off" (p. 1D). If this is true, then babies may be aware of their surroundings much sooner than previously thought, and if they are exposed to prolonged, negative treatment, negative behavior may result. This is especially so if loss of self-esteem is experienced.

This example is only an illustration of how negative learning may begin. However, if negative learning continues and is not offset by love and care, negative behavior may result. The possibility the existence of this set of circumstances exists for many prison inmates, because they come from some of the most disadvantaged, disaffected, and dysfunctional environments in society. Drawing upon the research done by Alice Miller, Bradshaw (1988a) feels that "the poisonous pedagogy is a form of violence which violates
the rights of children. Such violation is then re-enacted when these children become parents" (p. 7).

For Bradshaw (1988a) and Miller the:

"poisonous pedagogy" concept exalts obedience as its highest value. Following obedience are orderliness, cleanliness and the control of "emotions and desires." Children are considered "good" when they think and behave the way they are taught to think and behave. Children are virtuous when they are meek, agreeable, considerate, and unselfish. The more a child is "seen and not heard" and "speaks only when spoken to" the better that child is. (p. 7)

Some of these traits appear to be cyclical and generational and may be desirable, but when they are strictly followed "these family system rules result in the absolute control of one group of people (parents) over another group of people (children). Yet, in our present society, only in extreme cases of physical or sexual abuse can anyone intervene on a child's behalf" (Bradshaw, 1988a, p. 8). Further, "there is a crisis in the family today. It has to do with parenting rules and the multigenerational process by which families perpetuate these rules" (p. 2). This can readily be seen in prison environments today, as many women prisoners are second and third generation violators (S. MacAskill, Prison Warden, Personal Communication, 11/92). "Parents who model goodness and firmly establish behavioral consequence for anti-social behavior provide a much more stable moral foundation for their children than do spanking, punishing, and moralistic labeling" (p. 156).
According to Bradshaw (1988b) and Miller, there are varying degrees this authoritarian control can have on the development process.

Alice Miller has shown convincingly that much criminal behavior is "acting out" behavior. "Acting out" is also called reenactment. What this means is that a criminal offender was once victimized in much the same way as he criminalizes. Children from violently abusing families, children from families where high voltage abandonment takes place, suffer terrible victimization. They generally take on a victim role and reenact it over and over again, or they identify with their offender and reenact the offense on helpless victims (as they once were). This reenactment is called "repetition compulsion" -- the urge to repeat. . . . While no one can or has proven that every criminal is acting out his own abandoning shame, I believe there is enough data to support the hypothesis that this is most often the case. Surely no one has offered any other solution to the everlasting problem of crime and criminality. Without any doubt, criminals feel like social outcasts and bear enormous toxic shame. (Bradshaw, 1988b, p. 20)

An example of this acting out behavior is set forth in the following case study and commentary concerning criminal behavior:

In Alice Miller's work on criminality, she presents the case of Jurgen Bartsch, who was a child murderer. He murdered four boys between 1962-1966. With some minor deviations his modus operandi was the same. After he enticed a boy into a former air-raid shelter not far from his home, he beat the child into submission, tied him up with butcher's string, manipulated his genitals while he masturbated, killed the child by strangulation or by blows, cut open the body, emptied out the stomach and buried the remains. Bartsch testified that he would achieve sexual climax while he was cutting up the corpses.

Reading the details of this account are truly nauseating. One feels outrage and horror. Surely such a person has criminal genes, or some
pathological sexual drive and perversion. However, as Alice Miller outlines the details of Jurgen's childhood, one cannot easily dismiss her thesis that there is a direct relationship between Jurgen's criminality and his early childhood. She writes, "Every crime contains a concealed story which can be deciphered from the way the misdeed is enacted and from its specific details."

The specific details are beyond the scope of my purpose here. Bartsch was an orphan, who was adopted after his parents made a careful search for the right child. Jurgen would spend hours, ritually looking for the right boy to murder. Jurgen was beaten as a baby. On many occasions he was found black and blue and bruised. He was beaten in the same room that his father, who was a butcher, was cutting up carcasses. Later, as the beatings continued he was locked in an old underground cellar. This went on for six years. He was forbidden to play with any other children. He was sexually abused by his mother. She bathed him until he was 12 years old, manipulating his genitals. At the age of eight he was seduced by his 13-year-old cousin, and later at 13, by his teacher. His crimes bore the imprint of each detail of his life. He "acted out" his pent-up hatred on little boys who all wore lederhosen (just as Jurgen had done as a child). He butchered them with a butcher knife as he'd seen his father do while Jurgen was being whipped, beaten and abused by his mother. She would often give him wet kisses on the mouth after she had beaten him. Jurgen also kissed his victims.

Jurgen was a victim who became an offender. He awakens our outrage and horror. "But," as Alice Miller writes, "the horror should be directed at the first murder, which was committed in secret and gone unpunished."

When a child is being violated, his normal reaction is to cry out in anger and pain. The anger is forbidden because it would bring more punishment. The expression of pain is also forbidden. The child represses these feelings, identifies with the aggressor and represses the memory of the trauma. Later disconnected from the original cause and the original feelings of anger, helplessness, confusion and pain, he acts out these powerful feelings against others in criminal
behavior, or against himself in drug addiction, prostitution, psychic disorders and suicide.

Again Alice Miller writes, "Someone who was not allowed to be aware of what was being done has no way of telling about it except to repeat it."

In a lesser way all parents who have not worked through their own childhood trauma will reenact it on their own children. (pp. 110-111)

Thus, negative learning and behavior can be traced from the minimal extreme, where babies were removed from familiar surroundings causing negative behavior, to a situation where extensive abuse can cause severe behavioral problems such as Jurgen Bartsch's "acting out" syndrome. Small negative experiences may cause behavioral problems if adequate care, love, protection, and structure are not in place. When many youth are abused at very early stages, this would have an effect on their behavior. Similar to an abused puppy in a cage, abuse in infants and children may have resounding effects in adulthood. Many times the result of this abuse means incarceration if proper steps are not taken to counter the abuse.

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Negative School Environment

Another area of development which may affect learning is the school system. Over 30 years ago, during his 1962 State of the Union message to Congress, President John F. Kennedy said that "if this nation is to grow in wisdom and strength, then every high school graduate should have the opportunity to develop his talents. Yet nearly half lack either the funds or the facilities to develop his talents. . . . A miseducated child is a lost child" (as cited in Trent & Medsker, 1968, p. xviii). Furthermore, almost a quarter of a century later, "many high school freshmen read at the fourth grade level" (Cusick, 1986, p. 69). In addition, "when a large share of an institution's resources must be allocated to remediation" (p. 69), and when "the 'best and brightest' do not elect to enter teaching; teaching practices are said to be dreary and ineffective; and prospective teachers learn little in mediocre teacher education programs" (Weis, Altback et al., Editors, 1989, p. 1), it is "difficult to raise the level of academic content" (Cusick, 1986, p. 69).

Traditionally, until the recent advent of high technology, "much of our system of elementary and secondary education evolved in the context of an economy based on mass production. It emphasized development of the routinized skills necessary for routinized work (Task Force Report on
Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 15). In addition, "a whole administrative system grew up to specify what routine skills were needed" (p. 15) and how to measure such skills. Furthermore, "a large bureaucracy emerged that tried to make this system work as smoothly as possible" (p. 15).

However, within this environment there developed the process of "disengagement (Cusick, 1986), which was a tendency of students from all social classes, children attending even the 'better' achievement-oriented high schools, to be uniformly uninvolved in the acquisition of challenging knowledge" (p. 3). In addition, as the age of computers and high technology advanced; as many traditional homes were disrupted by women having to find employment in the workplace; and with the increasing divorce rate, school curriculum began to reflect "a smorgasbord of topics designed to keep students in school and off the streets" (Task Force Report on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 15). Since some of these topics were not intellectually or vocationally stimulating to all concerned, "disengagement" and the inappropriate "bargaining away [of] standards" (Cusick, 1986, p. 1) among students, teachers, administrators, and organizations perpetuated and thereby minimized academic learning (Cusick, 1986). This type of activity may create confusion and dysfunction not only for the learner but also for those working within the system. Furthermore:
Delinquent acts occur where bonds between an individual and institutions such as school and family are weak. The casual chain from academic incompetence to delinquency includes poor school performance, dislike of school, and rejection of school authority. Social control theorists consider attachments to and involvement in school important variable in prevention of delinquency. (Hirshi, 1991, p. 23)

Moreover, two studies reported by Cusick (1986) indicated that (a) elementary children are often severely criticized for talking together about classroom material, and that (b) "white, middle class, competent, hardworking teachers in racially mixed classrooms are not particularly sensitive to the circumstances of some children who must operate with situationally induced inattention patterns that may be dysfunctional to academic learning" (Cusick, 1986, p. 76).

Further, "the school as an acculturating institution has erroneously operated from a base of standards that has limited relevance for the disadvantaged--letter grades, grade levels, rigid grouping, stereotyped instructional materials, and emphasis upon norms rather than individuality" (Frost & Rowland, Editors, 1969, p. 63). The results of these studies and observations are almost incomprehensible considering that, "by the year 2000, one of every three Americans will be a member of a minority group . . . and one out of every four . . . [will be] born into poverty, and the rate is increasing" (Task Force Report On Teaching As A Profession, 1986, p. 4).
There are two other areas that have traditionally influenced the behavior of children in the school system—humiliation (shaming) and corporal punishment. Even though neither is systematically used in today's schools, paddling is allowed in all but 9 states (McKay et al., 1989, p. 273), and "this paddling can be hard and is inflicted on both teens and small children" (p. 273). Moreover,

Shaming has always been an integral part of the school system. Sitting in the corner with a dunce cap on is a common association with school days. Even though most modern forms of education no longer use dunce caps, there are powerful sources of toxic shame operating in the school system. . . . [The] educational system . . . [is] a major force in solidifying the internalization process of shame based people. (Bradshaw, 1986b, p. 61)

In conclusion, "social and behavioral scientists have stressed that basic personality structure is laid down early in childhood. . . . [However], now there is a growing emphasis on the view that although the effect of the environment is critical, there is a potential for change, growth, and personality development at all stages of life, and particularly in adolescence, and early adulthood" (Trent & Medsker, 1968, p. 1). Those changes may also include hope for all in later adulthood, provided enough time, effort, and resources can be put into effect to counter some of the cyclical and generational dysfunction that are operating in some sections of society. This may be especially true since, in recent years, "the nationwide effort to improve our schools and students achievement
rivals those of any period in American history" (Task Force Report on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 11).

Abuse, Alcohol, and Drugs

Abuse comes in various forms. It includes anger and violence, childhood abuse, and sexual abuse which can be both physical and psychological. Another major type is substance abuse, or self-inflicted abuse, including drugs and alcohol. Many of these types of abuse may have their own specific symptoms associated with them and may contribute to dysfunction and disaffectedness in the family, institutions, and society in general.

Complex problems relating to abuse, drugs, and violence are presently pervasive in society. Here "violence is a part of daily life" (McKay et al., 1989, p. 273) and is frequently depicted in the news media. At home, the cartoons that children watch on television are replete with violence. At school, children are subjected to violence from paddlings, shaming, and the "acting out" behavior of others reflected from their home or school environments. Many times the resulting anger leads to violence, which may be a form of toxic abuse.

Childhood Sexual and Physical Abuse

For various reasons, abuse has reached astounding proportions in society in recent years. "The problem of
child sexual abuse has emerged from the cloak of social secrecy and become a leading concern of mental health professionals and a new topic of mental health research" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 174). In addition, "the burgeoning literature reflects not only increased scientific interest in sexual abuse and its effects but also growing public concern about this form of child maltreatment" (Briere, 1992, p. 196). Various studies reported by Briere (1992) indicate that "one third of women and one sixth of men in our culture have experienced sexual contact with someone substantially older by their mid teens" (p. 196). Furthermore, "between 15% and 45% of women have experienced at least one incident of contact sexual abuse including fondling, frottage, and attempted or completed oral, vaginal, or anal intercourse before age 18" (Wyatt & Newcomb, 1990, p. 728). Thus, "1 in 4 to 1 in 2.5 women have experienced at least one incident of sexual abuse in their lives before the age of 18" (Wyatt et al., 1992, p. 167). Moreover, "nearly 2.2 million children in the United States were reported to be victims of abuse and neglect in 1987" (Papalia, 1993, p. 284). This number of reported child neglect and abuse cases almost tripled from 1980 to 1987, rising from 785.1 to 2,025.2 per hundred thousand population (U.S. Department of Commerce Statistics, 1992, p. 186).
'Early sexual abuse evokes profound and lasting effects' (Beutler & Hill, 1992, p. 204) in its victims. In addition, there are numerous symptoms and problems associated with childhood sexual abuse. These disorders include "borderline personality disorder, multiple personality disorder, somatoform disorders, eating disorders, and substance abuse in women" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 175). Specifically, these effects include "post-traumatic stress, low self-esteem, and guilt, anxiety, depression, somatization, dissociation, interpersonal dysfunction, eating disorders, sexual problems, substance abuse, and suicidality" (Briere, 1992, p. 196).

Furthermore, childhood sexual abuse usually occurs "within the context of normal developmental changes in a child and therefore is bound to interact with other events and developmental processes" (Alexander, 1992, p. 165). One of these processes is self-esteem (Frey & Carlock, 1989, p. 144). Anger, divorce, disrupted families, and abuse can have devastating effects on children and their self-esteem (Frey & Carlock, 1989, p. 25; McKay, 1989, p. 243) in that "when parents are rejecting, angry or abusive, children will blame themselves before they'll see their parents as wrong, mean, or bad. Even children who have suffered severe abuse will defend and protect the abusing parent" (McKay, et al., 1989, p. 243). Almost invariably, anger and abuse in children has one or more of the following effects: loss of
a sense of self; loss of control; or a feeling of abandonment. When these conditions exist, children feel that they are bad and suffer loss of care, love, and protection (p. 242-3).

**Adult Sexual and Physical Abuse**

Another area of abuse is adult sexual abuse in women. "Current estimates of sexual abuse in adulthood range from 15% to 22%" (Wyatt et al., 1992, p. 167) of the adult female population. As far as types and forms of abuse, it "can range from one incident to many contacts over a period of years and from relationships with a nuance of seductiveness . . . to noncontact forms of abuse . . . to contact with varying degrees of physical intrusiveness and trauma" (Alexander, 1992, p. 165). "The majority of survivors of these experiences may have psychological problems, sexual dysfunction, and difficulties in male-female relationships" (Wyatt & Newcomb, 1990, p. 758). In addition, the effects of rape can also be devastating and "include depression, depression anxiety, fear, a history of suicide attempts, and low self-esteem" (Wyatt et al., 1992, p. 167). Furthermore, "sexual abuse often occurs in conjunction with both physical and emotional abuse . . . as well as family dysfunction" (Alexander, 1992, p. 165). Moreover, "negative attitudes toward future sexual encounters, sex guilt, unintended pregnancies, fears of
personal vulnerability, and a disruption in social functioning have also been associated with adult sexual abuse" (Wyatt et al., 1992, p. 167). Also, "women who have a history of incest report more difficulty trusting adults and peers and experiencing psychological intimacy" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 174).

The types of adult abuse, especially in the family system, may be almost as varied as the effects and often just as difficult to identify. Those relating to marital situations occur "when anger escalates out of control" (McKay, 1989, p. 270) and when "someone is induced to act in ways that they would not otherwise have chosen to act by violence, threats, or intimidation" (p. 270). Sometimes the incident of physical abuse will occur and never happen again; at other times, it may be repeated on a regular basis, often with severe physical and psychological damage; and for the majority of the times, drugs and alcohol are blamed (pp. 275-79). However, in most cases, "the man has been abusive before the substance became a problem. And since he often aims for places that don't show--breasts, stomach, base of the spine, parts of the head hidden by hair--he probably knows what he's doing. Considerable control is required to wound only where it won't be seen" (p. 277).

As noted, there are many types of abuse, and abuse is far reaching for the adult female prisoner. This is
illustrated by the profile published by the American Correctional Association (1990) which points out that, "between the ages of 5 and 14, the typical female prisoner was a victim of sexual abuse . . . usually her father or stepfather" (Fletcher et al., 1993, pp. 15-16). The profile also indicates that "by the time she was 13 or 14 years old she started using drugs and/or alcohol . . . to make herself feel better emotionally . . . believing that life is too painful and that nobody cares" (p. 16).

Substance Abuse, Drugs, and Alcohol

A related area involving abuse is the abuse of drugs and alcohol, since they are "involved in more than 80 percent of violent episodes" (McKay et al., 1989, p. 227). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that during the 1980s the reported drug arrest rate per 100,000 U.S. inhabitants doubled from 256.0 in 1980 to 526.8 in 1989 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992, p. 188). To many this would seem that the Reagan-Bush "war on drugs and crime" was highly effective. However, this program did very little to solve the drug problem; it only threw more people into jail, and it created more victims and fear of crime (Elias, 1993; Mann, 1993; Messerschmidt, 1986). As a matter of fact, in the majority of people in age categories over 18 who had used drugs and alcohol, there was a general increase between the years 1974 and 1991 (U.S. Department of Commerce
Statistics, 1992, p. 127). However, "recent evidence suggests that drug use among adolescents has actually declined in the past few years (except for cocaine, which has significantly increased . . .). Still, drug use among American youth is the highest in the industrialized world" (Botvin et al., 1990, p. 437).

For women, there are a number of problems related to alcohol and drugs aside from their general use. First, many drug dependent women were also childhood victims of incestuous abuse (Barrett & Trepper, 1991). Second, unhealthy relationships have been linked to drugs, alcohol, and codependency (Petrie et al., 1992). Third, and probably the most serious, this area of abuse has come to be considered by many as a family and cultural disease (Pasick & White, 1991). This problem has become so serious that here and in other countries large numbers of women who were abused as children are now appearing in alcohol treatment centers, even though the centers are frequently not equipped to meet their requirements (Kaplan, 1991).

Abuse, Drugs, and Developmental Learning

Other than being a major cause of loss of self-esteem, abuse and drugs may interact with the developmental process of learning. "In fact, children are affected by all forms of violence in the family, whether they are directly involved in sexual or physical abuse or are witnesses to
violence inflicted on others, as in wife beating and rape, abuse of pets, and violence against personal property" (Combrinicki-Graham, 1989, p. 413). Further, the ideas of "self and social development are inextricably bound together, and dysfunction in the self domain would inevitably have its counterpart in the social domain" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 176). The concepts of self and abuse have further ramifications, in that abused children often exhibit delays in developing speech, indicating the correlation between emotional and cognitive development (Papalia, 1993, p. 286). The result is that there is an increased loss of the "sense of cognitive and social competence and control" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 178). Therefore, a speech-related dysfunction can be detrimental to self-esteem and the learning development of a child.

Furthermore, in a study comparing the social cognitive styles of abused and non-abused children (Barahal et al., 1981), it was concluded "that abused children displayed less productive intellectual skills and fewer social cognitive competencies than non-abused children" (p. 512). The study further determined that "the lower IQs of the young abused children provide evidence that diminished intellectual achievements may be a pervasive consequence of abusive child care" (p. 512). However, some students in college have been able to overcome the influences of this abuse and perform at a standard which is either comparable or superior to those
who have not been maltreated (Mulrine, 1993, pp. 44, 84). Thus, abuse may affect the learning of some but not others.

Not only are cognition, development, and academic performance affected, but "substance use behavior, like other behaviors, is [also] learned through a process of modeling and reinforcement and is mediated by intrapersonal factors such as cognition, attitudes, expectations, and personality" (Botvin et al., 1990, p. 438). Further, child abuse and neglect may enhance "drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency, depression or anger due to family problems, emotional and psychological disorders" (Slavin, 1991, p. 443).

Finally, it is important to recognize that substance abuse is "promoted and supported by social influences from peers, family members, and the media" (Botvin et al., 1990, p. 438). These influences, interacting with modeling reinforcement and the abusive process, can have grave long-term influence on cognitive and physical development (McKay, 1989; Papalia, 1993; Slavin, 1991).

In conclusion, the influence of substance abuse has a significant relevance to the adult and to learning. The "integrated sense of self and meaningful interpersonal relationships forms the core of the maturely functioning adult" (Cole & Putnam, 1992, p. 176). They also have a significant effect on the personal and social development of
Drugs, Abuse, and Incarcerated Women

Abuse, drugs, and violence have a potentially hazardous effect on incarcerated women. Recent surveys of jail and prison populations in the United States disclosed that:

1. Most of the time while growing up, 40% of the female inmates had grown up in a single parent household, and an additional 17% lived in a household without either parent. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, March 1992, p. 1)

2. About two-thirds of the women reported being sexually or physically abused before they entered prison. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report, March 1993, p. 9)

3. Almost a third of all women in jail and presumably of all women incarcerated reported that a parent or guardian had abused drugs or alcohol. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, March 1992, p. 1)

4. More than half of the convicted female inmates had used drugs in the month prior to the current offence. Approximately 40% had used drugs daily. In addition, nearly one in four women in prison reported committing their crimes to obtain money for drugs. (p. 1)

5. Overall, female violent inmates (76%) were more likely than male inmates (66%) to have injured their victims; 68% of the women had inflicted major injury, sexually assaulted, or killed their victims. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report, March 1993, p. 17)

6. Of incarcerated women, 42% had two or more children under the age of 18 living with their father, grandparents, or other relatives and friends. More than 44% of women had an immediate family member or spouse who had been incarcerated. The family member for 34% was a brother or sister. (p. 10)
These numbers indicate that something more than a "war on crime and drugs" needs to be placed into effect in society. Combined with the rise in the number of incarcerated women and the nearly 70% recidivism rate, they demonstrate that something is wrong with the corrections system, the home environment, and the family system. This does not exclude the school system, as well, since school is where the majority of children receive a substantial amount of their care and education. However, if this country is to approach being a less violent society there must be a promotion of system-wide interventions, with goals and objectives designed to change the way people are socialized. These changes must occur in the macrosystem (Edelson & Tolman, 1992).

Attitudes, Values, and Social Learning

There are many factors which affect or impact motivation in learning. Some of those that have been identified are "attitude, need stimulation, affect, competence, and reinforcement" (Wlodkowski, 1985, p. 45). Others are "heredity; maturation; environment; and beliefs, attitudes, values, and needs" (Frey & Carlock, 1989, p. 31). At the core of these factors and influences are attitudes which are affected by both beliefs and values. The word attitude implies the evaluation of an object, and to explain attitude there must be the consideration of values and
judgments (Triandis, 1964). An attitude is the evolution of a concept (Anderson & Fishbein, 1965). Attitudes denote "enduring beliefs . . . predisposing one to respond" (Rokeach, 1968, p. 112) in a particular manner. In this respect, learning is the building of individual concepts. Further, it has an additional facet of an affective component "based upon cognitive processes . . . an antecedent of behavior" (Shaw & Wright, 1967, p. 3). Therefore, the idea of attitude becomes a primary foundation block for learning and is defined as:

A predisposition to think, feel, and act in a particular way toward a referent or social object. This predisposition is based upon a set of related opinions, beliefs, values, memories, and perceptions which form the attitude and sustain it over time. (Kelker, 1992, p. 29)

Thus, inclusion of these factors, influences, and concepts is at the focal point of learning, for, as "beliefs, attitudes, values, and needs become more aware to the developing self, the individual engages in a process of evaluating these factors, internalizing them and attributing them to self as seems appropriate" (Frey & Carlock, 1989, p. 31). This is also a process of "identity formation" and is a main element of social learning (p. 31).

Belief, value, and need are concepts relevant to the development of attitudes. "A belief is any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 113). A value "refers to a single belief of a very specific kind," while
an attitude differs from a value in that an attitude refers to an "organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation" (p. 18). A need, however, is "a condition experienced by the individual as an internal force that leads the person to move in the direction of a goal" (Wlodkowski, 1985, p. 47). Therefore, it can be said that belief, value, and need predispose the idea of attitude and are essential elements of attitudes.

Another element of attitude and learning is the "predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward particular people, groups, ideas, events, or objects" (Wlodkowski, 1985, pp. 45-46). In this regard, if there has been negative socialization or learning about a particular thing, self, or person, there is the likelihood that the beliefs, attitudes, or values toward this person or thing may be negative. This is similar to the negative socialization demonstrated in the "puppy in the cage" analogy. If a puppy has been tormented or mistreated while in the cage, the animal may hold resentment not only for the cage where it was housed but also for the victimizer. Conversely, if the cage was a viable place of care and protection, the hostility may not develop, and the puppy may have a positive attitude concerning its surroundings.

Thus, the basic common concepts of attitude are affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Alport, 1935; Doob, 1967; More, 1974, p. 37). However, if the concept of
attitude is negative, there may be a necessity to incorporate the process of attitude change to make the attitude positive in nature. This change is another learning process, especially if the attitude initially learned was negative. For some educators, this means a form of changing old attitudes as well as creating new ones.

Mrs. B presents her opinion that the root cause of delinquency lies with the parents and their inability to give the children the right kind of love and affection that would keep them out of trouble. This is a very comfortable and secure attitude. It is unassailable. Parents, she would say, should be able to keep their children out of trouble; ergo, if the children get into trouble it is the parents' fault. If Mrs. B is to learn anything of the complex forces within people and within society which are at the root of delinquency, then she is going to find it impossible if she persists with this closed-shop attitude that the parents are to blame. For learning to take place she must forfeit this persisting attitude, and leave herself open to the forces of learning. However there is a snag, a problem which has important repercussions for the learner. Unlearning is not simply a matter of giving up one attitude and replacing it with another. There is a time lag. It takes time to build up a new attitude, to assimilate new knowledge and information. You have to live with a growing attitude for a long time before it really becomes part of you. During this "gestation period," the new knowledge and information has to be measured against a number of yardsticks, such as how far this new view is acceptable to my view of myself, to the group to which I belong and want to belong, to the subculture of which I am a part, and so on. (More, 1974, pp. 6-7)

This type of learning can occur as one of two consequences. One is adapting to the environment, and the other is a result of social learning (Hovland & Rosenberg, 1960). An example of the former would be the analogy of the
puppy in the cage developing either positive or negative behavior. The latter could be exemplified by Mrs. B changing her attitude about the cause of delinquency in children.

Moreover, when considering attitude change, there are four factors that promote this type of change. They are (a) a change in life goals, (b) new information, (c) new group affiliation, and (d) personality change. There are also three circumstances that resist attitude change. They are (a) relative stability of one's personal life system, (b) group pressures to conformity, and (c) expectations (More, 1974). Between these two sets of pressures is a process of forming attitudes and attitude change, to help us make sense out of the confusion of the vast number of impressions we receive through our senses daily. To cope with all of these impressions, we have virtually constructed a mental filing system. Each impression is neatly put away in its appropriate file, and we are strangely resistant to throwing out any established file in favour of a new file. Anything that does not fit straight away, we do all sorts of things with, until it does fit somewhere or, alternatively, is tossed out. We should be lost without this attitude-filing system; it gives an order and stability to our lives, and we do not like that order and stability threatened by something which does not fit neatly into the system. (p. 29)

Thus, while it is similar to a filing system, "learning is also a very individual and personal process; so too is unlearning and changing attitudes" (More, 1974, p. 37). Learning may be a threat to one person and seem a totally enlightening experience to another, depending upon the
circumstances and the environment. Examples of this might be the learning of bias or prejudice or the developing of self-esteem. Changing these well-established attitudes may result in a long, excruciating process. However, first the person must admit that there is a need for change.

Model to Effect Change

Systems theory has evolved over the twentieth century through the development of Max Weber's Theory of Bureaucratic Organization, Frederick Taylor's Theory of Scientific Management, and Elton Mayo's Theory of Human Relations (Souryal, 1985, p. 23). An additional theory, called Contingency Theory, "stresses an evaluation of the duties and personnel of the agency" before selecting one or a combination of these theories for a particular agency (p. 36). The purpose is to select the theory that is best suited to the agency.

Frequently, systems theory has been the model of choice in administration, and it has become a major management methodology. Systems theory encompasses the idea that "the world can be viewed as consisting of structural wholes, or systems, that maintain identity or integrity under a range of conditions and that exhibit certain general properties emerging from their 'wholeness'" (Wilson & Morren, 1990, p. 69). While this theory incorporates the idea of holism, "systems theory says only that it is useful to view the
world as if it were composed of parts" (p. 70). Further, administrative systems theory views the organization in its totality with emphasis on the components of the system, how they work, and the productivity of the system (Souryal, 1985, p. 34). Subsidiary parts may be smaller or larger, but they all serve as parts of the whole. For example, several pulleys and belts of various sizes may be responsible for the operation of a simple machine. However, if one of the parts stops functioning, the machine will not function properly regardless of the size of the malfunctioning part. The same may be said for cars, organizations, and ecosystems.

Savory (1988) incorporates these ideas of holism and totality into the Theory of Holistic Resource Management (HRM); the world and its environment is viewed as being one ecosystem having many parts including the interdependence of plants and animals. The HRM model was designed so that forecasting certain management decisions could be accomplished with a reasonable degree of accuracy (Savory, 1988). This model can be linked in a circular fashion to Kolb's learning styles with the following four quadrants: Identify--Diverge; Plan--Assimilate; Test--Converge; and Implement--Accommodate (Montagne et al., 1993; Wilson & Morren, 1990). Using this combined model, holistic problem-solving involves (a) perceiving the problem; (b) developing a solution; (c) testing the solution; and
(d) implementing the solution (Kolb, 1986) (see Figure 2). When viewed in a circular format, holistic thinking and humanistic problem-solving will involve the whole problem even though individuals may perform better in their own particular quadrant, depending on their learning style (Kolb, 1986; Montagne, 1993).

When considering the "wholeness" of the individual, organization, or ecosystem and the interdependence with other entities, this model can be considered from a sociological standpoint. Use of the model can enhance better learning and problem-solving techniques from a sociological point of view in an effort to solve some of the dysfunction prevalent in or around these entities. This technique could be used with jails, prisons, and corrections. When the parts as well as the whole are considered on a proactive basis within the inevitable process of change, the individual and society can control that change for the betterment of all.

When utilizing the Holistic Management Model (HMM) (see Figure 3), the ideas of holism and systems theory from a humanistic standpoint become focal points for a conceptual framework of social learning and problem solving. In the identifying stage, the problem may be perceived through the HRM process and identified through various means by diverging within the environment with due consideration for
Holistic Management Model

Figure 2. Adaptation of Savory and Kolb's Models
THE WHOLE
(who, what, where, when)

Maintain:
- personal, organizational,
cultural growth
- flexibility

Develop:
- management guidelines
- financial &
biological planning

The Processes:
- ecosystem
- human system
- energy
- motivation
- water / minerals
- knowledge /
- human resources
- succession
- community stability
& dynamics

IMPLEMENT SOLUTION

PERCEIVE PROBLEM

IMPLEMENTING

TEST SOLUTION

DEVELOP SOLUTION

TESTING

Brainstorm / Establish:
- goal (value), objective
- quality of life expected
- future condition
- new paradigms / tools / action

Guidelines for
Sustainability:
- cause / effect
- weak link
- whole system

Compare with Reality,
Individual,
System, Society

Human Creativity,
Effort, Vision

Monitor,
Control,
Adjust

Converge
Assimilate
Diverge
Accommodate

money, time, effort
proactive vs. reactive

replan timing
early warning

Figure 3. Sociological Adaptation of Savory, Kolb, and Montagne’s Models
knowledge, motivation, and community stability over the process of time. This process may necessitate deviation from the norm to include the idea of wholeness. However, the early warning process will help identify problem areas that may be out of synchronization.

The planning stage includes human creativity and brain-storming activities. This could elicit paradigms which could be used to develop a solution for a proactive assessment of an existing problem. Goals and objectives should be well formulated so that there are clear ideas as to what is to be accomplished based on the quality of life desired. These ideas will be assimilated into the solution developed. If reactive solutions are to be considered, care should be taken to keep them to a minimum and only utilize them in connection with proactive solutions.

When testing a possible solution to a perceived problem, a convergence of energy will be necessary to determine the cause and effect of a solution and what tools and money are needed to implement it. This process will address the weakest link in the system. A comparison with reality will be necessary to determine the effectiveness of the solution for the individual, organization, society, and/or the ecosystem.

The implementation of management guidelines must always consider adjusting, controlling, and monitoring, with flexibility being the underlying factor when devising a
tested solution. Appropriate flexibility must be allowed for accommodation of these variables and consideration must be given to the replanning process. Hence, the diagram has a circular configuration, since the tested solution may need to be recycled through the process if it is found to be ineffective or if a better solution can be developed. Another reason for the circular design is that constant change in the environment of the system will accommodate significant change and evolution of the methods used to address these changes. Management guidelines must also consider personal, organizational, cultural, societal, financial, and biological implications if and when these are relevant to implementation.

The approach to holistic thinking and problem solving has been traced through systems theory as well as ecological and learning models to show it has implications for sociological consideration. It is holistic in design and humanistic in approach. It can be translated from ecology and agriculture to sociology and people by holistic and humanistic approaches. For example, in today's world people are complex and so is society—the simplistic, rural outlook is diminishing. To solve problems such as violence, prisons, and recidivism there is a need to look at conditions from a holistic standpoint. For instance, although psychological, physical, and sexual abuse are often discussed separately, "they often occur simultaneously, and
the definitions overlap" (Fletcher et al., 1993, p. 55). They are also reflective of larger problems, i.e., violence and anger. Therefore, the need exists to look at women in prison in a holistic way to identify early warning signs which may affect the larger picture.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The design utilized for this study is the case study method. "Broadly defined, research is systematic inquiry. There are numerous well-tested designs and techniques to help guide the inquiry. Case study is one such research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically" (Merriam, 1988, p. 6). This method utilized qualitative methods of interviews and observation to interpret what was "occurring in a natural setting--hence the term naturalistic inquiry" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 17).

Case Studies

"The general design of a case study is best represented by a funnel" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 62) where the study is wide and open. As the research develops, the focus narrows to "more directed data collection and analysis" (p. 62). "The qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). It is often referred to as "descriptive research" or "non-experimental" research, which "is undertaken when
description and explanation (rather than prediction based on cause and effect) are sought, when it is not possible or feasible to manipulate the potential causes of behavior, and when the variables are not easily identified or are too imbedded in the phenomenon to be extracted for the study" (p. 7). Therefore, descriptive case studies "are particularistic in that they focus on a specific situation or phenomenon; they are descriptive; and they are heuristic—that is, they offer insights into the phenomenon under study" (p. 21). Furthermore, case studies present "a holistic and life like description that is like those that the readers normally encounter in their experiencing of the world, rather than being a mere symbolic abstraction of such" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 359). As a case study, this research encompasses "life-like" experiences which are "oriented toward [descriptive] case study research that is qualitative in nature, emphasizing description and interpretation within a bounded context" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). The descriptive aspect of case study research means that the case study is "a rich, thick description" (p. 11) of "a slice of life" (Guba 1978, p. 4).

The "bounded context" or "system element" of a case study "is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue,
or hypothesis" (Merriam, 1988, pp. 9-10). Furthermore, "the case study represents an unparalleled means of communicating central information that is grounded in the particular setting" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 360) that is to be studied.

The case for this study was the women's facility of the Montana State Prison (MSP) system. Even though large in size, Montana is small in population. It has only one women's correctional facility, which is officially considered a branch of the Montana State Prison (MSP). In a manner of speaking, this is how the term "women's prison" is derived. However, the women's facility is officially labelled "Women's Correctional Center" (WCC) and it is located in Warm Springs, MT.

Naturalistic Inquiry

Considering the environment, subject matter, and complexity of the female residents, an alternative method varying from conventional rationalistic/quantitative inquiry was chosen for this study. This method, naturalistic inquiry (NI), was chosen because it "has considerable promise for social and behavioral inquiry generally. . . . Naturalistic inquiry is not a new method, having its roots in ethnography and phenomenology" (Guba, 1978, p. 1). Case studies "are embedded in the growing body of literature on qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry" (Merriam,
1988, p. 16). When relating qualitative research to naturalistic inquiry (NI), qualitative research is "the paramount objective to understanding the meaning of an experience" (p. 16). As in holistic resource management, "qualitative research strives to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole" (p. 16). Using NI, researchers "interact with information in a natural and unobtrusive manner" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 6).

The goal of the naturalistic inquirer is to focus on qualitative studies, because researchers are "interested in insight, discovering and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). The researcher "seeks holistic description and explanation" (p. 10), "through interviews as the typical NI data collection method" (Guba, 1978, p. 4). To accomplish this, the researcher relies on "field study as a fundamental technique" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 55) and regards truth "as ultimately inescapable" (p. 55).

By contrast, the method of the rationalist researcher "tends to see the world as composed of variables. Certain of these variables, called independent variables, can be manipulated to determine their effects on dependent variables" (Guba, 1978, p. 12). In addition, when the rationalistic researcher "approaches an inquiry it is, typically, to test some proposition about a relationship called a hypothesis" (p. 13) while "the naturalistic
investigator is a phenomenologist" (p. 12) who "is concerned with describing and understanding phenomena" (p. 12) or "human behavior . . . from the actor's own frame of reference. . . . The phenomenologist examines how the world is experienced. For him or her the important reality is what people imagine it to be" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, cited in Guba, 1978, p. 12).

In addition to being studied from the world of experiences, "phenomena" are also researched in their natural environment. Common techniques used are participant observation, case studies, and methods that gather as many viewpoints as possible. Since the goal is insight and understanding rather than measurement, such an approach to research may lead to uncovering phenomena whose existence was not suspected (Conti & Fellenz, 1987). Moreover, there is "sufficient immersion in and experience with a phenomenological field [that] yields inevitable conclusions about what is important, dynamic, and pervasive in the field" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 55). This research is "similar to the 'zooming in' and 'zooming out' with a lens" (pp. 82-83) of the camera. The idea of immersing oneself through participant observation and interviewing into the environment for the purpose of discovering and understanding experiences includes the idea of understanding these experiences from the "actor's own perspective" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 2).
At the time of the study, the participants for this study were residents of the Women's Correctional Center (WCC) at Warm Springs, Montana. The site of the Center was a rural community located in southwest Montana on the grounds of the Montana State Mental Hospital. The primary building was converted from a former nurses' dormitory in 1982. The building was designed to house 30 women; however, the emergency bed capacity was 45 (Byorth, 1989b, p. 3). Since 1989, there have been no less than 50 residents in the facility at one time, with a high of 69 in 1992 (S. MacAskill, Prison Warden, personal communication, 11/2/92). Needless to say, overcrowding was a problem.

In addition to overcrowding, location, and servicing, terminology was a problem for the facility. Location and servicing were problems not only because WCC was situated in rural Montana, where few medical and counselling services are readily available, but because staffing at times was problematical. There was also a problem with the facility's being located on the grounds of the state mental hospital. This possibly added to the labelling and categorization effect of the residents when they were discharged from the facility. Specifically, the former residents may have been labelled not only as inmates but also as mental patients.
The other problem of terminology, or semantics, relates to how the WCC is described and referred to in state records and documents. It is officially listed as being under the state prison; however, it is officially called a "correctional center." Unofficially, the staff and the public who are aware of its existence refer to this facility as a prison. Within these bounds, there is a philosophical question as to whether WCC is a prison or a correctional facility as its name would imply. Furthermore, because of its unique location, the facility gives the impression of having a community corrections element, since some of the residents work and perform other duties on the hospital grounds. Because of this situation, and since the female occupants generally refer to themselves as residents, they are similarly referred to as residents in this study, even though the facility is commonly referred to as a women's prison. Thus, because these terms appear to be contradictory, in conjunction with some of the other problems of the environment, such as overcrowding, labelling, and parenting, they severely affect the lives and welfare of the residents.

Finally, many people feel that a women's correctional facility should have a woman as the chief administrator since there are gender issues involved. However, traditionally, WCC has a male chief administrator who has subsequently become a warden.
In preparing for the study, the residents at WCC were asked in writing and verbally to volunteer and participate in interviews for the study. It was explained that the process related to the social learning experiences of the incarcerated adult females. Since social learning experiences were to be examined from past, present, and future perspectives, the participant group also included volunteers from the Butte Pre-Release Center (BPRC) at Butte, Montana, which accommodates most of the WCC residents who are re-integrating into society. Two interviews were conducted with each participant. From these two sources, 31 women were interviewed concerning their background; 25 were from WCC, and 6 were from BPRC.

Some of the women interviewed were in transition between WCC and BPRC, and some were proceeding from the facilities to parole. Some women must go to pre-release before getting parole, and some get parole straight from WCC, depending on the circumstances of the particular female resident. Due to mitigating circumstances, there are some who are not eligible for pre-release and stay at WCC. Also, there are some who are returned to WCC because of rule infractions or other violations. However, all women interviewed were or had been residents of WCC.

The residents interviewed were between the ages of 19 and 72 and were customarily housed together on the second floor of the main building. Housing assignments were
generally not influenced by age or type of crime committed. Of the 31 residents interviewed, 24 women were white. The seven others identified themselves as Native American. Therefore, of the total group, white women outnumbered Native American women by more than three to one.

Approximately one-fifth (6) of the residents interviewed were considered to be from Montana because they were born in the state and had lived in Montana for significant periods of time before their arrests. The remainder of the women interviewed were from other parts of the United States and had either spent significant amounts of time outside Montana or had been born in other areas of the country.

Approximately two-thirds (20) of the women interviewed had committed nonviolent property crimes which included writing bad checks, forgery, and theft. Check-related charges were the major violation. One-third (10) of the women in the study had been convicted of violent crimes, which included assault, sexual assault, or homicide. Of that number, five convictions were for homicide or deliberate, mitigated homicide.

The participants were almost evenly divided into those without a high school degree at the time of entering WCC and those who had acquired at least a high school diploma. Five participants had little or no high school or GED prior to entering WCC. Ten obtained their GEDs while at the
facility. The remaining participants had at least a high school diploma, some college, or a college degree before coming to WCC.

When educationally possible, all residents leaving WCC by usual means have at least their GED, and in many instances they also have Adult Basic Education (ABE) and/or business skills. No college education is presently offered because federal regulations prohibit this unless the residents can pay tuition. However, approximately one-half of those interviewed had college backgrounds. The backgrounds ranged from an associate to master's degrees. One of the participants from the pre-release center was concurrently working and attending college. Thus, the participants were somewhat more educated than the statistical norm in the rest of the United States.

Research Questions

People learn in a variety of ways, and their learning may sometimes be associated with loss of empowerment or freedom in their daily lives. While it is one thing to lose empowerment while performing day-to-day tasks, it is yet another to lose one's freedom through confinement such as incarceration. Events leading up to and involving the incarceration can be learning experiences. For each person, they may be significantly different, depending on the circumstances and experiences of the individual. Therefore,
a qualitative study (a) is guided by findings as they emerge, (b) must avoid becoming too rigid in presuppositions of what the study will disclose, and (c) should be prepared to change direction as the need requires (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

The general research questions for this study were arranged in categories and topics to encourage the women to talk about themselves. During the interview process, efforts were made to establish rapport with each woman and to allow her to give impressions, opinions, and perceptions about herself, her background, incarceration, and social learning which included both formal and informal education. The general categories allowed spontaneity in conversation and guided the interview. The actual interview took the form of a conversation and proceeded in an unstructured fashion. This style allowed for additional rapport with the interviewee and accommodated responses from her point of view. Each woman was made aware of the general basis for this study, voluntarily agreed to be interviewed, and agreed to have the conversation recorded.

The interviews gathered data relating to the following research questions.

1. How do adult female residents understand social learning experiences? What is their reaction to the learning process?
2. What are the various kinds of individual social learning experiences of the residents?

3. What role do social learning experiences and education play in impacting the negative, deviant, and criminal behavior of these female residents?

4. How has childhood and early development affected social learning experiences and subsequent behavior of adult female residents?

Two interviews were conducted with each participant. The general areas of questioning in the interview process were as follows:

I. Initial Interview/Conversation
   A. Opening comments and general background questions
   B. School environment
   C. Early childhood and family life
   D. Peer group involvement

II. Follow-Up Interview
   A. Personal and internal experiences
   B. Positive and negative experiences
   C. School and external experiences
   D. Extent these experiences affected present situation
   E. Perception of self as a learner in these situations

Sample questions for the interview are included in the Appendix.
Research Procedures

This study, which was conducted at WCC and BPRC, was geared toward gaining information concerning the impact of social learning experiences on the behavior of female residents. Initial steps were taken to contact correctional authorities to see if it was possible to conduct a participant observation study. To facilitate this study, a 12-week internship at WCC was conducted. This was done for several reasons. First, it was felt that the internship would better enhance the possibility of being able to conduct the study. Second, it was felt that rapport with the staff and with the residents as well might be accomplished. Even though the residents were of primary consideration, the cooperation of the staff was needed to carry out the study. Third, during the internship, it was possible to gain both familiarization with the female correctional environment in Montana and also to gain information concerning the adult education element housed within the Montana women's correctional system.

After approval was obtained for the study, arrangements were made for the internship. Several meetings were scheduled with appropriate correctional authorities to determine the guidelines for the internship. The primary work was accomplished through the adult education program. This accomplished both familiarization with the various
programs and procedures at WCC as well as offering immediate contact with the residents and staff. A major part of the 1992 Fall Semester was spent conducting general classes, group interviews, and making the general acquaintance of the women, as well as learning about the various phases of the adult education program. Many of the classes were conducted at the Expansion Unit (EU) of the main facility of WCC which is arranged to house 10-15 medium and maximum security women. The reason for conducting the classes at the EU was that there were few extra-curricular activities available except for daily exercise programs. The women at the EU were strictly confined either from their initial incarceration or subsequently for violations or infractions which required a higher level of security.

The initial reaction of the residents to the researcher was somewhat unaccepting. However, two or three women were open to communication. As a result, the researcher was able to use the contact with these few to open up communication with the remainder of the group. With few exceptions, everyone was opening up by the end of the month and discussing various topics ranging from personal problems to education and criminal justice. After a few more weeks, most were asking when the researcher would return for additional classes.

This effort was of tremendous assistance in developing a rapport and in gaining the trust and confidence of the
residents interviewed. In the Montana prison system, women can proceed from EU to WCC and then to BPRC. After that, they may possibly return for various infractions. Throughout this process, they may pass along information about their treatment and care to other residents. This process of communication is called the "grapevine." It is defined as "informal word of mouth communication used in prison . . . as a way of spreading news usually unknown to authorities or to the general public" (Burkhart, 1973, p. 446). As a result, information concerning the researcher travelled the same route. Fortunately, the information portrayed the researcher in a positive light as a viable authority figure concerned about the welfare of the residents. This made the subsequent interview process easier and far more informative. As a result, all of the women, with the exception of one at the second interview stage, were more than willing to supply information about themselves.

In an effort to establish better rapport with the residents, the researcher appeared on the grounds in casual clothing and retained his long hair which was pulled back in a ponytail. These techniques were of immense benefit in establishing rapport, trust, and confidence with the residents. As a matter of fact, if there had not been gender difference, the researcher would have been considered one of the "family."
Because of the nature of the prison environment and because an informal, conversational relationship had been established with almost all of the residents, all women in the prison were given a chance to volunteer to participate in the study. To accomplish this, a letter asking for volunteers was posted on the bulletin boards of WCC and EU where it was easily noticeable. Only a few women signed up as a result of the letter, so a personal announcement was made by the researcher at a meeting where all the residents were gathered. This method proved to be a more rewarding and motivational way of getting volunteers because of the more personalized contact with the women. Between the posted letter and the personal announcement, 25 volunteers were identified. Another six were obtained in the same manner at the BPRC. Thus, there were a total of 31 participants in the study. Another task to be accomplished before the actual interview process began was the selection of general sample questions. During this process, two pilot interviews were arranged through the BPRC because both of the subjects had recently been at WCC and had been working or going to school through BPRC. One of these women was included in the study, but the other requested not to be a part of the study, although she was willing to review the questions, undergo a partial interview, and offer suggestions and criticism as to the validity and effectiveness of the questions. Based on these two pilot
interviews, a final list of general questions was adopted (Appendix).

The interviews were then arranged by appointment at the respective facility, with due regard to resident routines and daily schedules. A 90-minute time frame was established with appropriate breaks allowed to avoid fatigue on the part of both the respondent and the interviewer. On several occasions the conversation became quite emotional and some breaks were necessary for a respondent to regain composure.

The interviews were recorded by the use of a cassette tape recorder and were accompanied by field notes taken by the researcher. It was initially anticipated that the recordings would provide backup to support the notetaking. However, the converse was found to be the case, and the recordings proved to be the primary source for providing exactness in the responses for data analysis. Because the exact words of the women were being mechanically captured on the tape, it was possible for the interview to take on a conversational nature. Although the researcher was taking brief field notes, the flow of the conversation never had to be interrupted in order for the researcher to catch up in the recording process. All of the interviews were conducted personally by the researcher.

Care was taken to arrange the interview meetings so as not to conflict with the daily routines of the residents. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer
explained the manner in which the responses would be recorded and obtained the permission for recording of each person interviewed. In addition, the participants were briefed as to the purpose and scope of the interviews. Utmost care was taken to see that each resident was comfortable with the process.

The outline of the questions was generally followed. However, on occasion certain topics may have been discussed out of order to accommodate convenience to the respondent. For instance, if the person being interviewed related drugs, alcohol, or abuse to family life primarily, that area was discussed before moving on to the school environment. In addition, some women had been incarcerated for charges where drugs, alcohol, and/or abuse had not been an issue; therefore, these issues were not discussed at great length in order to allow time to discuss other relevant issues in more detail.

After the initial round of interviews was conducted, a review of the tapes was undertaken to determine which questions may have been overlooked and which remained to be answered. The initial interview was centered around external learning processes relating to school, family life, and peer group involvement. The follow-up interview generally concerned reflections and carry-over issues among these areas, differences in learning processes, and how
social learning experiences had impacted subsequent behavior.

After the interviews were completed, the available prison records of each resident were checked to verify demographic information. In the criminal justice field, such records and files are generally reviewed prior to the interview. However, for these particular interviews, the records were checked after the interview so as not to allow any preconceived notions about the resident to occur. This procedure allowed for better spontaneity and trust on the part of the interviewee.
CHAPTER 4

THE RESIDENTS

As previously described, the interviews were conducted with 31 women from the Montana women's correctional system regarding their perception of the impact that social experiences had upon their learning and subsequent behavior. These interviews revealed that, from a developmental and behavioral standpoint, the majority of the women perceived some form of abuse as the underlying factor that affected their lives and learning. Therefore, to better understand their learning process there is a need to understand the effect that abuse and violence had on their lives. The learning patterns of these women can be understood only in a holistic approach that examines the total environment of their lives. Thus, before learning can be examined, the effects of abuse and violence should be considered.

Demographics

Of the 31 women interviewed, 24 were Caucasian and 7 were Native American. There were no other ethnic groupings. The ages of the women ranged from 20 to 72. Eighteen of the women had been convicted of money-related, non-violent crimes, including check-related charges, forgery, and theft.
The remaining 13 had been convicted of violent crimes including assault, sexual assault, and homicide or homicide related charges. Many of the women considered the sentences for the non-violent crimes exorbitant and a gross inequity on the part of the state criminal justice system.

Of the 13 violent offenders, 10 were serving time for homicide; mitigated, deliberate homicide; or homicide-related charges. Most of the homicides related to the deaths of husbands, boyfriends, or close family members, including one matricide. All but two of the violent offenders had experienced longstanding abuse. However, the abusers were not always the victims of their crimes.

Educational backgrounds ranged from those with no high school diploma or GED to those who were high school graduates or had college degrees. At the time of the interviews, five of the women had not obtained GED certificates or high school diplomas. Another group of 12 individuals had received GED certificates; 7 of those had received these certificates after arriving at WCC. Thus, over one-third of the women interviewed had not received high school diplomas or GED certificates prior to coming to WCC. Of the remaining 14 women, 2 had high school diplomas, 7 had some college, and 5 had some form of college degree such as an associate or master's degree. In some instances the educational levels attained prior to entering WCC were
not verifiable from official sources but were reported by the residents.

Overall, the educational level of the women interviewed was relatively high. While the median educational level for female inmates is 11th grade (Bureau of Justice Statistics Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics - 1992, 1993, p. 595), only 5 of the 31 interviewed had not obtained at least a GED certificate. Correctional facility policy requires in most cases that each woman acquire the GED certificate prior to departure.

The violent offenders had the lowest level of education. Of the 13 violent offenders, 7 had no GED or high school diploma, 3 had attained this level, and only 3 had some college at the time of their arrival at WCC. All of the women in this category, with the exception of one, claimed to have been abused. Some had been violently abused.

The remaining 18 non-violent offenders had varying educational backgrounds. This group included most of the women with GED certificates or high school diplomas and most of those with college degrees or some college. Of the non-violent offenders, only two claimed not to have been abused.

The three women from both groups who claimed not to have been abused had completed the highest levels of educational activities presently offered at WCC. One woman had previously completed her GED and had subsequently
enrolled in a college program that was offered at the facility. The woman with the high school diploma had also taken some college courses. Both women had accessed all available business skills courses. The third woman had previously received a master's degree and had only taken treatment classes while at WCC.

Thus, the violent and non-violent offenders differed in educational levels. Those with the least amount of education had been involved in more violent crimes and had suffered more abuse. Those with the higher educational level were involved in crimes of monetary origin and experienced less abuse. Nevertheless, the most relevant finding for the group as a whole was that 28 of the 31 women claimed some type of abuse. In addition, of the three who had not been abused, one had used drugs and alcohol to some degree during her teenage years, and the other two had experienced loss of self-esteem from factors other than abuse.

Profiles of the Groups

When divided by their formal educational experiences, the women interviewed formed six distinct groups. These groups were as follows:

The Under-Educated: women with no high school diplomas or GED certificates.
Getting GED Certified: women who obtained GED certificates after entering WCC.

Having High School Equivalency: women with GED certificates or high school diplomas which were obtained before coming to WCC.

College Students: women with some college background but no degrees.

College Graduates: women with some type of college degree including associate, bachelor, or higher degree.

The Non-Abused: women who claimed no abuse and whose educational background included a GED certificate, some college, or a master's degree. For reasons to be discussed in the ensuing chapters, it became apparent during the interview and analysis process that these women must be grouped separately and not according to educational levels attained.

The Under-Educated

The Under-Educated group consisted of five women who were generally the same age, which ranged from the mid-20s to early 30s. Two were incarcerated for violent crimes, including sexual assault and mitigated, deliberate homicide. One of the women had also been arrested for bail jumping, and the other had been designated a persistent, dangerous felony offender. The other three women had been convicted of various non-violent crimes including issuing bad checks,
theft, and forgery. One of these women had violated her probation.

None of the women in this group had either a high school diploma or a GED certificate upon entry at WCC. However, before the interview process was completed, all were involved to some degree in the GED, ABE, and/or treatment programs at the institution. As previously noted, administrative policy at WCC requires that each resident obtain at least a GED certificate, if possible, before leaving the facility. However, intellectual deficiencies or short confinements may preclude this requirement for some.

The members of this group had varied backgrounds. One had been a model, one had been heavily engaged in gang activity, and another had been involved in prostitution. The other two had been more closely associated with their immediate families. However, this did not preclude involvement in deviant behavior or being victims of abuse. All but one had been heavily involved in drugs and/or alcohol at one time or another.

All of the women in this group had encountered most types of abuse, and in two cases the abuse was more pervasive. The other three women had encountered abuse of a somewhat lesser magnitude.
Getting GED Certified

The Getting GED Certified group was made up of those women who had received their GEDs after coming to WCC. The seven women in this group ranged in ages from early 20s to mid-60s. This group included one of the youngest women incarcerated. Two women were serving time for non-violent crimes, including check writing violations and forgery. One of those three was also serving time for a parole violation.

The other five women in this group had been incarcerated for violent offenses, including assault and mitigated, deliberate homicide-related offenses. Two of the women in this category had been convicted of conspiring to kill, or actually being involved in the homicide of a close relative. The other three women had either assaulted, attempted homicide, or committed homicide against non-family members. With four of the seven women in this group being violent offenders, this group was the most violent.

Even though this group of women had their GED certificates at the time of the interviews, they did not have them before coming to WCC. They are included in a group of 12 of 31 women who did not have GEDs or high school diplomas prior to arriving at WCC. This is over one-third of the total number interviewed. In addition, all of this group were at least minimally involved in some ABE or treatment program at the time of the interview process.
This could have resulted either from lack of interest on their part or because not all residents can be enrolled at any given time in one of the programs.

Each woman in this group had encountered some type of abuse, ranging from child abuse to spousal abuse. One woman had reportedly spent time as a child in a satanic cult where abuse and sacrifice had been condoned by her father, who was part of the group and who had coerced his 9-year old daughter into the group. Another woman had been convicted of the homicide of her husband after many years of pervasive psychological, emotional, and mental abuse. The triggering mechanism for this crime was reportedly the husband's threat to kill their grandchildren. These two women indicated severe degrees of physical and sexual abuse at various times before incarceration. Three of the four women in this group who had been involved in violent offenses had directed their assaults and homicides at non-family members. None of their victims had died as a result of their wounds. In one case, there was no physical damage to the victim, and the incarcerated woman had only been charged with conspiracy.

Of the seven individuals in this group, only two admitted limited or no use of drugs and alcohol during their earlier years. The other five had been heavily or continually involved in drugs and alcohol before incarceration. Five of the women were Caucasian and two
were Native American. One woman had been released from WCC and was completing parole requirements at BPRC.

All of the 12 women in the Under-Educated and Getting GED Certified groups had been abused in one way or another. Of these 12 women, 7 had been involved in violent crimes and 5 were non-violent offenders. These two groups represent a majority of the number who did not possess high school diplomas or GED certificates upon entry at WCC. This is more than one-third of the total interviewed. Those women in these two groups reported tolerating more abuse and were involved more often in violent crimes than the rest of the women interviewed. Thus, the less educated women in this study were subjected to more violent and abusive behavior than those who were more educated.

Having High School Equivalency

The women in the Having High School Equivalency group all had their high school diplomas or GED certificates before coming to WCC. This group consisted of five women ranging in age from mid-20s to mid-30s. One of the women had a high school diploma, and four had GED certificates. Three of them were serving time for non-violent offenses and the other two were violent offenders. All five reported having been abused severely at least once in their childhood. Four of the women were Caucasian, the other was Native American.
The non-violent offenders in this group were serving time on various bad check charges, forgery, and theft. All of them admitted the use of drugs and/or alcohol at various times in their lives. These women had all completed their GEDs.

The violent offenders in this group had either high school diplomas or GED certificates. One, a high school graduate, had been convicted of sexual assault and theft. The other had her GED and had been convicted of the mitigated, deliberate homicide of a non-family member.

All five women in this group stated that they had been severely abused. Most of the abuse occurred in childhood, however two reported spousal abuse. One non-violent offender stated that abuse contributed to her living on the streets as a 13-year old heroin addict. The two violent offenders, who were in their early 20s, reported pervasive abuse in childhood. One of these had been physically abused by her father and others from an early age. The other woman had been sexually abused by a slightly older female babysitter at age 8 and had also suffered psychological, emotional, and mental abuse. The other three women had suffered the same type of abuse from parents and step-parents from an early age.

This group is approximately in the middle educational level of the six groups. It is fairly evenly divided between non-violent and violent offenders. However, the
educational level did not diminish with the amount of abuse they were subjected to or the type of crime they committed. Those with GED certificates outnumbered those with high school diplomas four to one. However, the woman with the diploma was one of the violent offenders. All of the women in this group had been involved or were involved in some type of ABE or treatment program at the time of the interviews.

**College Students**

The women in the College Students group had some college but had not graduated with a degree. The seven in this group ranged in age from their late 20s to mid-40s. Three of the seven women had been released to the BPRC and the rest were still at WCC. Two of this group had been convicted of violent crimes and the other five were non-violent offenders.

One of the violent offenders had been convicted of aggravated assault while the other had been sentenced on a charge of mitigated, deliberate homicide. The five non-violent offenders had been convicted of various charges including issuing bad checks, forgery, theft, bail jumping, and use of drugs.

All of the women in this group had from one to three years of college. However, none of them had graduated with any degree. One of the women had departed WCC and BPRC on
parole and at the time of the interviews was working and going to school at a local college. She was the only one who had pursued any type of advanced education on her own after leaving WCC. Three of these women had previously been involved in prostitution, while one of them had also been heavily involved in gang activity. Most of these women were from the western United States with the exception of one who was originally from the southeast United States. Six of the women were Caucasian and one was Native American.

At the time of the interviews, four women were involved in some type of business skills and/or treatment program at WCC or BPRC. One of these women did not have her GED until after coming to WCC and had received her college courses while at WCC when they were available. Some of the women in these groups had been enrolled in various college classes presented at WCC. However, federal regulation removed funding for these courses in the fall of 1992, which materially reduced the education offered at WCC.

All the women in this group claimed that there had been some type of abuse in their lives, usually in childhood. Some indicated sexual abuse; others claimed psychological, emotional, and/or mental abuse. Some of the women indicated that there was also a limited amount of physical abuse. Five of the seven women indicated that they had been involved in drug and/or alcohol use which ranged from limited to very heavy. Two of the seven were drug addicts
at one time and had been involved in the sale and/or manufacture of drugs.

**College Graduates**

The College Graduates group consisted of four women who had some type of college degree. These included both 2-year and 4-year degrees. Two of the women had associate degrees, and two had 4-year degrees. The women in this group ranged in age from the late 20s to the early 50s, with one each in her 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. All of the women in this group were Caucasian.

In this group only one woman had been convicted of a violent offense, which was related to homicide. The remaining three were non-violent offenders, and had been convicted of various crimes including bad checks, forgery, and drug-related charges.

Of the five groups where abuse was reported, this group experienced the least amount of abuse. However, two reported limited abuse, one of which was mostly psychological. The other three had undergone pervasive abuse during childhood and varying degrees of abuse as adults. One of these had encountered somewhat extensive spousal abuse. The other woman had been physically and sexually abused by her minister father. As an adult she became heavily involved in obtaining illicit drugs.
The Non-Abused

The Non-Abused group consisted of three women, ranging in age from mid-30s to early 70s. All of the women in this group were Caucasian. This group included one of the oldest of the women interviewed. Two of these women were serving time for non-violent, check-related offenses while the other was convicted of conspiracy in a homicide related matter involving a close relative. Because they were different from the other women, in that they claimed not to have been abused, they were placed in a separate category.

These three women were fairly well-educated. One had a high school diploma and some additional training in business courses. Another had obtained a GED before coming to WCC and had received college credits while at the institution. The third, who was one of the oldest interviewed as well as the most educated, claimed to have a master's degree, but corrections personnel were never able to verify this.

Even though none of the women in this group claimed any abuse, one indicated some use of drugs and alcohol during her teenage and early adult years. Another woman admitted prolonged use of alcohol but nothing of a habit-forming nature. The third woman claimed little or no use of alcohol before incarceration. Nevertheless, all three women indicated that they had suffered some degree of loss of
self-esteem at various times in their lives brought on by family situations other than abuse.

All three had accessed some type of educational opportunity during their incarceration. Two of them were still involved in this type of activity at the time of the interviews. The third woman was only involved in an occasional treatment program during the interview process. Of all the groups, the women in this group were the best educated.
CHAPTER 5

ABUSE AND THE RESIDENTS

Abuse in one form or another has become increasingly prevalent in U.S. society. Moreover, even though it may appear more pervasive at the lower level of the economic strata, where poverty and poor living conditions exist, no economic level is exempt. The "abuse experiences are shared by many of us and are lived with in a variety of ways" (Briere, 1992, p. x). In family situations where these abusive conditions exist and where stress, psychological problems, and loss of or estrangement from a viable role model are in vogue, abuse may often be physical and/or sexual. However, in other situations abuse may be more verbal, veiled, psychological, or emotional in nature. Additionally, depending upon the situation, there may be a combination of various types of abuse. Nevertheless, whatever the situation, most types of abuse can create negative, even devastating circumstances for the victim. Furthermore, many young people who have been abused "grow to become distressed and symptomatic adolescents and adults" (Briere, 1992, p. xvi).

Abuse appears in many forms. It may be openly violent and physical as well as sexually violent and physical. Both
scenarios may be accompanied by psychological, emotional, and verbal expressions. Furthermore, abuse may appear not only separately as psychological, emotional, or verbal abuse, it may also be a combination of any or all of the general types of abuse. While some abuse is overt, other types may be subdued and often it is longstanding. Depending upon the psychological makeup or capability of the victim, it may be devastating and even life threatening. If the person has been degraded and abused from an early age, little immunity, individual "soundness," or protection may have been built up. Moreover, when medications, alcohol, and/or hard drugs are brought into the situation, the results can be devastating and potentially damaging to development.

Most of the 31 women in this study experienced various types and degrees of abuse. These included (a) mental or psychological abuse, (b) emotional abuse and neglect, (c) verbal abuse, (d) witnessing family violence, (e) spousal abuse, (f) physical abuse, (g) sexual abuse, (h) drug abuse, and (i) substance abuse other than illegal drugs. Such abuses started at ages 8, 9, and 10 and even earlier in some cases. The underlying pattern for all of the women was abuse and/or loss of self-esteem regardless of education or upbringing. The relationships among disaffected or dysfunctional parenting, abusive relationships, drugs and alcohol, and deviant behavior was
strong. Most of the women in this study had been abused in some manner; the abuse was generally perpetrated by an immediate family member. In only 3 of the 31 cases was no abuse reported; however, like the abused women, these 3 "unabused" women also suffered low self-esteem. However, their low self-esteem resulted from causes other than abuse. There were many cases of parenting disaffection which involved inappropriate parenting techniques on the part of one or both parents. Such dysfunction affects not only home life, but it also has carryover effects into school, peer, and personal relationships.

Generally speaking, the women studied could be grouped according to the types of abuse they suffered. However, since so many of the types of abuse overlap, the educational groups are maintained throughout Chapters 4, 5, and 6. There are some major trends as to the specific types of abuse suffered, but many women suffered several types of abuse at the same time or at various times in their lives. The major trends or themes of abuse will therefore be considered in Chapter 7--Summary and Conclusion.

**The Under-Educated**

This group consisted of five women in their early 20s and 30s with no high school diplomas or GED Certificates. They had been convicted of various crimes, including issuing bad checks, bail jumping, assault, and mitigated, deliberate
homicide. Two were Native American, and the other three were Caucasian. One reported no use of drugs and alcohol. All of these women indicated they had been victims of or involved in multiple types of abuse. Two of them had not been sexually abused by a member of the family but had been raped by a non-family member during their teenage years, which would label them as sexually abused. One woman had been sexually abused not only by various members of her immediate family, but also by one or more non-family member.

Parental disaffection may include psychological abuse as well as emotional and verbal abuse. It may be subdued or veiled, or it may be overt and callous. Abbie recalled an illustration of the former:

When I first started my period and everything, I'd ask for money to go to the store to get what I needed and my mom told me, "No." My sister turned around and asked for money to go get her stuff, and my mom gave it to her. But she told me I couldn't have it because I could go upstairs and use old, clean washrags.

On another occasion Abbie said, "There would be times when my mom would hit me for something my sister did and said I'd done it. I'd get my hair pulled, or I'd be heading upstairs and she'd pull me down by my hair."

An illustration of the callousness of abuse may be seen in Abbie's following recollection:

It was more my mother than my father, but he slowly started beating me. I remember one instance when I was 10 years old. I was told to borrow a flashlight from next door. I was taking time to put my shoes on and I wasn't being fast enough so he booted me with his size 10 boot right
up my ass. I ran out the door into the street and went next door crying and brushing the dirt off and everything. The next door neighbor, who was a former cop, came up to my dad, and he [my dad] said, "Well, she'll learn a lesson when I tell her to get going, and I won't have to kick her in the ass to make her go, will I?" I ended up spending the night at the neighbor's house, but my mom and sister got in on the act the next morning by claiming I wasn't doing my chores on time. I ended up being dragged down the stairs and beaten because I hadn't done my sister's chores.

This type of treatment alludes to the double standard treatment of one sibling over the other. Abbie described the following incident, where she was denied the privilege of going out after her other siblings had already left. This was representative of what she had endured during childhood.

I go, "Mom, I'm going. I'm gonna be going at 7 o'clock. Do you need anything done between now and then, before I leave?" She says, "You're not going nowhere. You leave that car parked and get back in the house. Go to your room where you belong." Well, my brother was sitting there. I go, "Mom." She goes, "Do what I told you. Now!"

I went upstairs and I cranked my stereo up. That's the way I can relieve pressure, ya know. Instead of saying things to my mom that I don't want to and that I'll regret in the end. So my brother came up, and he goes, "You're going out at 7 o'clock." I go, "She ain't gonna let me take my car." He goes, "You're going out. You watch." He goes, "When I go back out to the camper give me 10 minutes and you come out." I go, "Yeah, right."

Okay, so I give him 10 minutes and go back. I go, "Mom, can I please go out tonight?" Here I am, 19 years old. My two younger brothers, who were 17 and 15, had already been out, left the house. She said, "No, you're staying in. I told you to stay in here." I thought, "Well, here's my chance." I go, "I'm going whether you like it or not." My brother goes, "Here's the keys. Go on."
Get outa here." Mom goes, "You get back here," and my brother goes, "No, she's going." So I left. I took his car, and he had my keys to my car. I took his car and left.

A single incident such as the one Abbie experienced may be of little or no consequence, unless it continues to occur over a long period of time coupled with verbal abuse such as "telling me that I wasn't going to amount to anything . . . that I was a special ed retard."

By comparison, Anna also recalled damaging verbal remarks from her mother:

I remember what my mom used to call me when I was little. . . . She used to call me a black nigger, but that didn't really bother me because I didn't know what a black man was until I found out my father was black and I was raped by six black guys.

For Abbie it got to the point where she "thought that [she] was the black sheep of the family. They treated me like sh-- (I don't want to swear, I was gonna say shit) but they treated me like dirt and the other kids like high and mighty. It was like I didn't matter." The ramifications for both Abbie and Anna were severe loss of self-esteem, negative attitudes, and developmental dysfunction.

Frequently, parents are abusive because of their own deep-seated psychological problems, which may be exacerbated by their interactions with adult peers. Anna described her relationship with her mother as follows:

My mom was an alcoholic and she was never a mom to me. She used to get angry when she drank. It was almost as if she became another person. When she was sober she was fine, but when she was around
family and friends, and they were really into their drugs and alcohol, and when she was drunk, it was like she was a totally different person.

Abbie implied further that abuse in childhood may lead an individual to abuse his or her own children and/or to become involved in abusive relationships.

My dad used to abuse my mom. My sister and I were talking before I came to prison. She goes, "You know, is it a coincidence that you and I get involved with men that beat on us women? We stick in those relationships because we saw dad and mom do it." We decided that it's the way men show us that they love us.

Ada, on the other hand, imitated her father, someone whom she perceived as being immune to being hurt physically.

Well, my dad thought he was big, bad Joe when he was beating the shit out of me and my mom. Ya know, when he was drinking he had more strength than when he was not drinking. Yeah, and I thought, well, shit, if it's gonna make him that strong when he's drinking nobody can beat me up. Nobody. Come on, try it. I would egg fights on.

Ada's attitude carried over into school. "I would go to class cocky. . . . I was very angry . . . all the time I was going to school."

In addition to simply observing parental/spousal abuse, which can have its own special effects on the observer, the victimizer may have deep psychological resentments or other problems that further reflect on the victim. Ada recalled:

I am the oldest. I am the outcome of a rape that happened to my mother when she was 17. My stepfather married her when I was six months old. I really didn't know any of this until I was 17. But when I was young, he used to tell me I was a bad seed, and there was a lot of resentment. . . . He was a very abusive man. He was also an alcoholic. He beat me as a child. My brothers
were beaten as children. There were beatings beyond beatings and mental abuse and all other types of abuse. This went on not only from my stepfather but from my mother.

The stepfather had an unusual interest in the so-called "bad seed," whom he never adopted. He molested her on her 9th birthday. Ada recalled the abuse:

I took my first drink when I was 9 to escape the sexual abuse that was occurring, and I continued to drink for quite awhile. . . . I knew that was exactly what was on my mind. I thought, "Well, this just happened, and I can't believe it happened." Honestly, I didn't even think about drinking. I didn't know what I was going to do until I went to do the dishes, and the bottle was there. I saw it and it clicked right then. He doesn't remember the shit he does when he drinks. That's the way I learned to hide the pain. I drank for that reason, to escape the abuse. I recall everything. I remember everything.

Ada further recalled two incidents that occurred at about the same time. One dealt with the abuse of her, and the other concerned abuse of her mother.

I was a little girl and I had a little yellow dress. We went for a drive in the mountains with my family and my aunt. I had written with crayon on the back of my dad's car seat so he made me get out of the car and he left. He pulled away. Everybody pulled away and I went running after the car 'cause I thought I was going to be left there, and I skinned up my knees really bad. I felt abandoned, and I have throughout my life.

Regarding the incident involving abuse of her mother, Ada recalled:

I heard fighting one night and I came out of my room. My dad had my mom's head and he was slamming it off of the refrigerator. I remember saying, "Daddy stop, you're hurting Mommy." He stopped, and he picked me up. He said, "It's okay, I love you and Mommy both," and then he sent me back to bed. Then the beatings continued, and
they continued that night. . . . They never stopped, but I knew that the fighting continued. . . .

Regardless of where the abuse was directed, it left long and resounding scars. The sexual abuse continued until Ada was 23. She recalled the last incident was when she passed out at home after a drinking spree and woke up with her stepfather on top of her. Unfortunately, she was too drunk to do anything about what was happening. Her hatred was internalized, and the drinking got worse from not wanting to remember.

Abuse, especially physical abuse, often has more immediate effects. Anna recalled:

I can't remember exactly what happened, but I do remember the first incident being at the age of four. It went on from there. The physical abuse was beating me up, pulling my hair, punching me, breaking my bones, and sending me to the hospital. I remember hiding in the closet. I was so scared. I didn't want to be found because I heard my mom screaming and calling me names. I was in there for a long time. I was so scared I peed my pants. I was crying, but I didn't want them to hear me. Finally, my mom found me, and she pulled me out of the closet. She started beating me, and punching me like I was a grown adult. I recall being so sad because she didn't really care about me. That's just my mom.

There are times when abuse has more long-lasting psychological, emotional, and/or mental effects, which can affect the victim's relationships with others. Agnes recalled how it affected her:

I had five older brothers and I got treated as a baby. But there was a lot of abuse from my brothers and my mom and my dad. In my relationship with my brothers when I was young, I
looked up to them. I'd always go out and play ball with them. But because of the sexual abuse from my stepfather, it got to where I didn't want my brothers to touch me. I was getting older and I was beginning to comprehend what had really happened to me.

Later, after her self-esteem had dwindled to a very low point, Agnes "went into prostitution thinking maybe I would feel better about myself and maybe get rid of the pain. It was like I was starting to feel like somebody, you know, a person again. The men were coming back, so there must have been something there."

Agnes ended up in several relationships with abusive men. After being severely abused and hospitalized, she began to feel that, by practicing prostitution, she:

Was getting revenge on men thinking that every time I took their money I was getting even with them for what they had done to me. They abused me, took my dignity, so I'm taking their money. . . . I thought that, and I still do to this day because of what my stepdad did to me. I've had a grudge against men for what he did to me.

Ada's response, on the other hand, was less physical and more psychological:

I hated men. I hated men so bad that I would use them. I would get involved with them, and I would make them fall in love with me. I mean, head over heels in love with me, and a week later I would just leave him. As soon as I heard him say, "I love you, please marry me," I was gone. Just so I could hurt that man like I had been hurt, and that was horrible. I look back at it sometimes and think, "God damn," but I can't change the past.

Allie, who was possibly the most severely abused of the group, recalls how she struck back:
I came to WCC for what they call sexual assault. I was the first woman in the State of Montana to be sentenced on such a charge. I had a fall partner [the person arrested with her], and my crime was a man raped my little boy when he was a little over 2 years. Being a victim of sexual abuse myself, I severely beat the man. My fall partner was also a victim of sexual abuse when he was younger, and he shoved a broom stick down his [the rapist's] butt and told the guy that that's how it felt [for] a small child being raped and if he knew what was good for him he'd crawl home and die.

During the time, I was on a lot of heroine. I was drinking a lot, and I wasn't necessarily beating the man for being the sort of person he was. I was beating him and all the abusers in my life.

My adopted father, two of my uncles, and one of my brothers, who were not only sexually abusive but emotionally and physically abusive towards me because of my nationality and because probably, as my mom says now, I was probably the prettiest one of all my sisters . . . and they felt they were teaching me to be a lady [by making me do what they thought women should do--have sex].

Allie was abandoned by her adoptive father because he did not want anything to do with her "after he had abused me." He subsequently sent her away, as she was "the problem child." As she recalled, "I was the one that rebelled all the time, and I was the one that got the beatings for the things my sisters did. I was the one that took all the crap."

Allie ran away from her mom and her adopted father and "was practically raised by the Hell's Angels," because her real father and brothers were affiliated with this group. "I had some self-value living in a gang." It also meant that "I turned to a lot of drugs and a lot of alcohol to
hide what I was feeling." The drugs and alcohol were "accessed for me at any time by my brothers." She admitted to being a "full blown alcoholic and drug addict by the time I was 12." She "started at 9 years old breaking into liquor cabinets and stealing liquor." Allie justified her behavior:

It was my way of escaping. It was my way of hiding it. It was my way of numbing myself. As I grew up in that family environment, I learned that I couldn't have feelings. I wasn't allowed to feel. I wasn't allowed to cry. I was just a shell of a person walking around. A shell of a small person walking around. I was beat if I cried. I was beat if I laughed. I was beat if I joined in playing with my sisters or something.

In addition to being furnished alcohol and drugs by her brothers, her real father, who was not known to her at that time, "became a friend [and] a drinking partner." Allie recalled "his reasoning for not telling me at that point in time was because I was drinking, I was doping, he was drinking, and he was doping with me. He had seen the violent behavior I had, and the outlook on life that I had." Evidently he felt it best not to approach the subject.

Allie carried the abuse and drug use around for years, even until the time of her crime. This is a form of displaced anger which can have both short- and long-term effects. Regarding the short-term effects of the incident for which she was arrested, Allie recalled:

When I was beating the man in my crime, I was seeing the faces of one of my brothers who is dead now, my adopted father, and two of my uncles that had raped me and molested me when I was a younger
person. I wasn't seeing his face, but I was feeling him and knowing all of his violence and that was my way of handling it.

At the time of her interviews, Allie was able to reflect on those years of abuse:

Both my uncles were half-Indian, and my brother was full-blooded. He died in July of '90 of leukemia and he was involved in my abuse. When I was 17, he and four other guys raped me. But as I look at it now with my brother--the many years that I suffered from his abuse and from everybody else's abuse--most of the ones that were responsible are dead now. Those who abused me, the Great Spirit made them pay by their suffering, with their pain, with their leukemia, and with the way that they died. They were made to suffer with that pain, for the pain that they inflicted on me in my life. That was my way of forgiving it and forgetting it and coping with it.

Another form of justification relating to the long-term effects of abuse pertains to another woman in this group, Anna, who suffered years of abuse at the hands of her mother. However, the burden of her crime may offset any justification, veiled or otherwise. Anna recalled the culminating incident, when she believed her mother was abusing her granddaughter, Anna's child.

When I did it, I was high and I was drunk, okay. But my daughter was in the care of my mother, and I came home and heard, you know, how like if a baby cries normally? My daughter was not crying normally. It was almost as if she [my mother] was beating the shit out of her [my daughter] 'cause she was crying so hard. I guess she was crying for too long. My mom was in the house with a bunch of people, and they were just partying away.

My first thought was when I got there was she was beating her up. She was doing something physical to her like she did with me. So that's what my first thought was and I didn't care about my mom. I didn't care about anything else. I
just . . . didn't want my daughter to grow up in
that because I did, and it's a cycle that somebody
was telling me about. It goes from generation to
the next. It just carries on.

I thought, "Well, it ain't gonna carry on
anymore 'cause I'm gonna stop this." Ya know, I
know how it feels, and it hurts. I do not want to
have my mom do that to my own daughter 'cause I
know, just know it. It's just, it's not the thing
to beat up my own child like my mother did to me.
I just snapped and I know I did kill my mom. It's
like nothing in this world can ever hurt me again
the way I hurt my ownself.

Getting GED Certified

This group consisted of seven women who did not have
high school diplomas or GED certificates before entering
WCC, but who had obtained GEDs after coming to the
corrections center. The patterns of abuse encompassed
psychological, emotional, and mental abuse, as well as
physical and sexual abuse. The number of women in this
group who had committed nonviolent crimes totalled three.
All were Caucasian and in their 20s. Members of this group
also abused drugs and alcohol, and it is possible that
substance abuse may have influenced their assaultive
behavior.

The four women in this group who had been convicted of
violent crimes had all suffered from extreme psychological,
emotional, and mental abuse or from physical and sexual
abuse. Two were Native American and two were Caucasian.
Two were in their 20s; one was in her mid-40s; and one was
in her mid-60s. One of these women had been transferred to the BPRC from WCC.

Babs reported no history of drug or alcohol use by her or her parents. However, she had been brought up in a very restrictive family environment where religious overtones played a significant part in everyday life. She was the daughter of a minister whose religion prohibited any diversity from the religious beliefs. Her recollection was that their religion "was very strict. . . . You couldn't wear jewelry or any sort of makeup . . . and you couldn't go to the movies." This lifestyle was different than that of many of her peers. Babs describes her home life as follows:

Being a pastor's daughter, I didn't use swear words. My parents weren't drug abusers or alcoholics, and both my parents were together. These are things that the kids I associated with didn't have. Most of them came from single parent homes, alcoholics, and drugs. The older I got and the more things I wanted to do, the more things I wasn't allowed to do.

At the other extreme of the drug and alcohol issue, two of the women recalled totally different early environments, evolving from similar lifestyles to the friends and parents of Babs's peers. Bea, whose stepfather was "heavily into alcohol, lived with my mother for 20 years even though they hated each other . . . money kept them together." She described her mother as a "prescription person, not an addict." Bea reflected on her home life:

Oh yeah, there was alcohol and medication in the home as I was growing up. If me and my sister had cramps my mom would say, "Take a shot of whiskey,
ya know, it will help your cramps." There was mornings me and my sister were drinking whiskey before school because we had cramps, and it was just an excuse. Then there was times we'd start drinking whiskey because it felt good to go to school. I mean, after we got the permission to use whiskey for cramps, its "Take a codeine with it. That'll really help you," and so next thing you know, my sister gets into pills. I didn't get into pills till after I experienced the Valium. Then after that I'm turning my mom's carousel looking to see what's narcotic and what's not.

Bess's home life was even more disjointed. It came from both her father and her stepmother; she had never known her real mother before her incarceration. She described her early relationship with her father as follows:

First thing that comes to mind would be swimming with my grandpa. I was about eight, almost eight and that's when I start remembering a little bit more . . . because there's things I didn't want to remember, and there's things that don't want me to remember. My dad and his group of people . . . it was bad stuff. My father was involved in a satanic organization, and he took me in when I was a child. It went on until I was 13, when I left. As far as we can figure out, it started like when I was six and half, seven. See, I was living with my grandparents, and my father would start coming to get me. He'd come for like the weekends. Then he got married, and that's when he took me.

For Bess, her stepmother's brand of abuse may have been just as toxic as her father's:

She was jealous. We went to knives a couple of times. We'd grab whatever was there and a couple of times there were knives there. I've got a few scars from that one. She also had a problem with girls. She didn't want us. I thought she was jealous of me. She had a boy by my dad, and I thought, "Well, I was right." Then she had a girl, and then it started that I'd have to hide her, too. We had a bathroom that locked, and we could get in there and lock the door.
These three women came from different backgrounds, not only financially but philosophically as well. Even though it appears there was structure and care in Babs' early life, it was offset by the strict religious overtones interspersed with "mental and a lot of verbal abuse." For her, this type of treatment:

Manifested itself into the point where, when I was probably 10, I started watching kids, you know, out playing late at night and that kind of thing. I got into the habit of sneaking out of the house, about 12, when everybody would be asleep and I'd go run around with these kids to fit in and do what they did. In fact, I even got drunk once. My goodness, I did. That was bad.

Thus, in essence, the disaffection was there, due in part to Babs's desire to explore things her friends were examining and in part because she was denied a sense of investigation by her restrictive, religious parents. However, she added another facet to her relationship with her parents.

There was five of us kids, and my parents never had time for me. There was a real big lack of attention. I thought they loved me, but I needed attention. It was a form of abuse, and it bothers me to this day. It also manifested itself into flirtatious behavior because the beatings I got at home were negative attention. I sought positive attention and making people happy other ways. They were not always good ways.

Of course, my being female, my ways of pleasing people was towards males. I became flirtatious, and then promiscuous at an early age, with men, not boys, because I always looked a lot older than I was. A 20-year old next door neighbor who I was always visiting with my brother, doing chores, thought I was 17. He asked if he could take me out, which was not approved, but we found ways of messing around anyway. Nothing sexual but it came pretty close. Anyway, I got positive approval from that, and when I
realized he liked the pleasing part [kissing, etc.], I continued to find ways to please people. I was married at 14 because I felt I could get the things I wanted if I got away from the restrictive, religious parents. Then my marriage went haywire, and I ended up here.

Bea found the necessary elements of life, such as love, missing from her home environment:

I was screaming for help when I started drugs. I was screaming for help. I wanted somebody to help me. I wanted somebody to tell me different things. I wanted love. I wanted true love. I never knew that.

Oh, I was definitely crying for help a lot of the times, but the problem was that I never got the direct care and help that I needed from the people that I was trying to get it from. I think as a kid, nurturing was missing. I don't believe I was nurtured. I really believe I missed that. I think I just craved; I always craved. For some reason I was starved for cuddling, and I was starved for praise, and I was starved for love. I think the only thing that I could even come close to trying to describe is that I was trying to be two different people. I was two different people. I have this image that everybody on the outside would see me as. You got your shit together and ya know, a good person, etc., etc. but on the inside I was worthless to myself. I was crud. I had nothing. I think that if I go way back, I could say that I had that pounded in my head--that I was always a bad girl, from a child on. Bad girl, ya know, naughty, bad girl. That message is, ya know, I owned up to every bit of that, and I'm sitting here today still owning up to being the bad girl.

For Bea, this atmosphere created a lack of "self-respect, self-worth" and a loss of self-esteem. "I wanted to be somebody I wasn't. I had to have low self-esteem because I didn't like myself." Bea was the victim of a kidnap-rape at age 16 which also involved a great deal of
other physical abuse. The rape, coupled with her home environment, was the final trauma that led her to "become a real chronic drug addict" because she did not want to deal with the problem of "feeling dirty, ashamed, guilty, and responsible."

Similarly, drugs offered Bess a form of escape:

I didn't think about the past. I just made sure I was either taking drugs or staying real busy. Lots of things and feelings and stuff got blocked out with the drugs. I wouldn't let them in. The drugs really blocked out feelings and built up a tolerance to forget about anything. I became withdrawn and mean. I could blow up if things got real bad. I had more of a tendency to be angry from not understanding. The only thing I can think of was I got a grudge against people. It made me not trust them. I want to stay away from them. People are bad. It seems like they're always out to get you. One way or another they want something or they wouldn't talk to you. I didn't want to deal with the past. I wanted to keep everything numb so I drank and used drugs. Those two things were the two major reasons for my being here.

Beth remembered what it was like being sexually abused by her father.

It started when I was about 9 years old. My dad would touch me and stuff and I would scream for my mom. My mom would say, "What's going on?" Dad would say, "Nothing," that he was just tickling me and stuff. He would tell me because he knew that my mom was everything in the world to me, that if I told anybody I would never see my mom again.

I didn't tell anyone until I was 12 years old, when I told my sister. On that occasion I was laying on my bed. My dad came in there and told me to go to his room which was downstairs, across from mine. I kept telling him no because I knew what he was going to do. Finally, he came out and told me that my mom was at a neighbors house and that there was no one here to help me. I began crying harder, and he took me by the arm
and walked me into his room. To this day, I don't remember what happened. Then I told my sister when she came home, and she called for my mom.

As a result, my mom took a knife and tried to kill my dad. I can still remember him on his knees and her standing over him. After that I kept to myself. I was really shy. I went to school, and I came home. I shut out everything and tried to keep away from my dad and everybody else because I thought if he's doing this maybe somebody else would do it. I went into counselling from then until I was 16. That isolation went on until I was about 13 or 14. Then I started coming out and stuff.

Beth gradually transferred this isolation to aggressive behavior. It began by "bluffing everybody but my counsellor, and I blocked the abuse for many years. Then I started really being mean [and] after that I started wanting to fight." Then "I fought for so many years that nobody would fight me anymore." At that point "I just got bored with it, [and] I turned to stealing because it was funner. . . . I stole just to see if I could get away with it." Beth further admits that the fighting "was a control thing over the one I was fighting . . . a high because they were begging me to stop as I had to beg my dad to stop when he had control over me."

Becky, the middle-aged woman in this group, saw physical abuse in childhood manifest itself into assaultive behavior and alcohol abuse when she became an adult. There were several occasions when she was beaten or severely whipped as a child for things she did not do. She recalled one such occasion in this manner:
I got a real bad whipping when I wasn't the one that had done it, yet I got the blame for it. I had welts all over my body. My sister and my cousin stole the money from my mom. I was around 10. I was really mad, and I was gonna get even with both of them. I couldn't sit down or anything because of the welts that were made from the thick, wide belt my mom used.

Becky attributed her bad temper to a similar incident. "I saw my sister throw things when she got mad." In addition, "when I was young I had to cook, and I got mad. I just didn't want to cook." She further admits that "alcohol was in my family" and one of "my brothers killed himself and that was alcohol related." Furthermore, she stated that she "liked the taste of [beer]. The more I tasted the more I wanted." Then came "the fights. I liked to watch fights." Then "I learned how to drink and fight." What "affected my incarceration was my temper and my drinking 'cause when I was drinking I'd get mad if things weren't going my way."

In conclusion, Becky stated that when she committed her crime she had been drinking and she got mad because people were intruding on her privacy.

Betty, who had been convicted of a violent crime, stated that she distinctly remembers the sexual abuse occurring at "about [age] 9 or 10," but she recalls other incidents "at a very young age." Through therapy, she "pinpointed the age at about 4." Betty recalled a series of incidents that illustrated the toxicity of the physical and sexual abuse in her family.
I recall one incident where I must've been about three 'cause we hadn't been living in our new house for very long. My father came home very drunk, and my mother took me. I was the youngest one, and I think she was pregnant with my brother. She took me and ran outside. She turned around and came back and pushed me inside the door. My father was in the driveway. He grabbed her around the throat and banged her head into the garage door, ya know, repeatedly.

One night I'm sitting next to my older sister, and he picked up our coffee table and threw it at her. It went over her head and out our picture window onto the lawn. I felt--frozen seems like the word to me. Probably coldness and fear, immobility.

The abuse was all happening at the same time, and it's been like a cycle. It started with my older sister that he had sexually abused. He went down the line to my other sister and me and after me I don't know, I have a younger sister and brother. I know that through the cycle, it wasn't only him doing the abuse. My sisters began abusing each other and me and the other siblings. It went all the way down the line in that cycle.

In addition to the incidents of abuse, Betty recalled the effects it had on her:

It was all a big chain, ya know what I mean? The abuse created all these negative things and all these bad attitudes and habits and coping mechanisms. I grew really hard and cold. Every piece of pain would turn into anger. I stuffed it all, and I built it all up. That gave me an excuse to drink.

As time went on, my new sense of the alcohol and drugs became increasingly worse. As that progressed, my anger would come out when I drank, and I started being really aggressive. I'd pick fights, and I was still verbally assaulted, and more and more violent increasingly. It all goes back to the abuse which created all those emotions and feelings and the mechanisms to survive that.
Betty is aware that her father "was sexually and physically abused as a child" and it most likely had some effect on his actions during her childhood.

Besides being angry over the abuse, Betty was almost as resentful about her mother's way of looking at and handling the abuse.

My mother called it children experimenting. I call it "you only know what you're taught." There is a lot of twisted religious beliefs, too. My mother belongs to a religious cult. She's fanatic about it. She hides behind it, and that is her protection. I think that she converted to her religion after I was born, and I think that was when a lot of the abuse escalated. I think that she went into that for a cover, as a protection. That has always been her excuse.

If she didn't want to see something, she hides behind that. If she doesn't know how to handle something, she reads her Bible. She lives her religion. They are the only people she associates with. She goes to church three or four times a week. She preaches to people all during the week. She lives her church. My perception of it is that everything she does, everything that comes out of her mouth, has to do with the church. Everything. Instead of really looking at what's happened to her kids and what's going on in her family, all she would look at was her church. Neglected, I felt very neglected.

There were other feelings and presumptions that Betty related. "I think that if I was brought up in a more structured, accepting, warmer home I probably would have grown up with a higher self-esteem, a lot more self-worth, confidence, and a whole different set of values." Instead, "I drank because my reality was too ugly to accept." The drinking and aggressive behavior got worse, especially after her sister died from a drug-related incident. She recalled
this incident as being "the point in my life where I stopped
giving a shit." From then to "the period of time leading up
to my crime, we were using or drinking every single day."

Billie, who was the oldest in this group, grew up in an
environment which was reasonably free of abuse except for
some veiled traces of psychological abuse concerning her
parents' view of the traditional woman's role in relation to
the man's. This related to the man being the head of the
household. It was the woman's role to work in the house and
to have the man's meals ready after a day's work. During
the days when America was more rural, it took both marriage
partners to keep the household going. However, as more and
more households required two incomes, many men in various
geographic areas may not have felt comfortable in allowing
their wives to enter the work place or become independent of
them. This seems to have a particular bearing on Billie,
whose turmoil began after her first marriage ended. She
recalled that "when I got married again, that was it for
good. That was it. I was never going to get another
divorce. I was the first one in my family to get a divorce"
and since that was extremely painful, "I said, 'I'd never do
it again.' It was like the old saying, 'You made your bed,
you lie in it.'" Being brought up with this traditional set
of values had costly consequences for Billie. The verbal
abuse began "from the time that we got married." He began
saying that:
Because I hadn't finished high school, I couldn't do anything. I was too dumb to get through high school, so therefore you don't know how to do anything. You haven't got the brain power to do it with. He kept telling me that all the way through, and after awhile I began to believe it.

In addition, "he systematically got rid of my friends [and] didn't want me around my family, as we moved constantly."

Even Billie's attempts to continue school and work at menial jobs were met with opposition. "I wanted to go to a kind of business trade school, and he said I wasn't smart enough. What really got me is I believed it, and I didn't go."

Another even more excruciating incident in a long series illustrated her husband's jealousy and opposition to her friends. Billie had finally obtained a minimum wage job as a part-time clerk in a store.

I had lived in that neighborhood all my life so I had a lot of friends, both men and women. He would embarrass me and make me ashamed, and that's the way he had of getting rid of them because he wanted me to stay home. There was one incident I remember in particular. One of my friends from high school was having a birthday party for her 2 year old daughter. I left early from work as the sister of my former husband had offered me a ride to the party as it was better than the bus. My husband came to the store and raised all kinds of a fuss about me not being there. He had said that I had gone to see my boyfriend.

On the way to the party, I had to stop at my house, and as we arrived, my husband was standing at the bus stop waiting for me since I was only allowed to go from home to work by the bus. At that point I asked to be dropped off there. My husband got out of the car and accused me of not working and screwing around. He got pretty nasty. He pulled up my dress to see if I had my pants off. I was embarrassed, ashamed, and degraded. It was bad. However I was so conditioned to his humiliating me by this time that I just took it in
stride. But I was so ashamed I never saw any of those friends again. Shortly thereafter we moved out of state, away from my family.

Billie further recalled that she never "tried for a job like that again, [and] I remember him telling me that the only thing I was good for was to cook a meal so I went in and cooked." It got so bad that "I didn't have any feelings" after so many years of abuse. It got to the point that "I was so unsure of myself that if somebody came to the door that I didn't know real well I wouldn't answer it. I wasn't afraid of them, just more uncertain that I couldn't talk to anybody on an intelligent level."

Billie also suffered physical abuse, as did her sons. She recalled one continuing episode concerning herself. "He would come up from behind me and reach around and grab my breasts and twist them." That hurt, but it did not matter because "that's one of the times he used to say he could do anything with me because he owned me." A similar series of incidents concerned their two boys.

He was always coming up from behind them and hitting them on the back of the head. He'd just laugh about it. He'd think it was funny and if I said anything to him about hitting them, he'd do it a little more.

We got so we didn't show our feelings. It was almost like we had two different lives--one when he was away from the house. We could laugh and play. When he was there everybody was quiet. Even the kids were quiet even when they were small. It was such a relief to come home and have an empty house, thinking I could do whatever I wanted to for a little while. It was better when he was gone.
Billie may have been able to withstand some of the abuse aimed at her, but:

If there hadn't been abuse for many, many years to myself and to my boys and my grandson, I probably wouldn't have thought that he meant it when he said he was going to kill them. 'cause when he said it to me other times I guess the first few times I couldn't believe he meant it, whether he did or not I don't know. Then in the last couple years I did think he meant it, but I had gotten to the point where I didn't care. In fact, that one time he was pointing the gun at me when I woke up, I would have liked him to shoot me. I wanted to get it over with, and I remember even thinking at the time when he left the room after I told him to go ahead, I didn't want him to leave. I wanted him to go ahead and do it. I was tired of the whole thing. I know that day I got the sleeping pills out and looked at them again and thought, "Well, I can go another day without them."

Then it got a little better. But the only way I can explain that is by turning on him. I haven't really even put this into words before because it seemed like it was all over. It was something I couldn't--I didn't--have control over. I guess you'd call it instinct. If you saw your son out in the middle of the road and a car coming, you'd get him out. That's the only comparison I have.

That's why he got shot. The last thing I remember him saying was that after he killed me he was going out and kill the kids. But he had threatened me enough that I was used to it. I was just trying to get away until he said that he was going to kill the kids. I don't remember anything after he said that until I woke up out in the hall. If he hadn't threatened the kids, I think I would have just kept going out the door.

Having High School Equivalency

This group consisted of five women. These five women ranged in age from early 20s to mid-30s. One was Native American and the rest were Caucasian. Two of the women had
been convicted of violent crimes and the other three had been sentenced on non-violent charges. Of the two violent convictions, one woman had been incarcerated on sexual assault and the other had been sentenced for deliberate, mitigated homicide. All of the women in this group had been subjected to some form of general abuse, and all of them had been involved in some form of addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.

Cathy recalled that she was raised in a generally healthy environment by her grandparents, "since [her] mom and dad were sent to prison when [she] was three years old." However, during the years of growing up, she did witness a considerable amount of parental dysfunction when she was with her parents. On one occasion, during the interview process, Cathy recalled that she had always held a great deal of resentment toward her mother because:

She left us in a park when I was 4 years old and my brother was 5. My little sister was 3. This was right after she had gone to prison, and she got out in about a year and a half. I know now that I am an adult that she was running from the law then. I can remember being left in the park, and it started to thunder and rain and stuff. My brother put us under the merry-go-round. We were left in the park all day long. Eventually, this lady who lived across the street from the park rescued us and took care of us for 2 days. Then my grandpa read an ad in the local newspaper about us kids and came to pick us up. That was when my grandparents got full custody of me.

This form of abandonment may also have long-term results, as depicted by Cathy's recollections about her feelings later on in life.
You know, leaving us in the park, I've never forgotten that. I've never blocked that out. I've continued to see all the time I was growing up until I was about 18 years old. I had always been afraid of somebody fighting 'cause of when we were left in that park, but I didn't trust her all those years of growing up. I didn't want to have anything to do with her and when I would go stay with her I was always worried and anxious. Just the park incident. That was it. I think I was old enough at that time to realize that she left us there.

I didn't go visit her for a long time. She would come to my grandparents' and visit us and my grandparents didn't trust her, either. For a long time they wouldn't let us go with her. Then my grandfather helped her get that house four blocks away from us, and she had lived in an apartment downtown. They helped her get that house, and my grandfather was helping her buy groceries every week and everything. I'd see her take the money that Grandpa was giving her and go buy beer and wine and stuff like that. I didn't go and stay with her, and I didn't trust her at all.

Cathy grew up with an alcoholic mother and a drug addicted father and stepmother. There were visits back and forth between parents and grandparents, even though she lived primarily with her mother's parents. On occasion these parental visits were traumatic.

Well, I'll tell you the first time I witnessed drug abuse, and that was when I was 8 years old. I was at my grandparents'. My dad would come see us all the time at my grandparents' house, and I walked into the bathroom one day and my dad laying in the bathtub. He had blood all over him and now I know what was going on. He had a needle sticking out of his arm. It scared me so I ran out into the living room and my grandma was sitting out there on the couch. I was crying and I was saying, "Dad." I thought he was dying. I thought he was dead or something. She went running in there, but I was really scared. The blood scared me. It just looked like he was dead to me. Intravenous drug users use this trick when their veins start collapsing. They sit in hot
water and their veins will pop back out. I learned that when I was a very young user.

"I learned to be a drug user at a very young age [as] my dad was still my favorite person and I couldn't see no wrong in what he did." Cathy later recalled what happened when her dad and stepmother would come for visits.

We would all do drugs together . . . a family thing. [We] would sit around the kitchen table with my dad, his brothers, and her brothers and uncles. I mean, there would be a bunch of them. The thing that really bothered me about my dad was he didn't have any veins, and he would always want me to help him shoot up 'cause that was the only way he could get the needle into his veins.

There were other types of trauma for Cathy as well. Her mother lived with an aunt, and there were other disturbing occurrences:

They would always have a bunch of guys around and she would say things like, "These are my daughters. Aren't they pretty." These guys would want us to sit on their laps, and I would go upstairs and hide because I was scared. My sister would stay with my mother while she drank and partied. That's when she [my sister] got sexually abused.

Cathy married for the first time at age 15, and that union ended in divorce. Her second husband physically abused her, and she suffered post-traumatic stress as a result of his beatings. Following her failed marriages, Cathy turned to alcohol. Regarding her alcoholism, she recalled:

You get numb after awhile. You can't feel nothing after awhile, and when you get to that point, like I said, the only thing that I could feel for years was anger. I couldn't feel love. I couldn't feel, you know; there is a lot of feelings that I
couldn't feel. I couldn't feel love. I couldn't feel sentiment. I couldn't feel real, real, true happiness.

In conclusion, she stated that "alcohol was the source of all my woes, and all my problems have been the result of alcoholism."

For Cammy abuse was more covert, as no physical abuse was apparent. However, the psychological abuse she suffered was possibly as damaging as physical abuse, since it concerned a basic Maslovian survival need--the need for food.

I was put in rooms with the door shut and told to go to bed. I would cry for hours. I can remember crying for hours. Being locked in a room. Going to bed without dinner. You know, I can remember eating macaroni and hot dogs. I hated so much macaroni and cheese and hot dogs. I hate 'em. I hate 'em. I hate 'em. I don't even make my kids eat macaroni and cheese. I mean, I don't buy it. I don't. That's from my childhood. My mom eating it 5 days a week, all the time. I just grew up on junk food. She'd give us food stamps and say, "Here, go buy yourself a burrito at 7-Eleven." Ya know, things like that. I hated it but I was happy to eat, ya know; I didn't care. I was also beat from 4 to 5 years old and slapped all the time.

When abuse is carried out by a disaffected parent, it has many ramifications. It can carry over not only into the daily life of the victim but also into the way she perceived school life and other institutions (e.g., the welfare system). Cammy described this type of abuse as follows:

I left home because I was being beat and my mother never let me go to school. She didn't care. She was always bringing men home and, you know, telling them she was babysitting us when we were her children. Things like that, you know. That
hurts a child. I mean, it gets to the point where you're tired of the abuse. You're tired of everything. She'd drink all the time, constantly drink, did drugs. She would come home at like four in the morning, and I would be asleep in the bed. I would go to school just to get away from her. She would just start hitting us. We got hit the most. She was drunk and she didn't want kids.

We were her only means of support. She got welfare for us so she had to keep us around. I remember her saying that to me, "The only reason I have you is for a welfare check. The only reason you're here." It hurts. I mean, it's hard to explain. Now I'm older and I hate her. You know, I hate her. But at that time, it was like, "You don't love me and you don't even care. You don't care if I scrape my knee. You don't care if I fall. You don't care if my arm is broke." She didn't care. Clean the house; do this; do that. We were just like her little maids. You know, anything she said we did because we didn't want to get hit. I mean, she didn't just hit us with a fist; she hit us with boards.

I didn't think I was good enough to be anyone's friend because that's how my mom made us feel. We were no good; we were shit; we weren't anything. "You're just a burden on me." She didn't have time for us whatsoever. I don't care what it was. I can remember going downtown in the car to take us to the welfare and her just knocking the piss out of us in the car 'cause me and my sister would be laughing and she'd [my mom] want it to be silent 'cause she had a hangover. We'd go in the welfare and our lips would be busted or something, and she'd say, "You tell them you fell down." Things like that and of course we told 'em. We didn't want it to happen again. I mean, there's many times me and my sister wanted to just go to the welfare and tell 'em she's beating us. But welfare wasn't like it is today. We didn't want to get our Mom in trouble 'cause she's our Mom.

However, when Cammy's mother wasn't inappropriately "correcting" her children, she was rarely around.

She would take off with men that she'd just met. She'd claim she was head over heels in love with them. She'd bring them home and sleep with them.
and we had to listen and that hurt. It degraded her. She doesn't know what love is. She was selling her ass because she always wanted what she wanted (material things) and she got them through these men.

Furthermore, Cammy's mother left her in the care of her 12 and 14 year-old sisters for months at a time.

I went through puberty and having periods without my mom even being there. My sisters told me and showed me what it was. I learned that all on my own. I felt I didn't have a mom. I felt hated by her, like she didn't like me. There were times I wished I was dead. I hated myself. I thought I was a bad person.

In the midst of all this rejection and mistreatment, Cammy knew what she needed. "I just wanted a mom. I wanted someone that I could walk in and talk to and say, 'I love you, Mom,' and her say, 'I love you' back."

Finally, from approximately 10 to 13 years of age, Cammy left home and lived on the streets, until she went to live with her natural father. While she was on the streets:

I never used that much, but I bought drugs. I sold drugs. I did what I had to do to survive. I lived out of garbage bags and trash cans. No matter what happens, nothing can be as bad as being on the street. I was lonely. I was scared and frightened, but the one thing I didn't do was sell myself like my mom did. It's a big world out there and don't think for one minute you can't be the one lying in the gutter because you can.

Parental dysfunction and psychological abuse had similar results for Candy--she ran away from home. However, she turned to using drugs. "By the age of 13 I was a heroine addict because of her [my mom]. It made me feel good. I wasn't that dumb, stupid, awkward, self-conscious
kid anymore." Furthermore, "I got away from situations by running and drugs. Running with those people. I felt better about myself. Of course, I was high all the time but it took the pressure and pain away."

In addition, Candy recalled something of her earlier childhood, related to more personal issues that were never addressed at home, and which impacted her path to using drugs:

I don't remember any physical or sexual abuse, but there were just situations of criticism and confusion. I didn't get much encouragement like, "You're a good kid." Nothing was ever talked about in my house. My mom never talked about drugs. She never talked about sex. She never talked about menstruation and all those things that happen to you. So I went and learned on my own, I guess you could say. The biggest thing I didn't have was a parent's time. She never went to school plays, little kid things. She didn't have time.

Candy recalled that, because of the psychological and emotional abuse, she was self-conscious and awkward as a child and explained what effect that had on her.

I always hurt myself when I was a kid. I broke almost every bone and had stitches. I don't know, I was just clumsy or something. She [my mom] was always mad at me about that, too, 'cause she'd have to come off work to get me from school if I hurt myself at school or something when I was little. I didn't do it intentionally, but I was an awful clumsy kid. I felt really awkward as a kid, very awkward, very awkward. I can visualize this when I was probably 6. I had a perm and no front teeth. I remember people would laugh at that picture. I just felt like an awkward kid.

As a result, Candy grew up fast, and she ran away because she thought, "I'm pretty big for my britches and I'm
going to go and see what life is about. I really never gave much thought to anything else. I just wanted to run. I never have been back home." She lived on the streets, she was in and out of juvenile halls and girls' schools, and she was in and out of jail. "I became a drug addict 'cause that's what I wanted to be, but that's hard work. You've got to hustle the drugs. You've got to work to hustle the money. You've got to hide." However, a time came when she "would get what I needed to get, no matter what, and I did it." This attitude has had a long-term effect; even today "I don't see the joy in life. I don't."

For the two violent offenders in this group, the abuse was more physical. Carrie, who was psychologically and verbally abused at home, was also sexually abused by a female babysitter. Moreover, the psychological abuse was two-pronged; it was administered first by her mother and later by her stepmother. Carrie provided some background concerning the abuse that ran in her family:

Both my parents inherited it. Even on my dad's side, my great-grandfather was an alcoholic, and he used to beat my great-grandma. It goes back a long way in my family. Both sides.

She described the relationship with her mother as it eventually developed:

My mom's a very serious alcoholic. If she gave me a drink I'd shut up, so I got my drink. I used to drink with my mom from the age 13 on. Up until the day before I went to jail I was drinking with my mom. We sat down that night and drank almost a whole fifth of alcohol.
Since Carrie saw her mother drinking, it may have influenced her to drink as well. Further, she recalled how her mother blamed her for all of her marital problems:

When my parents got divorced is when it started 'cause that was when my mom started drinking. My mom started, "Well, someday you kids will know how much you've hurt me." Her thing was that I was born. I was the baby that was supposed to bring the family all back together and make everything happy because they were close to a divorce when my mom decided to have me. I was kind of an afterthought.

Well, it didn't work. They got divorced anyway. In her mind it was my fault that they got divorced, I guess. That was when she started to say, "It wouldn't work because you're no good." Just different things my mom would say. I'd hear them and for awhile it would be, "Well, that's not true. I'm not like that." Then slowly but surely, I guess, I just kind of adapted into the attitude that she had told me I had. I started to believe what she said.

Living with her mother was one thing, but after she moved in with her father and stepmother it was even worse. While her mother had been involved in with alcohol abuse, her father was preoccupied with his second wife, which made Carrie feel very unwanted. Worse yet, the stepmother did not like Carrie.

By the time I really got to know my dad he was married to his second wife, who was a royal bitch. I hate the woman. She was very mentally abusive. When I was 12 years old she looked right at me and said, "I can't love you because you're fat." Cool woman.

By the next year the psychological abuse worsened and became pervasive, and affected both home and school life:

I was letting my dad know what my grades were and everything. My stepmom got on the phone and said,
"Stupid people get grades like that. You must be really stupid." She screamed and hollered and ranted for 10 minutes about what an idiot I was because I couldn't get good grades. She made me so angry and she hurt me really bad because maybe the grades were bad but they were the best I thought I could get at the time. She was always saying things like that to me and for a long time I thought she was right.

When I was around, she wasn't the center of my dad's life because I was Dad's little girl. I was also my mother's daughter, and she hates my mom. My mom is white trash and since I'm part of my mom she hates me too. I was also treated a lot different than her own daughters.

The toxicity of these relationships was further illustrated when Carrie talked about what led the hatred between her stepmother and herself. As in many other cases of animosity between wives and husbands and ex-wives, the children are frequently caught in the middle of domestic disputes, and such was the case for Carrie.

My mom had a few choice words to say when she caught my stepmom in bed with my dad before they were married. She was cheating on her husband, and he was cheating on my mom.

Well, Dad used to say, "Hey, I'm gonna take her [Carrie] over and she's gonna stay the night," or, "I'm gonna take her over so she can play with Misty and Holly for awhile." Well, yeah, he'd take me over there but that wasn't the reason. Okay, it was great. I got to see these two, ya know, but while we were playing, they were screwing. That's where I learned to lie because I was always covering up for them.

The other facet of her abuse was from a more sensitive, sensual nature. Carrie described being molested at a young age by a female babysitter. This sexual encounter had resounding effects on her.
When I was a juvenile, about 6 to 8 years old, I was molested by a girl about 13 or 14. In turn, taking that as a learned behavior, I turned around and did the same thing to a boy I babysat. She used to make me do sexual things for her while I was staying at her house. I was supposed to be the girl, and she was supposed to be the guy. Well, after being molested I finally got so curious about sex I wanted to see what it was like to actually do it with a man. That was where my being a perpetrator came into effect. Later on, sex kept me going. That's what I lived with. Without a guy to have sex with in my life I didn't think I'd survive.

As an afterthought, Carrie recalled:

She [the abuser] ran the show. So hey, well if she's in control, then I'm gonna be in control because that's the way women are, apparently. I'm like that in my relationships now. I like to be the controller. I like to be the boss and ya know, it's something I grew up with because my dad, I guess the best way to put it was he was very, very pussy whipped.

Inasmuch as some fathers take subdued roles in the rearing or discipline of their daughters, others are more aggressive or volatile. Cassie remembered that:

When I was very young I recall instances of my mom and dad not getting along and some drastic instances where the violence had occurred when I was very young. My dad would get angry at me and my brothers. He drank, and he worked really hard. He worked trying to do two jobs. He was tired, and he was grouchy. He was unhappy so he would get carried away when he would correct us. He would cross the line of abuse, and I remember that a few times, mainly it was directed towards me until I was about 12. That's when I started rebelling really bad.

The problem wasn't really how often it occurred but the problem was that he didn't just spank me or slap me. He would punch me in the face. When I was a little girl, I remember when he was angry with me he would pick me up, walk into the bedroom, and throw me down on the bed in such force that I would fly clear up into the air.
and land on the floor. This was like 4 or 5 years old. He did it with my mom and brothers, I mean, I'd watch it all the time. I'd watch them get the hell knocked out of them. I would cry and I would scream. He would tell me to shut up or he would give me something to cry about.

When I got older, like ages 14 to 17, he rarely did anything to me during those years, but when he did, I would get back up and he would have to knock me out cold 'cause I would get back up. I mean, I was so used to being beat up that I would want to do it, and there was nothing he could do to hurt me. He could not hurt me. He could break my nose and I would get back up--and back up--and back up. I didn't give a shit. He is the whole reason why I began lifting weights. He is the whole reason I have the muscles I do today.

As a matter of fact, the weight lifting began at 14, just so that Cassie would be able to defend her mother and herself against the abuse.

I lifted weights every single day for three years. I was huge, but by the time I reached my peak the abuse stopped except for when I got married. That pisses me off because I want to know why he stopped. Was it because I was at the peak of my weight lifting and that I'd had enough of his shit, or was it something else? Of course, he'll never tell me because he's in extreme and total denial.

The abuse continued during her marriage even though Cassie and her husband had a "violent relationship before [they] got married." When she found out she was pregnant she:

Was really happy 'cause I wanted a baby really bad but my marriage was so stressed. I was so fat when I was pregnant, and I was drinking really bad. Then my daughter was born, and I felt I didn't want her. Also, the beatings got worse, and I began to feel my life was over. My husband refused to hold down a job, and he spent all the money on drugs and alcohol, not even supporting
the baby which was the only thing he claimed he wanted. I finally got sick and tired of it. I got a restraining order on him and filed for divorce and shit really hit the fan.

Shortly after her divorce, Cassie moved in with a drug dealer, because she couldn't afford to make payments on the house anymore, and because she "was spending all her money on booze." This relationship was not any better. As a matter of fact, it rapidly became worse than her marriage had been:

I was an alcoholic. I drank constantly. Whenever I felt a hangover, I'd start drinking again, and we would fight constantly, all the time. He would get violent with me because he knew he could beat me up, and he would intimidate me. He would scare me. He would say things to scare me just to keep me worried all day long that he was going to hurt me. Like he'd tell me, "I'm going somewhere and when I get back I just might kick your ass [or] when I get back and if this isn't done and that isn't done, I'm going to kick your ass." So he'd leave and I'd do everything he wanted me to do plus a whole bunch of other things, and then when he'd get back, he'd pretend like nothing ever happened. You know, just head games, really bad.

In addition, Cassie recounted how that situation deteriorated further:

The guy I killed was my boyfriend, and the night I killed him he was getting violent with me and saying he was going to do things to me. I just snapped. The night I committed my crime I had just had it. I was fed up. I kicked him out three times, and he kept coming back.

I just got sick and tired. He wouldn't stop taking drugs. I quit drinking, and I told him quit taking drugs. He would not stop taking drugs and he would lie to me. This one time, just to defy me, he lit up a joint in front of me. I grabbed it right out of his mouth, and I told him to get the hell out of my house and don't ever come back. The police came because he trashed my
apartment. He punched holes in the walls and he totalled my living room. The cops came. They kicked him out and told him never to come back. He came back a week after the cops kicked him out, and we got in a fight. He started getting violent with me, verbally and physically. He was pushing me around, telling me what I was going to do and all this other shit. Well, I just couldn't take it anymore. I had enough. I snapped and I killed him so I would say my past has a lot to do with that 'cause I was sick and tired of it.

When I first started stabbing him I did not plan on killing him. When he was dead and I was in jail, I found out how many times he was stabbed. I thought, "Oh my god, I'm going to prison for the rest of my life. I'm going to get a life sentence for this." He was stabbed 24 times and I thought, "Holy shit, they are never going to believe that this was self-defense."

College Students

This group is made up of seven women of diverse lifestyles and from various parts of the United States. All of this group had some college education, but none had received a degree. It is possible that some of these women had spent more years in college than those in the College Graduates group, but they lacked degrees. These women ranged in age from late 20s to early 40s, and they were all Caucasian. Only two of the seven women had been convicted of violent crimes, consisting of aggravated assault and deliberate, mitigated homicide. The other five were classified as nonviolent offenders, whose convictions included issuing bad checks, forgery, theft, and bail jumping.
Daisey, in her mid-30s and from a rather well-to-do family, recalled her childhood this way:

My mother gets mad at me because I like to claim my childhood was perfect. As far as I'm concerned, it was pretty damn close. The way I was raised, the way I remember being raised, and my brother, also, is the way I would hope that I could raise children. I think my parents did an excellent job. I learned unconditional love. I lived with it. My mother is pretty close to perfect. My dad's kind of rigid and doesn't do emotions very well. He helped me with sports and he helped me with my homework. The family had dinner and breakfast together every day of my life except if my dad was out of town on business. Our family was a family, and I don't have any complaints about the way I was raised. I don't remember them instilling anything radical into me this way or no way. . . . I had a good, solid foundation.

Daisey's mother was a school teacher and her father was a successful businessman. During her early years, Daisey lived a life quite different than the other women interviewed. During this time, "I was never taught to deal with things of a negative nature. I never lost. If I ran for something, I won. . . . I don't think I was taught that I was human. I was just taught that I was better."

Through high school everything seemed to be going very well in a positive vein as far as home, school, and related activities were concerned. The only possible negative recollection she had was that "when I was in high school I drank. We drank beer, but it was no big deal. No drugs. I didn't do any of those when I was in high school."

However, after high school the "perfect family" began to take a course in a different direction. Her parents'
marriage began to break up, and "that was very emotional" for Daisey. She recalled the interim between high school and college.

In between high school and college, the end of that summer, I went to Spain with my father. Dad was the president of his company, and it was a trip for his salesmen. If they sold $1 million worth of business a year, they got to go on these trips. So my dad was of course the host, and I was the hostess since my mom wasn't there.

We stayed at this really elegant hotel in this huge suite. We had this huge suite. I've been thinking about it and I can vaguely remember the living area, the living room where we entertained. I remembered only one bedroom and I know there has to be two bedrooms 'cause I can't imagine my father, in his position, would have gotten us a suite with one bedroom. That would look pretty bad when you've got your daughter with you. So there had to be another one, but I don't remember it.

At the time, my dad was like an alcoholic, and I know there was some serious drinking going on. Every night there was a cocktail party, and then we'd go out to a club. Drinking, drinking, drinking, drinking. That part I remember doing. I mean, I don't remember specifics, but I remember that there was a lot of drinking going on and who knows what happened. Something happened that involved my father. I think maybe the part of me that knows that this happened, I never, ever wanted to face it for years because I worshipped my dad. I just worshipped my father. I mean, he was way up there on a pedestal, ya know, so how can my dad do that to me.

However, I don't remember. I've run through the options. The only sense I have as specific as I can be is that I'm laying in a bed on my left side, and there's a real pretty nightstand right there and somebody getting in behind me, which could only have been my dad. You've got to remember, I was a virgin when I was there. I had a boyfriend so in a matter of a couple of days I wouldn't go from being faithful and being a virgin to promiscuity with some guy I just met.
When I got home from Spain, and I came off the plane that I was a totally different person. I was normally very bubbly and outgoing and talkative and lively. I got off the plane and I didn't want to say anything to anybody about anything. Which is very strange at age 17, ya know, you would want to talk. "Oh, let me tell you what I saw and what I did." My mom said I was very sullen. I was very quiet. I didn't want anything to do with anything.

Daisey recalled that, after going to college, things began to deteriorate even further:

I went off to college and things were different. The high school I went to was a very exclusive, private school, very small--250 people for the whole thing. I went to a university that had 35,000 people so I don't know if it was culture shock or whatever, but I just didn't feel like it anymore. I made the varsity basketball team as a walk on, which was quite a major accomplishment at a big university. As soon as I made the team, I quit, stopped going to school. When I went I made A's, but I just stopped going. I just didn't care. When I went to college, I smoked some dope, and that was no big deal, either. It was when I dropped out of college and came home that I started doing cocaine, and I did that for four years. That was in 1979. I was about 20, 21 when I started doing that.

She indicated that these events only laid the foundation for future addictions:

When I started screwing up, doing all these things that were wrong, that were not me and I couldn't stop myself from continuing. I tried to make myself be that kind of person--to be a bad person. To convince myself that I was worthless . . . taking up addictions: drugs, drinking, food [so I wouldn't] have to deal with the pain. That's how I dealt with it, by not dealing with it. When you drink you don't have to. You start running.

Her "running" led to further addictions which led to a need to obtain money by illegal means to support them. As a result, she ended up at WCC. When reflecting upon her
previous illegal activities, Daisey admitted, "I didn't understand why I was the way I was. I'm intellectually strong enough that if you lay it down and you tell me, at least I understand." Yet Daisey realized that:

We're all on that same path when we come to prison, on the road to self-destruction. Whether you've tried suicide or not, you could end up dead. If you're gonna be involved in crime it's not gonna come to any good end, so we're all on that path, too. I can just feel these bodies moving on the sidewalk, heading towards destruction. We've just stopped here at prison. The person we punish the most, hurt the most, when we come to prison is ourselves. The only common denominator I can break it down to is the pain. Most of it, I think, comes from abuse. I do believe, in my case, that abuse had something to do with my incarceration.

Dana's primary psychological abuse came from the same role model--her father. "My dad is very, very demanding. He's the authority figure in my house. I can't talk to him because of it, and that causes me to have problems with other authority figures." She elaborated, "I've always had this thing of not trusting men. I was never sexually abused. Mentally abused by my dad, yes, and it appears his perfectionism affected me the same way."

Later, with regard to another authority figure, Dana recalled the interconnection:

I was afraid to talk to my probation officer. I had to report every month, and things aren't always good. . . . I was having a hard time finding a job. I had two small kids. Things were hectic. I still felt like if I didn't go in and tell him something good, that he was gonna punish me for it. I got that from my father. I wouldn't say I lied to my probation officer, but in order not to lie to him I just didn't go see him.
avoided him. See, and that's how I think I felt a lot. I mean, I have nothing against him personally. I just have a problem with being in an authority relationship with a man.

However, that mistake led to her being at WCC. To support her statement concerning her father's perfectionism Dana recalled the following incident from her childhood.

I can remember at age 4, if our rooms were not spic and span, and I mean white glove, I'm serious when I say white glove. He would take a white glove and wipe our drawers or whatever, and if they weren't clean, he would throw everything on the floor. Empty our dresser drawers, strip our beds, closets, and say, "Okay, now you got a mess to clean up." I hated it, but I didn't have any choice. I guess each kid handles it different. I got to the point where I was just as bad a perfectionist as he was. My sister handled it differently. She just sat on the pile and stayed in her room for 2 days.

She further recalled how this type of perfectionism affected the whole family for years.

On the outside, people looking in thought we had the perfect family. He cares a lot about what people think on the inside. Ya know, don't do nothing to "embarrass the family" type of thing. We were a close family. We did a lot of camping together as a family unit. We did a lot of those things. Dad wasn't involved with us as much when we were young. He has, even to this day, a very low tolerance with feelings. He believed in the strict rule that children should be seen but not heard.

We weren't allowed to have fun. I guess another thing that I can remember is not being able to play with more than one toy at a time. We could play with one toy, and when we got done playing with that, we'd put it back. Then we could get another one. We weren't allowed to have friends over to the house and this is as we got a lot older. I can remember at 15-16 years of age I was not allowed to even have my friends in the entryway if my parents were not home because he was afraid somebody was gonna rip him off.
Somebody was there to take advantage of him, and I don't know why he felt that way because I never did anything to make him feel that way. Yet he didn't trust me.

In addition, Dana recalled one particular incident which illustrated the severity of her father's psychological abuse. This incident eventually had long-lasting negative effects upon her.

I think one of the most mentally abusive incidents would be related to our ping pong table. Dad took three ping pong paddles, drilled holes in them, and put our names on them. They hung on a peg. Well, a lot of times if you needed a spanking, more than not you probably deserved it, but the hard part is that you had to get the paddle for him and bring it to him, knowing he was gonna spank you with it. Oh man, that was torture. I'd have rather had twice as many spankings than to have to go get it. I was crying before I even gave it to him. He didn't even have to spank me.

You learned to toughen up because you were not allowed to cry. If you cried you, got another one. You toughened up, and you didn't cry. You held everything back, and you didn't cry. Your emotions weren't important. I think I held a lot inside. I was tough on the outside, but inside I was really, really hurt. When I went to the prison this first time, I sat down and cried for the first time. It is all right to cry, and now it's just the opposite. I cry a lot from a lot of build up. You weren't allowed to express your own emotions when I was young.

Subsequently, she "became sneaky" and "began to lie to get attention and to impress [my] Dad" because "I had to tuck [my feelings] away. I wasn't treated as an individual. I was treated as a part of group. My dad didn't understand how come I needed a hug when my sister didn't." She began to feel that "everything I do just doesn't quite hit the mark. It's not good enough, and the more I do the more they
demand. They didn't understand why I felt the need that I had to impress him." As a result, Dana developed a "very low self-esteem . . . because I couldn't do anything right. It seemed that no matter what I did he didn't love me . . . that I wasn't worth anything." Eventually she learned how "to manipulate people so they would like me. I would avoid my responsibility and do somebody else's chore because, boy, that looked good . . . to do more for others than for yourself." As a result, Dana "felt like I wasn't loved. That everybody was using me. But I let them do it. I think it got worse as I got older . . . everything that I did I was expected to be the best." This partially contributed to her being at WCC, because when she was working and embezzling money she was having financial problems associated with rearing two young children. This did not fit into her preconceived idea of a perfect household. Thus, "I push[ed] it back, hid my feelings. I had horrible guilt problems from it. I was sick to my stomach constantly [and had] headaches all the time. If I didn't keep myself busy, I was a nervous wreck." Yet all she ever needed was "emotional love."

My biggest fear is that all of a sudden I can see the problem. It's not completely curable, but I can help it and I don't have to pass it on. I don't want them [my children] to go through what I have gone through and I can change some of the things that I've done. I've taken right up into the same characteristics that my dad did.
For Dannie, who was approximately the same age as Dana, the early developmental years were somewhat different. She recalled her parents divorce and her mother's drinking problem, events which became precursors to the future.

When I was little, about six or seven, it was right after my mom and dad broke up that my mom really got into drinking. I don't remember too much about my dad leaving, and that really doesn't affect me. My mom began drinking more, a lot more. She started with the wine. She used to drink Red Mountain. She always had gallons of Red Mountain wine in the refrigerator. She'd start getting drunk in the early evening when she was making dinner. She'd start talking funny and changing. It used to make me mad. I felt a lot of anger. I just hated it. I mean, I really hated the way she talked and the difference in her change of voice, how it like slurred, and the falling down. I resented the change.

She didn't get abusive, she got goofy. I just hated it 'cause she wasn't Mom; she was somebody different. Just the way she used to walk around the kitchen. When somebody starts to get drunk, their motor movements change and all that about her would change.

I don't remember too much positive stuff about my childhood. I didn't get a lot of affirmations and stuff from my mom. I never got anything from her. All I ever got from her was she fed us; she gave us money. Basically that was it. We didn't have any sit down dinners or any kind of structure. It was pretty well a free-for-all. I kind of figured that everybody's life was like that until I started seeing other girls. "What do you mean you gotta be home for dinner?" "Well, can I come over to your house for dinner?" So then I'd go over there, and it would be so organized, ya know, the table and everything. It was different at my house.

Then later everybody used to tell me how lucky I was 'cause my mom was so cool. "Let's go to Dannie's house, we can smoke pot over there." My mom didn't care if we smoked pot and stuff and that got more open as I got older. This was like 14, 15, 16 years of age.
At about this time, Dannie rebelled:

I turned into a little hellion. I was a good kid up until like seventh grade. I was basically what you'd call a good kid until built-up pressure caused me to go out. Yeah, 'cause I hated my house. I found drugs and found an escape route. That was it. Then I started running away. I got real independent. I knew it all and I could do anything. I got incorrigible. I mean, I really changed bad. My parents blame it all on the drugs. My mom blames herself, too, though, but my dad blames it all on the dope.

Dannie recalled one incident which was indicative of how the drugs and alcohol began to affect not only her life but her younger sister's as well.

I remember one thing that I feel pretty guilty about. My little sister, Karen, was in the sixth grade at the that time. That's when we would do all that crazy partying and stuff, and I was like 15 or 16. I think I was in the ninth grade. It was about the end of school for me but Karen was doing well in school. She was the only one that wasn't into the pot or anything. Well, two things happened. I remember she got up one night and she walked down in her little pajamas. She was crying, and she said, "Dannie, I can't sleep. Will you turn the stereo down?" I said, "Oh shut up. Go back to bed!" Mom was already plastered in the corner somewhere.

Another time I'd made pot brownies, and I'd left them sitting out on the kitchen table with a note that said, "Eat 'em if you dare," with a smiley face. They were full of pot, Thai sticks, and I didn't think Karen would eat them. Well, she got up in the morning to get ready for school and she ate them. She had to be brought home from school, but that was the beginning of her drug addiction.

Recalling that incident, Dannie realized that the drugs "definitely had an impact on me when I was growing up, [especially] the escape thing" because that "is a big reason why people start using drugs and drinking. It's not to deal
with life. . . . It's easier not to deal with it." Drugs also helped Dannie to ease the pain of her mother's alcoholism:

It didn't bother me so much when she was drunk when I was high. It didn't bother me at all, in fact, that whole problem of it bothering me and the sick feeling inside when I'd see her drunk all went away when I'd get high. So that fixed the problem. That's definitely what happened. I didn't deal with it anymore.

Thus drugs "changed a lot of my values and beliefs with school and everything and my family. They weren't as important to me anymore."

Didi suffered not only the psychological and verbal abuse associated with disaffected parenting, she also suffered from incestuous sexual abuse at the hands of her grandfather.

I lived a very sheltered life. I was brought up in a very sheltered and authoritative family [where] there were so many things that weren't acceptable in our family. Anger was not acceptable, and you had to stuff a lot of emotions. I mean, you didn't get angry. To throw a temper tantrum in our house was death. You didn't do that. When you did get angry, you ended up stuffing and stuffing and stuffing. I think from the time I was born I learned to stuff. Then there'd be violent outbursts and punishments, and I'd do things that I knew I'd get in trouble for afterwards.

The sexual abuse first occurred "at six or seven, and lasted for several years. . . . I just put up a wall and pretended that it never happened." In the meantime, "my mom's big thing was sex before marriage is bad and that sex
is all boys want. It kept me from having any boyfriend/girlfriend relationships through high school."

In addition, Didi's parents showed their "love" through violent outbursts, yelling, and screaming. They would punish her by saying, "This hurts me more than it hurts you," and "I'm only doing this because I love you." It was her feeling, once she started male/female relationships later in life, that these experiences with her parents had a carryover effect, because even though her relationships became "emotionally, verbally, and sexually abusive," they were not "horrible" because such treatment "meant I was loved [because] that's what I had grown up with."

With her misguided concept of care and acceptance came drugs and alcohol when "I started getting into college and having a social life." Didi recalled that "with the drugs I had that false self-esteem you get when you're high. . . ." Her reason for getting into drugs was "because I was tired of feeling bad about myself and I was feeling bad about everything that was going on around me. By getting high I could escape." She started drinking at 19, using marijuana at 20, and using cocaine at 23. She also did a lot of gambling in between. Subsequently, to support these addictions, "I wrote checks because I didn't care, since I was constantly high." Didi reasoned:

Oh well, they're gonna go to Checkrite. They're gonna try and make me pay 'em off but they can't get blood from a turnip. Since I'm not working they can't garnish my wages. It never did cross
my mind that they're gonna take this stuff to the police and I'm gonna be in big trouble.

Didi summarized her activities, explaining how she would operate one of her checkwriting schemes on the street.

A woman working a bar or a casino, and because of the fact that I was a battered woman, I used that to my advantage. I could go in with a black eye that's 3 days old and get into a bar and order a drink. Maybe they ask you for your ID, and you can just use a whole manipulation with this other stuff going on. "Well, god, my husband just beat me up and I ran out of the house, and all I did was grab the checkbook." It's all manipulation. You manipulate these women by this. "Oh poor girl. Her husband just beat her up," or "Her boyfriend just beat her up and I'm gonna let her." They let you write a check like that. They will let you slide it back, and I just learned all these different things that I could use to convince people into letting me do it.

The big thing was, I mean, I could sit at a bar for an hour and write a thousand dollars worth of checks with the right bartender and the right outfit. Smile nicely, lean forward, ya know, and let a little cleavage show. The bartender is more interested in looking at your chest than he is in looking at the check. After I got into prostitution, I learned even more of that because you use even more manipulation . . . more of the male sex ego type [thing], whatever you want to call it. I think some of that may have come from the incest.

Della, in her late 20s, suffered from physical and sexual abuse from her mother's husband and boyfriends. She recalled that she was born as the result of "rape when her mother was 17 or 18." Her mother later married her stepfather and "was with him for three or four years, and then she left because he beat her and threatened us kids. He was also my first abuser." She remembered that "when I was in the fifth grade they tried getting back together, but
it didn't last." Della recalled the incident that precluded any such reunification:

I remember one night hearing my mom scream. I got out of my bed and ran into the room where they were. I saw him choking my mom. He had her up against the wall. Her feet were off the floor, and she's screaming. I ran to the linen closet in the hallway and got my mom's gun. Then I ran back, pointed it at him and told him I was going to kill him if he didn't let her go. . . . I'm 10 years old and I have this powerful feeling like the one I later got when I was on drugs and alcohol. I never had that feeling again except the night I was doing my crime. I was seeing the man that raped me when I was 5--he's hurting my mom who loves me, and I was afraid he was going to take away from me the only one that loves me. I would have killed him if he hadn't let her go.

In the meantime, Della "woke up to her [mother] reading the Bible and praying at every meal. We had to study, we went to church on Saturday. I remember one story from the Book of Job. It used to scare the shit out of me."

Della had "spent a couple of years at an early age with my stepdad and his family who did not accept me." The reason for this was that her mother had lost a second child shortly after birth and almost had a nervous breakdown. When she was living with her stepparents, "they instilled in me that I was bad to the bone because of the way I had been born." That became a contradiction because when "I went back to my mom I got all this positive stuff." However, later, when "I got older and Mom and I began to fight over stuff, she would bring up the same things, and it caused a lot of confusion and doubt." Regardless of how her mother
really felt, when Della returned from her stepparents things were different.

I had changed. I was very distant. It took me a long time to open up and talk to her. Before I left I was a really happy, bubbly kid and when I returned I was sad and withdrawn. I was scared and afraid. She brought me out of it, and I really became attached to her so it really hurt when she brought up things about my childbirth.

Between the ages of 10 and 16, Della was sexually abused at least three times by her mother's various boyfriends. The last incident occurred when she was 16 and was raped by a police officer with whom her mother worked. The last incident created a great deal of friction between Della and her mother concerning the police as authority figures, but for Della it "was the big incident after which things really went to shit."

After that there were drugs and alcohol and abusive relationships. She became "a time bomb waiting to go off" during the next 20 years, even though she served a few years in police work while in the military service. Ironically, there her distaste for authority prevailed because she got a "thrill by busting [superior] officers who were drunk, obnoxious, and disorderly."

Dottie, in her early 40s, had also undergone abuse. "I have been sexually abused since the age of three by different men and by women that my mother knew. I was . . . raped at 11 while one of these women watched." She further recalled that "my home life was very abusive, physically and
verbally. My father beat us extremely, and my mom didn't try to help us. I hated her and my stepfather for letting him do that." There was also "sexual abuse by cousins and uncles, and then the homosexual thing happened at 11. Two of my uncles went after the girl and her father after this happened." She also had recollections between three and five of physical abuse between her stepfather and mother, and of being molested by people outside the family.

Although she was being abused, Dottie took on the role of protector to her brothers and sisters. She recalled an incident when she was about 9 years old.

My stepfather had locked my little brother in a walk in closet. He was going to hit him with a baseball bat. I grabbed a pair of scissors near the sewing machine, and I stabbed him in the leg. That put a stop to my brothers and sisters being beat on.

That incident preceded her involvement in fighting at a young age. Combined with the fact that Dottie "had a lot of anger which [she] didn't know how to get rid of," her resulting behavior:

Came out in assaults, a physical release, as I always felt good after I got in a fight. It became a control issue. I had been such an introvert and had been so withdrawn for so long, it finally got to the point where I could express myself with explosive behavior.

Dottie recalled her feeling when the fighting started.

I can remember them right down to the physical part where my knees were shaking and I felt like crying. I would get the shaky knees and the incredible adrenaline rush. Like no more, I can't take any more, no more of being feeling under somebody's thumb. That somebody was going to
control what I did or how I acted or anything. I just got to the point where I didn't take anything from anybody.

She justified her behavior as follows:

I was tired of being hurt. I had been beat and abused for many years. I came to an age and a strength that I knew I could fight back. For years I carried a terrible attitude that I had gone through so much when I was younger that nothing could hurt me so I had no fear for many years. None whatsoever. I would go up against anything and everything, and it didn't bother me. I didn't stop and think twice about it.

Finally, in addition to the alcohol, drugs became a part of her lifestyle, and "I ended up in a motorcycle club where very few women were involved."

I'm an IV drug user and an alcoholic. I've been around it all my life. My real dad was a biker and a drug user. He was a pimp so I was around it. About age five, I remember sitting around with my dad, and he'd smoke pot. He was also real heavily involved at the time the amphetamines came out. I was back and forth around it, and I never thought nothing of it. I never knew it was addictive.

Dottie further recalled that she loved her stepfather, in spite of his physical abuse:

This may sound really strange, but to this day I love the man very much because he taught me everything. My mother didn't teach me anything; she was terrible. He taught me how to clean. He taught me how to cook. He taught me anything I needed to know. How to fish. He took me hunting with him. I did have a camaraderie with him. I was his companion when I was with him. I was never abused by him sexually or molested by him or anything, just emotional and physical. I figured out later when I got older that it was because I resembled my mother so much he was taking it out on me. He was a very angry man, and he took it out on me. He was an alcoholic.
While recalling the good things about her stepfather, she knew there were things that he could not give her and which her mother did not make available either.

I was never taught things about how to grow up, ya know. How to clean yourself, how to comb your hair, how to brush your teeth, that girls have periods, none of that. I wasn't taught any of that. Well, it was embarrassing when I got older 'cause I didn't know but I really didn't fit in. I didn't look like the other kids. I didn't act like the other kids. Well, as far as clothing and going to school, I had two outfits to last me a whole year if I was lucky. I always wore shoes that were too small and my feet are deformed because of it. I didn't know how to match colors, I remember that. I didn't know anything about taking care of myself. I knew how to get in a shower and use a bar of soap and that was it.

[As a result] I became a tomboy. I didn't feel I belonged around other children. I felt like I was a lot older because of raising my brothers and sisters. I felt left out. I carried a lot of guilt. I finally got fed up with it, and I hit the streets at 13. I started shoplifting to make money. That same year me and a girlfriend rented an apartment and we were able to support ourselves. She was two years older than me. She was 15, and I was 13.

They would pick me up and take me to jail, They would put me in a foster home and I'd run away. By that time, I was really good at taking care of myself. I would not stay in a foster home, either, because I could do much better by myself than what they could do for me in a foster home. Oh, I loved it. I really like it. It gave me a sense of belonging. Being separated from my family and school and everyone and I knew that being alone and taking care of myself through going to jail and foster home, I learned more about my personal hygiene and taking care of myself than I did at home. I was growing up real fast at this point and within a couple of years I was full blown as far as using my womanly attributes to attract or distract. Whatever, I was very grown at that age.
Ironically, Dottie stated that on the streets she had a sense of "belonging," and then came the "bonding," especially with men. "I got into prostitution as I got older [and] did what I needed to do to make my money and get high." Dottie summarized her character:

I can be a down and dirty bitch pounding the pavement to make money, or I can be right up there with the highest priced call girls. You have a woman here that is very versatile and for me to have to go back into society and just do a 9 to 5 thing, making normal wages would be very hard. You get to a point however, that it ain't worth it.

Dusty, one of the two women in this group who had been convicted of a violent crime, was also one of two who were different from the rest, for there had been very little physical or psychological abuse in her background. However, given the right circumstances, her conviction may have been somewhat attributable to the limited abuse she did experience. However, since she claimed innocence in the crime, abuse was not considered.

Dusty had basically the same upbringing as Billie--she learned that the man was the head of the household and the woman's place was in the home. The only difference was that Dusty was adopted. Her recollection of her general upbringing was as follows:

Part of it was the way that I was raised. My family--I guess my mom in particular--was very southern Victorian, if that makes any sense. I mean, she was like the baby of eight kids; six of them were girls raised during the Depression. It was like there, I had gotten the impression that whatever happened was my fault and that I was
responsible for it. Therefore, I assumed that it was my responsibility to say, "Okay, I did it," and "Fine, I'll go along with that." That was just what I thought I was supposed to do. That's just how I was raised. As a woman, I should never attempt to think for myself because only other people could possibly know what was right and what was best for me.

Dusty further described the relationship with her parents:

Mom didn't really want to take the time with me as I was adopted. When I was real little, she was into these fancy little bonnets and the fancy little dresses. You know, her little pride and joy. Her little baby doll. After my little brother was born it was like, "Oh gee, we don't really want you anymore. You were a mistake that we never should've made. Now we have our own child which happens to be a boy who can carry on the family name." I was kind of shoved back into the back corner which was all right with me 'cause during the summer and on weekends and stuff like this, I spent a lot of time out in the shop with Dad.

Dad was a mechanic and he had his own shop down at the house, and I was always out there every chance I got. Carrying tools for him and cleaning tools and cleaning parts and making gaskets and just doing whatever. When I couldn't get out to do that or he wasn't working on that, I'd hole up in my bedroom with books from the library. We had a really good library for a small town. Mom didn't really care as long as I was out of her way. She didn't have any real interest in what I was reading except the librarians thought it was kind of strange when I was like 13 years old, somewhere like that, I was reading Shakespeare and Edgar Allen Poe and automotive manuals. Just anything that attracted my attention. Mom had absolutely no interest in any kind of education at all. It just didn't matter.

I realize, now that I have the education to understand it, that she was probably to some extent emotionally disturbed. It was like if I did what she wanted me to do it was okay, but if I did what I wanted to do, like learning and getting an education, it was all wrong.
After she was denied the opportunity to go to college because of her mother's lack of interest in education, Dusty rebelled and left home. She later ended up in at least one abusive relationship and, after being compromised by her fall partner (the person with whom she was arrested) into taking the blame for the crime, she was convicted and incarcerated. At this point she had time to reflect on her predicament in the following fashion.

Well, I've finally realized that my man wasn't going to say anything, and I started thinking about the other guys that I had known through school and stuff. I thought probably 75% of the male population should be executed. I don't like women either, but that's because they're worthless.

**College Graduates**

This group consisted of four women, each of whom had some type of college degree. The average age of the women in this group was 42, and all were Caucasian. Only one woman had committed a violent crime, and the other three were nonviolent offenders whose convictions included bad checks, forgery, and drug violations. One claimed to have been the victim of only a limited amount of abuse; however, for the other three the abuse was often rather harsh and involved other addictions.

Edie, who was minimally abused, stated that the only abuse she knew from childhood resulted "from the alcoholism
of my mother and her side of the family. There was also physical abuse from my stepfather." Edie recalled that she "saw [her] Mother stay with a man who abused her, who abused me. Simply, back then women really didn't have much choice. Women were dependent on men for their livelihood and everything." During childhood, "I didn't have many friends. I spent my time reading and getting off by myself. I got along better with books. I guess that was my escape. I'd picture myself as a child, I was right there in the book. They were my friends."

After marrying into a somewhat abusive relationship at an early age, Edie was able to terminate the marriage only after her children had been born. This may have been a relatively easy task for Edie but she offered the following observation concerning other women:

For some people, taking abuse from your husband or abusing your children is a normal way of life. They don't know any better. They accept it, but I don't look at it like that. I don't sit around laughing and joking about Jan's old man beating the hell out of her the other day. Well, I remember when this used to happen and when my old man used to beat me. It's just the accepted way. It's funny because they don't know any other way of life. They've never been taught.

[Later] as I got older I couldn't work because of my back problems. After my experiences I swore I would never depend on a man or another woman or anyone for my livelihood. I would be my own person. I would survive and I could and my way of surviving was checks. I could live with that rather than trying to live with a man that didn't care anything about me. Also, I could live with the fact that the money I took came from the biggest thieves in America. I never hurt the working person. I never hurt an individual in my
life, and I've done it on my own. I have probably felt that way since I was about 14 years old.

Edie rationalized her checkwriting activities as resulting from her "rebellious" nature:

I'm rebellious against people telling me what to do. I get that from my stepfather. The way he punished me. The things he made me do. I guess, I looked at him as an authority figure. I don't disrespect people. If they're wrong, I will come out and tell them, "Hey, you're wrong." I am not easily influenced or ordered by authority. While I may not argue with them as far as their authority goes, my rebellion is in a very quiet, passive manner. I just completely ignore them and do what I want to do anyway. A person's position in life really means very little to me. I respect people in all walks of life even though I disrespect the position. I judge that by the way they treat other people--by the things I see myself.

The amount of abuse in this group went from minimal to very harsh. Although it may be presumed generally that abuse is less pervasive among more educated people, this group belied that presumption. Perhaps the reason lies in the degree of education received. Edie had a four-year college degree, as did one of the other women, while two held associate degrees. All grew up being victims of various types of abuse which carried over into their adult lives.

Ellie, who was in her late 20s, had the following recollection of her early childhood:

My adopted father was foreign born, and it was his belief that it was all right for a child to drink because over there they did it. So it was nothing for him to let us drink one or two drinks, ya know. Besides, we weren't going nowhere. We drank beer mainly. [It got to where] I couldn't
stop at one or two. It led me to trouble. It seemed like every time I turned around when I was out drinking or something, I was getting in trouble. Not too much with the drugs. No, I've never gotten in trouble with drugs.

Ellie also recalled the results of her mother's disaffected parenting. "I went from alcohol to drugs. My mother started me on drugs at 19. Both my parents were alcoholics, and my mother was hooked on prescription drugs. There wasn't a lot of love in our family." Ellie recalled that, shortly after her adoptive father died, she had her first experience with marijuana.

I had a really bad cold. It seemed like they couldn't give me nothing to get rid of it. My Mom goes, "Try smoking this, and it will help with the congestion." I thought, "No, I really don't want to Mom, because I'm afraid of getting hooked." And I did. Consequently it led to coke. Once I tried acid, and I didn't like it.

Ellie recalled how drugs affected her later on:

They helped hide the feelings. It brought out a different person in me. A person that everybody could get along with. When it came to having sex with my husband, I had to be stoned in order to do it or else I wouldn't do it because of what my adopted father had done.

Ellie had been physically and sexually abused by her adoptive father for years. After he died, Ellie's mother kept telling her that she had killed him, because she (Ellie) was not around to administer first aid at the time of his death. She further recalled that her mother was not especially concerned about losing her husband, because:

Two weeks after my adopted father died we moved to California and my mom took off to Vegas. She came back and she was married to somebody we didn't
even know. That caused a lot of rebelliousness.

My mom left me with my grandfather when she got remarried. He was sexually abusing me at the time. Holy shit, like there was somebody there for me that would listen to me, understand what I was going through. The drinking got worse when I got to California.

Ellie recalled how she felt about the abuse she suffered at the hands of her stepfather and her grandfather. "I couldn't understand why they did it. I felt violated and angry. I kept to myself." To make matters worse, she repeatedly told her mother about the abuse and received no help.

She wouldn't believe me and stuff. I couldn't trust her after that. Here she was leaving me with a man that was sexually abusing me and wasn't doing anything about it. I mean, I'm her daughter and why isn't she doing something? Mothers are supposed to be protective and responsible for their kids. She wasn't.

[As a result] I hated her. I still hate her. I wrote her a letter when I first got here, after I started my drying out period. I told her, "Well, in a way I hold this against you and in another way I don't hold this against you because now I can get help for my sexual abuse and my drinking and drug use. Before, out on the streets I wouldn't have done this." Which is true because I had gotten into the treatment before and sloughed it off. The only reason I did it was because I was on probation, to comply with their records and stuff.

But I said, "I still hold it against you that you testified against me to get me in here. That was pretty low. You don't see me calling your probation officers and telling them that you're drinking and you're using drugs." Which, by rights, I want to, but two wrongs don't make it right so I just stuffed it. She'll get caught sooner or later. Her day'll come.
I want to talk to her about sexual abuse. Why did she just let it go and stuff? She's still denying it. She was right there when my own grandfather asked to marry me after he had raped me. She told him, "Yeah, go ahead."

Effie, in her mid-40s, had had a professional career earlier in her adulthood. She recalled being "physically, mentally, and sexually abused by [her] father from 9 to 13."

I'm sure that there was fondling that went on before that, [but] I just thought that he was showing me he cared. It became more than just fondling and touching. There was actual penetration, and I will never forget that. I felt dirty, flawed. I still feel that way. Not so much dirty but the flawed part--there's something wrong with me. It wasn't my fault through, and I'm still working on that. It's tough for me. I'll get through.

Combine this abuse with the fact that her father was a minister, and any semblance of a valid role model or authority figure dissipates. Yet, even though "he was a sick person, he was still master." Effie remembered a typical example of the physical and sexual abuse and how they were related to the church.

I could plan on a beating probably every Sunday when I was younger because no matter what happened I was the one that was at fault. If I had to go to the restroom at church I could count on a whipping when I went home because I was not supposed to leave church. God was trying to punish me for it. It was just some of my dad's sick beliefs. I'm beginning to learn that now but at the time when the sexual abuse was committed or the incest was taking place he would tell me that if I didn't do what he wanted I was going to be evil and I was going to be punished. I was also locked in a dark closet until maybe half an hour before my mom got home at 9. I tried to talk to my mom, but she didn't believe me because she doesn't know that way.
She also stated, "I took a lot of beatings because my father felt that I put the basketball games over his church, but I still went to the games."

Effie knew the "sexual, physical abuse was negative attention," but it was "the only attention that I got from my dad. Even though it was negative attention, it was attention, and I wanted it very much. It may be that's why I let it go on so long before I really, really raised hell."

Effie recalled the destruction of her self-esteem and its effects during later years.

My paranoia started way back there, because I knew what was going on but I couldn't get anybody to listen to me. It caused low self-esteem on my part. At the same time I would always look at other kids and say, I wonder what they would really think about me if they knew what was going on? So, therefore, I shied away from people. I didn't feel I ever deserved what I got--the physical abuse I got from him--but I had no choice. Then I began to look at myself as a bad person because if something bad happened it was always my fault. I'm the one that took the beating for it. I began thinking, hey, there's something wrong with me. Why is it always my fault?

The low self-esteem also came in because I was never allowed to have any close friends. When my father was around other kids, it was like he always paid more attention to them. He had time for them but not for me. Like the only type of attention I ever got from him was negative.

Emotionally this was very painful. I became a perfectionist, and I was raised with the idea that everything had to be just so. I became so insecure I didn't like myself. I was afraid to let anybody know me because if they saw me stripped down they wouldn't like me. I was depressed. I was unhappy. I was looking for some tender, loving care from my dad but I never had it. I never will have it.
Often, when young girls are severely abused, the results are devastating if there is not some form of alternate caregiving available. Fortunately for some, a caregiver is found in another member of the family, a grandparent, or even a member of the extended family. For Effie, this person was her grandmother.

My grandmother really did care. It was genuine love. I just had to be hugged by her, and I would stay real close. I could talk to her, and she would believe what I was telling her. I was able to cry around her. I couldn't cry at home. Without her I might have grown to be a very cold person.

As a result of their closeness, Effie and her grandmother eventually forced her father to stop the sexual abuse.

[I] called my dad on what he was doing when I was 13. I told him that my grandmother knew what he was doing to me, and if he didn't stop we were gonna turn him in. The sexual abuse stopped, but the other stuff didn't. The physical abuse I could take, but the mental abuse is--those scars are hard to get rid of.

In addition to causing problems in growing up, Effie recalled how the effect of the sexual abuse carried over into her adult life and marriage:

When I was engaged to be married, your sexual pleasure is supposed to be a pleasure. It wasn't a pleasure. It was a duty, and I realized then that I didn't want to feel. The feelings became frozen, and I started using pills. I didn't deal with it. I just covered it up. I went through two marriages. They didn't know.

Without help, the situation was not going to get any better. As a result of an accidental head injury in 1979, Effie found she "couldn't numb it anymore. I used pills to
numb it. I got hooked on prescription drugs, and I used false means of getting them which got me here." She recalled the reason she continued to take prescription drugs:

   Because it numbed. I didn't feel pain. The pills were an upper for me. They gave me euphoria and basically that's what happened in a period of time. I guess, deep down, I knew what was going on--why I was doing it. But then I got to the point where I was hooked on the prescription drug, and it took more and more to numb everything. Then I became physically addicted to them. Physically hooked on it. I had to have them to maintain, because if I didn't then I started withdrawing and I became very, very ill. I didn't want that either. So I kept using them. They had power over me.

   The escape thing is a big reason why people start using drugs and drinking. To deal with life, ya know. It's easier not to deal with it.

   That was the end of her professional career. However, Effie looked at the positive side of her life. "I'm still young and I still have a lot to offer other people. I still have a lot of things going for me."

   For Elsa the abuse was not as severe, but the results were more devastating. Her father had been in the military, and her mother had been sexually molested as a child.

   Mom and dad were real strict. They were like drill sergeants. Everything that they taught us to do had to be exactly the way Mom would do it. We would have a certain way to fold clothes. The hand towels had to be folded the right way and everything had to be done a specific way. If we made a mistake it was exactly as though we did it on purpose and we got into trouble. Getting slapped and yelled at was usually what it was. It depended on the error. See, I don't think they thought it was abuse.
However, whether it was abuse or not, that treatment had very pronounced results, again relating to self-esteem.

Being slapped on the face and body, I felt sad. I felt like, sort of incompetent. See, I think it is ever since I can remember. I've always had a low self-esteem. I intentionally didn't make mistakes or on purpose, and there were times that my dad misinterpreted something that had happened for something that didn't happen. We didn't have as many rights. We were always told that we were children and we were to be seen and not heard. To shut up all the time. Well, I learned that the best thing to do was not to show emotions. To do very little talking, not to cry, and to do what I was told.

By keeping quiet I didn't get slapped. If I said the wrong thing I would get slapped or yelled at. I was just jumpy and scared. I just was always afraid of things--afraid of saying things. I still do, but I would say that it wasn't just with them either or anybody abusive. I was afraid of doing or being with hardly anybody at all. I mean, anybody so it wasn't just with them. I think, because that was the way I was brought up and it wasn't just that we had to watch what we said to my parents. It was like whenever we were around we had to be careful what we said to anybody.

Even though she questioned whether her parents' treatment was abuse, Elsa did remember an incident in early childhood which might have been indicative of something more:

I have a home video of where I was just a baby. I was almost a year old, and I was touching the train under the Christmas tree. It showed my mother slapping me and taking me away from the tree by my arm. I kept touching the train, and she wouldn't stop slapping me. The psychiatrist said that was abuse. There was a lot of threatening, so I guess there was physical abuse.
There were also other things that had a bearing on Elsa's childhood. She recalled being intimidated at school because of her father's position there.

He was an authority figure. I remember he came into my kindergarten class. We were sitting there drinking milk, and I remember spilling my milk. I remember feeling really bad, mostly because he was there. Not because of the teacher or anyone else but because he was there. I felt like I was really bad, a bad girl, and I was scared of him.

Because Elsa was intimidated in her father's presence, he was able to pressure her into activities that she did not enjoy.

He taught me how to play the flute. I didn't want to play it, but he gave it to me. I didn't tell him I didn't want to play it 'cause we weren't allowed to say no. I could've said I didn't want to but I wasn't rebellious. I just didn't. I did it 'cause I thought I had to.

You know, you make errors when you're mouthing and when I would make an error he would get really mad and yell and raise his voice. A lot of the time he thought I did it on purpose. He thought I shouldn't make mistakes and so that affected me. I was real nervous when I had to play the flute. I had to go to those tournaments, the contests, and I could play pretty good. I had a good tone, but I got so nervous that I would stop in the middle of the song and I couldn't play anymore.

I have that problem to this day. I don't like to start doing something when other people are watching me. I'm real conscious of myself when other people are watching me. It doesn't matter what it is, even tying your shoes.

Elsa's parents were eventually divorced, and she went to live with her mother. Soon afterward, when Elsa was around 17, there began a series of encounters which ended up in abusive relationships. She recalled the first incident:
My mother's boyfriend, the priest, came up to me when I was laying on the couch. I wasn't raped by him, but it was like a sexual experience. He came up to me and he kissed me and started fondling me. That's all I remember of it, but I remember thinking that he was a dirty old man, and I was uncomfortable around him.

After that, and possibly to compensate for her father's lack of attention, Elsa entered several relationships with men. At least one of these relationships was abusive, and she was raped several times. She eventually married.

There was a little bit of manipulation with him, but there was mostly a lot of physical abuse. It was mostly when he didn't get his way. Well, he was abusive, and I was afraid. When he was abusive, it was like I couldn't accept it. I would tell him that this is against the law and you can't do this, but he would anyway.

Elsa eventually had her husband arrested for abuse. However, "I still feel that he had control, even when he was behind bars; I don't think it was because he was behind bars, I think it was because I was hurt because he called me names and he physically abused me." When her husband got out of jail the abuse escalated. On one occasion, Elsa went for the gun to protect herself. A struggle ensued, and her husband was shot and killed.

The Non-Abused

The last group is made up of the three women in this study who disclaimed any abusive environment while growing up or prior to incarceration. However, each one claimed a
loss of self-esteem in some form resulting from personal crises or from family-related problems.

Flo indicated she had used drugs and/or alcohol to a limited extent during her teenage years, partly due to peer pressure. However, her drinking was curtailed once the pressure to use substances became less prevalent. She made the following observation concerning the treatment programs at WCC as they related to her situation:

If you don't have a drug or alcohol problem or sexual abuse problem, you don't have a whole lot of treatment. It makes it very hard because you don't get parole because you're not programming. There's nothing to program.

That type of situation may exist whether an incarcerated person has a problem or not. It may simply be that there are no appropriate programs for particular problems. However, since many of the treatment programs do carry over into other areas, benefit may be derived for different problems. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous treatment incentives may benefit not only alcoholics but also someone with other addictive behaviors.

The three women in this group were in their mid-30s, early 50s, and early 70s, and all of them were Caucasian. All of them had been or were presently involved in self-directed learning or in the training of others.

Flo recalled what possibly led to her loss of self-esteem while growing up:

I think one of the things when I was younger [that affected me] is that I was always heavy and
sometimes the kids liked to tease me about that. I became very sensitive about my weight until I was probably in my early 20s.

She is unsure whether her loss of self had a bearing on her limited use of drugs and alcohol. Flo claimed to have regained her self-esteem; this is quite different from some other residents who were unable to regain the lost self-esteem and continued searching for relief of their pain through more and more addictive behavior.

Regarding the criminal justice system and women's role in it, Flo made the following observation:

There's an overall view in society that if a man goes to prison and he's made a mistake he can rehabilitate, come home, and be the model citizen. If a woman commits a crime, she's bad to the core, she'll never change. I think that's a way that women have been viewed for a long time.

Fran, in her early 50s, recounts her reaction to treatment while incarcerated:

I'm not a drinker, I'm not an alcoholic, I'm not sexually abused, so there. They did have a self-image type class but I have put those on. I have done 13-week seminars on those [outside WCCI].

Fran also indicated that her childhood was far different than most of the other residents. Regarding her experiences, Fran stated, "I would say most of my experiences were positive. I had the stability behind me of a so-called, and I hate that term, 'normal childhood.'"

Fran was one of the few women who felt that she had been falsely convicted. If that is in fact the case, what
is it like for an innocent middle-aged woman to be incarcerated? Her response resounded on a note of hope.

Well, the biggest problem is accepting the fact that it is happening to you. You read about it happening, but that's a totally different thing than what actually happened. [In the long run] it basically reinforced how [I feel] about myself. How strong I am. . . . In bitterness the only one that hurts is me. I want to come out of this in as good of shape as I can.

However, Fran could see the resemblance between herself and some of the other residents, because she had suffered considerable loss of self-esteem when undergoing a personal crisis in her early 20s.

A lot of them are at the point where I was 30 years ago, and I guess I came out of that by myself with no help, basically. Part of that was my fault because I wouldn't accept some help. What I want and what I'm trying to do is give them at least a little bit of help [because] the number of these women in here that have been sexually abused as children is terrible.

As a result of her empathy, Fran works with a group of her peers in an industrial sewing enterprise that not only makes products for various commercial companies but also helps some of these women rebuild lost self-esteem by improving their skills. Even though this may involve menial tasks, the increased self-esteem that is generated may be very beneficial.

The women of the various groups were from diverse lifestyles or at least they had been while growing up. One of the most illustrative of these was the lifestyle of Fay, from The Non-Abused group. She had grown up in the southern
Midwest, where she purportedly had access to the best schools, education, clothes, and environment during her early childhood and adolescent years. However, Fay was an admitted lesbian and had been for most of her life. She may have suffered loss of self-esteem from this lifestyle, but she did not recall such a loss. However, she did express concern regarding personal situations in her life. Fay made the following observation concerning her chosen lifestyle.

I think it was born in me because as I look back I can remember always liking the little girls, you know, in my crowd. We did beautiful things. We rode horses. We had dogs and cats, and we groomed them for shows and things like that. I can remember necking with the little girls when I was like 10 or 11 years old. Now that's why I think it was born in me or grew from my lifestyle. I think it was a combination of both, I really do.

As a matter of fact, from the time I was about 14 I had two separate wardrobes. I loved slacks, and I think I was patterning myself after my father who was a beautiful dresser and he was a big guy. I went to the best stores in the city. I had unlimited credit rating on my mother and father's accounts, and I'd buy all fantastic slacks and jackets and private eye coats and shoes. Then I would go to the women's side, and I was equally happy in there buying picture hats and dresses, evening gowns to go to parties. A dual personality, sort of... I had several affairs in my teens and early 20s and finally I decided, well, straight life was not for me.

Fay eventually turned to careless checkwriting, because she no longer had unlimited access to large amounts of cash and someone to take care of her financial indiscretions. This happened after she leased part of her business to associates and her father became seriously ill. She talked about her checkwriting activities:
What made me write checks? I had always known how to write checks. Surviving, or being with the woman I wanted to be with. Usually it was to make bond for a woman or sending money to her children, same thing. Always in my own name, always non-sufficient fund. No forgery involved, nothing. Well, away from my mother and father, I had always been able to turn to them and depend on them. I was brought up that way. Then when my father collapsed, I realized somebody had to be strong within the three of us so I took the reins.

After that I missed being with gay people. Where am I going to find gay people that were decent where I was living. I returned to California, and, of course, everything was in a hell of a fix. I'd been gone for many years at that time. I took over my business place again, but I kept one of the associates as a partner. Unfortunately, he was also gay and having all kinds of personal problems. Without really thinking of consequences, I continued writing checks. Then it came to the point where I didn't have the money so when you are trapped, I wrote checks for survival.

Fay continued to write bad checks for a good part of her life, which resulted in various incarcerations in the western United States, until finally:

I had just reached the end of the line. There was no place to go. I had no home. My cat had been stolen and she had been with me for 13 years, everywhere I went.

But then I started thinking, "Now, this could be me." Then I said, "No. No. It will never be me." I would never reduce myself to crawling in a kotex box over a grate where the rats were running. This was on the street in downtown D.C., and I thought, "What would I do?" and I felt my three checkbooks in my purse and patted them. I said that's what I would do this time only. I would be smart this time. But I wasn't smart.

In conclusion, Fay made the following observation concerning the transition in her life: "Ugly. All ugly. Now ugly. From beautiful to ugly."
What is the nature of reality? That question may be answered in many ways for different people, depending upon their various interpretations of life's circumstances. For Freire, 'it was "man's ontological vocation," according to Richard Shaull who wrote the forward to the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). He further described this role, alluded to by Freire, as being assigned to a person:

Who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This world to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a given reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved. It is the material used by man to create history, a task which he performs as he overcomes that which is dehumanizing at any particular time and place and dares to create the qualitatively new. (pp. 12-13)

Further, Shaull states that, according to Freire, "there is no such thing as a 'neutral' educational process."

In stating this premise, Shaull further indicates that:

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by
which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 15)

The method by which this "practice of freedom" is created is through the "notion of consciousness" or "conscious existence," which is the "highest form of reflection of reality" (Luria, 1976, p. 8). For Freire, it manifested itself in the form of "conscientizacao" or "critical consciousness" which "refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 19).

Further, Luria (1976) states that "from the outset, the social forms of human life begin to determine human mental development" (p. 9). He makes the following declaration:

From birth on, children live in a world of things social labor has created: products of history. They learn to communicate with others around them and develop relationships with things through the help of adults. Children assimilate language--a ready-made product of sociohistorical development--and use it to analyze, generalize, and encode experience. They name things, denoting them with expressions established earlier in human history, and thus assign things to certain categories and acquire knowledge. (p. 9)

Citing Vygotsky, with whom he studied and worked closely, Luria maintains that this process is made easier, since "social history has established the system of language and logical codes that permit men to make the leap from the sensory to the rational" (p. 10). This early learning is sensory and gradually becomes rational.
Under the influence of adult speech, the child distinguishes and fixes on behavioral goals; he rethinks relationships between things; he thinks up new forms of child-adult relations; he reevaluates the behavior of others and then his own; he develops new emotional responses and affective categories which through language become generalized emotions and character traits. (p. 11)

For Vygotsky and Luria this is a complex developmental process which moves from sensory to rational consciousness.

This entire complex process which is closely related to the incorporation of language into the child's mental life, results in a radical reorganization of the thinking that provides for the reflection of reality and the very processes of human activity. (p. 11)

This change, or reorganization, may be one of the fundamental steps between early learning and adult learning, for, as Vygotsky has observed, "The young child thinks by remembering, [the] adolescent remembers by thinking" (Luria, p. 11). At whatever level the change takes place, Vygotsky called this process the "system structure of consciousness" (p. 11).

This changing process also incorporates the ideas of formal and informal learning which are abundant at the adolescent and adult levels. However, at the adult level, the main characteristic of learning "is the fact that adults engage in an educational activity because of some innate desire for developing new skills, acquiring new knowledge, improving already assimilated competences, or sharpening powers of self-insight" (Brookfield, 1986, p. 11). Moreover, "one thing that has become dramatically
clear is that many people have not learned the things they need in order to be productive citizens in today's changing world" (McKenna, Conti, & Fellenz, 1994, p. 1). Furthermore, "scholars and researchers have devoted little attention to informal learning in natural social settings" (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982, p. 153).

However, case study scenarios of the women residents interviewed in this study revealed learning in both formal and informal settings. Some experiences which impacted their lives were recollected from the past, while other experiences were taking place at the time of the interviews. Further, experiences are visions of the changes that have taken place and of expectations of the future. In most cases, there is a consciousness of what has happened, how impediments have impacted their lives, and what is expected for the future. Some of the women had undergone that critical consciousness of the mind, but they were ill-equipped socially or educationally to make any drastic changes. Many were dealing with the reality of their lives. However, the women's hope for the future was that there will be a better reality than the past.
The Under-Educated

The Under-Educated group consisted of five women who did not have high school diplomas or GED certificates at the time of the interviews. All of these women at the time were in some form of GED, ABE, or treatment program at the center. While most were motivated in this direction, some showed little interest other than what was mandated by the requirements of WCC. In any case, there were times when other variables affected learning. Some of these variables were overcome and others lasted for years. Examples were found in two of the women interviewed in this group. Abbie, who was found to have suffered from a learning disability during her limited formal education, had the following observation to make concerning her past and present learning agenda. "I want to learn, ya know. Before, I didn't give a damn." Anna, who had been relegated to copying other people early in life, was asked how she learned. Her response was, "Well, not in most things but in math, by watching people. I even watch people today." It is possible that very little had changed for Anna. It should be pointed out, however, that she did not learn how to read and write until she was 9 years old.

Agnes, on the other hand, did not possess a positive attitude toward learning. "I'm just going to school because
I have to go to school. Other than that, I don't care. If I didn't have to go I wouldn't. I don't see a reason for a GED. I don't see it. If you don't get it, too bad, you're out of luck." Agnes had been given 30 days in maximum confinement for rules infraction, and in order to get the confinement lessened, "I had to attend school. That is the only reason I'm why I'm attending. Other than that I would not be going."

The other two women in this group were somewhat more positive even though their backgrounds were replete with abuse which highly affected their formal education. Ada looked at her present condition with the following observation, based upon her informal learning from the past: "I've got a clean mind. I mean, I'm not influenced by any goddamn man that's gonna beat me if I don't do what I'm supposed to do or that what he wants me to do." However, Allie, who is somewhat older, seemed to be more philosophic about her realization of past and present circumstances.

Life is an education. As the saying goes: "You have to live and learn." Well, each thing that you do right or wrong, you're going to learn something from it. You might make the same mistake two or three times, but each time you do you learn something more from it. It's like picking cherries off a tree. You pick one and you gotta pick another in order to get quantity.

Abbie grew up without experiencing any specific physical or sexual abuse. However, psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse was evident and it affected her learning. It was also discovered in junior high that she
had a learning disability, and she endured a great deal of criticism and mental abuse about this from her family. In addition, she was raped on two occasions while participating in school-related activities. Therefore, education for her at any level was difficult and remained that way at WCC.

Abbie remembered two events relating to school and home. The first involved her learning disability.

From first to sixth grade I had no problems. I never really learned I had a learning problem with like reading at all until I got into junior high. I noticed it when I was in junior high when I was in seventh grade before I got transferred that the work was a lot harder there. There was more school books. I didn't like it. Not at all.

The second event related to the verbal and mental abuse she suffered after it was discovered that she had the learning disability. She also commented on her general reaction to this abuse.

Well, growing up, it was always referred to. . . . I don't know if it was meant to hurt me or make me wise up and be smart or something. It was that I'd be told by my mother that you're not gonna amount to nothing. You're a special education kid. You're retarded. You're not gonna make anything out of yourself. Well, ya know, I learned and was told I ain't gonna do nothing. I can't learn nothing. I'd put on a innocent look, retarded look, whatever you want to call it, and thought, "Well, I can't do that. There's no use."

For Abbie, as with so many others, this developed into a self-fulfilling prophecy in that, if an individual is frequently told that he or she cannot do anything, he or she proceeds to make the negative comments come true.
With regard to the rape that was connected to the school-related activity, Abbie recalled:

I enjoyed some of the school. Ya know, there's only one part I regretted at school, and I really can't blame that part on the school. When I'd go to school and I'd come home, I'd be on like such a natural high. The only thing I regret about the school that is I went through a summer school and the teacher would send a different one of the girls uptown to get stuff. Well, I went by myself and the teacher allowed me to have an hour and a half where it normally took an hour. She'd let me take my time going up and back because of my knee problem. On two different accounts is when I got raped when I went to get something for her.

These incidents resulted in severe problems at home for Abbie. She eventually dropped out of school and never quite recovered from the abuse. In addition, she was unable to obtain her GED by the time the interviews were concluded.

Anna, who was severely abused and neglected by her mother, was unable to read or write until she was 9 years old. The abuse began as early as she could remember. Her personal and emotional needs were neglected, not only by her mother but by the school she attended. She recalled what it was like in school before she learned to write:

When I was 9 years old I didn't know how to read and write. I copied the other kids 'cause I didn't know. I mean, it was like that in kindergarten, and we really didn't do anything there. I can remember being in school, but I don't remember what grade it was. I remember that I was watching those kids because they had the pencil and they were writing like d's or i's and all that stuff. I was watching them, and I'd watch them to learn, to try to learn how to do it. But they were doing what I couldn't do. I don't know how I got to be 9 years old without the teachers knowing that I couldn't write, but it happened. To this day I still don't understand
how. It was almost as if they didn't pay any attention to me, but I can still see myself sitting there watching those kids, trying to copy what they were doing. I guess it must have looked like I was really writing. I didn't turn anything. I felt like a failure. Sometimes I didn't even go to school.

After learning to read and write I felt like I was a whole different person, ya know. I could use words, too. Talk better. I could write better.

In the meantime, the abuse continued, and Anna recalled further that:

When I turned 9 they put me in a foster home with these people, and they didn't realize I didn't know how to read and write. They thought I did, so at first they left me alone. They were Christian people, and they sent me to church school. The one thing I couldn't believe was I bluffed them really bad. I don't know how I did it, but I did. So one Sunday they were going to Sunday School and, since everybody in the family was asked to read from the Bible, my turn eventually came. I was trying to read, and the page was upside down. My foster mother saw this and goes, "You don't know how to read, do you?" I just looked a her, and I took off outside 'cause I was scared. I went to have lunch. After awhile she came up there and got me, and we talked. She didn't hit me or anything.

She took me out of school for a whole year, and she taught me. She spent time with me, and she taught me to read and write. I kind of resented her because I was thinking that it should of been my mom doing that with me, but after awhile everything was okay. I stayed there with them for almost 2-1/2 years, and then they wanted to adopt me. But my mom kind of said, "No." She didn't want me liking people or them adopting her daughter, so she got herself together, or whatever you would call it, and I went back to live with her.

Despite the negative forces in Anna's life, learning to read was a positive event that impacted her self-concept.
After learning to read and write, I felt like a whole different person. I could use words. Talk better. . . . It was like I read everything I could get my hands on. That's probably the only positive thing that I can remember about schooling--home school. After I learned to read, it was like I didn't care about anything else, even after I dropped out of school.

Reading opened new worlds for Anna and allowed her to exercise her imagination. However, although writing was not as exciting, it was still a rewarding learning experience.

Then, for writing, she would help me the same way she did with the reading. I could write my own name. When I first started writing I was thinking I couldn't do this. She kept encouraging me. She would say, "I want you to write out this sentence," and pretty soon I'd copy it. I'd have to cover it up so I could write it the second time without looking.

However, the joy she initially expressed was short-lived, at least as far as her general feelings and those of her foster parents were concerned.

They were excited, and then after awhile it was just a thing. It was an accomplishment, but I mean, they didn't carry on for months and months and months. I just learned how to read and it was no big deal. As you grow older you learn from what people say.

Learning by listening to what people--such as teachers--say and by communicating with others--such as students--influenced Anna's learning style.

Sometimes I can tune people out. What I'm listening to I don't want to hear, so I just tune them out. That's really easy for me. But if I don't want to learn anything, I ain't gonna learn it. It's all up to the person that's teaching me. I mean, that's how I look at it. I never talked to a teacher so probably the only person who ever taught me anything was either my foster mom or her
husband. Or I taught myself by watching other people.

Regarding her recovery and present reality, Anna had the following comments:

I've learned a lot because I'm in the Aftercare, and there's also CD, chemical dependent programs. I see a lot of that in my family. A lot of denial, a lot of co-dependency, and stuff like that. I learned that we don't have to suffer. It's okay to be an alcoholic and an addict and a co-dependent, but it's not okay to be in denial or to stay in your addiction. That's the solution right there. I learned a lot, and it's okay if people want to keep on because that's not your responsibility to take care of that for the other person. Your responsibility is to yourself.

At first, Anna considered that her responsibility first to herself was "heartless and cold." However, after she realized what had led up to the killing of her mother, she began to comprehend that she "had crossed that line . . . everybody has a line to cross," and she came to understand that she "really wasn't 'heartless and cold'" but, rather, that she needed help. Getting that help was her primary goal at the time of her interviews.

Agnes, another woman who grew up with a certain amount of abuse in the home, had many problems which carried over and were reflected in her school attendance and her negative attitude about the entire learning process. However, throughout the interview process she gradually began to admit that she had some positive reflections of school. Nevertheless, her ill feelings toward school resulted
primarily from a dysfunctional family environment. "My family was different."

Her parents were divorced and she had been sexually abused by her stepfather. She further recalled, "My brothers were a lot older than me. They would always have some crisis or something, and I always got caught in the middle." Regarding the abuse, "I didn't let anybody know what was going on at home, of course, but it came out in my attitude and my attendance at school." Because of her home situation, she shied away from people.

In the long run it got me. I didn't have any friends so I didn't go out, and I wouldn't go places. My dad had bought us a TV one year for Christmas. I would stay in my room a lot, and I'd come up and get myself something to eat. That's how it was in our family, kind of like fend for yourself. I'd get myself something to eat every morning, and a lot of the times I'd just stay in my room after school. I hated going to school. I'd always try to tell my dad I was sick. There was a lot of that, you know.

In addition, when the family moved and she had to change schools, she felt that her family's secrets followed her:

I'd walk into school, and they'd say, "Oh, we already know about you. We know what happened." Well, what that did was made me just not want to go to school. My family had changed, but it was real hard because I didn't know how to take it. I didn't want to say, you're right. How did you know? I'd say, oh, they are full of crap. They don't know what they're talking about. I blew it off.

I just rebelled. I think 'cause I was forced to go to school. I would go to school but leave my books at home so then Mom and Dad would be called at work. But you know, half the time in school I would be stoned or just be bad.
Much of her rebellion resulted from her brothers' involvement in drugs and their influence in Agnes' own drug problem, which further affected her attendance at school.

When I was going to school and stuff, it came to the point where I was skipping school a lot just because I didn't want to go. I was too busy getting high. I was probably about 12. My brothers were using, and I tried it and liked it. It got to the point where if I was to skip school one more time I would be kicked out, expelled, or whatever. This was about the time I was getting emancipated, and I told them I didn't care. I said, "I hope you do. That way I don't have to come back." The school kind of got involved in my family. They thought something was wrong, too, just because the way I was acting, you know. Then when I went out to California I really did the drugs up big.

As previously noted, Agnes did recall something positive about formal education. It was "probably in my seventh grade year I had a teacher that helped me read. I didn't know how to read very good until she helped me." Agnes did not recall anything in particular about this teacher "except for her paying attention to me. That was the main thing. Otherwise, you know, every time you mention education I think of her. That is how important she is to me."

Regardless how much this specific teacher meant to Agnes, that one positive recollection could not overshadow her negative attitude toward school, which was probably the most intense of any of the women interviewed.

I just didn't like it--I never liked school. There was nothing I ever liked about it. As a matter of fact, when I got into my 8th and 9th grade year, I was skipping school, and I would
never go. Never go and usually never show up. One year, I never showed up for school that whole year, and they went in after me then and brought me back in. This is a real hard subject because I can't say I was ever interested in school. I never got any attention. I didn't get nothing, and I didn't do anything in school. That's why when you ask about my education, I don't really have one, period. I can't remember my school years. I can't and I don't see the point. I was in so many schools and met so many new people. I just don't think about my past.

That is one thing that I think people make a big mistake over. That is that you need [education] to make it out there. I don't have to have an education to make it out there. I've done it before without having an education. I made it fine, you know. I don't have to have anything. Everybody seems to think you do, but you don't. You know, that's why it isn't important to me. I don't care about it; I just don't. It's nothing real exciting.

This was the attitude Agnes brought into the GED program at WCC. Her attempts to obtain her GED had been threatened at various times when she was given maximum confinement during her incarceration periods. She reiterated:

I just don't like school. I hate school, period. I hate school. When they told me I have to get an education, I wanted to throw up. I thought, "Oh wonderful." I just don't like school. I don't care about it. Again, what is the sense of getting your GED? A GED makes you look stupid when you go out to get a job, when they don't want a GED. They look at you and say, "Oh, you didn't graduate from high school." I don't see the sense in it. I don't see a sense in having it. I think it is ridiculous to even have it. You think everybody else that did it wants to frame it on the wall and make copies of it. I think it's stupid. I think it is ridiculous. I really do. If you didn't want to do it in high school why would you want to do it now?
Although there seemed to be no hope for Agnes, there were times when elements of the GED process at WCC seemed positive to her. Indeed, at the time of the interviews there were some vague signs of change in her attitude toward school.

It may be that interjecting learning tools and technology into programs would give some students more incentive, especially when their previous encounters with the education system have been negative or dull. In that respect, Agnes actually enjoyed some of the more technical classes.

Sometimes it's similar to when I was in high school. We do computers and stuff. I think that gets a lot of students to enjoy school better--to work on computers or taking timing tests. I think that helps students, not only myself, but other people as well and makes them think good, you know.

Another factor that influences students to learn is caring teachers, whether in a regular classroom or a GED class. Again, for Agnes, the teacher in the seventh grade and the one she encountered at WCC had positive influences on her. Regarding her teacher at WCC:

He has taught me a lot. I don't know, I mean, I've learned. I'm trying to take my GED since I got here. Five times I've tried, and my scores keep getting higher. That must be telling you something. He makes it fun. We don't sit there and do a bunch of work; we work on the computer. It's fun, and it makes me want to go. I just sit and concentrate, take notes, and do what I have to do.
Agnes had other positive reflections on the GED program at WCC. This was especially true when she saw her attitude toward learning improve. This attitude change appears to have been centered around a growing self-concept and positive learning.

I liked the business courses. I think I liked them because I was good at them. I mean, they were easy classes to take. They were easy courses to get good grades in for me because I just have a natural ability for them. I love accounting, but I hate school. There was nothing I liked about it.

However, Agnes discussed the many extenuating circumstances from her past which affected her performance in school. For example, she had "cheated" during high school, but, "There is no possible way to cheat in here." She also admitted that much of her attitude toward school depended on how she felt. At one interview, she recalled her general physical and mental condition during the prior two days and how it affected her at school.

I think the reason why, well, last night I got help going to sleep. I got up this morning. I was happy, and I was ready to go to school. Yesterday, I had a bad night before, and then I had to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning. It's just like eating. If you don't eat, like yesterday I didn't eat in the morning and I felt terrible, but today I got up, ate breakfast, and went off to school and I was fine. I wanted to go to school but it's like my responsibility. It's up to me to get that sleep and do the things I have to do to be there.

Agnes was asked what she would change about her life if she had a chance to do things over. Clearly, "it would probably be my education. I would've stayed in school. I
would have to say more education, too, because I think there is a lot more out there that we are not being told." This reversal in attitudes possibly resulted from a change in Agnes' environment, and by her interactions with "caring teachers." Environmental changes may also affect other students moving from formal educational settings to adult learning environments. Thus, perhaps there is hope for a better reality for Agnes.

Ada, the fourth woman in the Under-Educated group, was the victim not only of psychological and verbal abuse, but also of sexual abuse by her stepfather at age 9. In addition to the abuse, she discovered alcohol was an effective way to escape the pain caused by the abuse. The ramifications of the abuse and alcohol use are reflected in her attitude toward school.

Ada recalled that, in response to the abuse, her drinking became commonplace. Because she was responsible for taking care for her younger brothers, drinking became a nightly affair, since there was no one home to correct her actions.

I would put the boys to bed. They'd eat dinner and they'd play. After they took their baths and ate, then they'd be in bed at 9. I never saw my mom and dad. I would drink up until like 5 minutes to 11 when my mother was coming home and then I would be in bed before she came in. She would never know. She never knew. Not once. Never! It was really tough, and I would skip school the next morning. I would go to my friend's house and pass out on their couch until afternoon classes and then go to school. I got called in quite a bit. They would call my parents
and tell them I was skipping school. They never did anything to me. I was just like, "Oh, she's probably really tired; she's babysitting, ya know."

She further recalled how she felt when she did go to school:

I would go to school angry. If I was hit in the morning before school or any of my brothers were hit I'd be in an angry mood, and I would take it to school with me. It would go right with me, and I was always in trouble in school. Well, if I would get in a fight at school I would get sent home and that would cause more problems. But then I just kept running away. I wouldn't go to school. If my dad would beat me in the morning or at lunch and I had a black eye, I wouldn't go to school. I would skip school.

She also admitted that she "went to school to escape the problems at home," and usually "that was the only reason I attended." She further indicated that, whether she went to her friend's house first or directly to school, she "went to school half drunk most of the time." As a result, "My grades were horrible. I didn't do well. I just didn't get much out of it."

As to specific school subjects, Ada did recall some positive experiences in social studies classes. However, math was a different matter. Based upon her recollections, it would appear that positive and negative experiences can be directly related to teachers, how they present their subject matter and how they are perceived by their students. Ada recalled the following general overview of her school experiences.
My favorite subject, I think, was social studies. I hated math. I still hate math. I liked social studies 'cause I had a good teacher. It was a fun class, and I learned a lot just through his teaching--the way he taught. I just didn't understand math. We didn't have a teacher that really explained it. He graded our papers and handed them back like he hated us. I skipped math a lot. I went to all my social studies classes. I liked the way the class was taught. The social studies class was taught in a fun way. It was like we would play teams against teams. It was competitive to learn our states and capitals: It would be one team against another team, and that's how we played. You would have to run to the map. It was just fun. We never had homework. It was a class that demanded your full attention the full hour and a half. It was a fun class, and he was also friends with my family. Like I said, we didn't have homework. I learned just from the class. You could ask me probably any state today, and I could tell you the capital.

Another element of her life that affected Ada's formal education was her strict fundamentalist religious background:

I was raised in an area of strict religion. The women had to wear dresses over their legs every day of the year. There were no pants involved. No makeup; you couldn't cut your hair. You were just a little secluded from the world. My belief to this day is I have rebelled totally against religion. I'm just coming back right now in my alcohol and drug treatment where I'm accepting that part of the society drilled into me--the religion part. But the effect that it had on me was I rebelled, and I've been in trouble ever since. I wanted to try everything that everybody else did in school 'cause I never got to.

Peer relationships were also directly impacted by her strict religious training, and she remembered that she "never had any friends."

I was made fun of due to the religion. In our religion, and I suppose I should explain that it was strict; very, very strict; we went to church
Sunday morning, Sunday night, Monday night, Wednesday night, and Friday night. The religion was women do not cut their hair, women do not wear makeup, women wear dresses below their knees and shirts below their elbows at all times. No sports, no television, no radios, no nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. So of course we were made fun of.

However, in spite of this predicament, she became a cheerleader during her sophomore and junior years in high school. This accomplishment gave Ada a degree of rapport with her peers.

However, she quit school before graduation, primarily because of the toxic home environment. She pursued a short-lived career as a model, which she eventually abandoned when her alcohol use had escalated and become cocaine addiction, and she could not maintain the rigorous schedule involved.

Regarding her incarceration and present informal or social learning capacity, Ada confessed that "alcohol and drug abuse were the main factor in my being here. I thought I couldn't live without drugs or alcohol. I never thought it was possible." She compared her present state to her psychological state of the past.

Have you ever heard that saying that there's no prison like the prison that you have in your mind. That was me. This place is cake compared to the prison I had in my head. I had a brick wall--thick, thick, thick--and I had so many secrets in there, from the time I was child. That was definitely me. That's what I'm coming just to realize, in the last couple of weeks where I'm at. Finally, because I don't have a prison in my mind anymore. It's gone. I had to let it go. This place to me was just another place and in just over the last couple of weeks I've realized, "Holy
She explained how she believed she arrived at this new consciousness:

What happened to me, I think, was finally realizing that my life was unmanageable. I had no control over where I went. That I couldn't fight anymore. I couldn't fight my father anymore. I couldn't fight my [ex-husband] anymore. I just felt defeated. Then I came here, and then I was just tired of fighting. I was tired of carrying all this shit, but I was so afraid that once I let go of everything that I would have to do it over, go through this big trail of life by myself.

Ada's self-realizations came about over a period of time, and they included learning about her past, dealing with it, and putting it behind her.

I don't know that I can understand psychological abuse. Why now I can forgive the sexual abuse or the psychological abuse. For me, forgiving the sexual abuse took a long time. I'm 25 years old, and it took a long time. It's okay to forgive and it's okay not to forget, but it's not okay to continue these hateful feelings. You'll never forget. No. But if you don't forgive truly, I mean, really honestly and truly in your heart forgive, you're gonna be back. I've tried to commit suicide three times. Why? I can't tell you why. I was alone. I was scared. I wasn't being beat. I was accustomed to the ritual, routine thing I had as a child.

This was the point at which she realized that changes in her life were necessary. It was as though she had to reach her lowest point mentally and emotionally before any real change could begin to take place. Regarding this change in her informal, social learning, she made the following comments:

Here I've got a lot of my self-esteem back. I like me again. I'm doing this with a sober mind. I'm not drinking. I'm not doing drugs so it is a
different learning experience for me, and I'm doing it on my own this time. I don't really care if there's a group or not, now. It's not that big of a deal to me now. I don't really care as long as I get what I need. Who cares?

She observed that "what I had to do first was to like myself and to believe I was worth liking. I've learned to get over my self-centeredness and to rise above thinking that I'm God."

Ada was asked how she arrived at this realization and what her hopes were for the future.

I don't want to get drunk again or so fucking high that I'm slicing myself or taking pills and not knowing it. I want to live. I want to live now. I have a wonderful, wonderful person in my life for a change. I want to move on. I don't want to be who I used to be anymore.

Allie, the last woman in the Under-Educated group, appeared to have been one of the most severely abused of all those interviewed. Even though she was a Native American, most of her earlier years were spent with a White stepfather who sexually and physically abused her. She also spent a considerable amount of time in a motorcycle gang with her real father (although she was unaware at the time that he was her father) and her brothers. During that time, her brothers supplied her with dope and her father drank and did drugs with her. According to Allie, her father later told her that he chose not to reveal his identity to her at that time because of her belligerence and emotional state. Finally, she reported that two of her brothers and an uncle
raped her at least once during this time, and she was also abused, mistreated, and neglected in other ways.

Discussing earlier times in a dysfunctional home environment, which directly affected her formal learning, Allie recalled some of the humiliation she encountered in grade school.

I was a real problem child. I was an isolated child, more or less. I isolated myself from other people, other kids. I didn't play with anybody at recess or if I did I was really, really mean to them. With the kids at school and stuff, they were mean back to me. I always wore the hand-me-downs to school while my sisters wore the new stuff. So you know, it was taking its toll to where I felt I had to be the toughest kid in that school, or I wasn't going to survive.

Some of the trauma, however, was eased by the fact that "I had one teacher that really worked with me. She was the one person I could talk to about my abuse (but she would stare at me). If we were doing a play or something, I'd be the stray dog. She knew the reason why." For Allie, the reason was that she simply felt socially inferior to her peers.

However, what she most hated was "having to go home from school" because, even if school was bad, home was worse.

I think it was partly because of my age 'cause of the way my home life was. My attention span and stuff was short, but at school I would throw myself into my studies and everything. I picked up as much as I could. I felt that if I kept good grades that I'd be less hassled at home. I wouldn't be inferior to my sisters or my brothers as much as I was.
She remembered that "I liked art classes and learning how to write and the attention that the teachers would spend with me when [I was] at that age." However, the positive aspects of school were not enough to keep negative thoughts about herself from entering her mind.

I seen myself as a stupid child, a slow child because being unaware of my dyslexia, I didn't know what it was. I thought, "Well, okay, I see this different so therefore I must be stupid, you know." It really made it hard, and that's why I struggled through school.

Even though there appears to have been no official diagnosis until early adulthood, it was generally accepted that dyslexia was a part of her learning disability, because she exhibited its characteristics. After she arrived at WCC she began to try to understand more about her learning problem. Allie made the following observations concerning her dyslexia, which appeared relevant as far as her formal and informal learning were concerned:

I don't think that they picked up on my dyslexia until like in the fifth or sixth grade because that was when I can remember them putting me in these classes where we had that extra attention on working with math and different things. My grades dropped, and I got frustrated a lot with what I was doing. I would see a problem written a certain way, and I'd work it out and get it right. It would come out right that way to me. But when the teacher would check it, the answer would be wrong because there was one or two numbers that were reversed. But I didn't see it as reversed. They didn't see it to be appropriately written. It was like writing something, and it would be one or two letters that would be reversed. Like now, it's with smaller words like "it" and "is." You know, when I write my brothers, if I'm writing fast or typing fast it reverses, but as a child I wrote real small and real slow but my letters
would still be reversed, and I'd get really frustrated with it.

Although special education classes are designed to help students with their learning disabilities, they can have a demoralizing effect which will cause the person to develop a negative attitude toward learning. Allie recalled what this arrangement did for her and the effect it had on her learning:

I really felt really stupid that I had to go to speech therapy and special ed as a child because the kids that went there were considered stupid or retards or whatever. I didn't care about learning. It made me really rebellious in school. I didn't want to learn. I always felt that I was stupid. I was inaccurate. I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that because I was seeing things different than other people were. I pronounced words different than a lot of people did. It took me awhile to learn to speak English because I was around my grandmother a lot. I spoke a lot of Indian which made it hard for me to pronounce certain words or certain things or really talking openly in a class or a class discussion or answering a question. They thought I was a freak because I would get to thinking faster than I could talk. I would go ask the teacher something, and I would start to ask her in Indian. Then it would dawn on me, I'd remember this teacher is not going to understand what you're saying. You're not at home with grandma. So I would have to take my time to pronounce the words, and I couldn't get my meaning across. I would get really frustrated and angry about it. I'd just forget it and not do it until I got home and had my grandma explain it to me.

Fortunately, Allie had her grandparents. Concerning this environment, she recounted her greatfulness for what they had done to help her.

Living with my grandparents was a blessing to me because my grandfather always told me that and education was something that no one could take
away from you until the day you die. My grandpa and my grandma would work with me on my homework and stuff. If I didn't understand it they would explain it to me. With my mom and my adopted father, there was nothing. At that time I would've done anything to stay with my grandparents.

Allie was also concerned with moving from school to school, and many times she received different treatment, not only from other students but from her teachers as well. She remembered one particular incident which had resounding effects on her feelings toward education:

I was in junior high and we were living in another state at that point and time, as we moved a lot. My mom had been burnt in a house fire when she was eight years old, and she had scars on her face and hands. Well, she had come to the school one day to pick me up for some doctor's appointment or shots. I don't remember what it was. That afternoon when I got back this teacher told me that my mom could not come to the school to pick me up because she was a scarred-up freak. She was a disgrace to society; she shouldn't be seen in public. Well, I picked up a plastic chair, and I threw it at this teacher. I said, "You have no right to talk about my mom that way." They called Bob, my adopted father, and he came down, and all the way home he beat me up. When we got home he told my mom that I had rebelled enough and that I was never going to amount to anything. I should pack my stuff and get out of the house because he was no longer going to take care of me or feed me or anything like that. This made me happy because I thought, "Well, I'm getting away from the abuse." My mom said, "My daughter is not going to live on the street." So he says, "Well, if you love her that much then leave with her." So my mom and I left, and she had divorced him.

The incident may have been important to Allie because, "I was really excited because it was one of the few times that my mom took an interest in me." However, as a result of the incident, she was beaten by her adopted father, and
was suspended from school for three days. After that, "I would go to school really stoned half of the time, so it was like I was there, but I wasn't. I didn't pay attention much after that, because you got this goofy teacher that's really caused you a problem, you're going to make a joke about it."

Much of Allie's informal and social learning experiences at WCC were centered around her earlier education. She came to the realization that she had:

Given my mind and my brain a chance to slow down, reverse so that I can focus better and I find that I'm not ashamed of it. I mean I have dyslexia. I can speak out and say I'm an alcoholic. I'm a drug addict, and I also have a learning disability called dyslexia. It's not something to be hid, it's something to be worked with. I'm more aware of things now than I was two years ago, three years ago.

I'm working on my education. Anybody with a learning disability has to treat it as an addiction. They have to work harder to accomplish something because it is much harder to learn for them. They're learning to deal with these problems that another person who doesn't have this disability or a comprehension problem doesn't have. A person with one has to strive harder to achieve the learning capacity more so than the person without the problem. It's helped me realize where my anger has come from.

Regardless of how she may have felt personally, there were times when things did not seem to progress as she would have liked.

Still, to some I may be stupid and inaccurate. I can do things, but still I feel inadequate because these other women in my program or this juvenile center were able to take tests and see them as they were written. I know the material, and I can do it. But I just couldn't see it in the right way. I see myself as striving to learn now. Wanting to learn. A patient learner now. I don't
see myself as being stupid or inadequate. I just have to work a little harder than a person that doesn't have a disability to learn.

She discussed how she felt about learning and where she wanted to direct her energies in the future:

I feel as an adult that my education is very, very important. Anybody's education is important. I'm willing to learn whatever I can as far as different skills, different things like in computers and things that are coming in now. Understanding and working with people with learning disabilities or younger people who have been incarcerated, I would like to do because they say drugs and alcohol deteriorate your brain to a certain point.

That type of learning has affected me here. It has brought me to a level of my math and other subjects where I could have it read to me and I could pick it right up and do it. But to sit down and read it and then do it, that slows me down or confuses me, frustrates me, and then I just quit, I don't do it. It's brought my interests up in education and the educational part for younger children and the younger adults that are working for people with learning disabilities. Dyslexia is one but there are other people that have problems in comprehension and different things like that. It shows that I'm not the only person in the world that has dyslexia or has a hard time or would not allow myself to comprehend something because my attention span would not be there.

Allie further reflected on her learning experiences at WCC with the following observation:

I'm getting treated for my drug and alcohol. I'm getting treatment for my sexual abuse. I'm learning. I'm going to anger management. I'm learning how to deal with my anger. I'm learning that it was not my fault that I was violated or that I was abused. I'm learning that my drugs and alcohol were a coping mechanism, a surviving mechanism. I've learned that if I go back out there and I drink and use again, it'll either lead me back in here or to death. It may lead me to losing everybody that cares about me now. Where it's not a lifestyle that I choose to live
anymore. I want something out of my life. I want to go to college. I want to go back to school when I get out. . . . I've strived in here, I've been going to school since I've been in here. I'm not sitting here doing nothing with my time like I could be. I'm doing something for myself. I'm not doing it because the classification board or parole board tells me I have to. I'm doing it because I want to.

There seemed to have been a distinct difference among the attitudes of the women interviewed, since there were those who wanted to do something and those who perceived they had to or were forced to do something. Reflective of her change were Allie's concluding remarks:

I feel it now, after almost seven years of separation and being in prison, I'm having time to look at my life and change my life rather than relying on someone else to do it for me. It's up to me to do it. It's up to me to better myself because nobody else can do it.

This self-realization may come only after years of hard work and personal sacrifice.

However, for some, such as Agnes, that point in reality had not been realized and possibly would not until she acknowledges her problems.

Getting GED Certified

This group consisted of seven women who obtained their GED certificates while at WCC. Two of the women had been transferred to the Butte Pre-Release Center and the other five resided at WCC. This group included one of the youngest and one of the oldest women interviewed; thus, there was a great diversity, not only in their educational
backgrounds, but also in their perceptions of learning and education. In addition, the two older women of the group who came from rural areas, were not encouraged to seek formal education beyond high school. They were perceived to be focused in other directions, such as maintaining households and being wives and mothers. Therefore, their formal education was not a major endeavor. The other five women had approximately the same amount of formal education. However, their formal education had been abandoned when they dropped out of school, ran away, or became involved in drugs or alcohol.

All of the women in this group were active in some or all of the educational and treatment programs at WCC. They were also involved in on-the-job-training or were working and training in some other capacity within the State Hospital system, where WCC is located. Of the two women who had been transferred to BPRC, one was a cook and the other worked with children. Another woman at WCC was working at a job on the grounds of WCC. The other four were involved in chores or jobs at WCC itself. All of these jobs or job training were considered part of the rehabilitative process, even though they were not necessarily considered training for appropriate jobs upon release from WCC.

Regarding their general attitudes and perceptions of learning and education, the following quotations may shed some light on where the women had been and where they were
at the time of the interviews. Even though they may not have liked school, their learning was frequently affected by factors external to the school environment.

Babs, one of the younger women, came from a less abusive situation, but was raised in a strict religious home environment. She conveyed her feelings about school: "I didn't do well in school. I didn't like school. I didn't like it at all." Of course, it was later determined that she had some degree of dyslexia.

Bea basically felt the same way; however, she did not have a learning disability. She stated that "education didn't mean shit to me. . . . I didn't like school." But she had another problem. I stopped learning when I started using drugs."

Bess had to deal with physical abuse. She felt that the beatings she received at home had an adverse effect on her at school, because the reporting system whereby the school notified authorities of the abuse failed, and she was forced back into the situation at home. She recalled, "I guess the worst thing would be when I'd go to school and have bruises. They'd call the cops and I'd get taken out of school. It was embarrassing and I'd miss school."

Becky, one of the older women, who had little need for formal education while growing up, stated, "I don't know how other kids learned, but I learned on my own." The other older woman, Billie, who was not encouraged to complete her
formal education, stated, "I learned just to do what I needed to do and not to expect anything else."

Betty was somewhat more philosophic about what affected her learning, which consisted of her home and school environments, as well as her peer relationships.

It all went back into the school system. To get to school would mean that I wouldn't have to be at home and to get out of school would mean that I wouldn't have to be with peers that were critical, that really pointed out your differences. So you know, it's a struggle with all those things.

Babs, a woman in her 20s, had not been subjected to physical or sexual abuse while growing up. However, she suffered psychological and verbal abuse from strict religious parents and from peer mistreatment at school based upon her learning disability. Babs married in the eighth grade to escape from her home environment. At this point, she quit school because she thought she could get everything she wanted by being married. Babs reflected on her early schooling in the following manner:

How did I see myself as a learner? It was real hard. I had to spend more time than most kids did with the studying process. I had to really, really concentrate on what was being said or I would lose it. That was all through school.

She further stated that "I don't understand the learning process." Part of this may have been due to her dyslexia. "I read things backwards. I think it was in the fifth grade, I was even placed in a slow learning class."

Babs's favorite subject was math, but she had trouble with "all the rest. Math was the only one [I liked]. I did
pretty good in Math. It's probably the only A I ever got. Oh, it felt good, but it's not something that I'll use a lot in my life. I like numbers."

Since Babs had difficulty with the other classes, she had the following observation to offer.

Well, if you don't like something, it's hard to do it. It's hard to be there, and I was always sure that I was being stared at, made fun of, and all that stuff. I got to the point where, especially with studying, it got so frustrating that I got to the point where I cheated a lot. I think it's the only way I got through with those grades, was cheating, 'cause I got shitty scores when I wasn't cheating. So I cheated a lot, and I had to be sneaky in the matter. I wanted to get good grades. I wanted to at least make a passing grade so I wouldn't have to repeat that class. Like I said, I got real frustrated at the time it took to learn things that other people would be picking up easily. There was a lot of people in class that didn't study, they just listened to the teacher and they did fine. I couldn't do that so it became easier just to cheat 'cause of that effort. I only really did it in school. I learned to get through.

The significance of this observation may be that this is the point at which Babs learned to take the easy way out. Once one discovers an "easier way out" or a "short cut," rationalization can be made for cheating or even doing something more illegal, especially when the sense of right or wrong has not been firmly established. Further, "instant gratification" is attained by the behavior, rationalization can be made that the "end" justifies the "means."

When I was in the fifth grade, because of the inability to retain information, I was put in a special education class, but that was just the fifth grade. The problem always persisted. I mean, I would study myself to death and barely
pass with a C. I always did really terrible in school because I just couldn't keep it. Not at all. I haven't met anybody who has that problem. Most people have dyslexia or something like it, but not this bad. There is a lot of that in my family.

She went on to state how she felt about the special education class in general.

When I first started it was real embarrassing. I felt like I must be retarded or something, but it progressed. I was able to keep up with the class. There was only like 13 kids in the class, and we all were sort of there for the same reason. I started not really making friends but I wasn't picked on or anything. I kinda liked it as time progressed. I seemed to kind of fit in there.

She further recalled that her most positive memory in school "was getting that A in Math." This good grade had a positive impact on Babs. Even though she was not able to transpose the effort she made in math to all of her classes, she had the following comments to make about the math class in general.

I was able to concentrate on it. I never saw numbers backwards so it came easier. I was real quick with it, and I always got good grades. Math was like a quiet class. There was not a lot of rambunctious things going on to distract my attention. I got a lot of praise [for the grades and doing good]. It made me want to excel in Math. . . . I really liked the positive reinforcement and it even caused me to want to do it in the other classes. The only other one I was able to get the same thing in was really Art. I was able to excel in my Art classes, but anything else I just couldn't do. I just couldn't.

In addition to her strict religious family environment and her learning disability, there was another problem for Babs, which concerned peer mistreatment stemming partly from
her strict religious environment and partly from, as she believes, being a racial minority in school. While growing up in the Southeastern United States, "I was the only White girl in my class," and "I got beat up a lot by the colored kids."

I was not popular. I was not well-liked in school at all. To go to school was a battle because I didn't want to be there. I didn't want to go because I'd get kicked out a lot. I got beat up a lot when I was young 'cause they knew I would not fight.

The biggest thing that sticks out in my mind is walking home from school. We lived within walking distance although it was quite a ways. I'd get beat up a lot going home. The Black kids would all the time beat me up. I became afraid of people. I became very prejudice 'cause I was the only White girl. The only thing I can think of was my religious environment and the clothes I had to wear. I was never a mouthy person so I don't think it would be that.

Babs was 14 years old when she married for the first marriage. Between her two marriages and her incarceration, there were other incidents that affected Babs's informal and social outlook and which also indirectly led to her incarceration. These matters encompassed her entire life, starting in childhood. She realized that:

I really wasn't loved. At least that's how I took it. I wasn't my parents favorite. In fact, it seems like the worst of us five kids are my parents favorite, and it's not me. That's what I learned out of it was that I just wasn't cared about. Even my logic told me that my parents loved me, but they just didn't show it. Seeing it go to, especially my younger sister, that probably hurt the most.
As a result of these feelings, Babs began to fear other people and the consequences of interactions.

Even at home, although they weren't doing it to be bad or anything, the one thing you did not ever do was to ignore your parents if they spoke to you. You would never do that. You ignore them, and you'll be sorry. So I learned to be afraid not to acknowledge that someone was addressing me.

This fear carried over into school. Babs recalled:

When I was in school if I tried to ignore someone when they would talk to me I would be afraid and try to ignore them. [If I did that] it seemed that I got beat up worse. If I talked to them, sometimes I could even talk them out of beating me up so I was afraid not to talk to them. I was afraid it would be worse.

Babs talked about her understanding of social learning:

I never really had to learn anything. I always had people telling me how it was to go, how things were to be. I learned to adapt, to be accepted even if what I had to do wasn't particularly right to me. I learned to go against the rules, so to speak. But what's strange with all that is that I was doing that pretty much up until the time I got married; sneaking around and disobeying rules and doing things I wasn't supposed to do. But what's really strange is that when I got married that stopped. I mean, abruptly. My husband wouldn't let me have any contact with my family. He didn't like them, and I didn't argue the point. It's what he wanted, and that's the way it was. I stayed home. I didn't go places. I guess you'd say [that with] my married life neither of my husbands allowed me to work. I stayed home. I didn't have friends. I didn't go or do anything so I wasn't around other people. I was mainly with my husbands and their families.

This environment resulted in isolation and changes in her attitude toward people.

It made me try to be a people person because I got to where I'd do things even if I didn't want to do them to keep people happy. [I did this] so they wouldn't want to beat me. It almost seems that I
was that way all my life, but of course I'm sure I wasn't.

Babs felt her learning experiences directly impacted her arrest. During her second marriage, she had finally been able to obtain a job as a cocktail waitress, against her husband's wishes. At the time, they were also having marital difficulties, and for her it had at times become almost unbearable. One night a man at the bar approached her and, asked, jokingly she believed, "Do you want to have your husband removed from the picture?" Since she had learned not to ignore someone who was talking to her, she engaged the man in conversation on more than one occasion. It turned out that he was an undercover cop and was reportedly a friend of her husband. According to Babs, her husband had set the whole thing up as a joke, but things got out of his control. She was arrested for plotting to have her husband killed. She was sentenced to 25 years with 15 years suspended.

To Babs, then, "Probably the biggest and most impacting thing that I've learned [from this] and coming here was how cruel and dishonest people are to each other. [I've been here] almost 2 years [and that] has probably been the biggest surprise."

Concerning her recent completion of the GED and her learning experiences in treatment programs, Babs stated that:
I did take the GED course when I was about 19. I got my reading test done there, but my husband got angry about my going to school, so I quit. I got the rest of the classes here [at WCC] and the certificate here.

She further admitted that she had no formal education beyond the GED. Concerning the pursuit of additional education, she reflected:

I learned that I can work on my own without people's help. I can do my own studying. I don't need a teacher like all those other people. They had to have the teacher's help all the time. I didn't. I worked on my own. I worked at a quicker pace than they did. As far as learning anything from the GED itself, I don't retain information so what I learned at that time is gone. I couldn't take that test again and pass it. I would have to take schooling again. I just don't retain information well.

Babs further stated that she had gained other informal learning experiences since her incarceration. Some of them related to her and her surroundings, especially her opinion regarding the cruelty of other people. Other experiences have and will continue to affect her on a more personal level. "One thing about being in prison is that I am a lot stronger person than I thought I was because I knew I had to survive this or go crazy. I had those two choices and no others, so I've had to make a lot of changes."

Another thing that she realized is that "I don't care how people see me anymore. That used to be such a big thing. I don't care anymore. I like me. I like who I am. I like what I do. My values, I guess, have changed a little bit."
However, her major discovery concerned childrearing. She brought this up because it had such a profound effect on her and she thought it might have some bearing upon other women, whether in situations similar to hers or not.

Because my children did not always do what I said to do, they were confused a lot. A lot of it was because I would say one minute this rule would be the rule, and I wouldn't feel like enforcing it that time so I would let it go. It caused problems, but I didn't see that as being a problem until I got here and had it happened to me. I thought, "Man, if that's confusing for me and makes me nuts, what did I do to my kids."

This is quite a realization from a person who claimed she did not "understand the learning process." However, this individual has truly benefitted from experiential, adult learning.

Bea, another woman in the Getting GED Certified group, was in her mid-20s and, like Babs, had not suffered any physical or sexual abuse while growing up. However, she suffered from the emotional ramifications of a broken home and from observing the abuse of her mother. "When my mom and dad were married, he was an abusive alcoholic, and she went through some real severe abuse. My mom has never forgiven my dad, so there's a lot of hate that I learned to deal with." When her mother remarried, she recollected that:

She married a wealthy man, and I had everything materially I wanted as a child. I lacked love and nurturing; there was not a whole lot there. My dad wasn't able to actually be a part of our lives until later. When he did become part of our lives, he competed with my mother and her husband
so it became who could out do the other. I learned to be a real selfish child.

In addition to the lack of nurturing, she recalled her mother's manipulative behavior and the effect it had on her attitude about right and wrong:

My mom's a real manipulator so I learned manipulative behavior well. It taught me to be dishonest... because I learned that little things give a message that it's okay to lie. That gave me permission to be dishonest to everybody, actually, if I chose to be that way. I didn't have to tell someone, ever, how I felt because I could make it look like I was fine. If I smile, everybody will leave me alone, and I learned that.

Bea remembered how she learned from her mother to control situations by using manipulative behavior.

One of my remembrances of just hearing, "If you dress up and look good, then everybody will think you're pretty, even if you don't want to go to school. As long as you look pretty." Even as a little girl, you were supposed to be pretty and you're supposed to behave and be quiet. You're not supposed to act out. That was one way--smiling and looking pretty. I remember somebody would come over to visit; like maybe it would be my stepfather's friends and she'd go, "Oh my God, so and so's here." I'd watch her entertain these people for hours and she'd sit there and she'd smile. She'd be so funny, and I learned that. There would be times she'd say, "Say I'm not home." So I was brought up with it's okay to lie in little ways. You don't right out and out lie, but it's okay to tell someone that your mom's not home because she don't want to deal with them.

She also learned the importance of being popular in school.

I got a lot of praise for being popular. That's where I got my praise. I wanted a lot of it, but never got enough of it. It was the wrong kind. I mean, look, that's sad. You have to get your praise through being popular, and the more popular the more you're gonna be loved at home. That's
sick. I look at that now and I get pissed off. That's bullshit. What I learned from that was that if you're not the most popular person in school you don't mean shit at home.

In addition to her father's alcoholism and her mother's manipulative behavior there was a drug abuse problem. "Prescription drugs were also big with my mother. Mom had a pill, and that was a big thing. Medicate no matter what the circumstance. No matter what caused the coincidence or the feeling, you can numb it. I learned about drugs from my mom. How she learned it, I don't know."

Even after her mother's first divorce, "there was still some physical abuse in my family, where my mom would get beat up by my stepdad. I saw that, and I went back to school after the summer and got in fights thinking fighting was the answer." In view of this, Bea's observations about education became relevant.

The only thing school was important for me for was this big popularity deal and even that ended in my junior and senior years. So learning was nothing important to me at that time. Nothing really was at that time. The only thing I cared anything about was sports and cheerleading. I did like drama. That fits really good into my character because, ya know, it just fits.

Regardless of how much the home environment carried over to school, Bea's interaction with teachers did not appear to have been much better. Most of her interactions with teachers were negative. She recalled one particular incident which exemplified her negative reaction toward teachers.
In the sixth grade I had this teacher, and he segregated me all the time in this closet. It wasn't a shut the door closet. It was separate, kind of off to the side of the classroom. It was actually a place to hang your coat. He would put my desk around the corner and make me sit there. He said I talked too much and that I was always out of line. Really, I was never out of line. I did have a smart mouth at him because I really didn't respect him whatsoever as a teacher so we never really hit it off from the beginning. I just didn't like him.

Left alone, this situation may have resolved itself. However, as can easily happen, inappropriate parental interference aggravated the situation.

I remember thinking that he was nothing--no matter what his position was. I thought I didn't have to listen to him, and I had this attitude. This was a bad attitude in sixth grade to have, but because I took that one incident home to my parents and said he laughed at me and made fun of me, they supported me in not liking him. They even tried to get me out of his class and into another class. It reinforced that I didn't have to respect him, and I didn't see him as an authority figure. He didn't mean shit to me. My belief was that he was a bad guy and my parents after that incident believed it so, it was like they reinforced my belief that I didn't have to listen to him. Well, I'm sure if they would have supported him, I would have hated them, too.

As far as her previous informal learning experiences were concerned, Bea recalled the differences between the love and care she had encountered at home and that which she found through an alternate caregiver. Regarding her home environment and the influence of her mother, Bea made the following observations about love and caring as she had perceived it at an earlier point in time. This observation
contrasts to the present perception she related during the interviews.

My mom didn't love herself so she didn't know how to love us. My mom hated herself. My mom still hates herself so she's uncapable of giving love. I can see that today, but at the time it was just like me. Right now I'm uncapable of giving my children love because they're not in my care and because I never knew how. I was never taught, myself. Even in a relationship I couldn't tell you how to give true love, and it ain't sex. It has nothing to do with it. I see this today but I didn't know it then. I thought money was love. Sex was love, and that's all the mattered. That was love. So, "Do you love me? Well, give me $20." The difference to me today is not a dollar bill or money. It's somebody accepting me for who I am and supporting me in what I believe and what I do. I've learned that there's not a whole lot of love in this world. If you don't have self love, I guess nothing else matters. If you don't have that, you're history.

She maintained that those previous concepts were based primarily upon what she had learned from her mother. To illustrate this point, she stated, "I can't tell you why my mom [didn't] care for herself, but I can say [that] I didn't care for myself because I never learned how. I learned that by not ever being able to live up to my mom's expectations. The expectations she placed on [me]."

Bea's other view of love and nurturing was from the alternate caregiver, her paternal grandmother, whom she visited frequently during her early adolescent years. This person was loving and caring and always ready to give positive feedback, even to negative behavior. Bea recalled how she felt when interacting with her grandmother.
I learned that it felt good. I liked that feeling. I remember getting a real excited feeling when she would just give me a hug or tell me how neat I was. And, oh, knock something over and it's not, "OH GOD!" She didn't go crazy. It was like, "Oh, we have an accident here. Let's get it cleaned up." It was the way she handled it. It was the way she handled all situations. She was very consistent. She was never gonna react one crazy way and then go back to another level. She was very consistent.

Bea found herself seeking more of this type of response from her grandmother because she felt that "if something makes you feel good, you want more of it."

Another negative learning situation concerned Bea's addictions. Concerning the drug addiction and stealing, she made the following observations.

I ended up scamming so many doctors because I was an addict, and I needed more pills, more drugs. Why was I an addict? I believe I was an addict because I have a chemical imbalance that my body liked. I am an addict. I don't know how I became an addict. I believe I was an addict before I ever started using because of alcoholic and addiction in my family. I believe that I had all the characteristics before I ever used. I am an addict with dishonesty, phoniness, false pride, low self-esteem, no self-worth. I had all that before I ever used drugs.

Wanting to have everything just like I did when I was a kid given to me. I thought it was easier to take it than it was to make it. I had shoplifted out of stores for tools and stuff, but I had not stolen anything yet to try to reach my mom's expectations of me. But since I was going to have to visit I wanted to impress her with jewelry and stuff.

Those misguided endeavors eventually ended up costing Bea her freedom and her family.

Losing custody of my baby and coming here the third time. My family almost let me go. I lost
total respect for myself, completely. Prior to coming here I didn't want to live. It was the lowest that I've ever been, facing myself and being here a third time. I was walking out the door the second time saying, "I'll die before I put myself back." [But I did come back.] I think my feelings changed because I have other people praying for me. I was given something. I'll tell you what that was. That realization came when I had nothing left but myself sitting in the forensic unit [for intensive psychiatric treatment]. When it was me, myself, and nobody else. I had no children to worry about. I had nothing. I had only myself to face. Everything else was removed from my life so from that point on I said, "It's either here--you're either gonna live or you're gonna die. Now what are you gonna do?" It took me awhile to get to where I really thought I would live, but I did. Each day that I survived and each day that I tried something different, it worked. I know where I am. I have a sense of direction. The decision of saying that you're gonna do it and doing it.

At this point, it may be appropriate to ask two questions. What might have caused a "three-peat" performance? What has changed this third time that may be different than before? In analyzing the former question, it may not take much for a person to recidivate. For Bea it was simply "a relapse."

A relapse of drugs and alcohol created every problem entering back into WCC that could have ever happened. What happened? A relationship that I was in. I took advantage. I went back to old, selfish ways. I stopped taking care of myself. I was doing really well. I took the focus off myself and started focusing on somebody else.

She further indicated that much of her recovery was related to a learning experience in which she began to reflect upon her life and actions. This occurred while she
was confined to a maximum security unit and spent time alone. She stated:

I thought of everyone of the things that ever had ever happened in my entire life and I looked back and said, "Well, God, I could have learned." I can look back and say, "Well, maybe I did learn something." There was a time in my life where I absolutely did not learn anything because I guess I was never willing because everything would just get worse and worse and worse. It would never get to where I'd say, "Well, I can learn from this and really pick up and move on" and know not to do that again. That isn't how I existed. I existed to repeat it 10 times worse than what I did before, thinking I was gonna try and get over it better or something. I think because I still didn't care about myself. I had no self-esteem whatsoever. But see, you would never know that by looking at me.

In explaining what is different the third time around, Bea stated, "The difference that I see is that I've got to focus on myself and stay in control of me." She further stated that "there's nobody to blame for anything in my life except me."

That attitude changed, along with self-respect for myself. For one thing, I know that if I expect to get respect from anybody I must give respect myself. It's something that I've just kind of picked up through this time around of going through treatment again and learning about myself and my ways.

Bea also stated that her present recovery is more multifaceted than it was on previous occasions. She made the following observation concerning the spiritual side of her recovery.

I had to realize that the world doesn't revolve around me, and I don't always get what I want. For one, I cannot rely on myself. I must have some kind of spiritual life, and that's what I'm
living today. Before I was actually, basically a person that was existing and not living. I was living really sick, living really unhealthy. I had no sense of direction in my life whatsoever, none. God was the last thing I wanted to hear.

Another aspect of her recovery is that "I've learned that I can be accepted, no matter what. The key factor for me is being able to care for myself enough. Children in adult bodies. That's me."

In this regard, the idea of children in adult bodies had a double meaning, because she could see the effect in a new endeavor which she encountered through the pre-release center. She offered the following account:

My child still comes out. It does. It gets tested. I have a new job. I get tested working with girls that are like 16 and 17 years old. They drive me crazy, and I'm thinking, "My God." It's probably because I see myself. Ya know, it's like, "Look you little snotty-nosed brat. All the things I was I'm seeing." I get tested and my child comes out in me. When things don't go my way I stomp my foot, but I'm learning.

Bess, a woman in her mid- to late 20s, had suffered physical and sexual abuse when she was taken into a satanic cult by her father at an early age. He was also her first abuser in the cult environment, where human sacrifice had reportedly taken place. Bess lived in this environment periodically from age 9 to 13 when she fled, opting for a life on the streets. In addition, her stepmother, also a cult member, abused her.
Because of her toxic home environment, Bess held strained views of school and the educational process. About her school experiences, she recalled:

I did okay. [However] if some classes were boring or if I didn't understand the material, I just turned it off. [School] was like an escape. It was a different world. The teachers were different. I didn't get abused there. It was somewhere safe, like an escape.

However, escape to school was a limited refuge because "when I came in abused I got sent to the nurse's office. Then they'd call the cops. I really didn't hold that against the school because they had to report the crime. It was the cops that jerked me home, back to where it [the abuse] started."

These incidents with the police and the abuse by her parents severely affected Bess's values and attitudes toward role models and authority figures. She had been abused by her caregivers, and then she had been thrown back into the same abusive environment by other authority figures. During these developmental years Bess had little respect for authority figures or role models.

Because of the pervasive abuse at home and at school, Bess turned her interests to the streets even before she decided, at age 13, that was where she would live. She related the following scenario of how this type of life began to interest her and how she assimilated into street life and drugs.
Sometimes I'd run away from school and stay with people. You'd be surprised how you can meet people. The school had a park across the street, and we'd go over there and just meet people and start talking to them. I was probably about 12. This would be right before I left for good. When I left for good, I went over there, and there were just other people sitting there. I just kind of sat down a little ways away, and they started talking. You'd be surprised how many people will take in someone that was that young, that didn't have anywhere to go. They would say, "You clean our house, and we'll let you stay there."

They'd take you home. You don't have to sleep in the streets and stuff. Sometimes good--sometimes it wasn't good. It depended on the people, but it had its downfalls that I didn't see at the time. I didn't see them at all. I see them now. Nine out of ten times these people were using drugs, on drugs, or selling drugs. Pretty messed up people and then they'd get you involved in it. You're in pain, and the drugs take it away so you really don't care. You think it's a good thing. I still do that.

After a period of time, Bess found herself fitting into the environment. Her desire to become part of the scene was revealed in the following observation:

Wherever I lived and whatever they were doing was kind of what I did because I wanted to stay there. Like in one house all they did was put drugs on the mirrors and snort them, and that's what I did. I didn't do anything else. Then say, in the next house they started shooting up. That's what I did. I wanted to fit in with whatever was going on so I could stay where ever I was as long as possible. I'd really show that I was like them and they'd keep me there, or they'd let me stay there. I knew the alternative was not having anywhere to go.

Bess eventually reached a point where she sold drugs herself. She rationalized this activity in the following manner: "I just sold them [because] I didn't know how else to get money." Much of Bess's informal, social learning
occurred on the streets. "They taught me a lot on the streets. You learned how to survive, and you learned the basic rules of the streets. The abuse didn't teach me much. What it did teach wasn't good." Nevertheless, during the alternating times when she lived at home and on the streets, Bess felt the need to escape at various times. "I just knew that when you were bigger and faster you could get away, and I knew that someday I'd be that and I just looked for the steps."

In addition to her street knowledge, Bess had an opportunity to return to school in her late teens, after becoming pregnant and moving back to live with her grandparents. There, she encountered both formal and informal learning. During this period of learning:

I went to a private school and they had really good teachers. I did real well there. Later on in my pregnancy, I had a home study teacher, which I was able to pick. He was there all the time, working with me at home.

Bess found this one-on-one interaction very helpful, recalling, "I did really well." She further remembered that most of her learning at this point was accomplished through "repetition." When she had an assignment, she "could do it over and over until [she] understood it." This was especially true with the GED assignments, since the teacher "went over it and over it" until she could complete the task. Bess stated that this was much different than before, when the teachers would "usually only go over it once 'cause
their classes were so full and they couldn't give me the attention I needed." However, she was unable to complete the training for the GED certificate at that time.

Regarding her learning on the streets and her limited formal learning, Bess stated, "I think you learn from both of them, from what people say to you." However, in both situations, "I think that if you hear it enough you start acting like [accessing the information]." If this information concerns something negative, "things may start happening that are not so good." She felt that this may have had a pronounced effect on her previous learning processes.

Concerning the transition from formal to informal and social, and back to formal learning, Bess believed that the educational process at WCC "made me realize again, from trying to put things in order, how hazy everything was concerning dates and places." Much of this "haziness" stemmed from her heavy and prolonged use of drugs.

Still to this day, because of the drugs, I can't really put things in chronological order real well. I don't know that I ever will. I'm not using anymore, but I'm on prescription drugs here. Maybe it's because I don't want to remember or because they're not good things to remember. I also forget things real easy, real quick.

Bess believes her cognitive processes were inhibited by her drug dependency and her negative learning experiences. She stated that, previously, she "couldn't learn in a positive manner." Someone else had to help her. "I
couldn't make a decision. I would have to ask someone. I wouldn't try. There was nothing positive. [Everything] was just all building up the other [negative] way because I never tried anything good." In contrast, "Today I do things 'cause I want to, not because I have to. That's really important because it affects your attitude towards the abuse, the chemicals, or living through an experience."

Regarding what she discovered about herself through her learning experience at WCC, Bess stated that:

I found that I was good in math. I could do it. They took time to work with me. I was over in the other building. There was only three of us in the class, and there was a lot of time for one-on-one. I found out that I could do a lot of things, and it made me feel better.

This was similar to the progress she had seen when she lived with her grandparents and attended private school, and it may suggest a more proficient method to help students with conceptual or learning disabilities to learn.

She further advised that, as a result of this experience, she became "more outgoing, more responsible, and more knowledgeable." She had "more self-respect. I [thought] better about myself." She decided that "I wouldn't let people use me [and] I wouldn't stand for it. I see a difference in the way I treated people from when I got here to now."

Another discovery alluded to by Bess was the realization of self-concept. The transition from low self-
estem toward a growing self-concept involves a learning process.

I have a more positive attitude. Like with things that I didn't think I could do before. I didn't think I could go through school, and I didn't think I could take a college course. I just didn't think I could make it through college 'cause I didn't think I was any good at math. I didn't think I could remember anything, and I thought it was bad. There was a girl in here that was taking two college courses. I took one of them, and I got an A in it. That kind of showed me that, "Hey, you can do this work." It was a science class and that was not one of my good subjects. I found that I could get into the book. I could answer the questions. I could read through it and go back and pick out the answers and do it.

In addition to schoolwork, Bess stated what she had learned about herself during her formal learning process.

There's differences now when I learn 'cause I never knew a lot of this stuff. I never knew how deep it went. I knew drugs were bad. That's the extent of what I knew. They were supposed to be bad for you. That's it. Then here I learned in this class about how they affect your attitudes, your characteristics, everything. Everything they affect. I didn't know that before.

Thus, the learning went far beyond mere instruction:

I was learning a bit about trust and unconditional love. That someone didn't turn away at whatever I did or whatever I said. I'm more outgoing. I talk to people. I'm still cautious but I've learned to communicate, at least on a level to where it's just about normal. I can talk to people. I think going through those classes I started to feel a little better about myself. Finally seeing that I had problems but I could get over them and there were other people that had the same problems. I wasn't the only one out there that had been through that and felt that way about themselves. I was always surprised when some would say, "I felt that way, too. Wow! Did you?" Things that you carried around deep inside of you, you never wanted anybody to know 'cause you knew
they'd just stay away from you forever if they knew those things.

This may be a momentous realization, when a person realizes that she or he is not going through a problem alone, or that someone else might be experiencing the same problems. In addition, the sense of accomplishment created when a person learns positive things about himself or herself can bring one to a new level of personal consciousness and, for Bess, this sense of reality meant:

Potential. I can achieve things, accomplish things. I can do things. I can do something and finish it and do it well. I get the desire to do things. I start to feel good about myself and want to do it. I want to make something of myself. I learned something about the thinking process—go step by step by step. I knew what I had done, but [more] I saw how one thing led to another.

Two of the women in the Getting GED Certified group were Native American. One was in the youngest group of women interviewed and the other was in the oldest group.

The younger Native American woman, Beth, had been sexually abused by her father and had been in counseling during most of her adolescent and teenage years. Because of this she developed a fear of being hurt by others, which may have led to her aggressive behavior toward people, after having learned that it was important to be in control. Seeing her mother beat her father after learning of his sexual assault on Beth may also have influenced the idea of control. It was also through these experiences that Beth developed her attitudes about formal and informal learning.
Prior to her father's obtrusive behavior, there was a time "when we were smaller that my dad would always take us out and play football or baseball, because we were a big family. We always liked sports." Sports affected Beth in two ways. First, it increased her competitive behavior which became important to her later. Secondly, sports opened up doors for new friends who helped her maintain this interest. Concerning her subsequent interest in sports, she recalled that one of her favorite memories was "when I was in basketball and we took the divisionals."

One of her teammates helped open doors to building Beth's confidence by introducing her to her mother, a counselor, who later worked with her through some of the after-effects of the abuse she suffered. Beth recalled what this meant to her in her social learning process.

I think I was in the sixth grade, and Little Dribblers started. My counselor's daughter was in it, and she asked me if I would go with Kathy to basketball. I told her that I would try, and she said that nobody there was going to hurt me. I was really close to her, and I always wanted to be with her. She was always teaching me stuff about myself and about how nobody can touch me unless I say they can. She was more like a best friend--like an older best friend. I could tell her anything.

In school Beth stated, "[I] had a good relationship with my teachers, especially my math teacher. We were like friends. . . . I did really good in school. I was in sports--basketball, volleyball, and track. I never got below a C, and I had a B+ average. I got along with
everybody. I was in school up until my senior year. I quit when I got pregnant."

Beth had both positive and negative formal learning experiences. Some subjects were naturally appealing to her, while she was frustrated in others because of what she perceived as poor teaching. She recalled the positive side of her formal learning which reflected the effect a positive teacher can have on a student.

Math, business skills, P.E., accounting, and tribal government. I was into that. I loved math. I've always liked math. Tribal government was my favorite because of my uncle who was active in the tribe. I always used to go in and listen to the sessions. I thought it was pretty cool so I just got into learning about my tribe. Our tribal government teacher took us out and showed us all the sites that the chiefs and everything used to do their little things and he was always taking us out on field trips.

Beth then recalled the negative side of learning in school, which was also reflected in the teaching style.

I didn't like science. I didn't like social studies. I thought they were boring. Science was boring because my science teacher didn't really teach us. She gave us the book and told us to do it. I mean, there was no experimenting. She was also our social studies teacher. I didn't really learn anything in science and social studies because of the way she did her thing. . . . I mean, she gave me 30 points in class for listening to her problems one day. I mean, that's learning? That's all she did. You ask me anything about social studies, about things that happened back then, and I don't know because she didn't teach it.

She further recounted that, to make matters worse, her negative learning was influenced to some degree by a teacher's obvious racial bias, which made learning more
difficult. She related the following scenario from her social studies class:

Then we got into social studies. All I did was books, books, books. It was just boring, and I didn't like it. When I did my social studies I only did it because I had to have it in. I did it like in the morning before I went to school because I didn't like it, so I didn't spend much time with it. The teacher was a mean teacher. I think she came from somewhere over in the east and she was really prejudice. So she was pretty bad. It made me not like her. It made me not want to do her work. She would always say, "Okay, all you Native Americans sit over here and non-Native Americans sit over here." And then when we'd play baseball, it's a thing in history where you answer questions and you get to move. We would always have to be on her team. We had a lot of White friends, but she always would split us. Everybody was mad about it. I was a fast learner. I was a good student. I always got good grades, even when in social studies. I hated it, hated it but I still got good grades in it.

Beth also felt that learning was difficult when:

I would have to have things explained to me. I didn't go to the teachers because I felt I couldn't go up and ask them because, "They'll think I'm dumb or something." So I'd ask my dad all the time. My dad was a really smart man, and he'd explain it. Like math and algebra, he would always help me.

Her reaction resulted in part from a dwindling self-perception. This may have been related to tensions between her father and herself.

She felt that another negative aspect of ineffective teacher was when teachers tried to "throw things down your throat" to make the students learn. She remarked that, when this happened, students would "bluff their way through it [learning]. They're going to fake it 'til they make it.
That's what they're going to do. Fake it 'til they make it."

Yet another negative aspect of Beth's formal learning experience was switching schools.

It was confusing. This teacher does things one way, and this teacher does things another way. For example, algebra. Some do it the short way--get it done, get it over with. Mr. Cooper, when he did it, he did it the long way. He explained, he showed it. Then when I went to Mr. Duncan's in Corvallis, he did it the short way. Do this, do that, and you're done. He didn't explain, so that's again when I had to pull my dad in.

Although these formal learning experiences definitely left a negative impression on Beth, they were not nearly as pronounced and lasting as what happened in her senior year, which continues to affect her. She recalled the episode:

There was only one person [teacher] that I didn't get along with and I can't even remember her name. We didn't get along because she said I always acted like I was better than her. She was a white woman. I always used to tell her that I didn't know what I was doing wrong. I mean, she always used to call me a spoiled brat. I'd just laugh at her. I used to tell my mom what she was saying and my mom said, "She's just jealous." Because she was my English teacher, she was part of the reason I didn't graduate.

It was two days before the graduation. She came up to me and she goes, "Beth, you are not graduating." I asked her why not, and she took out my English Comp and said, "You need footnotes." She just threw it at me and it hit me. I picked it up and I said, "I need what?" She goes, "You need footnotes." I said, "I ain't got my material that I did this with. It's gone." She goes, "Well, you'd better get it or you're not graduating." So I went and talked to our principal. I told him what went on and everything, so he called her into the office and asked her, "Why now? Why are you doing this now, two days before graduation?" She said because she
overlooked it before. So the principal told her that I was going to go through the ceremony; that I would come back for the summer and do my English Comp. She said, "No," she wouldn't let me do it. I was mad. I was very mad and then on graduation, that was the first night I drank. My whole class was mad.

This tendency toward anger, coupled with her aggressive, fighting behavior eventually led to her incarceration.

Beth had almost no subsequent educational training prior to coming to WCC. However, she did recall attempting her GED on one occasion after "I ended up in jail. Then they let me out to go take it on a weekend." She was unsuccessful in that attempt because of her personal situation.

I just got drunk. I walked in there and the teacher [who I knew] says, "You're not going to take your test like that. You're not going to pass." He gave it to me anyway because if I didn't take it I was in big time trouble. I just kept falling asleep because I was so drunk.

She finally earned her GED at WCC. Beth also took parenting and anger management treatment classes. Further, "I read a book maybe once a month. I just don't have the patience to sit down and read any more." She also had another admission to make:

I'm the kind of person that, if I don't have to do it, I won't do it. I'm not very motivated anymore. I'm getting old because I'm just lazy all the time. When I want to do something, I can't do it because I can't go outside. There's just total burnout here.
However, everything was not completely negative, because she was able to learn informally about herself. She explained what the informal treatment sessions had done for her.

I've learned a lot with the treatment. A lot of things came out that I didn't remember was there. For example, feelings that I go through every day that I didn't want to realize that I had. Today, I know that I can control what I do.

I want to say, the major thing I learned is I can show my feelings and to take a risk. I'm not willing to take that risk yet. But I have learned that by showing my feelings I don't have to fear what someone will say. I guess it's an image thing.

She further indicated that the treatment gave her more control over her life, because she learned to take things one day at a time.

I'm also noting that I'm not a protector of anybody but myself. I used to think six months down the road, plan this and plan that. Then it would just blow up, just wouldn't happen. Now it's whatever happens today, happens today. I'm not thinking about tomorrow because tomorrow may never come. That's what's helping me get through doing my time here.

However, there was a negative facet to this observation which had contradictory effects on her, relating to her lack of motivation.

I think that's where the laziness comes in, too, because I don't plan anything for the next day. I don't say, "Okay, I'm going to get up and do this and do that and do that." I say, "If I get up, fine. I'll try to do something." But I don't plan nothing. I don't do it anymore. I guess I'm just tired of being let down or something, things not going my way. I'm tired of it. I just go with the flow.
However, this may not be a totally negative assessment. This situation is analogous to the Alcoholics Anonymous program which promotes a similar tenet--one day at a time.

Becky, also a Native American, is nearly a generation older than Beth. Despite being born into a generation which stressed the value of education, she presumably lacked motivation, both in and out of school. The reasons for her lack of motivation varied; however, two main elements affected her attitude. One was the whippings she had received as a child in punishment for something her sisters had done, and the other was the racial prejudice she had encountered in various situations after leaving the reservation. The former was reflected in her comment, "I do something or I'll be nice to a person only up to a certain point. That's the way I've always been, from the time I got that whipping. Being nice to my sisters, maybe that's why I am the way I am."

Becky encountered her first experience with prejudice following the eighth grade, when she and her family moved to California. Her negative experience resulted from interactions with other ethnic groups. Becky recounted:

I used to think that they were just as good as us until after I grew up and first ran into prejudice in school in Los Angeles. At first, the majority of the school was Black. They acted like they ran the school. Then there was a handful of Mexicans, a handful of Whites, and a few of us Indians. We all [the minority groups] stuck together because that's the way the school system was.
Then, after Los Angeles, I went to San Francisco and the prejudice came from the White people. In Los Angeles it was the colored people. . . . You could see the prejudice in the way they looked down on you, 'cause everything an Indian did wasn't supposed to be done that way. You could just tell. You could feel it. Then the Indians had their own street, bars, and Indian Center where only Indians went, and you could see a lot of prejudice there, too.

The prejudice was something with which Becky had to live because it would surface again at various times in her life. "That's the way it was with people in Montana. You can be my friend, but that's all. Don't come too close. . . . Maybe it's because I don't trust anybody."

Her early formal education differed from that of the other women interviewed, because she spent grades one through eight on the reservation. This was a positive learning experience "'cause I learned something." She recalled what happened during this period of time and how she felt about her grades.

When I first got my first report card I had A's on it; I remember that. Let's see, we didn't get report cards in our first, second, and third grade. In fourth grade was when we got report cards. I was proud of it because I saw all those A's on it--all down the line. I took it home and showed it to my mom. She really liked it. She showed my stepdad, and he liked it. Then my grandparents came, and she told them, "Look at Becky's report card." My grandparents talked Indian, and they were glad for me. I felt like I was way up here because they were all praising me as good, saying how I was a good girl and to keep it up. My grandfather said, "Study hard and you'll get more A's again."

However, there were other aspects of her early learning experiences which negatively affected her outside of the
classroom. These were reflected in her statement early in the interview that "I don't know how other kids learned, but I learned on my own." This was true both at home and school. Regarding her home life, Becky further stated:

I had to survive one way or another. If my mom wasn't gonna be there to cook for us, we had to learn how to cook for ourselves. That went for cleaning the house and washing. She taught us girls how to wash clothes and cook and make bread.

Thus, learning how to do things on her own also carried over into the classroom. Later, Becky recalled an experience in school which influenced her perceptions of authority.

My best subject in school was biology. There was a couple of guys that I ran around with that helped me out with my biology, especially when it got down to where we had to dissect a frog. I didn't want to, and they encouraged me to do it. Even back when my uncles went hunting and they'd shoot a deer or something, I'd watch them skin it, but I wouldn't touch it. Even going as far as cutting up a chicken, nobody could get me to do that. Then our biology teacher said that if I didn't dissect that frog he was gonna give me an F for the whole semester. I was mad so I just cut it open. I didn't know if that was the way to cut it, but I cut it open anyway. It was sickening to cut it open and look at all that shit inside.

However, dissecting the frog and having to yield to the authority of the biology teacher had not been as bad as the classroom punishment Becky had to undergo as an eighth grader:

This stupid teacher made me stand in the front of the room against the blackboard with a piece of gum on my nose. That was embarrassing. That was humiliating. I felt like crying. I didn't want to go back to school after that so I just stayed home a week. I told my mom I wasn't going back.
After I got into my ninth grade, it was like I was forced to go to school.

However, she was not forced to do embarrassing things for long. "I finally quit in the 10th grade. . . . I felt like if I was to stay in school I wouldn't have anybody to hang around with, because [my friends] were always dropping out of school." Also, "I was 17 or 18, and I figured I was all grown up, so I didn't have to go to school. I was basically on my own then, so I did what I wanted to do."

Between the time she moved to California and her incarceration, Becky had limited experience with self-initiated learning. "I did a lot of reading 'cause I like any kind of book. I also learned beadwork from my grandmother. You have to learn patience with beadwork, and I always wanted mine to be perfect." At one point, she also attempted to get her GED, explaining, "I was still young so I went back to school." Unfortunately, it didn't work out "because it was the hardest thing for me."

However, she was able to obtain the GED certificate at WCC. She described her feelings about the GED course at the time and how she approached the preparation and organization of the class.

At first I thought I was dumb, but after about the first month I saw that I wasn't the only one that was taking the GED. I felt good. It made me feel good 'cause I figured out I'm not the only one that's dumb in this world. See, even my paperwork, I have to have them all organized. There were three subjects. The teacher gave us one folder but I made sure all my math papers were up to date and all in one bunch, not just all
shoved together. See, my house never had anything organized so if I wanted a certain paper I had to look through all different papers. I've always wanted my work to be perfect, just like my beadwork. I like it to be perfect, and I've always tried to do some good work in school.

She went on to state that everything about the GED course was positive, "even the math, because that was one subject I was really poor in even when I was still in school." She was subsequently able to pass the math "because of the books I was given to study." Becky felt that finishing the GED "was a big accomplishment for me. . . . I feel good when I think how old I was when I quit and how old I am now."

With regard to what she had learned from the exercise, Becky stated, "I just learned that I was able to get it. Able to do some of the problems that were handed to me. I learned to write better. It was hard at first, but then I liked it after awhile."

In addition to her presumed lack of motivation in learning and the feelings of prejudice she encountered, there was an issue concerning attitudes and values that affected Becky. That issue was her attitude toward authority, which was "one thing I don't like. I'm finally learning how to take orders from people, where before nobody was able to tell me what to do." This was one of the reasons why she joined a particular socio-political organization, since "they didn't try to boss [people around]. Nobody was boss in the group, no matter who it was. Everyone's at the same level. There was nobody
looking down on you or someone on the same level thinking they're way up there" which she felt was prevalent with White people. Because of this treatment, "I was prejudiced towards White people for a long time, but now it doesn't bother me. I can't figure that out because they did take the Indian land."

Regardless, she is still concerned about prejudice, because "you know where I really felt prejudice other than in my early years? It was coming to WCC." She was referring to the attitudes of some of the residents as reflected in their negative comments and actions concerning Native American activities, such as powwows and participation in Bible studies. To Becky, these negative attitudes seemed inappropriate, because none of the activities excluded the White women.

In conclusion, Becky made the following assessments.

I still try to be my own self. I feel, if they don't like what I'm doing then they don't have to look. It goes for either side. If the white people don't like what I'm doing, then they can turn the other way. Same thing with the Indians. If they don't like something I do or something I say, they don't have to listen.

Thus, Becky made an assessment of her reality that was especially remarkable for someone who had appeared to others to be unmotivated. She thinks as an individual--independently and creatively.

The other two women in this group were White and, like Becky and Beth, were also at opposite ends of the age
spectrum. One was among the youngest in the overall group; the other was one of the oldest. These two exemplified in some ways the contrasts and similarities in the learning experiences of all those interviewed. Even though their backgrounds were diverse, both were incarcerated for attempted or mitigated, deliberate homicide which was a common denominator bringing them together in the study.

Betty, the younger of the two women, grew up in a strict religious atmosphere. She was also the victim of extreme physical, sexual, psychological, and verbal abuse, not only from her father but also from other individuals. There was also evidence of sibling sexual abuse in her family which had been left unaddressed by her mother who, according to Betty, had termed it "sibling experimentation." In addition, alcohol and drug abuse were common denominators among her father, at least one of her sisters, and herself.

Concerning these abuses, Betty stated:

Drugs were never a real big thing with me. It just depended on the peer group I was in and what was popular and available. For me, my choice was alcohol. I was really little when my dad started feeding me alcohol. [It became] a learned behavior.

She offered the following additional information concerning the rest of her family's drug problems.

My dad drank. My sister drank. Her husband was a drug dealer, but I think I've only bought drugs twice in my life. Why did I take the same path? Oh shit, I don't know. I've asked myself that same question, and I don't know the answer. It was just like when my sister died. It was all drug related. I told myself I'm never going to
use drugs, and I did. I went through periods where I would slow way down and stop using. Then toward the end I got to where I was using more and more and became full blown.

Unfortunately, this behavior was more pronounced than just using, because for Betty there was a direct relationship between the drugs and alcohol and her crime. While there may be a question of how the drugs and alcohol affected Betty's learning, there is no question that the strict religious environment took its toll. In her own words, Betty described this environment:

The religious background was really restrictive. In school there was a lot of people who celebrate holidays in class with parties and stuff. So that had an effect because you are noticed as an outcast or different. Kids can be really cold; they don't always understand. The same thing with, like the flag. They pledged their allegiance to the flag, and you're told you can't participate with that and that puts you out . . . .

My mother's religion ostracized me with my peers 'cause I was different. In school a lot of it was from everything from holidays to social events to sports activities. I was very different because I had interest in those things. I was good at a lot of activities, but I wasn't ever allowed to do those, so I was very, very different. It wasn't because I was not good enough. A lot of that had to do with my self-esteem. It shot down any confidence I had, and it presented a message to me that you were not good enough to do these things. You don't have any confidence to try.

In spite of this toxicity, Betty's early formal education appeared basically normal. She recalled her impressions of the earlier grades and especially math classes:
It was kind of effortless. I wasn't a straight A student. I was an average student with potential to be an excellent student. I knew I didn't have to put forth effort to pass without doing a lot of work so I didn't. So I was pretty adequate. I would just pick up what they said and do it. I didn't have any difficulty comprehending things. The only thing that I really got excited about was in math classes. The teacher would explain something to me, and I would not completely understand. Then a light would come on, and it was like, "Oh wow!" 'cause numbers are so logical and solutions are so real.

Furthermore, Betty's junior high and freshman years in high school were also on the positive side. "I didn't experience any other negative settings. I could work at my own pace. I went through my eighth grade and freshman years at my own pace level." There was one experience in particular that left an impression on her, and that was "an English teacher in junior high that was a big influence on me. I developed a lot of good writing skills, and for me that was good."

Before she was incarcerated, Betty had the opportunity to take advantage of some vocational opportunities in an effort to obtain her GED. However, because there were so many negative influences from her earlier education, her learning was inhibited. Regarding her overall education prior to incarceration, Betty made the following observations and compared them to her educational program at WCC:

I didn't take full advantage of it. For me, it was like grade school. I didn't put in very much effort. I had an attitude of like.where am I ever going to use this. I took that attitude with me
when I went to Vo-Tech 'cause a lot of the people wanted to know why I didn't just go to college. I thought, "Well, why waste four years of my life in college when I can go to a Vo-Tech Center and get trained immediately in what I want to do. Why waste time and wait?" It was like I didn't want to learn anything that I didn't think I would not be able to use. It was almost like a waste of time.

I was kind of irresponsible. I studied and worked really hard in the beginning. Then towards the end I would get really lazy, and I wouldn't finish. I'm still trying to figure that out. How can I be really passionate and jump into it with both feet, and then I lose interest after a few months and drop out. Now I'm in a structured setting, and I'm told I have to do these things. But with the business skills I would take my books and that was all I did. So I studied all the time, and I pulled straight A's. Now in the other situation like Vo-Tech, I was in a classroom setting. I had to go at the same pace as everyone else. I get really bored with that. With correspondence courses my biggest motivation is that I'm paying for it out of my own pocket, so I better do it.

Regarding her informal, social learning experiences Betty connected some of her previous experiences with those she was undergoing during the interviews. In particular, there was one formal learning experience that she found relevant.

You know, even today I take what I've learned way back then in grade school and use it today. I'll use math as an example. I do all my math long hand, exactly the same steps that my teachers have shown me. I don't do short cuts or anything 'cause I comprehend things easier if I just do it the long way.

She also stated that another thing that had some influence on her present learning capacity was her change in attitude toward education and toward people in general.
I talked about how earlier I didn't want to study anything or do anything except for exactly what I wanted to because it would be like a hinderance to me, a waste of time. Well, today I have a new attitude because I realize that everything I do I can learn from even if it's making a mistake. Then I know not to do it again. I don't have to continually punish myself for the mistake. You know, when accepting new attitudes from people in treatment I'm really critical, a judgmental person. I've learned just to let go of that, and my relationships with other people around me have improved. I've really had to concentrate on just accepting them without putting conditions or expectations on everything.

At the time of the interviews, Betty was asked how she was able to learn what she needed to know to survive the traumas in her life. Her response was reflected in the following comments:

Like I said, I think that is kind of self-conscious because everyone learns survival skills for any situation they are in. You develop those through the experiences you are put through. I can't really say that I knew how to do that or that I knew what I needed to know or learned what I needed to know. Some of it was idealizing. You can't wait to leave home and to get to school. Then you get to school, and you idealize your family, what you would like them to be, and you talk about them. Then you can't wait to leave the school and get back home. You get back home, and you think everything is just great when it's really bad. A lot of that is fantasy or disbelieving in reality. That was a coping mechanism that I used.

Betty initially struggled to survive incarceration. "I was very angry. It was like the very last straw. I went crazy. It just broke and that was it." While considering what she was going to do, Betty realized that some preliminary steps had to be taken.
Well, first you have to be willing, and you have to have the desire. For me, I was just tired of living the way I was. I think it was after my crime and after I got here that really what made me see reality--how serious I was backsliding and how fast I was going to crash and burn; how close I was to taking somebody else's life. That made me sit and think and realize how serious my problems were. Then I learned that I better get my shit together, and either I was going to die or somebody else was going to die. You just reach a point where you don't take anything anymore from yourself or from anybody else. I just made a conscious decision that I wasn't going to live that way anymore. The biggest thing that I think is the most important thing is that you have to love yourself and like yourself before you can really do anything. Before you can really succeed in your education, a career, being a good parent, or having any kind of a healthy relationship. I think that it is crucial. I think that it is the foundation to everything.

From all indications, she had been able to do that, because her attitude toward learning and her responsibilities at WCC certainly reflected a positive change. Regarding the educational programs at WCC, she offered:

I really enjoyed it. What I liked best was the ability to work at my own pace. I don't progress as fast if I have to work at the same pace as other people in those structured classrooms because I'm a quick study person. I pick things up faster than most people do. So to be able to work at my own pace is a lot better for me. I also liked the business skills because I had the hands on access. The treatment part is more internal.

Regarding her transition from "a real cocky, dirty mouthed, little bitch when I came in here" to what changes she has made, Betty stated that:

Everyone has their own opinions that everyone looks at--things from a different viewpoint. If you open yourself up to seeing everything that happens and goes on around you from other people's
viewpoints and be really open minded about it, you can develop new attitudes. I've really had to learn that. . . . It's the same thing with any kind of education program or treatment program. You're not going to get it until you're ready. You have to be willing, and you have to accept that you know what is being taught. Accept your own character defects and your problems, and accept the fact that for any inner peace to come along you have to make some changes. You have to be at peace with yourself, and you can't do it for anybody else. You can't do it for kids, no matter how much you love them, your spouse, or anything else. You have to do it for you.

Many of what Betty had to say have concerned her recent learning capabilities and her personal life. Regarding her personal, social learning experiences, she provided the following information:

Well, I've learned several things. I've learned about myself in a sense that no one can take care of me like I can take care of myself. The abuse that I experienced as a child that created all these crazy emotions was not my fault, and I don't need to take the responsibility. I don't need to punish myself for that. The programs in here have taught me how to nurture myself, how to take care of myself, how to recognize and put names to the feelings that I have. That's really important. How to recognize when I'm feeling like I'm going into a crisis. When I need people, how to reach out and say I need to talk to you.

I've learned assertiveness versus aggressiveness. I've learned how to truly communicate with people instead of communicating through actions. I've boosted my job skills. I've gained a lot more confidence in what I can do. I've learned that I can make decisions and be responsible for my own decisions. I've learned that I can deal with any feelings or problems or situations or obstacles that come up without having to immerse into a bottle. I'm strong enough and able enough to reach out for help.

I can say just now that I don't have the desire to drink like I did before. Today, reality isn't that painful. I mean, there is a lot of
uncertainty, but I don't have to drink. I don't have the desire.

I have a lot of confidence. I feel a lot better about myself. It's very important because if you don't believe in yourself, if you don't believe that you can do anything, then you're not going to do anything. You're not going to want to try to do anything. You know, being here has been one of the most positive learning experiences.

Betty was able to reflect upon the positive learning experience that her incarceration has provided. She has learned many things and has also found an inner peace stemming from her ability to understand herself better.

I can't remember what you said that hit it, but between the past and the present in here and out there, it was like my experience in here has been really positive. It's been because whether it was wrong or not I was taken out of the situations I was in out there and brought in here. It pulled me away from all the distractions that I had, whether it was drugs, alcohol, relationships, my physical surroundings, jobs, or whatever it was. This situation left me to focus on just me. It pulled all those other distractions away and helped me to focus on what I needed to know and what I needed to learn.

Betty felt that she is probably her own worst critic. However, she has:

Learned to ease up on other people. The expectations on others is just an extension of what I put on myself. Well, those learning experiences are mistakes. If you change your attitude toward your perspective you see that you can create a positive learning experience instead of beating yourself up over it.

Betty attributed part of this change to the treatment sessions in which she had participated at WCC. Here, she learned that in order to be worth anything to other people, she must first learn to take care of herself.
[Change] is, like, a really healthy, selfish action. A desire to want to change inside of yourself to make yourself better. Treatment seems to be a stronger desire and pull for me. It's like I can't truly excel in anything I do until I can take care of what's inside. I guess that's a real priority. It depends on the individual and how much they want it.

Even though she did not fully complete the transition, she did have some ideas as to where it was leading.

Contained in the following statement is a sense of where this change had taken her so far.

I think I have more confidence in what I can do. Today I put boundaries on what I do whereas before it was let the wind carry me whichever way it blows. Today I can make a solid decision to complete a course or a program. I can stick to that and carry that through, and every time I get a certificate or I graduate from something, you know, that really brings more confidence.

She also spoke of self-esteem and what effect it had on her. In the following scenario she reiterated her thoughts on self-esteem, what she had accomplished, and her impressions of what can be expected if a woman wants to take advantage of the programs at WCC.

I think it has a drastic effect, both positive and negative. If you don't have any self-esteem or self-worth or any confidence, then your attitude is going to be negative, because you're going to feel like you can't do anything, like you can't accomplish anything, you're not worth anything. Why try? That's how I was for a long time. Now, it's like I'm moving toward the positive. I have my negative days, but I'm moving steadily towards the positive. My confidence is building. I have skills. I have abilities. I'm smart, and I have confidence in what I can do. I have a lot of goals. I've learned how to balance a lot of things, and I'm still learning. I go to extremes, and that's something I'm working on. It gets better every day, and this place has shown me a
lot. It's taught me a lot about myself. It's taught me how to look at myself, at the people that come here. Not just the women but the people that work here and the programs that are offered. If you really want to take advantage of what is here, then they are willing to help. If you don't you'll keep coming back until you're ready to take advantage of it.

Reflected in these comments was Betty's ability to understand her learning. She had gone from a level of feeling that she was worthless to where she now has confidence and self-worth. This change brought her to a level of consciousness where she felt that she could do what she aspired to do as long as she had the confidence, self-worth, and desire to do better.

One topic, however, that Betty had not covered, but that was an important aspect of her life, was her attitude toward authority. Since she did not comprehend all of its effects at an earlier age, she took some time to realize the significance of authority figures in her life.

My perception of authority for a lot of years was that [people in those positions] just wanted to control me, hurt me, and abuse me. Therefore, they are not to be trusted. You do not get close to them. You don't let them know you. You try to hurt them before they hurt you--like my parental figures, my parents. I also had a lot of resentment towards the sheriff's department and social services in my home town because I don't think they helped me. They didn't listen to me. They kept sending me home when they knew what was going on. They were authority figures, and they didn't listen to me. They wanted to control me and do things their way--this is what's best. In the long run it hurt me worse. I didn't trust them.
For Betty, "My father was a major authority figure; the first authority figure in my life. I don't have any respect for him [because of what he did to me]. It's like your boss or the police. . . .” However, she went on to reveal what she considers appropriate authority and where she has found the proper connotations.

Today I have a lot of respect for authority. There's a lot of authority here in this institution and I respect the officers. I respect the treatment staff and the administration staff because for me as an individual they have shown me consistency and they've also shown me that they are not trying to hurt me.

Therefore, the changes in attitudes, values, and learning capabilities have played a significant part in changing Betty from "a real cocky, dirty-mouthed little bitch" to someone who considers that "today, reality isn't that painful. There is a lot of uncertainty." But, "I have a lot of confidence." Provided she will be accepted back into society as she has been accepted in her present environment, Betty will probably be able to handle life more appropriately than before.

The last woman in this group, Billie, was considerably older than the rest of the group. Because she was in her mid- to late 60s, education for her was quite different, even than with Becky, who was closest to her in age. Having grown up in a rural community in the Western United States during the 1920s and 1930s, formal education at that time was not nearly as important as it would have been for Betty,
who was almost 50 years her junior. She had also attended a country school, which she described as having the groupings of grades 1 through 4, 5 through 8, and 9 through 12. For "the school where I was going, the teacher for the upper grades, 5th through 8th, was the same one all the way through. I had her then and she was there when I first started school." This teacher was "strict, but we all learned. We were ahead of the kids in town."

This general classroom teaching method was different from what is commonly practiced today. "When the teacher has four grades in one room that she's teaching, you had 15 minutes for your recitation for a class. Then she would assign you work, and you'd just go ahead and do it." There was conceivably little room for individual attention.

Billie "went to high school for two years." During that time she recalled something about what the classes were like. She said, "We had math, reading, and geography. That's mainly what we had. Spelling was real hard for me. History was, too, because back then it was just memorizing dates and battles and so on." According to Billie, there was not much to maintain a student's interest.

Billie did not recall much of a positive nature that went on at school, but she did recall something negative that affected her personally.

I guess about the only thing I can think of that was really negative that has affected me all the way through was in my first year of high school. We had to take choir. Well, I've never been a
singer, but the teacher told me to just mouth the words because I couldn't carry a tune. I still can't. There's no way I could ever try to sing in public or anything, even in a group I can't. Well, I knew I couldn't sing, I mean, I knew I couldn't but I always liked to try. I felt it was unfair that she wouldn't let me try. . . . The teacher kept telling me that I couldn't sing. Well, I can't to this day. Whether I could have been able to sing if she'd told me, "You've got a beautiful voice" or whatever, I don't know. But I wouldn't try to sing after that. Maybe it's 'cause it was true. I've always thought, at least for the last few years anyway, that instead of telling me I couldn't sing, she should have been showing me how to sing.

Billie stated that, at the time, "It just affected my choir. I don't think it affected my school." However, from what she said earlier, the incident apparently affected more than her choir. It may have weakened her self-esteem. This is especially true later, when her husband began telling her that she was "too dumb to do anything." Nonetheless, similar incidents have a way of affirming the negative feelings in a person if they are not emotionally equipped to handle them.

After two years in high school, Billie quit school and got married to her first husband. This marriage did not work out. Later she remarried, promising herself that she would not divorce again, no matter what the circumstances. That was a promise that would take a heavy toll, because the remainder of her married life was filled with abuse, pain, and heartache, not only for her but also for her two boys. In a manner of speaking, the resounding voice of her mother's words kept ringing through her ears. "My mom
always said, 'If you want to do anything, if you want to do it bad enough, go ahead and give it a try.'" However, those words may not have been meant to pertain to living in a pervasively abusive relationship. Unfortunately for Billie, that was partly what they meant for her.

Much of Billie's learning came from informal, social learning which she was compelled to pursue in order to survive the abusive relationship with her husband. Regarding this relationship, and how she learned to cope with it, she related the following learning mechanisms which she used.

I guess you learn it gradually. It's just a matter of what you have to do on a Tuesday to survive which might be different than what you have to do Thursday. But on Tuesday you do what you absolutely have to do to survive through Tuesday. If it didn't work, in my case, I tried it once, twice, yelling back at him. That might get you through Tuesday, but then he might be in a kind of mood that wouldn't get you through Thursday. You have to learn to be quiet, and you have to, I guess, learn to read the signs. In my case it was mainly be quiet. I learned not to hear his abuse. I can remember the tone and the look, but I don't remember the words.

Billie spoke of the negative feeling she encountered over the abuse and not being able to overcome her determination not to get divorced again.

I don't know if this has anything to do with it or not, but you know I told you that I'd learned not to feel over the years. I really can't say when this started, but I sure know when it ended. It got so that it felt like I was just living off the top of my head. Nothing soaked in. Like, a car would go by on the road, and I'd miss it for some reason or another. For example, I remember going to the doctors and saying I needed my thyroid
changed or something, the pills that I take for that, or some hormones or something, or some vitamins, maybe. They'd say, "No, you're fine." It just kept on that way. I just wasn't quite in sync with myself.

For Billie "the negative is almost like falling into a dark hole, where the learning is just wanting to keep on learning something like trying to go toward the light." Her recollection of where the negative feeling ended was also an enlightenment. It ended physically with "the shooting of [her] husband [and] the trial that was coming up." Mentally and psychologically, it ended for Billie by "getting out from under [his] dominance. I don't know how to relate it to learning unless you want to say [that] it showed me how much I had been under [his] control." Whether it was learning in a typical way or not, it was definitely an informal, social pattern for Billie.

In spite of all the toxicity and abuse, there were times during her married life that Billie was able to interact in more informal learning environments, even though the results might have been negative. She recalled one incident that eventually turned out to be negative, even though it was initially a fine example of a self-directed learning experience:

I wanted to do oil painting so I went to this one woman that I knew. My husband's sister went with me. It wasn't objected to because she went. I did two paintings with her. Then I just got some books and went on my own and I enjoyed that. I really, really did. One winter I painted quite a bit. My husband painted because he always wanted to, which was fine. Then at the fair I entered
two of mine and one of his. Well, mine took red ribbon, and he didn't get any. From then on he wouldn't paint again, but he would stand behind me and say, "That's not right. You shouldn't use that color. What are you doing that for?" until I just put my paintings away. Then he made fun of the ones I had already done, so I moved them all up to my room so he wouldn't have to look at them. That's just an example of him keeping on at something I liked until I would quit. I guess that if he didn't like it and he wasn't good at it, I shouldn't be either. It hurt that I had to give it up. I've never been able to get back to it.

She also recalled other incidents where the self-directed learning attempts were more positive:

I was feeling pretty good about myself. [My husband and I] were building the second house, and I was doing other things as well. I learned ceramics, did some stained glass work, and did some courses in painting. Those were learning things. They were good. I enjoyed them. The positive builds you up.

For Billie, that time was one of the brightest spots in her marriage. However, the situation worsened, and any learning she did was centered around her personal and emotional care.

Unavoidably, not much organized learning occurred until she reached WCC. At this point in time, she was able to get her GED certificate, take some business skills classes, and interface with computers. In the following observation she stated what it was like to be faced with this challenge and what it meant to her.

Over at the prison, when I first got started on the computer and I couldn't get enough. I wasn't there long enough to really learn everything I wanted to learn, but it was like I couldn't wait for the class to get out so I could get down into
it. Before it was closed off in the evening, I spent a lot of time down there. I still have that inner feeling of just wanting to learn it. When I start learning something, I can hardly wait to get to it the next day to learn some more.

This is an example of adult learning at its best.

However, there was one more positive step for Billie. This incident related to a talk she was asked to give and her response to what she had accomplished by giving this presentation.

I was asked to talk on domestic abuse, and I did. It was a small group, and I felt very comfortable with them. I didn't know anybody there, just the lady I went with. That was the first time, but she's asked me to speak at another one. It won't be until September, but it'll be a bigger group. I know I can do it. I think I can be positive enough so it's going to make a difference in somebody's life.

This challenge greatly affected her self-esteem.

Billie expressed her feelings upon being asked to speak for the first time and then being asked to return.

The main thing it proved for me was to show me that I wasn't stupid. It's made me feel a lot better about myself. I guess its made me feel like I'm just as good as everybody else and that if I really wanted to do something I could go ahead and do it. It feels great. I could look anybody straight in the eye, no matter what their education level was. No matter what formal education they had. I wouldn't be ashamed of myself. I might not be able to talk on the subjects that they could, but I wouldn't be ashamed of myself.

The sense of accomplishment derived from this talk and the self-esteem it kindled for Billie was evident in her voice inflections and the gleam in her eyes as she spoke.
The High School Equivalency Group was made up of five women who had obtained high school diplomas or GED certificates before entering WCC. They ranged in age from their early 20s to early 40s and had been convicted of both nonviolent and violent offenses. Four of the women in this group were Caucasian and one was Native American. Each of the women was involved in some type of education, treatment, or training at WCC. However, one showed signs of being somewhat disinterested in the learning process at the center.

One member of this group, Cathy, who was Native American, was in her mid 30s. She had suffered from some abuse from abandonment at an early age; however, other incidents which affected her when she was growing up were the arrest of her parents and their use of drugs and alcohol. The abandonment by her mother affected her most of her life and created a severely strained relationship between her mother and herself. However, only a minimal amount of this toxicity carried over into school, because Cathy was raised primarily by her grandparents, who were viable caregivers. She had been under the care of her grandparents since her mother abandoned her at age five. When asked how being with her grandparents compared to being with her parents, Cathy responded:
I'll tell you what it did for me. It made me have a good sense of value. I learned from my grandparents. I learned a lot from them. I learned values on home life, on how valuable a home life can be, and how a structured life there can be with that secureness. I tell you I didn't have to worry [with them] when I was a kid but when I was with my mom and dad I was constantly worried.

As far as formal education was concerned, Cathy was generally satisfied with most of her early school years, except for two negative incidents which involved math teachers. One incident occurred in elementary school and the other took place in junior high school. Comparing math and her other subjects, Cathy "was a straight 'A' student all the way through school except for math." Furthermore, her problems with math were non-existent until after the problem with the first math teacher occurred. As to this incident, Cathy made the following comments:

He was a really abusive math teacher. He would scream in children's faces and in my face. He wouldn't let you go to the bathroom. I peed my pants in the classroom one day. That was when I was in the fourth grade. I was 9 or 10 years old. He wouldn't let me go to the bathroom, and I couldn't hold it anymore. I peed my pants in the class. That happened three or four times during the school year, but not to me. It happened once to me, but it had happened to other girls. He was the type of teacher that also, if you didn't know a problem or something, he would humiliate you in front of the class. He'd put you in a corner. He actually did have a dunce cap. That's the only teacher I've seen with a cap that he would put on you and put you in the corner. He was a real terrible with kids. He should never have been a teacher.

Abusive teaching methods can have not only a humiliating and detrimental effect on students, they can
also turn them away from the learning process. Bradshaw (1988B), addresses this type of abuse when he talks about "toxic shame" in schools. It can produce fear of learning, as Cathy expressed:

Well, he started that out at the beginning of the year, very abusive towards the students. He would be that way to the boys, but he didn't seem to do it as much to them as the girls. After I peed my pants that day in the classroom I got really embarrassed. I went home and I told my grandparents. They complained, but nothing was ever done. I was afraid of him after that. After my grandparents went to the school I was afraid that it would get worse. I was afraid to do my work because I was afraid if it was wrong or I didn't do it right I'd be verbally abused again. So it just got to the point where I wouldn't even do it at all. Before that I used to try. He was the type of teacher that if you didn't stay up with the class then you were the one that he hollered at.

The second incident occurred in junior high school and was somewhat more severe in that it involved prejudice toward Native Americans as well as physical abuse. Cathy related the experience:

I got another abusive math teacher when I was in the seventh grade. I mean, this guy physically abused me. He picked me up by the front of the shirt and he was the one that discriminated really bad towards me and my family. Everyone called him the "Ax." My aunt and my brother and I were the in the same grade. He flunked us because we were all Indians. He would make me sit in the back of the room and everybody else could sit where they wanted to.

Like many other people, much of Cathy's education was informal in nature. Besides the informal learning experiences she gained from her grandparents, she also learned from other informal settings. Some of these
situations developed when she visited her parents, or was away from her grandparents' influence. In addition, some occurred when she was older. During the interview, she reflected upon the question, "How do I learn?" Her response was, "Just through other people that are around me. Through my family." In this regard she was referring not only to learning in general but to the fact that she had learned how to use drugs from her family. Concerning the drug use, she stated:

I exposed myself to [drugs] without even using [them] for a certain amount of time. They [her relatives] were at my house doing it, [and] I'd let them. We'd go up to the bathroom or at the kitchen table or something. It went on for a while without me getting involved. It was just curiosity. They'd say it feels good and everything like that. That was what it was. That's how I got into drugs, was just curiosity. There was nothing stressful going on in my life at the time. Everything was good. I was around it for quite a while.

Another aspect of her informal, social learning process was being able to ignore the negative events in her life. "Escape was learning to me. I was able to ignore everything--feelings, low self-esteem, anger, and being hurt from abusive relationships. I just learned to ignore everything." That assessment basically summed up her life between her teenage marriage, her leaving high school, and her incarceration. Because Cathy obtained her GED certificate during that time, she had very little contact with the educational process at WCC. She did state, however, that she had been heavily involved in WCC's
treatment activities. Essentially, she was still learning
the same way she had always learned. Regarding her
involvement in the treatment process at WCC:

I'm learning at the same time. I learn at the
same time with these people--they are all groups.
You learn a lot just being in any type of group.
You can learn from a group of alcoholics in a bar.
I can walk away from these people. I don't have
to see these people any further on in my lifetime
if I choose not to.

Cammy, who was in her mid-20s, experienced
psychological, verbal, and some physical abuse at home from
her mother. Drugs and alcohol were also prevalent during
her childhood and adolescence. Cammy had the following
comments to make concerning how this atmosphere affected her
learning:

My mother was on welfare and I didn't have
everything that other kids had, so I felt
belittled all the time. She wasn't always there
for us. She was always gone or drunk or on dope
or doing stuff like that. I didn't care about
school so [it] wasn't really a learning process
until I was in the seventh grade.

Before her formal learning process began at around age
12, she learned from her siblings. She stated, "I learned a
lot from them. I mean, when to shut up and when not to be
around my mom."

There were other circumstances that affected Cammy's
attitude toward school. "I went to school to keep from
getting my ass beaten by my mom." Being on welfare actually
was a greater source of distress to her than not liking
school. "I hated it. I hated going to school and being on
welfare. I hated to have free lunch tickets. I wouldn't even eat because it downs you and degrades you."

However, in spite of the degradation she felt at school, Cammy "was safe at school. I felt safe and I was a different person at school. At home I was scared and never said nothing. At school I could talk and I didn't have to worry about being hit." While at school she and some of her peers "were all close. We skated together. We were all just like a little family."

During her earlier school years Cammy learned both at home and at school. At home, "I learned about selling and doing drugs from my mom; watching my mom with her boyfriends." In addition to learning about drugs from her mother, she also

Learned more from my sisters, my brothers, and my peers, how to survive, more or less. I learned about dope and how to support myself from my sisters. They were older so they were doing their own thing. Everybody left home really young. So it was like I learned from them.

During this time, Cammy began to sell drugs at school, mostly pills she stole from her mother. She recalled the following scenario:

I just took 'em to school. I'd just steal 'em from her. I'd take 'em 'cause she wouldn't give me lunch money or anything, so that was my way of making my own way and eating and surviving. That's how I felt. She was so screwed up and messed up anyway that she didn't notice they were gone. I never took too much, where she would notice they were gone.
Finally, she indicated, it got to a point where "you didn't go to school, you just didn't." Cammy recalled what it was like when she was asked why she wasn't in school.

If the truant officer came and said, "Why isn't your kid going to school?" because welfare checks up on that. It was like you're not going to school and she'd beat your ass. She'd know we weren't going to school but in front of them [it was like she didn't know]. She'd wait 'til they left and she'd beat the shit out of us, and things like that you don't forget. As I grew, it kept getting worse and worse.

Because of the situation at home and school, Cammy "grew up too fast. I didn't have that kid life. I just went from 10 years old--I was 10 going on 13, then 13 going on 16."

Between the ages of 10 and 13, after she had run away from home, Cammy spent most of her time on the streets.

During that time:

I stayed on the streets, sold drugs, and did my own thing. I stayed here and there with friends, behind dumpsters, and ate out of dumpsters. I did pot and everything I could to survive. I was so young. I look back now and I see these commercials and stuff and I say, my God. How lucky and fortunate I am to have what I have. I mean, in my state of mind being in prison, well, at least I have a roof over my head and I'm fed.

However, in some ways there were brighter roads ahead for Cammy. At age 13, after she grew tired of life on the streets, she initiated contact with her father, who lived in another state, and she went to live with him. Cammy recalled this change in her life:

During my high school years, from the 9th to the 11th [grades], . . . was my learning process.
That's when I really got into school. I started learning where [before] I didn't learn nothing 'cause my mom didn't make me go to school, so I just went to get away from home.

In some ways these years paid off, because Cammy received a sports scholarship to college. However, because "I was a mother, married and everything, I just dropped and became a housewife." Regarding her decision to drop out, she reflected:

I gave up a lot, like beauty school. I gave up college. I regret those things to this day, but I'm 26. I can go to college. The whole thing is, I'm not gonna give up my dreams. I never had goals on the street. I never thought I'd graduate and that was my big goal, that I was gonna graduate. No one else [in my family] did, so I'm going to. I'm going to do it because no one else did and I did it and when I did, it was an accomplishment. I didn't go through with the class. I didn't walk through graduation, but I got my diploma and that was a big thing to me.

Life was moderately normal for Cammy for a few years following high school. After being abused to some degree by her first husband, she left him and returned to California, where she again got involved in the drug environment. Besides not being able to fulfill her goal of going to beauty school, two situations which affected her course of action during this time were her views on money and on marriage.

She "kind of looked at marriage as a game," because her mother had "been married at least 13 times that I can remember . . . divorcing one, marrying another." Based upon these perceptions, Cammy remarried, primarily to make
another man jealous. Subsequently, when she was in prison, she realized the second marriage was a mistake and she filed for divorce. Regarding her divorce, she stated, "I'm alone, learning a lot."

Regarding the importance of money and how it affected her life, Cammy made the following observation:

> It was a matter of survival. Money had always been the main issue with my mom. See, the thing is, even to this day when I was out, money was the main issue. It was like I wasn't used to not having money. I always had it. That's how I got here. I mean, I wrote checks and I didn't have the money.

Because she was a second-time offender, arrival at WCC was not necessarily the same for Cammy as it was for some of the other women. She explained:

> What people need to realize is [that] this prison isn't like a real prison. I've done some time in another state--120 days--so I learned more [about hard time] than I've learned here in a year. But you learn [other things]. I had to learn to realize what I could lose and what was right for me and that is what I did.

Cammy came to realize that "the whole thing is, I put myself here. No one can get me out. If I can take one step of learning from it, everyone of 'em was worth it, and that's how I feel. I feel I'm growing. I'm progressing. Only I can cause my happiness." She further affirmed that:

> Nothing is really screwed up in my life; it's all been a learning process and now I'm here and probably this is the best thing God could have done to me, is put me in prison. I mean, God didn't do it; I did it to myself. The best thing is Him letting me have the knowledge to know and learn what I've learned since I've been here and been locked up.
More specifically, concerning her learning process at WCC, Cammy recalled:

Anger management taught me that assertiveness is a lot better than aggressiveness. But the thing is, I'm learning how to voice out instead of being hateful. The consequences wouldn't have been shit, where in here it is. I mean, I have a lot on my mind. You know, I'm close, I'm right here. It's like you think after two years, you have time to think and deal with yourself and find yourself. I mean, finding myself was one of the best things I've learned, but I've still got a lot more to find. You do go through a [process] and each step is progress.

In conclusion, Cammy reflected upon where she had been and where she might be in the future had she not come to these self-realizations, most of which dealt with her informal, social learning experiences.

The major thing I've learned myself, my inner self, is that money doesn't buy love or happiness. The next most important thing I've learned is how to deal with me. I guess seeing [that] money's not the key to everything. That's what I learned, mainly, out of all of it. Money is not the source of happiness and love. That's what I'm owning up to now. That's one major thing that sticks in my mind. But in myself I'm not an angry person like I was before, fighting all the time. Defensive, I mean—I still get that way but I'm not as bad. I'm not walking that [lower] level anymore. I'm growing up, probably--maturing--by allowing myself to mature, more or less, is what I should say. That's a big, major thing. Being in therapy and group, I voiced out. Before, when I started group, I wouldn't even talk. I mean, trying to stand there and not be there, that was it and now I talk and I'm more comfortable. So that's [released] a lot of old hatred towards my mother and the way I lived and the shit I've done. But that's in the past.
Candy, a frequent offender who was in her mid-30s, was heavily involved in drugs at an early age. Indeed, drugs dominated her life.

When I was a kid I never wanted to be a cheerleader. I never wanted to be a mommy. I never wanted to be a wife. I didn't want to be anything. I wanted to be a drug addict and I was a drug addict. At age 12-13 I was bent on being a good heroine addict and that's what I did.

As her treatment in various institutions progressed, this attitude perplexed Candy.

I feel abnormal because, why didn't I have these dreams? Most people have dreams, don't they, goals, things they want to do? You know, like somebody wants to be a teacher all their life and they grow up and they're a teacher. I never wanted to be anything. I can't remember ever wishing to be anything.

Candy's dysfunction could be attributed to a number of factors in her youth, one of which was her situation at home and the fact that her mother had to work. Hence, "I knew that no one was home when I got home from school." Because many of her peers had mothers to come home to, and because Candy spent so much time at home by herself, she felt alienated.

I just felt really awkward around other kids in school. Oh, and the clothes I had to wear were different and their parents would come to their plays or their games at school or whatever. I felt weird, awkward, like I was the weird kid. That's what I recall when I think about school. I couldn't even sit here and tell what teachers I had, what they looked like or anything. I just felt very awkward. I don't know that I was but that's the way I felt.
As a result of her feelings, Candy turned to other areas for the support she lacked at home and at school.

I hung around with the guys who were getting into trouble and smoking in the bathroom 'cause I was accepted by those people. I couldn't fit in with the other guys, you know, the big family types. They were involved with the family and they did really good at school.

Gradually, she turned to the streets, because:

I could share things and I could be myself with the street people. I didn't have to wait around for somebody to come and pick me up an have to go change my clothes or whatever. So, it was like they were the lost crowd and I guess I felt lost with them.

Candy was able to apply what she considered her natural learning ability to her life on the street. "I'm a fast learner. It became a matter of survival tactics because if you're going to keep achieving the high you want then you've got to do things. I didn't have no qualms about doing them either. I still don't when I get strung out."

Unfortunately, her "fast learning" on the streets did not transfer to the classroom. Nevertheless, she recalled school life before she began her life on the street:

I left home when I was 12 and I made it to the 8th grade. I liked science. I hated math. I liked reading. I liked sports. At this one elementary school I went to they had a pool and we used to get to go swimming. It was part of the class.

She recalled her work habits in the classroom and concerning homework, and the fact that school work did not hold her attention.

I was really quiet. I listened and I wasn't a bookworm or anything but I didn't participate
either. I managed to do the homework and stuff. Sometimes I had to have help. My mom would once in awhile help me.

The absence of attention from home contributed to the discomfort she felt in the classroom. Consequently, her self-consciousness overrode her ability to concentrate on school subjects.

It wasn't fascinating to me because I felt strange. I couldn't wait to get out of the classroom. I felt really self-conscious sitting there with all those other kids around. I just was self-conscious, very self-conscious, because these were the smart kids. These were the kids that the teacher called on and stuff. I didn't even raise my hand. I didn't want to be called on, 'cause then I'd have to talk in front of these people. I was terribly self-conscious. I don't even know why. I'm still self-conscious to a point. It's getting better, a lot better. I think I was self-conscious because I was always getting teased and things like that.

Although Candy did not recall much about her other school subjects, she did remember the dreaded math classes. Math "was the hardest thing, because it didn't make a lot of sense to me. It still doesn't. Pretty much, that was it, math was my big thing. I tried to do well in the rest of them, but I didn't do too good in math."

Candy recalled that her older brother's excellence in school subjects had a profound effect on her early schooling. "My brother was a couple of years ahead of me and he always did really, really good. I didn't, so some of the teachers would say 'Yes, I remember your brother this and your brother that.'" Because of this, she felt that she was always being compared unfavorably with him, and that
feeling negatively affected her ability to learn. Years later, she recounted, "I hate to say those things now," referring to a tragedy that subsequently befell her brother, resulting in his institutionalization.

Candy did not graduate from high school, but she was later able to obtain her GED certificate. She made subsequent attempts to further her education, presumably during some of her previous incarcerations. However, negative experiences from earlier schooling, coupled with her intermittent drug usage, adversely affected her ability to learn.

I would just listen very quietly and try to get through. I still felt the same way, awkward and out of place, apart from everyone else. I'm sure that's because of my addiction and everybody knew. I think I spend more time worrying about that, than I did worrying about that I was supposed to be there to learn.

However, she did not always feel out of place, because there were times when "I was clean for awhile."

At WCC, Candy overcame a substantial measure of the negative learning she had encountered in her earlier experiences. Learning took on a new meaning for her. Typical of many of the other women interviewed, it became a tool that facilitated her self-reflection and provided a source of pride. For, Candy advancing her education replaced the goals she previously lacked.

I retook my GED because they couldn't get my records. I passed it and I'm taking the business skills class for the second time 'cause I just want to go through it again.
School is my main motivation right now. I'm smart and I can prove that I'm smart. I can prove it to myself that I'm smart. I'm pulling straight A's. It feel really good. I want to use it. I want to keep learning and use it somehow. It makes me feel good because I can do something positive. This is positive. I can do something good. Internally I'm proving something to me, I'm proving a lot to myself because I can do better. See now, no other time would I be tested to do that, to prove that, to myself. No other time in the other lifestyle would I have to prove that.

The significant change in Candy's attitude was reflected in her comments. Indeed, learning gained a new meaning, which she expanded into all facets of her environment. Her excitement and enthusiasm were reflected in her voice as she described her newly established interests:

I've got almost two years in business skills. I'm doing chemical dependency for the second time. I've already graduated [from] it once. Let's see, I did healthy relationship classes. I did parenting. Those are the major achievements. I'm doing [chemical dependency] again. I'm taking it over. We were given computer time and for me that's pretty much self taught. I try to spend a lot of time doing that. It's closed right now but when it's open there's programs that we can mess around with in there. I've had meditation. We try to participate in spiritual things and we're required to participate in outside meetings. Most of my time I'd spend with self-help projects--the self learning. Like homework from [chemical dependency] and interaction that we're supposed to do in trying out different things, we're learning. The last one was constructive criticism--how to do it. You're supposed to document how it went and all that. Then there's self-esteem exercises.

Candy reflected upon what she thought these new learning experiences would do or had done for her.

I'm determined to prove something to me for a change. It's hard sometimes but it gives me a
good feeling and I want to give up sometimes but I don't. I'm not going to. I give up too easy and that's why I don't care enough. I think you have to teach people to care about life and things and themselves, and I don't. I never learned that. I'm trying. I don't know if I can learn it now. That's the positive thing. I'm angry most of the other times. You're afraid to focus on yourself.

She further compared her new interest with that of an inquiring mind which encompasses the flexible, lifelong learning desire of an adult, as opposed to an individual who is satisfied solely with what is perceived to be the limited knowledge imparted by the teacher.

I'm participating a lot now because I think clearer. I'm always taking things that aren't logical, like bookkeeping. Accounting is not logical but I'm always wondering why things are done that way. I made the honor roll so I'm not dumb. I made an A in keyboarding, so that's kind of cool. I'm more active in what's going on. If I don't understand something I'll ask, whereas I didn't used to. I just tried to figure it out later. The teacher had 30-some kids and so you kind of just tried to keep up with whoever was ahead in the game. It was hard to speak up and say, "Hey, I have problems right here," because you didn't think you should take the teacher's time 'cause of all the other kids in the class. I feel we're all pretty equal here and it's a lot more important for me to learn than it used to be. Maybe it's my age.

Through her courses, Candy gained self-esteem. "I don't have to feel self-conscious because I don't know anything. I do now. I can walk in somewhere and say, yes, I know how to run a computer. I know how to do that." Her primary obstacle was learning to believe in herself. She assessed what this meant to her and what positive actions she would have to take to accomplish this goal.
Well, let's say I'm practicing [believing in myself] because that's not my natural train of thought. But I know if I don't learn it and don't believe it then I won't make it. It is learning, it's practice, it's totally reversing just about everything I do, everything. And I know I can. I can't unlearn the things that I know but I can learn better things.

Learning to care about herself was not without emotional drawbacks. Candy contemplated some of the reasons why she had such a difficult time with her newly-acquired learning motivation. This difficulty appeared to have centered around a critical attitude that she had not learned earlier in life.

I don't know that I ever learned to care. I don't think I can. I don't think I was ever taught to care, and I didn't learn patience or acceptance. Just, this is the way the world turns. You know, I didn't learn any of that stuff, except for living it.

As to her recovery, Candy recounted some of the major influences in her life, most notably her involvement with drugs. "Especially being a drug addict all those years, I have very displaced loyalty in the wrong things--the things I learned. The morals and the values that I learned, they're street values, street morals. I don't know the other kind." Given this, "The biggest thing that I have to learn is that I don't have to get high today. That's all I've got to learn, the rest will come to me." However:

Because I've done it so long, I think I'm sort of institutionalized. I mean, these kinds of places. I've been in a lot of places. I've been through a lot of treatment, too. So, the choices are before me. It's whether I'm willing to do the work or if I'm going to give up.
The years of drug abuse took their toll on Candy. One element that influenced her recovery was her weariness of her lifestyle. "I'm tired. I'm so tired. I'm too young to be as tired as I am. I've screwed up my body, but I'm trying to change." Yet she was determined to make the change.

I'm going to do it one step at a time, one day at a time. You know, like I said, meetings and meditation and reading and the skills that I'm learning in here. I have to use them and I have to use them every day. If I decide not to use them then I'll be prepared to come back here if I make it through the front door. That's my alternative. When you're younger you have a few more choices. Even after your first 5 or 10 years of using, you have some choices. I don't have any more choices. I have seen my disease progress and now I have two choices--to recover or to die. I think the recovery is going to take me a long time, but it wouldn't take me any time to die. I don't want to die yet.

Candy's final resolve meant personal actions as well as words. Her concluding remarks set forth those personal actions:

I lay down face first on the floor and I spread my arms and I surrender that control that I think I have. I'll do it in a public square if I have to because I don't want to live here anymore. And I don't want to die--that's my choice. I'm learning it right now. I'm learning about myself and it's scary because I really am addicted, terribly bad. I'm not an abuser, I am addict. You know, I know lots of abusers and I'm not an abuser.

Carrie, another member of this group, was in her 20s. In spite of being abused, mostly in psychological, emotional, and verbal terms, she was able to make fairly good grades until she "was in junior high. I was living
with my mom at the time and I was having a lot of problems with her. I was planning on moving in with my dad, 'cause I just couldn't handle it anymore. I was losing all my grades." Control became a big issue for Carrie. This developed as a result of her early home life.

I had the house to myself (I was five years old). I cooked, I cleaned, I did it all myself. It was very scary and that was where the control came in, because if I was in control I couldn't be scared. Honestly, with my mom, I guess, how it developed is she did less and less and less. And the less she was there, the more control I took of the house . . . different shit the older I got. Then with my dad--my dad is a really great guy but he had a second wife and she ran the show, too.

While her mother's drinking and absence from the home contributed to Carrie's unrest, other elements also created problems. One involved school, and an English teacher who forced her religious beliefs on the students in her class.

My family was just never really into church or anything and I wasn't raised to believe in [God]. I've never had the opinion that there was some great God up there and then she forced religion on us. It was just kind of like, "See ya." I skipped class or I just wouldn't do the homework 'cause she used to have us write and do projects where the subject would be God, or something to do with God. Well, I ain't doing that. I don't think you have the right to make me do that, so I wouldn't do it. Of course, I almost flunked her class.

Combined with Carrie's rebellion, this activity on the part of the teacher set into motion a tendency not to go to school, as well as a general negative attitude toward learning. However, in spite of this, Carrie was able to get at least one poem published in her high school paper.
The other incident that affected her even more deeply was being sexually molested by a female teenage babysitter when Carrie was around seven years of age. As she grew older, the trauma surrounding this event worsened, and she turned to other negative behavior, including drugs and alcohol. "I did drugs and I drank when I was hanging out with my friends. A lot of my boyfriends did drugs and it turned me off, so I quit." She explained why she later turned away from drugs and alcohol:

It was like I didn't want to be around them anymore. Also, my mom was a really heavy drinker. My dad used to be a real heavy drinker. Both my brothers are alcoholics. Both my grandfathers were alcoholic so I stay away from it. I stay away from it because I have a feeling I'll end up like all the rest of them. I don't want to be like that. My kids don't deserve what I went through.

Although she was able to abandon the negative behavior involving drugs and alcohol, for Carrie reaching 18 meant the realization of another addiction which even more directly resulted from being sexually molested. That addiction, she realized after arriving at WCC, was in the form of sexual fixation. She realized that "instead of being a victim [she] had become a perpetrator" when, while still in high school, she sexually abused a young boy, an event which eventually resulted in her incarceration at WCC at age 18. During treatment, Carrie began to understand more about her situation.

With my controlling factor and my co-dependency, which I've learned about in [chemical dependency],
they all kind of stem together. I learned that I
had become a sex addict and that stemmed from my
being molested. I'm learning how to handle that
and how to go back and work out of that situation.

Recalling her own molestation at age seven, Carrie began to
understand how this incident had affected her.

I didn't let the gal victimize me. She did molest
me but instead of remembering that and thinking,
"Oh God, what a terrible thing. I'll never hurt
anybody like that," I turned around and did the
exact opposite. I said, "Well, fuck, if somebody
hurt me I'm gonna hurt somebody else," and that is
what I did. From there I went on to do it. With
my family I had been given the understanding that
sex means you love somebody. If you love somebody
you have sex with them. Well, sex was what my
life revolved around after that, from the time I
started dating until [coming to] WCC.

As previously mentioned, another problem she brought
with her to WCC was one of control. "How did I learn to get
control? What I do in a relationship or something, is I
pick somebody weak. I've done that all my life. My parents
were weak and I got to run them and I controlled them."

During her treatment, Carrie was learning to deal with
another problem--a sense of powerlessness--which was related
to the control issue.

I'm learning to admit my powerlessness over my
life and that's really hard to do. I'm learning
how to admit that I'm powerless. I've never felt
powerless. I've always been in control and that's
one of the hardest things that I'm learning to
face.

Similarly, through treatment Carrie was working on her
anger, another big issue which had troubled her.

I'm learning to deal with the anger that I have
from when I was a little kid. Before it was just
beat somebody senseless or hit something. Now I'm
learning how to be assertive rather than aggressive and let people know that this is how I feel. Like, I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't do that, or, could we compromise because I'm very upset about this? That's really different. It's a good feeling. It's good to be able to do that 'cause before I didn't know how. I didn't have the tools to use and I was just, Hey, I'm this and I'm gonna make you mad, or, I'm gonna be a real bitch.

Carrie's recent learning as a result of participating in programs at WCC has led to major changes in her self-concept and her approach to problem solving. "If I'd never come here I'd never have dealt with [my problems]."

Carrie felt that she had come a long way in her recovery, and she pinpointed the source of her growth.

I think the biggest improvement with me is having an open mind. I'm not going to the class with my mind shut down, saying I hate this place and I don't want to be here. I walk in there every day saying what can I learn today? If I only learn that one little thing maybe that'll be the key. Because that's what I used to do. Well shit, I don't want to know this, so who cares. Bam! There went my mind. I'm not doing that anymore. Part of the difference is the people, because before I used to look at everybody as, well, I bet you they're smarter than me. This person does this and this and this. Now I walk in there and I say it doesn't matter what you look like on the outside, how you act, you're no different than me inside or up here. So I don't have this stigma of feeling like I'm less than them. I feel like an equal to anybody now. If something doesn't change and they don't deal with it eventually, just like me, if I'd never come here I'd have never dealt with it.

Cassie was a woman in her 20s who had suffered extreme physical abuse, first from her father, then from a marital relationship, and finally from a live-in boyfriend. The last relationship ended in catastrophic results, not only
for the boyfriend, but also for Cassie. She recounted her life:

My first memory as a child is my dad being taken away from us by the police and him beating the hell out of my mom. I've seen that all my life. I can remember when my brother was 15 or 16 years old. He and a couple of friends got drunk at school and my dad literally smashed his head through a wall. I watched him do this and I screamed and told him not to do it and then he was mad at me. He almost killed the poor guy. Dave and I were close to each other and we still are. The violence affected me because I wished for so long to be strong physically to where, if men ever hurt me, I could beat the hell out of them. Then my old boyfriend was in a street gang and tried to teach me how to use nunchucks and how to street fight. He was a tough little bastard. He wasn't really that big but he was pretty tough and he knew how to fight. Well, my strength wasn't shit compared to his strength, so I got a weapon and I hit him 'cause I thought, "Well, if you're big enough to beat the hell out of me then you're big enough to deal with me."

Cassie began her formal schooling with a very positive experience in kindergarten. This was largely due to the effects of a good teacher. However, in the first grade an authoritarian teacher completely changed Cassie's attitude. Because of her reaction to and interactions with her first grade teacher, Cassie embarked on a path which eventually resulted in her failure to succeed in elementary school.

I went to school, and kindergarten was wonderful. I remember that well. I liked the teacher. First grade, she kept telling us what to do. It was terrible compared to kindergarten. She was very bossy and very demanding, if you didn't have everything perfect. I remember watching everybody obeying her because they were afraid of getting in trouble. I wasn't afraid of shit. I was a very angry person. I would tell her things that they wouldn't even fantasize about saying. I would do things and I would test her to see what got to her.
and what didn't and how much I could get away with and what I couldn't get away with. I mean, she was more or less my experiment. I learned with her just how far I could get, what really worked and what didn't work.

Although she was developing the means by which to deal with people in the world whom she considered threats, her behavior had a price.

I got held back in the first grade which really pissed me off. My dad was upset. The very few times that I would apply myself in school, I did very well but I just didn't want to try. I didn't. I wanted to make him angry. I wanted to punish him because I was angry myself.

Despite the negative experience of the first grade, Cassie saw some social value to school. However, even this was not enough to improve her attitude relating to grammar school.

I liked going to school when I was really young. I had four brothers and then I'd meet friends, and all the girls were at school so I liked to go to school. But right around fourth or fifth grade I didn't like it anymore. I started to rebel against school because school was authority. I did not like authority so I started to rebel at fourth or fifth grade. By the time I was, like, in seventh grade I was skipping school a lot.

Cassie felt she was justified in this rebellion. She clearly linked it to her frustration with authority, and her attempts to prevent authority from being imposed upon her were problematic.

I became anti-social at home and I was anti-social at school. I had one or two close friends and I didn't want anymore than that. I rebelled against my father and my family 'cause Dad was the authority figure. Everything he told me to do I did the opposite. If he told me not to do it, I'd do it and I found the same thing with teachers.
Teachers being authority figures telling me what to do. I was very angry. I can remember being angry all the way back to the first grade. It came from home. One of my ways of rebelling was rebelling at school 'cause the teachers were the authority figure there. See, at home it was Dad, at school it was the teachers. I got held back in first grade because I rebelled. How did it come? Well, I'd talk back to the teacher. I wouldn't do what they told me to do. Like in first grade, we had this page and had these pictures on it and we were supposed to color these pictures and write on the line what they were or something like that. Well, I drew the cup some other color, just obnoxious things to piss the teacher off because she was an authority figure. To this day I remember who she is and I still remember her name. She was an authority figure. She was a teacher. I felt I had to make her miserable.

For Cassie, the authority imposed at home and at school augmented one another and became a serious problem for her.

I didn't like school. I hated math. I didn't like teachers telling us what to do. You couldn't chew gum, you couldn't do anything, you couldn't speak. I hated it. It was as bad as being at home, except my mom wasn't bad. It wasn't my mom, it was just my brothers. Well, they told you what to do. [Just like the teachers] they told you, "Don't chew gum, don't talk, don't whisper, don't do anything." I mean, they reminded me of the Nazi soldiers. They acted like we were in prison or jail or something. It just pissed me off. I was the only one that would tell the teachers how stupid they were.

Cassie's attitude toward authority affected not only her learning, it also began to affect her personal interaction with her teachers. She even experienced negative feelings when they complimented her.

The teacher would say, "You're doing so well and I'm proud of you. I'm glad that you got out of that slump and I'm glad to see you do so much." I would feel like telling the teacher, go screw yourself. This ain't for me and it ain't for you. It's for my mom, so just shut up and grade the
Cassie's rebellion got so bad that school personnel "thought I had a learning disability. The thing was, I didn't give a shit. I wanted to rebel against the teachers. I was extremely anti-social and I refused to learn. Therefore, they thought I had a learning disability."

However, in spite of the negative attitude and learning environment, Cassie found one bright spot before her formal school ended. This involved a teacher with whom Cassie could relate on a one-to-one basis.

Well, there was a person that I can remember during school leaving an impression on me. I don't know if she's still working there or not. I didn't look at her like I looked at all the other teachers. I mean, she wasn't a teacher to me, she was like a friend. I could tell her anything and I didn't have to worry about her double-crossing me or snitching on me. I mean, she would give me advice even about things she didn't approve of. She would give me advice. She was like my friend. She wasn't my teacher.

This positive encounter did not last long enough or have enough positive effect on Cassie's formal education.

My rebellion with these teachers lasted clear up until the day that I quit school--the very last day that I quit school. I remember putting rose perfume in the heaters during the winter because the teacher was allergic to rose perfume. I would do all kinds of things. Well, it started at home and it carried on through school. It lasted in school up until the time I quit and of course it carried on past school and all the times until I came to this place. Well, it depended on the situation [in which] I was involved.
The final reason that Cassie finally quit school was because of her interactions with the principal at the high school she attended. "I didn't go back because [he and I] were like enemies since the 9th grade.

He and I didn't get along. It was bad. He hated me so bad and I hated him. This guy followed me everywhere, I swear to God. Me and my friends would be out by the doors called the "Rowdy" doors. We would be smoking and getting drunk between classes. Well, he would follow me down to these doors and try to bust everybody. He was so stupid. He said, "Okay, everybody stay still, nobody move." We'd look at him and laugh and get in our cars and leave. He was pretty sharp, I tell you.

Cassie's only encounter with any other type of education was getting her GED certificate right after she quit high school. Her reaction to this process was seemingly just as negative, because "I hadn't liked school for a long time anyways. School to me was authority. I didn't like authority. Then my dad made me get my GED or else go back to school for another year and graduate. That kind of made me angry and mad."

She even disliked the GED classes. She did not have much success in the process and did not think she would complete the requirements.

I hated it. In fact, the third time I went to get it I was so convinced that I wasn't going to pass that I stayed up all night getting drunk. I didn't study. I did not study once and I went over there with a hangover and exhausted. I took the test for the third time and I amazingly passed. I was surprised that I passed. I thought that I would have to go back to school for my 12th year. I tried hard the first and second time but the third time I didn't think I would get it.
Not surprisingly, there was little if any educational activity for Cassie after this. Even after coming to WCC, her negative attitude toward learning and formal programs has continued. This attitude was not typical of the other women interviewed.

I have no intention of staying clean and sober when I get out. I'm not going to lie to you. I'm going to be honest. I have no intention [of doing that]. I know it's self-destructive. Well, the only way I'm going to get to the point where I can be clean on the street is if I deal with my problems and I get to the point where I like myself enough to do it for me, see what I'm saying? All I know is that I'm afraid of me. Now, there is nothing I would like more than to get drunk--so drunk that I pass out. If I had alcohol right now, I'd be shit-faced. I don't want to deal with the pain, I want to be numb. Well, how can I not be negative, I mean, look at all the shit I've been through. Look at the stuff I'm going through right now. Look at what I've waited for. They deal with it their way, I deal with it mine.

*College Students*

This group was made up of seven women who had some college education but who had not obtained degrees. Their ages ranged from mid-20s to early 40s. Five of these women had been convicted of non-violent check and forgery charges; however, two had been convicted of violent crimes, including assault and homicide. Two of these women were Native Americans and the remainder were Caucasian. Two of them were residents of the Butte Pre-Release Center; one had been released on parole through BPRC and was working and going to school in the community; and the other four were residents
of WCC. All of these women had been or were involved in some form of education, treatment, or training while at WCC or BPRC. Only one was going to college at the time of the interviews.

Daisey's problems centered around an incident as to which she has little conscious memory, which apparently occurred during a trip she took to Europe with her father after her last year in high school. Although most of her memories were sublimated, Daisey experienced considerable pain and sorrow over what she suspected occurred on that trip. An intensive effort to deal with these problems had not been undertaken until she came to WCC. Daisey believed that all of her problems stemmed from this incident.

I was born with a good brain. It was nourished and developed for 17 years. Like I said, I had a good foundation. I had something to fall back on, which I've always had but I wasn't smart enough to figure out what was wrong with me. So then I started thinking, "Well, I'm not smart." I mean, it just got all very jumbled up over the years. Now it's becoming a little bit clearer but I was not smart enough to recognize myself.

Daisey's educational foundation came in part from her mother, who was a school teacher. Indeed, both of her parents were well educated. Her early school experiences were positive, and Daisey attributed much of her success to her parents' involvement in her educational upbringing.

I don't obviously have a whole lot of particular memories about first grade but I remember being real excited about going to school all the time. I was real excited about it so [my mom] must have done a real good job instilling that in me. There was no dread about going to school.
Her most positive memory from the early years was her first grade teacher. "I must have made my mother sick because I quoted Miss Jones about this, that, and the other. Miss Jones this, Miss Jones that—but I was excited about school from the word go. Some of that sort of had to be parental."

Daisey was fortunate in that she had positive reinforcement and encouragement from both her family and from her school teachers.

I know I was always encouraged to learn, to ask questions. I know that from my early years at home. No question went unanswered. I didn't get the bullshit, "Well, that's just 'cause the way it is," answers. I got explanations. My parents are both very educated, very intelligent. My formal education, that was very structured. I mean, you got up at a certain time, you got ready, and went to school. You did school all day and then you came home and did whatever else. Then studied at night and then you went to bed and did the same thing the next day.

Informal learning in the home was also encouraged. Daisey was provided the opportunity to make decisions on her own and thereby to gain independence.

I was taught that I was smart. I was capable of making my own decisions. They were there to help me if and when I needed it but they weren't gonna tell me how to live my life. I remember this from very young on. I was always encouraged. I was told I could be anything I wanted to be, that I was wonderful.

For Daisey, "school and learning [were] never anything that was jammed down my throat. I mean, in high school I always took heavy course loads and sometimes I had to be talked out of taking too many."
Daisey also described her high school years as generally being positive in the areas of sports, school work, and extra curricular activities. However, she did recall that during the latter part of high school, she "had two devastating experiences." One was losing an election for class officer. That loss crushed her, "because I was never taught how to lose, because I never lost and my mother never lost, either. My dad never, never lost."

The other incident involved the trip to Europe where she was ostensibly sexually abused by someone close to her, possibly her father. However, she could not remember the specific details of this incident, a fact which created a great deal of inner turmoil, and her life began to change for the worse.

After her return from Europe, Daisey was sent to college at a large university selected by her parents, although she would have preferred attending a smaller, more local institution. At this point, she began using alcohol and drugs, and a year and a half later she dropped out of college. For the next several years Daisey was addicted to drugs and alcohol, which resulted in other negative behaviors, including gambling and writing bad checks. These activities resulted in several arrests and her eventual incarceration at WCC.

Daisey was not involved in a great deal of formal learning after dropping out of college. However, she did
attempt to earn her real estate license. She failed in this endeavor, primarily because of her involvement with drugs and alcohol.

Daisey also underwent court-ordered therapy at various times in the intervening years, including while at WCC. However, no great benefit was initially derived from these sessions because of her inability to recall specific details of her past and because she was forced to undergo the treatment against her will. However, Daisey's attitude changed when she entered treatment at WCC.

The approach was different in that somebody else made me do that and nobody's making me do this. However, when I was in those other therapies, once I accepted that fact that I was there, I was very much into every one of them. I worked very hard at all of them.

Throughout her therapy and learning, Daisey felt that she always had an advantage because of her early formal and informal learning experiences.

There's a lot of things that I don't have to learn. All I have to do is remember and accept the fact that I still am a good person. It's still there. I didn't lose it whereas some of these other people don't have that advantage.

Daisey learned much from informal sources as a result of her confinement. These informal learning experiences affected how she dealt with the anxieties and fears relating to her sublimated memories.

I've learned a lot in prison, but not in the classroom. Some of the things I've learned here they couldn't teach me in a class. I'm learning to stand up for myself. I'm learning that to deal with fear, 'cause fear has been such a horrible
thing for me. As I learn to deal with fear, it gets less. I'm learning it's okay to get angry. It's okay for not everybody to like me. I've learned some real, real, real important things in here that they could not teach me downstairs in that classroom. I'm learning to be me again and that's something.

Being here is good for me in a number of areas. I get kind of excited sometimes because I feel like things are coming full circle, 'cause for years my entire adult life was really screwed up. When I was growing up I was taught that I was better, and I certainly performed up to everyone's expectations. Then for years, my adult life, I have tried to make myself less, put myself down, treat myself badly, and then I come in here and I compare myself. I mean, I have the same qualities of a lot of people--the same abuse as a lot of people--and I compare myself and, I hate to say this, but I'm going to. I am better. I am a bum in a lot of ways, but I don't have to pretend anymore that I'm a piece of shit, 'cause I'm not.

As a result of her therapy and reflective thinking, Daisey recognized the source of most of her problems. She felt that this awareness would allow her to utilize and build upon her previous strong foundation and aid in her recovery.

It all goes back to the [presumed] sexual abuse. It totally ruins you emotionally. I mean, you just totally get screwed up and now I know that I can undo that. And see, what I'm doing is I'm undoing all the crap that's on top, the good part is coming out. I don't have to remake my whole personality and my whole sense of self because there's a good one still there. I tried to destroy it many times, but I didn't. I know that if I am successful in [dealing with the presumed] sexual abuse, that isn't gonna make my life just super easy. But I also know that if I can get myself straightened out emotionally I'll be able to cope with all the problems that everybody else has to cope with. Because, intellectually I am strong enough. I do have a good foundation.
During treatment, Daisy learned that her sense of self-destruction and her fears were being replaced by understanding and the desire and knowledge to recover.

Because the biggest thing I've learned in here is that I don't have to destroy myself. That I can get well and I know how to get well. I'm not scared to get well. I don't think I've ever been scared to get well but I didn't know how to because I didn't know why. I know why now. I know how and I'm not scared of it. That doesn't make it easy and I hate it sometimes. I don't like the pain, I don't like the anger. But I know that that's just something that I have to go through. I'm gonna be okay when I get out of here. It isn't gonna end the day I walk out the door. It's real important to me to be able to have somebody to talk to and so I will certainly pursue therapy on the same level.

In addition, through a trial and error process, Daisey felt that she had accomplished a great deal in handling small failures, by starting over.

I hate to just say the word "good," 'cause that's a little vague. It makes me feel good about myself because I'm doing this. I have help but I'm doing it. The lesson I'm learning [is] that it's okay to fall back as long as you pick yourself up. That you do number one--pick yourself up; and number two--you head back in the right direction. That's something I'm teaching myself. I mean, it's happening but I'm teaching myself that it's okay. So each time, I mean, I've had a couple other knockdowns since that big one, but they've been easier 'cause I haven't gotten so suicidal. That's been my answer. I thought about [suicide] when I first came here. I figured out how I was gonna do it, so I don't dwell on it if I ever get back to the point. But I don't get that way. Even that night [in maximum confinement] when I was just empty, just lifeless, I mean, because this is a fight. This is a struggle. This is not easy coming.

In summary, Daisey felt that she had learned a great deal about herself and about how to cope with incarceration.
As far as her plans for the future are concerned, she hopes to utilize her intelligence to facilitate her recovery.

I suppose the one thing that helps me to cope with [incarceration] the most is the realization that I don't have to be here much longer. I'm not ever coming back. I know everybody says that, but I'm not. I came to prison for a reason and that was to find out what was wrong with me and I have and I'm working on it. I'll never see any of these people again. I don't associate with these kind of people. This is not the world I came from and it's not the world I'm going back to. It hurts my feelings but I guess what I'm relearning to do is use my brain rather than my poor little girl, poor me feelings. It's not important to me to be popular. It's important to me to get well.

Dana, in her late 20s, had not been physically or sexually abused while growing up, but had encountered some psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse which traumatized her. This trauma was further impacted when she encountered a life threatening disease when she was a teenager.

Much of Dana's formal learning was influenced by events that occurred at home. She recalled having vision problems when she was in elementary school, and how her inability to see affected her reading skills. This incident had lasting effects on her learning ability.

I remember once in third grade . . . when I got glasses. The teacher was hard on me because I couldn't see. She just said I was being lazy. I couldn't read and what it all came down to--it wasn't that I couldn't read. It was because I needed glasses and I couldn't see the overhead projector. Yet I was criticized in front of the class and by my parents because my grades were going down. I wasn't being lazy. We got my eyes checked and found that the reason was because I couldn't see the board. It wasn't because I couldn't read. And yet I was given the glasses and that was it. Nothing was ever said, "Hey, we
were wrong." That was never said and I felt it deep and still do. Somebody owed me as a little kid the apology of, "Hey, you weren't dumb. You weren't stupid. You just couldn't see the board."

Dana's parents refused not only to acknowledge the physical reason for her reading deficiency, they also fostered a perfectionist attitude which she transferred to her studies.

I took everything in, full force. I was taught from learning experiences at home that if you're gonna do something you do it right. You don't do it half way. So I'm a quick learner. I'm very quick and that's a learning experience. I think that's just something that I have the ability to do, is learn quick. So I excelled in school. That's how I got my praise. I mean, if I excelled I was doing good and everybody liked me.

The positive reinforcement and praise that she received when she excelled at school meant a lot to her, so she transferred her attitude to include home life as well.

That's how I had to get any attention at home, was to be that little bit better than everybody else or act that way. Sometimes I wasn't, but I learned to act that way. Just trial and error. I mean, you learned something worked. You did something good and you get a good grade. You get praise for something and you got that praise at home. That taught me that, hey! That's what I have to do to get the attention at home and school.

Even though she had to work hard to get attention at home, the only way she "got any love or emotion was through the discipline." Discipline appears to have been tied into perfectionism for Dana's parents, particularly her father. They expected her to do things perfectly. Thus, instead of focusing on what Dana had actually accomplished, they
focused upon the gap between what she had done and what they interpreted as being perfect. The negative effect of their actions carried over into her adult life and incarceration.

The main thing that sticks out is that I was always expected to do my very best, and then I didn't complete that. It was like I could do things good for a long time, but then something goes wrong. It's just like the situation I'm in now. I do well on everything and then when I screw up it's like it makes it that much harder, because I'm supposed to be this person that has done all right. I always do right. I always follow the rules. I always do this, so that when I do make a mistake it seems like everybody's that much more disappointed in me. It makes me feel that much more--like it was so much worse what I did than somebody else.

A lot has to do with my dad and perfectionism--the demand to be the very best and the need for me to feel liked and wanted. The attention, that's what I did [it for]. I guess the negative to me would be that, because of that, I tried . . . to impress people and tried to be the perfect person [so] that nobody ever really knew the real me or what I wanted or dreamed. I hated myself when I made a mistake. Everybody makes them but sometimes I think I'm harder on myself for my own mistakes than other people are because I feel like I know better. I always felt that's the only time anybody ever gave me any attention, any praise, any anything. Nobody ever looked at the good things I did. It was always bad. I was doing things that were just normal, ya know, like grades in school. I was just going along like everybody else. There was no praise of how I was doing. It was always demanded that, "Well, can't you do a little more?" So I learned to always do that little extra, whether it was good for me or not. I was always doing things for someone else so that they would like me. I would feel loved.

Nobody ever wanted to know the reasoning behind what I was doing. It's just, "Why couldn't you do it? You're smarter than that. Why can't you do the right thing?" I wanted to make everything look perfect on the surface so that there was no question because if everything looks
perfect on the surface nobody's gonna call you stupid or dumb or anything else.

Even though Dana did not participate in many of the educational opportunities at WCC, she did undergo a considerable amount of treatment and counseling. In addition, because of the non-violent nature of her conviction, she was allowed by corrections personnel to progress through the system rather rapidly. However, as reflected below, she was only beginning to attain the recovery she desired:

I'm trying to find myself again. Experiencing it, I really don't know what I want out of life. I'm starting to build it again. I feel good about myself and I don't have to worry about anything else right now. I worry about my family, but essentially, right now, all I can do is worry about me because I can't control anything else, and that's really not a bad thing. You get to find you.

Importantly, the finding of oneself is essentially what reality is all about.

Dannie, in her early 30s, had escaped physical and sexual abuse, as had Dana, but she had undergone the psychological, emotional, and mental sides of abuse. In addition, drug and alcohol addictions had been prevalent in both her mother and father. Concerning this behavior and its effects on her, Dannie shared her thoughts:

You learn a lot when you're growing up about how your parents deal with things. It has a lot to do with what you do, because I noticed with me, how I dealt with my kids when I had [them], was the same. [It was] almost the exact way my mom used to deal with us. So it's like the dysfunction just passes from one family to--from one
generation to the next, to the next, to the next. My mom did her drinking and my dad did his drugging. The same type of stuff. I just got more involved in the criminal aspects of it. My dad did, too. He got in trouble with the law. My mom, well, you can't very well get arrested when you're on the kitchen floor, drunk, ya know.

As to her home environment, Dannie recalled additional specifics about what she learned informally from her parents.

We'd be in the bathroom shooting dope and, I mean, it was crazy. No structure, except for when my dad would come down on the weekend. Everything would get cleaned up. I remember cleaning up the mess--the beer cans, wiping off all the tables, vacuuming so the house looked good when he came down. He didn't know what went on, and that's what I learned, too--keeping secrets. I learned how to keep secrets. I mean, this was like a big cover-up to my family, because my mom was cool, so we'd protect her to keep this little thing going. And this all happened; it got worse as I got older. See, I got more into the drugs and more into the partying, and she got more into it, too. That's when we moved.

This type of activity affected Dannie not only at home, but also at school, and it influenced what she learned about exploiting people.

Well, I learned how to manipulate. I learned how to get around the system because my mom didn't teach us to not do stuff. She didn't teach us you don't steal things. I mean, she was right in with us. We'd go out drinking and she'd help me sneak in bars. She wasn't a mom. She didn't act like the other moms. My other friend's moms didn't act like that. I was kind of popular, and once everybody found out how cool my mom was, everybody liked me. They all wanted to come over 'cause they could sit around my house and eat and smoke pot and drink. Yeah, skip school over there. No structure. No authority figure.
Even though all of this drug related activity went on at home, Dannie had a positive reaction to school in her earlier years. She maintained a wide variety of likes and dislikes in her school subjects.

I liked reading and I used to really like math. When I was a kid I really liked math. When I was in grade school I really liked math and reading. I used to read books all the time. Let's see, what else did I like? I liked gymnastics. I got really into gymnastics when I was a kid. Those were the main ones that I really liked. I really like reading. I didn't like history and social studies too much. I remember that bored me. Science—I didn't like that either.

School helped Dannie in two ways: "getting me out of my environment at home [and] the typical stuff like the interaction with the other kids." Although her school experiences were positive, the situation at home grew worse—so bad, in fact, that she lost interest in school entirely, and she turned to negative activities.

Well, I pretty much dropped out of school at the end of 9th grade or the first part of 10th. I pretty much bagged the whole thing. When I first started school, when I was in grade school, I got straight A's. I found pot in seventh grade and that's when my grades went to hell, basically. That's when school went to hell. I still went but I started ditching school when I found pot. The peer group of friends that I fit in with, that accepted me; that was in seventh grade, and that started in another state when I was living up there.

I remember there was a big park and all the kids from the high school would come over there. All the dopers and stuff hung out in that park. It was a big hangout place. They used to sit around in circles and smoke pot. I thought that was neat and I found this group of people. They were partyers and they sold reds—downers—and acid and pot. I started taking all that stuff.
As soon as I found it I just went right with it. I loved it and then school went to hell and everything changed at that point when I started using drugs--everything, as far as school.

I didn't care about school anymore. I didn't care about getting good grades. I didn't care what my parents thought about anything. See, I was pretty mixed up before that, 'cause I felt like no one accepted me in school. I was always trying to get everybody to like me.

I had to cover a lot of my home life up with hiding my mom's drinking from my friends. That was a big problem I had. I always thought I had to have everything under control. I always had to make sure that my brother and sister were ready for school in the morning. That was one of my jobs because my mom wouldn't get up. So I'd cook them breakfast, all that kind of stuff. I wanted a way out, see, and I found it with pot.

From the park, where the drug activity began, Dannie became involved in more serious activities. She offered the following observation concerning her lifestyle and what she eventually learned from it:

I think a lot of it had to do with growing up. Part of that had to do with my age. The other part has got to do with [the fact that] I had my fill of it. I've been kicked in the butt so many times going out there and trying to [survive]. I've tried every way you could [to] use drugs. I've tried just doing it on the weekend. I've tried different kinds of drugs. I went from heroin to speed to coke back to heroin to speed, thinking it'd always be different the next time, and it never was. I'd always get arrested for something. It always led back to the criminal behavior and back to the same old crap and I'd be back in jail.

Then I got with my last fall partner [the person she was arrested with]. This is kind of weird, but I really think this had a big part, a BIG part of the change I went through. I had everything I wanted. I used to chase the bag. I used to try and get enough dope to keep you happy. It's called chasing the bag. It's like a cycle,
ya gotta get the money, then you gotta find the
dope and you need to get the money. It's like a
circle; you're constantly doing this. Well, when
I got with my last partner we had an endless
supply of dope. I mean, we never ran out. For
two years we had just all I wanted. It was always
there. More than I knew what to do with plus all
the money that went along with it. I never had to
fend for money--never had to look for the dope
'cause we had it all. I got sick of it. I mean,
I got my fill of it. I think I learned that money
isn't the answer to happiness and dope isn't the
answer to happiness. I think that had a big
effect on me. Then it became a thing you
experience, and you learn from it because you find
out that this isn't the answer. I mean, I had
more speed than I could ever use. I vacuumed up
more speed off my kitchen floor than most people
have ever seen. It just didn't mean anything
anymore. It got to where before I got busted I'd
been doing it every day for 2 years and it just
meant nothing.

Dannie held a firm conviction that her recovery began at the
end of this "binge," even though it would be some time
before she would be able to participate actively in a
recovery process. After an initial period of eluding the
police, "I started going to school in 1989 when I got
busted. I stayed in school three years before I came here."
During this time, changes in her likes and dislikes as far
as school subjects began to take place. "Now I hate math
and I really liked history. I took two semesters of history
in the other prison and found out that I really liked
American history, especially about the Civil War." She
could not explain the changes, except that "the math got a
lot harder and my interest just changed." Not only had her
interest changed, but so had her lifestyle.
In early 1990, after spending some time at WCC, Dannie was transferred to the BPRC, where she started working and soon began to take college courses. She reflected upon where she had been, what she had accomplished, and about her future plans:

Well, something I've learned is that I've been trying to get off the drugs for years. The one thing I know I've learned is that I think a person, before they'll ever quit using drugs or decide to change their life, they have to be sick of it--really sick of it. What I learned was I'm really sick of drugs and I want to have a new life. I learned that I could do it. I didn't think I could do it. I didn't think I could get A's in college, for one thing. I didn't think I could hold a job and now I'm doing both. I go to AA--Alcoholics Anonymous--and through that program I've learned a lot of tools as far as living one day at a time. I don't think I can ever use drugs again. I think today I'm not going to use drugs and it's a program for living.

You see, you learn from accomplishments. If you accomplish things, like I never thought I could get A's in college. Well, it's hard to get A's in college when you're in the free world because you have so much more to do. You have a life, you have other things to do. You have your job. You have your relationships. You've got your friends. Where at prison I buried myself in my books so I got A's. I got all A's, but I learned that, wow! I can get a degree. I mean, having that there for people that want it is a good thing. It's really too bad that they pulled it out.

In lamenting the end of the program, Dannie referred to Congressional action which, in 1992, withdrew financial support from most prison education programs.

Dannie learned other valuable lessons in the classroom, as well as in her social learning environment. "I learned how to type and how to work a computer. I learned a lot of
different things that I didn't know how to do before I got locked up. Those were positive things." She expanded further that she "learned how to do research. I liked doing that kind of work, even though my thing was business courses."

She concluded by stating that one of the most important lessons she learned, which might benefit other women in her situation, is that "there's consequences for your actions. I didn't learn that until I got thrown in jail. Oh, you mean I gotta go to jail? Wow! I did something wrong and now I'm in jail." This was a stark realization for someone who had never been taught this lesson of life.

Didi, a young woman in her late 20s, had been not only the victim of psychological and verbal abuse, but had also grown up in a strict, alcoholic family environment. Moreover, she was the victim of an incestuous relationship with her father. As an adult, she had been involved in several abusive relationships and had been convicted of non-violent criminal activity.

Didi detailed how she learned socially beginning at an early age:

I would learn from the way I was when I was young, from my parents rules and regulations and their strictness and that. If somebody hit you, they love you. I heard that so many times. My parents said, "This is gonna hurt me more than you." Well, that's what I learned. When I started my relationships with these godawful men, if they hit you, they love you. If they yell at you, they love you and it just grew from there. I was not happy in a relationship where I wasn't being
yelled at or screamed at, because I felt loved. That's the way I had grown up. I felt that if someone hit me because I had done something wrong, then I was loved and I was good at doing things wrong. I was always in trouble when I was a kid. So I already knew what I could do wrong and what I couldn't do.

This carried over to her formal education as well. She learned that if she did "good" things at home she got praise, and if she "brought home good grades I wouldn't get into trouble. I was praised when I got good grades." In this regard, she learned to gain favor with the teachers and get good grades at school, which got her praise at home. However, the grades were not enough, because "I was constantly in trouble for this or that. My parents were real strict." She "was so used to being praised" by her parents when she brought home good grades, she expected and generally received the same kind of praise from her teachers. "You're an exceptional student" and "you always get attention from the teachers" were words well received by Didi, since she was not so fortunate in other areas of her life. Assertions such as "I'm an incest survivor," "I didn't have a lot of friends," and "I didn't have a social life" were familiar to her. These comments were interrelated, because she "stayed away from activities" because of her "low self-esteem." Unavoidably, most of these circumstances affected her in adulthood, especially her efforts to gain praise and to deal with her low self-esteem.
Regarding her early formal education Didi recalled, "I never think of any positive things [which] is kind of strange." However, she did remember some positive aspects about achieving praise in high school.

I didn't have a lot of friends, just a select group of three or four that hung out together. I didn't do a lot of high school activities—my choir stuff and my drama, my forensics, but that was it. Those were things I did just because I enjoyed doing them. I felt good when I did them. My choir and drama and forensics were good things.

The negative elements of school were that "I didn't get into social things, football games, dances, or social activities like that. I stayed away from them. I really didn't have a social life because of the low self-esteem."

As far as the actual schooling was concerned, however, if Didi had to pick one subject she disliked, "I'd probably say the math classes. I never liked math."

Whether in high school or in college, attending school eventually became a monotonous process for Didi. She described this cycle as follows:

When I knew there just wasn't the time for it, the time that I needed to put into it and when I couldn't reach the expectations that were put on me by my parents, which were the same expectation I had of myself, I quit. I just gave up. I mean, if I went to a class and I wasn't getting a good grade I just wouldn't go to class anymore. If I went to a class that I was pulling a good grade in, then I'd go to class, or if it was a class I enjoyed. If it was a class that I didn't really enjoy but I had to take, I just didn't pay any attention as to what was going on.

Didi recalled one striking difference between high school and college which negatively influenced her. In high
school she was able to achieve the praise and get some of
the attention she desired. However, it was another matter
in college. She related one particular incident which
increased her negative attitude regarding those classes
which she did not enjoy.

When you go to college you don't get that
[attention]. The teachers in college don't care. They don't
care what you're doing. They don't care if you're in class. I had one class where I
never went to class from the first day. . . . He
gave me the summary of the assignments. The
assignments were all in the workbooks with the
dates they were due. I'd go slip my assignments
under his door. I never went to his class. The
teacher probably never even knew what I looked
like. I aced that class and I never went.

Inasmuch as this type of activity fit into her negative
approach to class attendance, it also adapted itself to her
ideas about manipulation which had been developing over the
years. This behavior had begun in grade school, when she
manipulated grades to get praise. Then it elevated in high
school. Indeed, for Didi, manipulation began to take on
real meaning during her high school years.

When I first started going out and getting friends
and the drivers licenses and the car, I learned
how to get around certain things. I learned how
far I could push my parents. Sometimes, if they
didn't push as far as I wanted, I just used little
manipulative things. I was not allowed to cruise
the drag, which I loved to do. So we'd make
little stories that we were gonna go to the movies
or we're gonna go skating. Little things like
that. I always had friends who had money and we'd
fill the car up. None of my other friends had to
do it, but I had to do it in order to be with my
friends and do what I wanted to do. Like the
thing with the pay phone and I thought, "Well,
there's a lot of loud music at the skating rink.
Why don't we just take this radio and stick it up
to the phone and turn it up and make my parents think we're there?" It was just like something happened and I just learned how to get what I wanted. Maybe some of it came from TV. All I know is that I wanted to do things, and I found ways to do them.

Didi held some of her own personal beliefs as to what effect her manipulation had on people and from what source some of it might have been derived.

None of my friends ever came up with any of the ideas. My friends were all real mellow. As a matter of fact, a lot of my friends were shocked at some of the ideas I came up with. I was real smart. I mean, I had the brains. I started using them the wrong way. I think maybe some of the manipulation I learned from my parents and my grandparents, who were alcoholics, and there's a lot of manipulating there. I don't think it's something that I intentionally sat and watched and learned. I think it's just something that implanted itself in my brain and then as I got older little things that I remembered came out.

There were at least two other facets of manipulation that influenced Didi's behavior. One was that "I wanted things acceptable, and since I couldn't have them acceptable there were just times when I decided to make [deem] them acceptable. In my own way I was rebelling." The other component, learning to make excuses for her manipulative behavior, negatively motivated her more as she grew older.

I think it progressed because the easier it got, it got easier to do. The manipulation got easier, the excuses got easier. You knew which lines would work and which lines wouldn't. You could learn the places where you could do it. The places you couldn't. Things like that and it did, it got easier and just kept progressing and progressing.
This activity overflowed into Didi's check writing and prostitution activities.

I learned this manipulation and I knew that I could manipulate people. Then I got to know that I could manipulate men more than women. I'm not even sure how the whole check thing started. I remember I had my own checkbook and I didn't have the money to pay my bills but I wanted to go out and party. I knew that I could write these checks even though I didn't have the money. At the time I was doing some other illegal stuff. I was counting on getting this money that I never got.

That check writing activity resulted in Didi's being sentenced to WCC and BPRC. After some recuperative time in jail and in treatment, she reflected upon where her activities had led her and what she had learned socially:

The major learned experience would have been just what got me here [and that] would have been that manipulation. Learning the manipulation all along. I don't know if I want to say unlearning it, but I am in a way unlearning it. What it took was the 3 months that I sat in county jail with nothing to do. I didn't have to, but because all of this was coming down and there was nothing else to do I began looking back at all this stuff that had happened. Seeing, that this mistake led to that mistake and to realize that, if you go all the way back, it would have been easier to deal with the first thing that happened and get it dealt with and go onto something else, than to just keep putting off all of this stuff and burying it and not dealing with it. You don't have to manipulate. If you deal with things as they happen, they don't pile up. When you get incarcerated you gotta deal with that. There's no way you can escape that. There's no changing it.

This realization had been a hard lesson to learn. However, "right now [Didi]'s in control, for once in a long time. For me, it's good. I have to have control of myself."
It means I'm gonna be okay. I mean, I deal with me, now. I don't deal with anyone else." According to Didi:

My learning now is different. Now, I'm just basically learning that what I did is not the way you do things. That there are ways to deal with situations other than escaping from them or manipulating. I think I had to manipulate so much when I was a child that that's basically what I learned to do. You manipulate to get what you want, and I know now that you don't have to do that. You can just ask for things, where before I never did that.

Didi concluded that she had learned the formula for dealing with personal situations.

I've learned that I can deal with life every day, if you deal with everything that comes up during the day so that drinking or using or addiction doesn't take control. If you deal with it when it comes up then it doesn't pile up. I mean, if you deal with it right away, you don't have to worry about it and you can get it taken care of.

This is one personal answer, but is it relative across the board?

Della, a woman in her late 20s, had been convicted on a violent assault charge. She was subjected to verbal, psychological, and physical abuse as a child. In some ways, her manner of dealing with her negative home life was similar to Didi's, in that "for me, the way I responded to the screwed-up family life . . . was by applying myself. I was teacher's pet and a straight A student because I got praise from school." School was a much better place for Della than home. "I had one good, safe place--school. Home
wasn't." In school, Della was successful, and she knew how to make the system work for her.

I was pretty lucky in that I never had a problem asking questions. If I didn't understand something I would ask the teacher. I would go to the teacher and I always had a way. I was a real eager student. All the teachers loved it. I was interested in learning. I wasn't a problem in class. I was a really likeable student so whenever I had a problem or I didn't understand, I would go to the teacher and stay there until they explained it. Then I knew and then I'd go on.

Even though school was a refuge from home, for Della, "I don't remember the first and second school years at all. It is like a block. I've deduced [since] being here that it was from being abused." During her grade school years she lived with her stepfather's family, where most of the early abuse occurred. Because the praise Della received when she did well at school helped her to escape her bitter home life, her "goal became the teacher's." She was subjected to verbal abuse and name calling from the other children at school, but recalled, "I had already been called all those names [at home] when I was younger. It bothered me and hurt my feelings, but I just ignored it."

At school, Della adapted to a hostile environment. First, "out of fear and low self-esteem, I became a class clown to an extent." Secondly, as a defense measure, she applied all of her efforts to the learning process. "I'm probably smarter because survival is what I call it."

Well, one of the things was learning that when you do it, you know that it works . . . getting good grades and being smart. I would do extra things,
too, like staying after [school], washing the chalkboard, or running errands. Anything they [the teachers] wanted I did, like with my mom. At the same time I learned doing school [work] was easy, and it wasn't hard for me.

Della's family repeatedly moved during her years in school. "From first grade to high school we moved to the point where if I was to go to a high school reunion I could go to probably 16 different schools in 6 different states. That's how much we moved." She recounted:

Well, first and second grade I was with my stepfather, the two years I don't remember. Third grade I was back with my mom. Fourth grade was back with my stepfather. Back and forth. After the fourth grade we went back to my mom. Fifth grade and from then on it was with my mom.

However, the fact that she was permanently back with her mother did not necessarily put an end to the moves.

Learning was somewhat different for Della in high school. By that time, "I was starting to smoke pot a little with my girlfriends." Because her family never stayed in one place long enough for her to establish close friendships, peer involvement became another important issue in her life.

Up until this point, and including the first semester of my sophomore year, I was extremely naive and incredibly snow white, square--whatever you want to call it. The perfect kid, still. But now moving for the 100th time to a small town, it was hard to be friends and the kids were cliquish. Now it became really hard. I was still doing my thing at school with the teachers, so I still had that. But now it was important to have friends. I had a hard time making friends. I ended up making the wrong friends after half a year. I met some pot smokers and got into drinking and then I had friends automatically, real quick. It was a
matter of acceptance from them. I didn't even smoke cigarettes until then. That's when I started doing everything. That's when the shit started coming out. So the more I was doing that the more I was doing something my mom didn't like.

Nevertheless, school work was important to her. She indicated that her favorite subject was foreign languages. She took French, Latin, and Spanish for two years each. As noted, school was easy for Della, and she succeeded in all of her subjects.

The only language I ever took home was my second year of Latin. I had a memory for it. I just picked it up quickly. You know, your second year of Latin, all you are doing is translating. I translated Julius Caesar from Latin to English. That whole story and everything. I took Chemistry. I took Algebra. I took pre-calculus and the hardest times I ever had was my second year in Latin. I breezed through the rest. That's what I am saying, I was smart. I also loved science.

Although she was a good student, circumstances changed drastically for Della in her senior year in high school. Besides her involvement in drugs, other negative occurrences during that year affected her learning.

There was a couple of classes I didn't like as good as I did my foreign languages, but I didn't do bad or anything. I ended up getting a D in history the last semester, but there was other things going on as to why my grades went down. In that class I know exactly why my grades went down. My best friend had died that year, at the end of the year. I had an A or a B at the time. Then at the end I didn't do anything because that teacher bothered me. I was not in any condition to be in school but my mom insisted I go. I did a lot of drugs and I was stoned. My history teacher was trying to help me snap out of it. She made a speech one day about how death is part of life and we have to go on and everything. I took it offensively and I cussed at her and walked out of
the classroom. I ended up getting a D. I got away with a lot of things because I was known as a good student and I always had worked hard. I didn't really work that hard or anything 'cause school was easy for me. I took advantage of it. I fucked around and still got good grades. Especially my senior year, I skipped a lot of school and [only] showed [up] for tests. In Chemistry, I got a C in that class. I was never there. I should have taken the tests and got A's and B's and maybe a couple of C's. So he gave me a C 'cause I never did any homework. I just wasn't there. That's how, especially, my senior year went. I did well when I was there. I showed up to take the tests.

After high school Della went into the military, hoping to become an interpreter because of her language abilities. However, at her mother's insistence she went into law enforcement and soon learned that she "got off on busting authority--officers who were breaking the law." She traced this attitude back to the childhood abuse she suffered at the hands of her stepfather, who was a person of authority. Moreover, her negative attitude affected her adjustment to situations involving authority figures later in life.

She was discharged from the military because she became pregnant. After returning home, Della went on welfare to support her child and herself. She considered help from relatives--especially her mother--as "handouts." Thus, for Della, entering the welfare system became a "matter of survival," and her life changed drastically.

It was a whole different way of living. You learned to shop differently. You learn to do everything differently. You either do or you don't survive and that's what it comes down to. How to get by, paying bills and eating. For about
9 months I had started drinking again and planning drug sales.

At this point, Della realized that, "being single, I needed some kind of degree to make the kind of money I needed to take care of my kid." She "got [herself] cleaned up," after which, with financial assistance from a local college, she entered a career training course in computers. However, learning was different in college than it was in high school.

You know, it's funny. I don't know how to explain it, but my first semester there I got all B's, not one A, not one C, but all B's. I almost had a nervous breakdown because I expected to get A's, like in high school. It was different. I could not sluff off like I did in high school and still get the good grades. I realized if I wanted to get the A, I've got to put the extra effort into it that I wasn't putting in. And it didn't seem as easy as high school. The ability to know and to understand, like in high school, was there, but college seemed like it was hard, very hard.

Again, Della turned her attentions to "using, drinking, being irresponsible, and not studying." Shortly after this, and again after becoming involved with the wrong crowd, Della committed the crime which culminated in her incarceration.

Della felt that most of her problems centered around a lack of self-esteem that resulted from her changes in lifestyle from the military, to welfare, and finally coming to WCC. During this time, "the world was crashing in on me big time." However, at the time of the interviews she saw "a much bigger picture. This has definitely helped me. I
take what I can use, what I can internalize, and discard the rest."

Pertaining to her informal education and treatment at WCC, Della recalled:

Right now, I've done all the counseling . . . sexual abuse, anger management, parenting, and self-esteem. I'm now in sexual abuse again. I'm also doing business skills with the computer to have something to do. I would rather be on the computer and refreshing my mind on accounting than sitting here with nothing to do.

Della took the process one step further. She saw a difference in academic learning as opposed to learning in treatment, and self-help learning. She developed some writing techniques to help herself deal with her feelings.

Academics never really bothered me. I'm not afraid to learn anything academic, 'cause I consider myself intelligent as far as what's going on. That's not a problem. Sometimes, like, I work harder than other times, but I'm not afraid of that. The self-help stuff--that's a different type of learning. You either have to accept it and decide to use it or not. I've learned a lot of things I did not know. I've learned a lot about myself that I did not know. It helps me to understand it. I see where, because of certain things I didn't know, why I ended up here. To begin with, I have made some bad choices through my life. Not that I consciously did some of these things. I understand a lot more about how things worked. I understand a lot more about whether I want to choose to make the right choices is still up to me. Sometimes I disagree, but you have to buy into it. You really do. If you do not buy into it or you want to just say forget it, then it won't work.

I do poetry whenever I feel like it. When something's on my mind really strongly, I'll write about it. Sometimes it rhymes and sometimes it flows really good. With poems I can write really good ones. Other times it's not rhyming at all but it's just getting the point down. I used a
journal, but with journaling I really don't like to do it. I really don't know why; I just don't like it, and a lot of my feelings and stuff come out in poetry. When I feel like it I'll write something down and some of it's good and some of it's awful. Sometimes I just do that and then later go back and make a poem out of what I wrote, to make it rhyme. I've done that just to get it down and that technique works.

In her closing thoughts, Della reflected that, whether it was formal or informal learning, her mother always played a very important part in her life, even though she may have been indirectly responsible for some of Della's earlier mistreatment. In spite of the problems, however, she "would have probably been ruined" if she had not had this contact with her mother. She "believed in me and it helped even more when I'd bring home good grades and there was lots of praise." Much of Della's attitude toward positive learning probably came from my mom, 'cause she was always honest and when I would ask a question she would answer. She wouldn't lie for anything. She never said, "Well, wait 'til you get older and I'll tell you." She would tell me and explain it to me on a level where I could understand--nothing bad, though. Whatever it was, sex or female problems, or periods, anything. She would tell me honestly, in a way I could understand it. It made it okay for me to ask questions.

Regardless of whether her mother was the source of Della's inquiring mind, "I know that my mom has been my lifeline to sanity and reality," because frequently she was the only good that existed in her life. "She is the one who instilled in me fairness and justice and love."
Based upon the information provided in the interviews, Dottie, in her early 40s, may have been one of the most severely abuse women in this study. She recalled her formal schooling, but she also possessed a vast amount of informal learning that she acquired on the streets, where she took up residence at about the age of 12. In spite of the abuse she experienced early in life, Dottie became somewhat infatuated with her early formal learning, possibly as an escape from that home environment.

I was in Catholic school, and I loved the Catholic Church. I loved the nuns and that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be nun, so I threw myself full force into Catholicism and I sang in the choir. I attended church daily. I did excellent in school.

As a good student, "I absorbed everything clearly. I excelled in everything except for math. I really excelled in art and in gym and physical education."

Many students develop their own learning styles at an early age. For Dottie, her style centered around watching and listening.

I was a very visual child. I learned by watching. I learned by listening. I was a quick study. I was very fearful of the nuns, but I loved the nuns. I was fearful of them and because of my fear and respect, which may sound weird, I did my very best. I was told often that I didn't need to use a book. All I had to do was listen to what the teacher had to say and I picked things up, and I can remember listening as a child. I learned how to read like I had always known how. My penmanship was perfect.
In addition to penmanship, there were other school subjects in which Dottie excelled. Many of her interests centered around awards and her growing competitive nature.

I got a good education when I was younger because of the nuns. I was very smart. I was five years old and I learned everything very fast, from reading to penmanship to math. I just was on the ball, a very bright child. I liked art. I liked penmanship. I liked reading. I liked history. I didn't like math, but I was okay in math. Because I could do them well I was awarded for it at a Catholic school. I was awarded as were my other classmates for good reading skills and penmanship. We were awarded, so I guess I was competitive, too, at a young age. I never seemed to want to compete with girls, but I wanted to compete with the boys.

Although elementary school was a successful experience for Dottie, her life changed significantly once she entered junior high. Part of this change centered around moving from parochial school to public school. However, much of the deterioration concerned poor interaction with a teacher who seemed somewhat overzealous in his handling of corrective measures. Although Dottie was used to strict discipline from the nuns, she could not adapt to the humiliating methods utilized by her seventh grade teacher.

As a matter of fact, all the way to the sixth grade I did really well and I liked math and all my other subjects. There wasn't anything I didn't like. Once I left parochial school and went to junior high in seventh grade I had a very bad experience with a math teacher. I was way ahead of my class coming from a Catholic school going into a public school. My teacher didn't especially care for me because I was a smart aleck. I just was a tomboy and I was angry. I had a real sense of false confidence that I gave off. I learned to do that so that people would think that I was okay. It didn't go over with him.
[the teacher]. I ended up being put up in the front of his class for the whole year, in a corner. It affected me pretty bad. I didn't want to go to school. I felt embarrassed. I was the brunt of my math class's jokes. I was forced to go to school and endure this. The thing of it was, I didn't tell anyone and I didn't let anyone know this. I just carried it as a secret. I carried many secrets growing up so I wouldn't face total embarrassment and shame outside of school. Once again, I felt left out, that I didn't belong.

In parochial school, although they were more corporal in nature, corrective procedures were designed to correct, not to humiliate. However, in public school, the discipline her math teacher imposed was humiliating, and her reaction was negative, probably because it reminded her of the negative discipline she had experienced at home when she was abused. Indeed, she considered the punishment of the nuns somewhat beneficial, because it was geared toward improvement, whereas the humiliation provided no benefit.

As a matter of fact, things were strict at home and things were strict at school. They were not as strict during that time when parishes were running schools. Nuns were allowed to slap your hands with rulers and pull your cheeks. I went through a lot of that with them, but it didn't faze me because I had already experienced far worse than that. It was much better to be beat at school than being reprimanded anywhere around home. It seemed to me that the nuns did it when they weren't supposed to do that but, back then, it didn't matter. It was their way of showing discipline. It did help me out later on because I knew what consequences were, whereas in junior high they did nothing but sit you in a corner. The nuns helped me excel in school.

The humiliation of her junior high school math class was exacerbated when the other students reacted to her punishment, tormenting her further. At this point in her
life, Dottie's attitude toward learning deteriorated rapidly, because she came to view school as an extremely negative place. Thus, these negative incidents may have played a part in setting the stage for subsequent negative behavior.

Well, I can remember thinking, "I can handle this. It's only an hour a day. I've handled worse." I told you I had the attitude that nothing could hurt me and I had no fears. The kids were really mean. They would talk to me, but they wouldn't talk to my face. They would keep their distance. They would talk to me if they were dared to say something to my face, but that was it. I used that attitude and that behavior to keep people away from me and to keep people quiet, too. I was never approachable as a kid. If anyone would try to approach me, I would put on the attitude of don't do it again. Don't talk to me. Don't say anything to me or about me.

It may seem peculiar that Dottie could tolerate the discipline of the nuns but not the discipline of the junior high school teacher. However, the discipline in the Catholic school was short and swift with a purpose in mind, whereas the discipline of the math teacher was carried out over a long period of time with little purpose in mind except public spectacle. This may be analogous to the difference between physical abuse, which may be short and swift; and psychological, mental, emotional, and verbal abuse, which may continue over a long period of time. In the case of the math teacher's punishment, Dottie's actions only intensified the situation. "I would purposely agitate this teacher. I would smart off to him. I would chew gum in class. I would do anything to agitate him. To show
off." Apparently, her negative attitude toward poor role models and nonviable authority figures had begun to develop.

In spite of the negativity surrounding her punishment in junior high, there were some positive aspects of junior high. One was learning to make her own clothes, a skill which Dottie was able to utilize later in life.

Nevertheless, she generally spent her time alone.

I took home economics and that is where I learned the things I know now. I didn't particularly care for it, but I did it and it came to be positive. I really got to where I could make my own clothing. Before, when I was younger, it was patching jeans and little projects like that. So I had some pretty positive experiences there. I didn't have any girlfriends. I went to school alone and I came home alone. My friends I would see after school. This is when I got older. I didn't have any real problems except with math in junior high.

However, her experiences in junior high marked the beginning of how everything deteriorated for Dottie, and she soon began to engage in negative behaviors.

I decided the next year to skip school as much as I could get away with. It caught up with me real fast, because I ended up in foster homes and runaway homes and a reform school. Once I got to reform school I changed. I went from the eighth grade to the tenth grade in, like, five months. My stepfather and my mother ended up in a divorce and my mom was gone all the time.

She finished high school while incarcerated and also took some college courses at WCC. During her earlier years, there was a considerable amount of informal, social learning in Dottie's life. Part of her learning, even at an early age, was a matter of survival.
As a youngster, in order to survive, it was just knowing where to be and what to do so I wouldn't get hurt. It consisted of studying people and getting a feel for people. I would see people that wouldn't get hurt or that were leading a different kind of life than I was. I could study other kids and see the way that they acted and the way they were treated or how they reacted. I would follow suit because I wasn't really taught anything, you know. I was kind of left on my own to figure things out. I'd say it started, where you really could notice it, in school, [in] the first grade.

Another aspect of Dottie's learning process was related to self-concept. "I don't think I ever thought very good about myself. But I learned at a very young age to act as if I did . . . to survive." Furthermore, because she did not assimilate well into high school, the streets became her informal learning environment. "Being on the streets and learning from other people, I was able to fit in." After a number of years on the streets, her informal learning diverged into different directions.

I had gotten pregnant, had a son, got married, got divorced, learned about physical abuse. I'll just ring past that, because I got into my addiction full blown. I ended up in prison in 1975. I got into data processing on the very first months of computer skills, the old 129's, and graduated from that to the models 742 with the double terminals. I was very good at both, so, at a very young age I had an advantage on computers. I was learning in 1975 what most people are just learning today. I did work for the prison. I keyed data. I dropped that when I was transferred back to the joint in Idaho.

Her informal adult learning while incarcerated took on another facet. Much of this process followed a path of self-directed learning, which increased her self-concept.
By the way, all my typing and everything is self taught. I learned it by myself. I had to teach myself how to type, but I did have an instructor for the information processing. I also taught myself how to sew. I taught myself how to draw. I taught myself ceramics, how to paint, macrame, anything to do with my hands. I taught myself Yoga. I mean, seriously, I did the breathing. The modern art, I really got into that just from reading a book.

In many respects, Dottie's desire to learn became a mixture of informal and formal education. At times, her desire almost took on an air of addiction, as learning became a substitute to dwelling on life in prison.

When I couldn't find anything to do, I could find something to learn. I could sign up for classes. I could do art. I can sew. Just anything they offered or anything that someone would teach me I would learn. I would go on binges with it. I would do art work for six months. I would do oil paintings, pencils, tattoos, and all that stuff. Sewing, I can sew anything. I was really taught just by picking up from other people, learning from other people. I did these things using my own head. Mechanics--I'm an excellent mechanic. That's because I would concentrate on other things so I wouldn't have to concentrate on why I was in here.

Moreover, Dottie felt that, because of the desire for learning that had been instilled at an early age, she was able to approach different types of learning more readily when she reached adulthood.

I was truly interested in the subjects that I was studying. I felt that I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to be going back to school. I had a love for school and I liked it. I loved the learning. I was a little bit lazy at times, but I truly loved the learning. I had a lot of time on my hands. I developed some dexterity as far as drawing, macrame, [and] artistic type skills that I knew how to do. I believed in myself enough to apply that academically, too. I
think I kind of used it as an escape. I didn't have to deal with it. This is true right up until I started chemical dependency here. I used school as an excuse. I would take anything and everything possible so I would be continuously busy studying and in school, striving to get that perfect grade for myself.

Dottie attributed her success in learning to a strong foundation in basic skills, which was acquired when she was in elementary school. Those skills continued to contribute to her learning as an adult.

Parochial school was rigid. I remembered that and study skills that I did in school as a child. I applied them to my adult learning and became even better. I held a 3.65 grade point average in here. It was up to 4.0, but I slacked off during treatment.

In summary, Dottie observed the differences among her learning processes as a child; her informal learning as she grew older; and her general learning as an adult, and how each stage influenced the next:

Oh yeah, the differences were that the courses that I did here, I truly applied myself. I researched and I studied. I kept that rigid parochial training that was inbred in me while I was in class. That stayed a part of me, so I applied it as an adult. It came natural for me to apply myself because I had already been told how smart I was. I had been told that you learn stuff real good.

By "keeping that in mind" she was able to secure the high grades she had previously obtained.

As previously suggested, learning in treatment was a somewhat different process than learning in the classroom. In addition, until she became involved in treatment, the results of her formal and informal learning were somewhat
more impressive, even though one might want to exclude the negative street learning as being detrimental. However, learning in treatment was different. According to Dottie, it had the following attributes:

It's hell. I didn't finish my memories [recollections] until this year--part of last year and the beginning of this year. It was hell. I never want to go through it again. I still have a lot of work to do. I'm in kind of a numbness about it. I'm in something that I will experience like a psychic numbing. I go through stages. I have period, a grief period, where I deal with it and then I go through another stage and I deal with it. I have a lot of work to do. I can always tell when it's getting ready to happen, because I get very irritable and everything amplifies. It wears off and then everything is really amplified--sounds, colors, everything, memories and feelings. It's been progressive over the last seven years. There's a possibility that there is more.

Summarizing what she had learned in treatment, Dottie felt that she had gained knowledge about personal responsibility:

You've got to make a choice either this way or that way--where in reality there's separation. In reality you don't have to make a choice by being in the middle you can just be yourself. Here you're either a failure or a success.

Dottie considered herself a success in all areas of learning--formal, informal and the social aspect of adult learning. She also gained a unique social learning experience as a result of her participation in this study. Ironically, part of the whole process was that the learning was continual during the interviews and it was observable at the time.
Well, I didn't understand that it was a learning process. I can look back and identify it now and see that. But the good news about it is it did come. I'm one of the fortunate ones even though I'm over 40 years old. I feel I'm very grateful.

Well, I had a best friend. She's been my best friend for five years. Aside from her I've never had a best friend. This girl was gay and she was in the closet when I met her. I met her in county jail and through knowing me [she had never done time before], we talked about prison and the things that happened. She was very comfortable so she came out.

We formed a bond. We became best friends. She was given an opportunity, under special conditions, to go to pre-release and work her way out, which she did.

She is not a drug addict. She didn't drink before. However, she started drinking when she got out and she was just kind of lost. She got in contact with me and I was talking to her by phone and trying to help her out--trying to give her moral support.

Well, she ended up back here. Her coming back had such an impact on me that I didn't understand at first, because it was a new feeling. It was like a slap in the face, is what it was. She's watched me come back, like, three times and she's never said a word about it. Ya know, like, jeez, why are you back? I'm pissed at you. She's always accepted me and always lent me true friendship. Well, I'm the same way with her; however, I displayed the emotions of, now this is horrible and my best friend is back in prison and I can't deal with this. It's really hurting me.

Well, in doing that, I had to take a look at myself. That's what I do these days. If I have feeling that I can't identify, I try to find out where that feeling's coming from. It doesn't matter what it is. It can be anything from love to hate. The reason I can identify the feeling is because I've experienced it. I can see it in other people because it's been my experience at one point.

Well, it hit me full in the hat when she came back, and I thought, [Dottie], how many times have
you done this to people? That right, there was probably the turning point of my life as far as how much impact I have on other people . . . my life has on other people. Well, you were there for it. You were there for it when you came down in the basement and I said, wow! Where have I been? It's like the picture was totally clear.

What I learned from it is my actions don't just affect me. I'm not just self-destructing. I'm not just hurting myself. I'm hurting everybody that I come in contact with. See, I didn't care. I didn't have a concept of it. I didn't understand it at all. There was none there. None, and I asked myself if this came from working on myself, getting myself together. Becoming whole, being balanced. It's like a gift that was given to me and I wouldn't, I didn't have to, I mean, maybe I did work harder at wanting to finally see it, but I don't know. It hit me so fast that is was like, Boom! This is it, Dottie. Where have you been? And I realize now the impact I have on other people's lives. I'm very cautious. I don't walk around on eggshells, but I'm very cautious. I see people in a different light. I don't see them as people. I see them as everyone is a unique individual. I see that actions are interactions with other people and are effective. I want my actions to be positive and that goes with everything--right down to my spiritual work--my counseling. I think it has to do with both.

I didn't care. I wasn't aware. I had a child inside that I didn't know what to do with. At times I hated it, and I was trying to self-destruct that child inside which would have self-destructed me. In fact, it did affect other people. I know that now.

I would say what I've learned from it would be to watch, to be more alert. It's apparent that I can hurt people, not just one person at a time. What it did for me was make me realize that I need to stop and take a look around. I have to stop and smell the roses. I have to take life for what it really is, which alleviates building up hopes for something that I know is not obtainable or not real. I can put myself in that mold, a fantasy mold, that I can accomplish this, this, and this, or be this kind of person. That's the facade I used to carry. I don't need to do that anymore.
The most meaningful part of this realization was the look on Dottie's face. That look captured the discovery that a whole new world had opened to her.

Dusty, the last woman in this group to be discussed, was in her mid-30s. She had not experienced much abuse in her life, except some psychological and emotional abuse from her mother which centered around school and roles of women. Dusty had been reared in an atmosphere where women were basically subservient to men, and their primary roles revolved around the home. This attitude affected Dusty's learning both in school and in other areas of her life. At an early age she discovered that she enjoyed learning and going to school.

Actually, I did pretty well. Up through grade school I got real high grades. Then it gradually became the nitpicking stuff that I got at home from Mom. I'd take something to her just to double check something when I had homework. I'd get, "Oh, don't bother me with that. Go away. I don't know. Go ask your dad." I got the impression that it didn't matter to them whether I did okay or not.

The negative relationship between Dusty and her mother had an impact upon her attitude toward school.

Well, in a way I enjoyed going to school to get away from Mom. Mom never has been real big on education. She's really an idiot. Even when I was real little in second and third grade I couldn't stand her. I couldn't get along with her. I think it had a lot more to do with a more higher level or maybe intellectual interest in educational things. It's kind of hard to explain. It was like, oh no. You don't need this. It didn't take very long to figure out that there was something wrong there.
The mother/daughter relationship was so negative that "I think the whole thing that I liked best about school was being able to get away from my mom every day."

From the time she made that discovery, "The end result was that I realized that if I was going to learn anything, or eventually make something out of myself, or get what I wanted for me, that I probably would have to do most of it on my own." Her style of learning until then was "like an observer. I would watch other people whenever I had a chance to--either at church, or whatever."

Consequently, Dusty reflected on those early years and became aware of the progress she had made in spite of the early training she received from a largely disinterested mother.

She wasn't that interested, and now that I've progressed to a point where I've had education and other things, I can kind of look back and fill some of the blanks that I didn't understand then. That is, Mom then--and probably to some extent now--was emotionally disturbed. She was very dependent. She was a baby of eight kids. Her sister that she is closest to is 10--11 years older than she is--so she always had somebody to pick up after her. She has a very dependent personality. Grandma and Grandpa were very straight-laced Victorian types right out of the 1800s, and that's how the kids were raised.

After reflecting upon her relationship with her mother, Dusty offered some insights into why she was different from her mother and why they were incompatible:

Some college was doing an experiment using my senior class in high school. They gave everybody IQ tests. When the results came back mine was like 160+. I thought that was normal. I
previously understood Dad's was at least average and Mom's was probably average or below average, but I thought that everybody was like me. It wasn't until just a few years ago that I put two and two together. That might have had a lot to do with the conflict between Mom and me. I think another part of it, too, was jealousy.

Dusty graduated from high school and won a scholarship to a rather large university in the southern Midwest. She was not allowed to go because her parents felt that any education she needed could be obtained locally. Dusty was asked how her parents' values and attitudes affected her learning, and how she dealt with them. Her comments painted a picture of how she maintained two separate identities--one for home and one for school:

I'm not real sure how I can explain how anyone can learn to deal with it, but the basic effect was, you knew everything else tied in together. Mom, her immediate female relatives, and probably, basically, women in general, couldn't be trusted. They were something to stay away from, pretty much.

It's kind of a process of experimentation, I guess. You look at this, and this happens if I do that, and that happens if I do this, but if I go over here and do something else then I get a different result. So, it was like I go home and I do this and this, then things are okay. Then I can go over here and do what I really want to be doing. It's kind of like what psychologists call wearing two hats. I was one person at home and somebody else at school, or out with my friends, or whatever I was doing.

Well, I didn't really care for it. It, to me, was being phony. One was me and the other one wasn't. I had to try to conform to something that I wasn't, something that I really didn't have any interest in being. I was like a little round peg out here but had to fit in a little round hole over there to satisfy other people--frustrating. I guess what came out of it or what eventually
surfaced was the knowledge, or at least the suspected idea, that I was an individual. I was probably more independent, emotionally stronger, more realistic in how I saw people and the world around me than my mom and her family was. I was kind of detached in a way.

Back up to looking at it like a picture. I'd say, okay, these people do not really belong in this place and time. They're out of sync with the rest of the world and the rest of society. I don't necessarily fit in with mainstream society either, but it's in a different way. To me mainstream society is everybody has to have all the same things. They all try to be cloned to each other, wear the same clothes, and buy the same cars, and that's not me.

I can survive in that type of environment for a period of time, and it drives me bananas after a while. I do much better off in the back country somewhere. Go out and build a little log cabin and give me a little cow, put in a garden, and come down once or twice a year and get supplies.

I have basically a network of people that I'm acquainted with around different parts of the country, that basically feel the same way. They feel that our view of how life should be—how mankind was intended to live—is more realistic than trying to fit everybody in the same mold.

This situation and attitude "had more of a bearing on my being here than it had to do with the lack of being able to go on with the education I wanted." She further intimated that "the inability to really be myself at home" was more hurtful, because:

At school I was fine. I was learning things and getting into stuff and learning, which was great. But I couldn't do that at home. It was like I had to be two completely different people. The me that I was at home was more discouraged than what was really inside.

Furthering her education soon ceased to be important to Dusty, and she rebelled against what she believed society
had come to represent. After becoming involved in some abusive relationships, she "escaped" her hostile surroundings with a man who eventually was to play a significant part in her being incarcerated. As they were traveling cross-country, a murder was committed and they were arrested for the crime. According to Dusty, her companion talked her into confessing, since they both believed she would get a much shorter sentence than he. That did not turn out to be the case, however, and Dusty was given a lengthy sentence in WCC.

During her incarceration, she was able to take college classes and to participate in several different treatment and educational programs at WCC. The programs included vocational training.

Regarding her informal learning activities, Dusty intimated that "I read a lot. I've always been a reader. It's been one of my escapes, I guess." Further, as to the judgment and sentence she received, "I don't remember thinking about it. I just stay in my room and read and maybe once in a while write letters... just wishing it would hurry up and get over with so I can get on with everything."

Her social learning process during her incarceration included realization of all that she had experienced during her life and how it affected her. Dusty felt that "just being away from the different kinds of environments I was in
and having a chance to really find out who I am instead of trying to be all this stuff that everyone else thinks I should be" has given her quite an incentive to view life on a different plane.

Basically, sometimes it has an effect, and yet it doesn't, because I've realized that I'm the same person that I have basically always been. I have pretty much the same interests that I've always had. The same thoughts, the same ideas. I remember trying to share some of that stuff that I was interested in--that I'm still working on now--when I was a kid. It was like all of this stuff has just been in storage for all this time and now I have the opportunity to re-open the doors and clean up the closet or whatever. It's still all there. It's waiting for me to do something with it. That I don't have to limit my life or my goals to what somebody else thinks I should.

Thus, insights that Dusty gained about herself and her life led her toward a more positive self-direction. However, many of the job skills and crafts which Dusty believed would be beneficial and provide fulfillment for her in her aspirations were not offered through any program at WCC. Consequently, she felt that her hopes of adapting to her chosen lifestyle outside of prison were substantially diminished by the lack of these fundamental offerings.

I think that the training that we don't have here is actually more important than what we do have. It doesn't matter whether you plan to run off and live in the hills, in a cave, or if you're going to be living in downtown L.A. We, as women, need the skills that are not offered here. I'll use myself as an example, okay? I don't think any correctional facility in the country probably can do anything with it--maybe one or two off-the-wall places. But the skills I need would be, like, how to make my own brooms, how to make my own soap from animal fat, how to make candles, shearing.
sheep, spinning wool, and weaving. Just things that I can use when I get to where I'm going. I could also use a viable job skill that if I got there and decided, well, gee, this really isn't quite exactly what I expected. Then I can go back and get a job somewhere.

Notwithstanding the inability of correctional institutions to provide customized training and education based upon their inhabitants' aspirations, Dusty's observations can be related to teaching fundamental job skills for preparing these individuals for life on the outside.

**College Graduates**

The College Graduates group was made up of four women whose ages ranged from late 20s to mid-50s, and only one of its members had been convicted of a violent crime. The others had been involved in check-writing or drug-related activities. During the time of the interviews, each woman was or had been involved in some type of training or treatment program. Because of their educational backgrounds, which included college degrees, these women were excluded from the high school equivalency classes, but were able, on occasion, to participate in vocational training.

All of the women acknowledged being victims of some type of abuse. For two of the women it was pervasive and had continued into adulthood.

Edie, in her mid-50s, claimed to have been the victim of physical and sexual abuse as a child and some abuse from
her ex-husband as an adult. Even though she had earned a college degree, much of her learning had been obtained informally. Regarding the abuse she endured as a child, as well as the circumstances surrounding her earlier learning process, Edie stated, "I've always, even as a real young child, spent a lot of time in my room alone, reading. I've always been interested in a lot of things--always read a lot." She felt that she probably stayed in her room partly because of the abuse and partly because she found solace in her reading. However, the seclusion of her room had a negative effect, in that she "did not like being around a lot of people."

Even though she quit school immediately after turning 16 at the beginning of 10th grade, Edie "really liked school"; however, because of her background, she soon learned that she "didn't necessarily need other people to survive." Other than this, she did not recall much about her early education. She did state that when she dropped out of high school, she had other things on her mind than school:

I was going with the man I eventually married. My first husband. . . . I didn't feel I needed an education. I was gonna get married and have children. That's all I needed. My husband was gonna support us.

Edie perceived that this was "just kind of what women in society did. Back in the early 50s women traditionally became mothers and wives and that was it." After a number
of years of marriage, four children, and being in a submissive and abusive relationship, she was widowed. Left to support herself and her children, she became increasingly dysfunctional. In addition, an earlier back problem had worsened, forcing her to lose her job. Unable to qualify for welfare, she resorted to writing bad checks to survive.

Regarding her predicament, Edie recalled:

When I would wake up some mornings, I couldn't even turn over in bed. I'd call up and tell my boss, "I can't make it in today. I may not be in for a month." I lost my job. I'd go down to welfare trying to get some help and, "Oh, we can't help you for another month because you made this much money. Next month." Meanwhile, how are you going to eat? How are you going to pay your bills? If you have children, how are those children going to eat? I learned to do what I had to do in order to survive. Fact is, I'm going to do what I have to do to survive and not have to kiss somebody's else's butt. I do what I have to do in a way that I can comfortably look myself in the mirror and say, Well, I wasn't out selling my body to do this. I never hurt anyone. I didn't snatch a little old lady's purse who really needed the money.

She related how being in a submissive marital relationship affected her when she was left on her own, and how it impacted her check-writing activities.

I was 30 years old before I ever went to prison. Once I got on my own I opened a checking account. My first husband would never allow me to have a checking account or savings account. He paid all the bills and everything. I never even had a driver's license. I was 22 years old before I ever got a driver's license. The first checking account I had, I ran short of money and I wrote checks, but all the bank did was write and tell me, "You're overdrawn." I would bounce my checks, trying to cover 'til payday. I knew as long as I had that piece of paper I could get by. I could
go get the things I needed. I could pay rent. I could pay bills.

Prison was not a total loss for Edie. "I received a GED in the early 70s while I was in prison. . . . From there I started college classes." She subsequently obtained an associate and a bachelor's degree in business-related areas. In addition, "I've had some library science courses, and I've had lots of computer courses . . . , business, bookkeeping, history, geography. I liked my computer classes and library science. I liked that." She elaborated:

I enjoy the motel/restaurant field. I love library work. I have the education, I have the knowledge, I have the will to go out there and work a job and support myself. I want to do this. It's something I enjoy doing.

As to her informal learning, Edie spent a great deal of time in the library. "I read all the time. What I'm doing is, I read everything I can possibly read."

Through all of her education and experiences, Edie did not change. "After all the years I've done in prison I still have very high values. I expect high values in others." However, she did feel that:

A lot of those years [have] probably [been] wasted. I wouldn't want to see other young women go the route I went. I would like to see alternatives for women rather than the street life of check writing or being under someone's thumb to survive for their livelihood.

She also acknowledged that she had done what she had to do in order to survive, and she would do it again if she had
to. However, she offered a few suggestions as to how education could be more effective in a correctional environment:

I would like to see more education for women. I would like to see more counseling to teach women—to help them know that they do not have to be dependent on someone else; that there are ways that they can take care of themselves and do it legally. I would like to see more job opportunity in prison for women so that when they walk out the door they can pay rent, they can take care of families, [and have] a chance to save some money. I mean, most of us are gonna walk out that door in worse shape or the same as when we came in. All the counseling in the world is great. There's a need for counseling. But that's not gonna put food on the table. All their intentions are great, but, like I say, hell is paved with good intentions. Put something in my hand that I can [use to] pay my rent and live.

She based her suggestions upon the following assumptions, which she related to her own situation:

I think when it comes to treatment, I would have benefitted earlier in life, probably with some counseling, with psychological treatment, because to this day I really don't see what I've done [wrong]. I know it's against the law, but when I look at things that used to be against the law and are now legal--such as alcohol--the laws change. I really don't see what I've done as all that bad as compared to what other people have done. It seems like this American system places more value on material things than they do on human life. The punishment is not going to be all that great and it's worth a chance I take. There's nothing that's going to change that. It's not any deterrent to keep me from saying I'm never going to do it again. You'll never hear me say that.

She had some reservations concerning the value of her treatment:

I don't think anything has affected my behavior in the last 20 years. I'm the way I am and very little can change that. I have my views. It's
made me know that I'm the one that has to take
care of me, and I have to do it in a way that I'm
comfortable with.

She also stated, "I really don't see myself as much
different than people who haven't been incarcerated. I see
[that] I had enough nerve to go out and do what I had to do
to survive."

Even though little had affected Edie's behavior over
the past several years, she had definite feelings about
being in prison and what the consequences were for her.
Although the consequences of being in prison may seem harsh
to some, they seemed to have had little effect on Edie's
overall outlook.

In this atmosphere, I am still very much of a
loner, but it's a positive. I think it's a very
positive change. I'm not jealous of what someone
else has. I don't feel envious or jealous when
someone makes parole or they're leaving and I have
to stay here. I don't get involved in the little
games like that. I'm comfortable with myself. I
can do my time. That might not be such a positive
thing, but time is not hard for me to do.

I don't know if it's a retreat, but I have
learned that I don't see prison like someone out
there who has never gone to prison. All they know
about prison is what they've seen on TV. I know
it's not that way. It's not as much of a scary
experience for me as it would be. It's a
consequence of what I do. I know what the
consequences are, but I'm not that frightened of
the consequences. The consequences do not deter
me from doing what I feel I have to do.

Even so, Edie stated that she had to make the following
adjustments to obtain some mental stability in dealing with
her situation:
I had to learn to make use of leisure time. I'm rarely ever bored. I can always find something to do--arts and crafts or reading. I've learned to socialize at my own level and with people that I care to be with, not try to fit into little groups or conform to others.

I'm not one that blames what my parents did. I don't think they're to blame. I had my own choices. I had my own common sense, even without formal education. I had enough common sense to make my own choices.

Thus, Edie's informal social learning experiences worked for her, where they might not have worked for somebody else under the same set of circumstances. Nevertheless, reality, to Edie, was a personal matter.

Another woman in this group, Ellie, was in her late 20s. She had been sexually abused, had suffered some degree of psychological and verbal abuse, and was reared in a somewhat strict environment. She had a two-year college degree, and she had been convicted for writing bad checks.

Ellie, whose early school years were somewhat replete with verbal and mental abuse at home, indicated that her "home life was awful." She had been "shuffled from one school to the other." In grammar school she was placed by her parents in a private Catholic school. However:

[I] was kicked out [because] I told the teacher to fuck off, because I'd always hear my dad say it to my mom, and I got to thinking, well, when things don't go their way that's what they say. I didn't like the teacher. I felt really down when it first happened anyway, because I got the beating of my life.

Although this situation involved physical punishment, Ellie considered it a positive learning experience. While it may
be viewed from a negative perspective, she felt that it helped to build her self-concept.

But at home I felt good afterwards, because I kept telling my dad the whole time, "When you first put me in there I did not want to be in that school." I didn't feel comfortable in that school. There was too many rules, and wearing those stupid dresses, I felt 20 inches tall, [with my] chest poked out.

I felt good about it, because I had my fill of it all. Before I knew I was gonna get [the] beating of my life when I got home . . . I felt really good, because it felt like, hey! I'm sticking up for myself and saying I'm sorry, I don't like you. I felt really good about doing it, though.

Regarding her early schooling, Ellie "was a slow learner in elementary school but I grew out of it." However, "I'd rather have stayed in school, even on weekends. I could have stayed in school 24 hours a day." Thus, although early schooling had little educational value for Ellie, going to school meant getting away from home, even though her behavior was less than exemplary. "I was always getting in trouble in school. I was skipping school or getting caught smoking or getting in fights." As a result, she didn't like many of her courses, particularly history. "I slept through history. Math. I hated Math."

As a matter of fact, she could not recall any classes she did like during her earlier years. Ellie explained some of the underlying reasons for her attitude and behavior:

The way I looked at it was, if I got in trouble in school and then I got sent home I was gonna get punished. That was their way of showing me attention. That was my only form of getting
attention from them. So I'd do stuff to get in trouble, because that was the only attention they ever showed me. Every child needs attention.

Thus, early learning had become a negative cycle for Ellie. Negative learning created negative behavior which in turn created negative attention. However, since that was all she could get, it was better than nothing, so the cycle continued, until "junior high [when] I got into more interesting things." Fortunately for Ellie, those "things" were positive, not negative. One was science; the other was math. She elaborated, "I was straight A's in Math and Science. Those were my favorite subjects. The rest of them I skipped. I didn't like them. Math and science I loved."

Ellie also liked:

Home economics, and I liked shop but they kicked me out. They kicked me out because I was a female. I can't really call it a class. It was more of a study hall type of thing, but I went and helped the handicapped kids on their learning disabilities and stuff.

However, because of her poor learning habits, learning at the junior high level was very difficult for Ellie.

I got into more interesting things in junior high. I didn't want to read until I was eight, so English was affected. It still affects me. My spelling is not good. Big words I don't know. That still affects me, but it's improving. I'm doing that on my own. That's what they make dictionaries for.

In spite of these difficulties, Ellie graduated from high school and also went on to college.
In addition to her learning problems, another problem from home plagued Ellie in school. This problem was resolved when a positive role model intervened.

When I was in high school I had it with my adopted father sexually abusing me all the time, so I tried to kill myself. I was really close to my chemistry teacher. He was a reverend and he found out about it. He came and he talked to me. He got me out of that situation and put me into a halfway house. He was really a nice guy. I miss him.

The intervention by her chemistry teacher may have saved her life.

Ella continued to move frequently, even after she had earned a two-year college degree. In four years, she attended three community colleges in three different states. As she got older her learning appeared to have improved, because in college she found she "could zoom through an eight-week course in two weeks." Her favorite courses were "English, psychology, business law, archeology, computers, and accounting." Her two-year degree was in business, with primary emphasis on accounting and computers. Unfortunately, at about this time, Ellie "got in trouble with the checks."

Two formal adult learning experiences made lasting impressions on Ellie. One was earning an Emergency Medical Technician license, a substitute to fulfilling a lifelong dream of entering the medical profession. "I tried it, but I've got a weak stomach, so I settled for getting my EMT license just before I came in here. I get my adrenalin rush
out of that." The other concerned an archeology field trip. She recalled that trip:

I think what fascinated me the most was the digs. I get fascinated by that stuff. I got to go with my Sunday school class. It's like an archeology type thing and we study the different places. We take field trips over to Iran and Israel to study some of the digs over there. When I was over in Germany and I found out that my class was gonna be going, I got permission to join them there and that was five, six years ago. I went to Germany, France, and Switzerland through the military. But I went to Israel for my Sunday school. I was already in Germany, but I just wanted to go on that trip.

Ellie received negative informal learning "on the streets." However, because of the trouble she got into from being "on the streets," she was required, presumably by court order, to enter into some chemical dependency, healthy relations, and parenting classes. During this time, "I owned my own business [and] I was in sexual abuse classes." She said that the reason for this was that "I got clean [when] I realized I had got into trouble [with the checks]. I needed to get myself together and I needed to find me."

In some ways Ellie was fortunate, in that she was able to start her recovery while on the outside. However, much of her self-realization came about in the same way as it did with the other women--it was just not quite so extreme. Concerning her self-realization, she described what happened to her, what she learned, and what she was unable to forget.

Well, to start it, when you first get here you're locked back there [expansion unit] for two weeks to three weeks. No TV. Nothing. I mean, you've got time to sit there and think. I kept telling
myself, you're going to change your mind. You've got to change. When I first came out on the floor it was like, this place is a joke. I'm not gonna learn anything here. I was wrong. I've learned a lot here. I've learned respect for myself, for other people. I realize I really did well with my crime. I mean, my fiance sends me money.

I have trouble signing a money order. I can't sign it and they laugh at me. They think it's funny, but I don't. Why do I feel like that? Because it got me in trouble. Signing checks got me in trouble. So now I think, every time I sign that check, I kept thinking, "Oh, they're gonna keep me here longer because I'm signing my name to this, because it's a check." It's just an odd feeling--it really is. It's like telling a kid not to play with matches, and he starts a small fire in the middle of his room and he gets punished for doing that, and the next time he sees matches he's gonna realize, hey, don't play with them, 'cause he's learned his lesson 'cause he got punished real bad for playing with matches and starting a fire. Or you get burned, ya know. You don't go back and do it again, do you?

Regarding the learning environment at WCC, Ellie felt that it was "helpful. I have found it very helpful. Well, I just started the class, and basically that's on my own. I just do some typing--trying to get my typing speed up for secretarial skills--in Adult Basic Ed." She took treatment for "sexual abuse, anger management, healthy relationships, and AA. "I started in business skills but they took me out 'cause they didn't feel I was able to handle both sexual abuse and business skills at the same time." On a personal note, Ellie reflected that her interests are more self directed, because:

Basically, I want to be able to do things for my future stepsons that my parents were not able to do for me. I want to give them the love and attention that they need, but also I want to give
them material things that I never received. The only way to do that nowadays is, you can't do it on minimum wage, you have to have your own business and [put] the college education to use. I might as well, instead of just letting it go.

In conclusion, Ellie made the following comments concerning what she had accomplished, what she felt she can accomplish, and some insight on the expectations she had for herself:

A lot of people see improvements in me. When I came in here I had no self-esteem. None. Now I'm walking out of here with my head up high. I know I can accomplish something out there. I know I can. I know I can. If I put my mind to it, I can do anything. I can hold down a job longer than a month. I'm gonna use what was taught--what I've learned in here--out there. I know I can say NO. I know I can walk away from a situation if I find myself in that situation. I'm assertive now. My self-esteem is up. I've got a whole new outlook out there, and I want to use everything that I was taught in here. I'm not talking about the games or any of that other shit. All the positive things that have happened to me in here. I want to be able to use that.

Hopefully, in the near future, society will accept someone with these goals and objectives as a viable citizen, unencumbered by labels and harsh judgments.

Effie, a college graduate in her mid-40s, had been sexually abused by her minister father during her childhood. She had also suffered psychological and verbal abuse throughout her early teenage years. Finally, while engaged in a professional career, Effie had illegally procured prescription drugs, a violation for which she was finally arrested and convicted.
Because of lapses in memory presumably brought on by her abuse, Effie could provide very little specific information about her early formal learning. However, she remembered that she enjoyed music and sports. "I was a cheerleader in grade school. My big thing in grade school--grades five through eight--was my music. I had started playing the piano when I was four years old and took two years of lessons." Playing the piano had both positive and negative consequences. Effie revealed what these consequences were and how, combined with other negative aspects of her life, they affected her:

I played the piano for graduation from grade school. I was made fun of because the kids were jealous. I didn't know about this until my mother and I were talking about it. My mother had been to school 3 or 4 times, and the teachers had sat her down and talked to her about the way I was treated. It didn't help any because I didn't have much self-confidence in myself because of all this other crap that was going on, and my self-esteem was very low then. Also, at the time, my dad wouldn't help my mother buy clothes for us for school. We wore hand-me-downs. I was made fun of for that.

Regardless of the ridicule, "I was an 'A' student. I studied hard. Some things came easy. The teacher would explain things to me and I could do it from there." Her perceptions about learning were based on her assumption that, since this was the way she learned in grade school, it would also form the basis for learning later on in high school. Regarding her extracurricular activities during high school, she stated that "I went there for four years."
My music was there. I did cheerleading. I was Homecoming and Christmas Queen. I was in the honor society and the class play. That's about it."

Thus, it seemed readily evident that Effie excelled in her studies. She felt, however, that her improvement did not begin until "I was going to high school math classes. I made good grades but I did it trying to seek the approval which I never got." She further explained:

Growing up, nothing I did was good enough for my dad. I was in extracurricular activities, I was the Homecoming Queen. I was the Christmas Queen. My dad would go on like, "Maybe they miscounted the votes, ya know, and so-and-so should have had it." But I also remember that my dad had other time for smaller children when I was little. He never had time for me.

Effie continued to do well in her studies, and in one area it seemed that her performance was for herself and not for the purpose of gaining her father's approval.

Again, it goes back to music. I played in a band. I played the clarinet. I started out at the bottom and I had worked my way up to solo chair. I was proud of that because that was a big accomplishment. It was a lot of hard work and I did it by myself. I didn't have my parents at home pushing me to practice or anything like that. I did it myself. I was very proud of that. I was proud because of the social activities I was involved in at school.

Despite her success in music, Effie was unable to gain any praise from her father.

After she graduated from high school, Effie realized that seeking her father's approval was meaningless, and she
began to pursue other goals. She recounted her education up to that point and beyond:

I've had almost 16 years of schooling. Grade school, high school, and then college. Well, in the mideast you could do it in two years, all year round, which is what I did. I went through a junior college. They had a very good... program there. I got [my degree] and then I went and took a year and a half of specialized training... . That was something that I wanted to do since I was a little girl, and I had the opportunity to do it and I did it.

However, Effie noticed how her learning processes changed from secondary school to college. She elaborated:

When I went to... school I had to learn how to study all over. You go to school eight hours and you basically study eight hours. It was tough to do but that was something that I wanted, and I knew that to maintain an 80% to stay in that class... I had to work. There was no way you could just look at a book and it's all there.

Once she finished school, Effie became quite accomplished at her career. In her own assessment, "My [career] gave me a lot of confidence as a professional, because I was very good--practically one of the best... around. I had a[n]... instructor that took time with me."

Nevertheless, even with all of her success in her career, Effie's self-confidence never increased, and she became involved in buying prescription drugs, which she took in an attempt to escape the pain which had built up from years of abuse. Although her dependence may have originally stemmed from drugs prescribed to relieve the pain from an accident, she soon discovered that they relieved her psychological pain as well, and her addiction grew. The end
result was the loss of her license and, subsequently, her incarceration.

After she lost her license and before her incarceration, Effie realized that additional education was desired. She returned to college to seek a degree in Human Services, hoping for a career in chemical dependency and child abuse counseling. However, before she could finish college, she was incarcerated. Regarding that part of her learning experience, she stated:

I will finish that degree. Not because I have to but because I want to. I've been through [treatment] and I'm pretty healthy today. I'm very observant, and I think that's what other people really need most of the time, but there's a few times when they're better off not knowing.

Because most of her formal education had been completed prior to her arrival, at WCC Effie became involved in many of the treatment programs and in vocational training. Regarding her treatment and her learning experiences at WCC, Effie had a wealth of information to divulge:

I learned a lot about myself and sexual abuse. I had to deal with a lot of painful issues then. But in the voc ed or the industries, it's very close-knit. There are 6 of us that work down there. They've helped me a lot with helping me to get some self-confidence in myself. I've also learned how to sew, which I didn't know before. They both kind of went hand in hand. Those guys were there for me because I'm very paranoid at times. It's still the flashbacks from the abuse. I don't have pills to hide it anymore. They're helping me with restoring my self-esteem and my self-confidence. I have a lot of fun down there.

Regarding her incarceration, "To me, it's been a negative situation that I've turned around and made the most
out of that I can. Some girls don't. I accepted responsibility for what I did. I don't blame other people. You hear a lot of that going on." She further confided that:

I'm learning. I have to look at this as there are some positive things that are coming out of it. Nobody put me here. I mean, nobody forced me to take those pills. I did that all by myself. I do feel that I deserved the sentence, now that I'm well enough.

Specifically, based upon what she gleaned from her treatment programs and formal learning experiences, Effie discovered that:

Number one is, and this may sound stupid to you, but I'm beginning to like me as a person. I'm going to nurture myself at times when I go back out, whereas I didn't before. Nurturing myself is a new behavior to me, but I am basically learning how to do it and it's gonna take some time. I'm gonna have to do it when I get on the outside, but I have to work at it somewhat. Like I said, it's a new lifestyle. I don't have anybody anymore. Just me. I've got to start a new profession and I'm not one that's gonna go out and accept a store clerk position, because that's not what I want. I want more out of life than that. That's the reason why I'm going back to school. It's not going to be easy. I know that but I'll make it.

Effie also learned how to deal with personal interactions in a more positive manner.

I'm learning that everything's not directed at me personally. In the past I have taken things that way. Sometimes people were just teasing me, but I didn't take it that way. I took it seriously and very personal. Maybe it's not directed at me. It may not be directed at me all, and if it is, it's not anything for me to worry about. I just kind of learn to brush it off. So, that's basically made me a stronger person, just by learning to be more assertive and not taking the passive aggressor [stance].
In addition, as she learned more about herself and how to listen to others, her self-concept was affected in a positive manner.

I have also learned a lot about myself as a person. I've learned more about my character defects that I need to work on. I don't have frozen feelings anymore and I've had those for a long, long time. It's gonna make me a better person in the long run because of that. I've learned to be thankful for what I have, because I've seen people here that have a whole lot less than what I still have. I guess I'm learning to open up to people, and that's been tough for me to do. I can help somebody down the road, maybe, with everything that I've been through. Through listening, conversing, and observing other inmates I've learned a lot. That's a big thing right there. I also listen to what people are saying, but that's not what they're really saying.

Further, with regard to listening and observing, Effie "listens, not just to hear people but to listen to what people are really saying." Moreover, "I learned to observe a lot more. I had to role play and I had to talk from my gut feelings about what was really going on. We don't do that often." She further recalled, "I had to do a lot of observing when I was in [school]. Now I do it as a person because you can learn so much by not saying one word. You can pick up on a lot of things just by eye contact and body language." By putting into practice what she had learned, Effie also gained an important lesson about facing her fears.

I don't have to hide behind my profession anymore to talk to other people or to show them that I have an education. I have learning ability because I found out that I'm an okay person. I can have intelligent conversations. I've restored
a lot of self-confidence in myself. I've got a long way to go, but it's a start.

As to her relationships with the other residents, "I'm finding that now I respect or admire these people." She compared their learning capabilities to those of the "non-traditional students" she encountered when she started back to college and noted, "I admire them, even the ones older than me." Moreover, they contributed to Effie's informal learning experiences.

Not only can you learn lots from them, you get a lot of education here about other people. You really realize that there are all different types of people that end up here in prison. I've learned a lot of things. Some things I'll take with me, some things I won't.

In conclusion, it was obvious that Effie had learned much about life from her schooling and from her experiences. "Nobody can take away that knowledge, but I can tell you that I'm a good person, whereas a few months ago I probably wouldn't have been able to say that." Consequently, "You can have all the book learning in the world, but hands on experience is the best teacher." In summary, Effie felt that, considering "the way I started out--where I was at then, and where I am now--I've come a long way."

Some of her closing comments related to what she had learned generally and what she expected for the future. She felt as though she was starting over with a life that had been temporarily interrupted by abuse and drugs.

I'm 46 years old and I have a hard time dealing with that. It's like I'm 46 and I'm starting all
over. I mean, not material wise, that doesn't bother me, but with my career, basically. I have learned that I'm an okay person. I'm not abnormal. I've learned that life can be a whole lot grander without drugs than with drugs. I've learned that I just don't want to survive and exist. I want to live life and there's a lot of difference.

Elsa was in her late 30s. She had not encountered much physical or sexual abuse until she attained adulthood, when she was subjected to spousal abuse and had been raped at least twice. In that regard, Elsa was convicted of mitigated, deliberate homicide in the death of her second husband, who was extremely abusive.

The early abuse she encountered was of a psychological nature and came from her parents, who were very strict and harsh in their treatment of Elsa. Her father, who was also principal of the school she attended, was not only a strict disciplinarian, he also required regimentation at home, probably based upon his military background. As a result, Elsa's early learning and schooling were influenced by the perfectionist tendencies of her father and mother. "I've had a lot of real problems with authority figures."

Following orders during her incarceration took on a similarity, in fact, to taking orders from her parents as a child. However, she was always able to deal with this type of situation so long as she perceived the authority figure as viable, which was not always the case.

Regarding her early education, Elsa recalled that having a principal who was also her father made school life
difficult, and the effects carried over into her later schooling.

I went to public school through the eighth grade—Kindergarten through eighth grade in a little, tiny town. My dad was principal of that school for the first couple of years that I was in school. Then he became superintendent of the school district, so he was really hard and we were expected to have good grades. Then I went to junior high in another part of the state because we moved, and it was a transition in the middle of the year, so it was kind of rough. The math seemed more difficult for me. I really didn't study much. I graduated from high school four years later.

Elsa's study habits were reflected in her likes and dislikes, which she enumerated:

Math, science, or social studies [because] I didn't want to have to memorize anything. I was lazy and I didn't want to learn those things. All I wanted to do was art. I loved art and that was all I wanted to do. I put a lot into it and I was a perfectionist in art.

Thus, the perfectionist behavior which was demanded by her father appeared to have been transferred to Elsa's love of art.

Elsa recalled that, during her early years, she did well enough in her classes that she did not require much help from her parents. However, as she continued through school her coursework became more difficult, and attaining the high marks which were expected of her became nearly impossible. At this point her father intervened.

Well, I knew that if I made a 'C' on math or something—I didn't make a 'C' very often, but when I did I was kind of treated like it was an 'F'—my dad would start getting the flash cards out: addition, multiplication, or whatever it was
I needed to work on extra hard. This is kind of interesting. I really didn't get help from my folks during my early years with math or anything unless my grades showed. I guess I didn't go to them, but if my grade got low then they would do something. But until then I didn't get any help from them. I mean, I learned it at school. I didn't learn it at home. Probably I didn't go to my folks for help because I was afraid of what might happen.

One of Elsa's favorite school subjects was art. She learned painting skills with little formal training.

I won the national art contest. I loved art. I kind of liked English, but I really loved art; that was the thing I really enjoyed. I just picked it up. I was just good at drawing. I thought that everybody else could draw well, too. I just did it on my own. I probably learned from little coloring [books] and stuff with crayons, and drawing on blackboards. I don't really remember how. I loved everything about it. I loved to color.

However, in spite of her love for art, she soon discovered that it was not readily marketable, no matter how perfect she tried to be.

I was painting in junior high, and I remember I was becoming so excessive in painting, everything had to be just perfect. . . . I would get headaches. I would spend so much time just doing it, and part of it was frustrating. Part of it was [that] I wanted to sell some paintings for money. I only sold one. I just painted a couple. I was fortunate that I sold it. I was just a kid. I was trying to make some money so I could buy something I really wanted. Well, I learned that you can't always sell what you paint.

Elsa's early formal learning was adversely affected by the fact that she was impatient. She recalled her problems with instructions:

I didn't have a whole lot of patience back then, anyways. Later on I was put on medicine, but I
didn't have a lot of patience as far as learning
to do things, like learning how to sew, learning
how to sculpture. I hated to learn the process.
I hated it. I hated the instructions. It was
like I didn't want to go through it, anything that
had instruction with it. Well, I had to do it. I
knew that in order to learn how to sew and things
I had to learn to go through the instructions. It
was like a daydream, so I missed part of it. I
still got some, but to this day, as far as sewing
goes, I just wasn't paying attention through a lot
of it, so I'm not as good a sewer as I could have
been.

However, her impatience did not prevent her from pursuing
another hobby later which, ironically, involved sewing, but
also stemmed from her love of art. "I really started to
love making doll clothes when I got older. I'd cut out the
material and make formals. I liked pretty things, I guess.
I just liked to do the work. I was really into colors."

Elsa's study habits changed for the better in the
transition from high school to college. However, she still
had attention problems and could easily be distracted from
studying.

In high school I didn't study that much, but in
college I tried. I wanted to study, but I worked
while I went to school. It wasn't all that easy,
as far as studying goes, but I put a whole lot
more effort into it. Also--I have to tell you
this--my second semester of college, I wasn't
paying as much attention. I was more into
partying and stuff like that. When I was in
college I lived in the dorms and where the parties
were....

While in college, Elsa continued for awhile to maintain her
interest in art. However, her passion for the subject began
to dwindle, and she rationalized her loss of enthusiasm:
I remember when I was in college, I loved art and I loved studying it. I just thought I couldn't wait until I could work the field as a commercial artist. I just couldn't wait to have something to do with it. Then I started thinking, well, artists are temperamental. I really don't want to be an artist. I started thinking that, and I don't know where I got that from. I just started thinking that they were temperamental people, and I should get away from the field. I honestly did, but I can't remember why.

Thus, Elsa's interests soon turned to other areas. She elaborated by stating that, even though the interests were there, other deficiencies created problems for her. She revealed what happened:

I realized I wanted to take engineering. I got into engineering, and that wasn't bad. It was a good experience for me 'cause I took an engineering class. I had never had chemistry before and I didn't have enough math. Then there was something else. I had no physics. I had next to nothing to get me ready for engineering. Another thing I had trouble with was my math, because I never really paid attention. I had to drop out of engineering class. It was scary. I didn't feel good about it, but I wasn't the only one. There was a lot of people who had to drop out of the class. I felt bad about the class 'cause I didn't know what was going on.

Thus, although her interest was valid, her goals and expectations were unrealistic, because she lacked background in the subjects she needed to succeed in engineering.

However, in spite of her misjudgment about engineering, Elsa continued her education by attending "three different colleges" where she happened to be living at the time. Just as with the other schools, she experimented with a variety of non-traditional curricula.
I liked all of it, but what I liked best was probably fluid hydraulics. That was hard. It was interesting, because you are talking about matter, and you're talking about weight and physics. The end result was that I began to really like and read science.

Participation in competitive sports also played an important part in Elsa's life, but her endeavors in this arena were limited by physical incapacity.

I love competing. I love playing games and I love the outdoors. I have to be more cautious. It definitely would help my self-esteem. There is just so many things that I can't do that it makes me feel like people are saying, "I don't understand why you can't do that," and that does happen. It is also depressing in a way when you can't do the things that you really want to do.

Exercise is also important, not just physically. It's just important mentally in so many ways, and actually exercising your body is chemically good. I think that anybody that can't be physically active like that will have to find something else to do.

Elsa suffered from a debilitating illness which precluded her from engaging in extensive physical exercise. Moreover, being incarcerated also limited her ability to exercise. Thus, though she did not entirely lose interest in physical sports and exercise, her activities were greatly limited, and her energies were directed once again toward more educational pursuits.

When I was in jail, that was different. Then I wanted to learn about computers. I had also learned how to cook. I learned from recipes. I initially started about '83 or '84. I started doing that when I was working for other people. I didn't really know how to cook very well. It was mostly Hamburger Helper before that. So I started following recipes, but I got to where I was baking, too.
I was learning the basics about computers in jail. I started writing here at the correctional center. I started collecting recipes while I was in jail. I couldn't take anything on computers or business because it interfered with chemical dependency. Then, when I was at EU [expansion unit], I didn't have access to chemical dependency or business classes. Then I was able to practice on the computer. That was all the business skills I have. I got an anger management group and that's it.

Not only had Elsa's physical environment and educational interests changed, but her approach to learning had changed as well. She became focused on self-directed learning, drawing upon various experiences and learning from them.

Actually there was a learning experience when I first went to jail. I had all these tons of legal documents--what do you call them? Legal papers from my case. I went through them all and I mean, we're talking about tons. I went through all that stuff and it was a learning experience, because there were a lot of technicalities there. I can remember telling my attorneys some of the things that I had read and things that they didn't even work on or read about until later on. I had to try and make sense out of those things I was reading. I learned to have patience, whereas before when I read things I wanted to quickly read through them. When I was going through those I went through them fast but thoroughly. I learned it from doing it.

Elsa went even further, when she divulged during the first interview that she had embarked upon another self-directed experience which involved writing. "The only other thing that I've been doing is, I was writing a song. It's about abuse, but that's not really a learning experience." It was explained to her that she was learning, so this was a learning experience. She responded:
Well, yeah, but something I probably told you in the beginning is that I have a hard time writing. It doesn't come that easy for me. I just don't see it. It's easier for me to draw or something. I'm not good with words. I'm not as good with words as I am with designing something. Well, actually I'm surprised I can write at all. I didn't know I could write at all, period.

She was encouraged to continue with her writing and, in fact, was still pursuing the song at the time of the second interview at the BPRC.

In addition to her self-directed learning, Elsa also had a general experience which involved how she had learned to observe.

I've learned that people make a lot of mistakes. People make a lot of errors and they don't realize it. I learned that from being in jail and going through counseling. There is so many errors made; what people think they see or report that they see still isn't really what they saw. People can see the same thing but they've got different recall. I just learned you can't rely on people. I learned that you can't. You can't depend on anybody. That's because people make those mistakes. People make so many mistakes they don't even mean to make. They don't care as much about my welfare, so if I let somebody else get involved they will try and do their best to do what they think, but they're going to screw up. It's like I can't afford to trust anybody. If I want something done I have to do it myself. If I want to find out something I have to find it out myself.

Some of this discovery occurred at the time that she had reviewed the legal documents in her case.

Regarding her other recent learning experiences, both in the classroom and in treatment, Elsa indicated that her disease had impacted her. For example, she had difficulty typing on the computer, and she was limited in physical
exercise. However, she was able either to adapt to her limitations or to accept the consequences of her disease.

One of the most positive feelings or outlooks I've had in the last--I don't know--quite a few years was probably when I was at WCC and I started working on the computer. Pretty soon my typing speeds increased. I have [arthritis], so it's kind of hard for me to type. My fingers get cramped, but I increased my typing speeds more than I thought I ever could. That was good and gave me confidence.

Then, also at the same time, I started getting involved in this exercise program I thought I couldn't do either, and I was able to. Then I started losing my hope, because sometimes during the exercise I'd get a stiff neck. They'd say, "You can't exercise anymore." I got to the point where I had to drop out of the exercise class. That brought back some negative stuff because I had hope that I could physically be more normal because I am limited in some things. So I was feeling good about that. I was thinking I could do more than I thought, physically. I was hoping I could get in shape. I mean, really get in shape, like running. [I] used to love sports until I had to get out of it. I mean, if I would've been physically able I would've been active in sports.

However, Elsa's experiences illustrate that, even though realizations can be made, the results are not always positive. Thus, although she was able to adjust to her limitations, her attitude was perceived within the system as being negative, and steps were taken to return her to WCC.

The Non-Abused

Although the women in this group came from varying educational backgrounds, they were segregated into a separate group because they, unlike all of the other women,
claimed never to have been victims of abuse. This is significant, because abuse of any type has been demonstrated to materially and adversely affect self-esteem and, hence, formal, informal, and social learning. Thus, it can also be argued that the loss of self-esteem through other causes will likewise adversely affect formal, informal, and social learning. Therefore, it was important that these three women be evaluated as a distinct group.

All of the women in this group had suffered from loss of self-esteem at various stages of their lives from causes other than abuse. The loss primarily involved health, family, or being incarcerated.

Two of these women had been convicted of non-violent money-related crimes, including writing bad checks. The other woman had been convicted of conspiracy to commit deliberate, mitigated homicide.

The women's ages ranged from mid-30s to early 70s, with approximately a 20-year age difference between each woman. Their educational backgrounds were as follows: One had a high school diploma; another had obtained her GED before coming to WCC and had one year of college; and the third held a master's degree. The master's degree could not be verified by personnel at the correctional facility. One of the women was involved in vocational training, and another had just completed the training and was doing on-the-job
training. The third woman had been involved in various treatment programs at WCC.

Flo was a 35 year old woman who originally came from a state in the Midwest. Her father had died when she was a child, and she had been reared primarily by her mother. Flo acknowledged some limited drug use during high school, which she believed was related to loss of self-esteem brought on by her overweight condition.

Flo completed the 11th grade and received her GED. She also had one year of college. During her early education she "liked science and history. I don't know that I particularly enjoyed math. I was good at it. My passion was music. Singing and learning all different types of music." Regarding Flo's learning style, she learned by procuring the basic information from a particular source and then expanding upon the information. This style generally held throughout her formal and informal education.

I can remember ... in sixth grade, learning about clouds. I think I've pretty much always been that kind of person--just give me the information and leave me alone. I learn better that way. That's ... one of the reasons I decided on self study--I do much better with the home study program because I can do it myself. Patience is not one of my virtues. Maybe my logic is backwards from some of the other people. See, mostly my interests have primarily stayed very much the same throughout my life.

Even in school, in traditional settings, I very rarely paid attention to the teacher. Not so much in grade school, but as I particularly got into high school. I'm very much the type of person who says give it to me and leave me alone and let me learn. I'm much better at assimilating
things myself. I don't do well in the traditional setting.

Flo could not remember any negative learning experiences in grade school; however, she did recall a negative experience in junior high school.

I always enjoyed school. I liked to learn and I still do. I have a very good memory. I can still remember almost all of my teachers' names. Each one had special things that I learned from them.

I think the only teacher I had a very negative experience with, ironically enough, I don't remember his name. He was a junior high school science teacher that I had. The school there gave spankings. I had never got one, but it bothered me to watch. He had, like, teacher's pets, and you would see the difference. I was a very vocal person. Even though I was in eighth grade I told him I didn't think what he did was right. No, I never did get hit--swats, as he called them. I can't think of his name here, but I can see him. I learned what not to do. I think any situation where you deal with something like that you learn to play games at times.

Her assertive nature was evident at the time of the interviews, based upon her manner of speaking. However, her assertiveness did not appear to have been utilized in a negative manner.

Flo felt that "most of my education is informal." At one time she was a licensed insurance agent, and she had also been a money broker. Most of the knowledge acquired for these professions had been self-initiated. In addition to her self-directed learning, Flo credited two individuals with influencing her life. One was her mother and the other was her mother's friend, both of whom Flo believed provided her with a great deal of informal learning. "This friend of
my mother who was in real estate, would go out and sell a lot of real estate. I worked with her. Most of my education is informal, thanks to her." About her mother, Flo recalled:

I think one of the things I remember I enjoyed the most in grade school was I enjoyed working with my mother in the store. She owned a clothing and shoe store. I used to work with her there and travel with her on buying trips. I started working in the store when I was probably 7, and continued 'til I was about 10 or 11. Then she sold it. I learned people skills, 'cause I worked with people. I learned to handle money. Mom taught me what to do at night to the till. I learned to use my judgment, 'cause when we would go on buying trips she asked me what line of shoes I thought would sell. She allowed me to use my judgment to pick a line. If she didn't think it was real good she would buy a small amount. She would buy it, and if it didn't go then she would explain to me that she allowed me to use my own judgment.

Flo attended one semester of college before coming to WCC, and there she took English and business law. She also attended trade school to obtain her insurance license. At WCC she learned accounting and typing. She had also worked in vocational services and did on-the-job training as a secretary.

Flo was also involved in a considerable amount of self-directed learning at WCC.

I think one of the things I've always liked to do is learn, but you don't have to learn everything all at one time. Sometimes I have a tendency to learn everything, and I want to know it now. I'm learning to take my time and learn correctly and not try to glut everything. That's one thing I still have a hard time doing. I mean, like right now I'm working on three major learning projects. I'm learning computers and then I'm doing major
study in the Book of Romans. I'm taking Greek. . . . It's a college course. Romans is informal. I'm teaching myself. I think what I'm learning is different, but I don't know how to put it into words, what the difference is.

Generally, much of what Flo learned concerns attitudes and priorities. Regarding her attitude toward learning, she volunteered:

My attitudes toward learning really haven't changed, because I always liked to learn. I think my attitudes, or at least knowing things, may have changed--mainly study methods. My attitudes about looking at life are different. My philosophy as far as my priorities have changed. I think you're not going to avoid change, you know.

Furthermore, with regard to her priorities she felt that:

I've learned to prioritize what's right, what I feel is right, now. I think I've learned to stop and really look clearly [at] a situation. I've learned to weigh pros and cons a little more. I've learned to slow down, to look at things. Not doing that has caused a majority of my problems, because I want things to happen right now. I have to really make myself stop. I think that's the improvement--a definite improvement--that I've learned to stop and look at things [and] weigh the situation carefully as to what's more important. That has come from having to make some hard decisions.

I think one of the most important things people need to learn, and I've had to learn in other ways, is just slow down. You have to learn to set priorities, but to set priorities I think you have to be taught. You have to learn what's important. I think that our society's so much the American dream. Well, to have the American dream you've got to push and have money. Mother and Father both have to work. I mean, that disrupts the home. I remember coming up to people and them saying, "You're a housewife?" It was like a dirty word. It bothered me because I had the dream of the mom and the daddy in the little white cottage [with] the little white picket fence. I was a single parent for 12 years.
Another element of her life which has affected her both in and out of confinement concerns what other people think about her.

I think, in hindsight, as I got older I learned not to care what other people think. I think a lot of it came being from a very loving home. I wasn't brought up with negative criticism. Dealing with that from children on the outside, I wasn't quite sure how to handle it. I didn't understand.

Flo considered herself a caring person, although that type of behavior was frowned upon both by the administration and some of her peers at WCC. She dealt with the disapproval at times by not letting her caretaking go to extremes and at other times by disregarding the criticism. She explained her feelings:

I think it depends on the person, because even in here I would help people. I'd have people turn around and hurt me, but that doesn't change me. I guess even if I know that somebody may hurt me it's not going to change my reaction or what I do. I will still help them. Sometimes I may take a little different tact of what I do, but that's the way I am. That will never change. I don't ever want to change that because I have seen people become so hard. That's not who I am and that's not who I want to be either. That's one of the things that goes on around here . . . because, well, "You're caretaking." Maybe I am but that's who I am, that what I'm going to be. I'm not going to change that aspect. That's not a lot of what they teach you here. If you stop and help somebody you're a caretaker to them. But every time you do you learn something.

Flo explained a final learning concept, which pertained to what she had learned about her previous behavior and how she intended to apply this to her life outside of WCC.
After being here I don't think I will ever go out and commit any other criminal act, because, as I've said, I've learned what's more important. I never want to put myself in the position that I will be away from my family. The struggle that I'm fighting to keep my [children]. I could be wrong when you're sitting out there, and things can change, but that's what I'm seeing now.

Fran, in her early 50s, had graduated from high school over 30 years before coming to WCC. She was originally from a rural western state and had lived on a farm in similar community most of her life. She had been convicted of conspiracy to commit mitigated, deliberate homicide. Again, although there was no abuse in her background, when comparing herself to some of the other residents at WCC Fran stated that she was "different in the fact that I do have the self-esteem, the stability within myself." However, she did experience the self-esteem problems of the other residents 30 years before. Therefore, because she had been in a similar situation, Fran empathized with the other residents.

She explained that she experienced a loss of self-esteem in the aftermath of the birth of her children. She again experienced this loss when she was convicted of her crime. She felt that she had been wrongfully accused, and she encountered great difficulty in overcoming what she believed to be a miscarriage of justice. However, she finally came to the conclusion that there was not much she could do about the situation, and she learned to deal with it.
Regarding her education, Fran attended elementary and high school in one of the rural western states. "I graduated second in my class." She received scholarships to go on to college, "which I did not avail myself of because I was gonna get married. We didn't get married, but that's beside the point." As to her learning ability, "I was a very good student and I still am."

As to her specific likes and dislikes, Fran explained that "basically, about the only thing that I didn't like was art. The reading, the math, the science--I liked it all. Music I also liked."

Fran did not recall any specific positive or negative experiences surrounding her grammar school or high school years, but she did remember, "When I was young I was motivated by pleasing my family. I lived up to what I felt was the family expectations. Now I'm doing it because I want to be motivated."

Fran felt that the schools she attended were very good and perhaps that was one reason she did not encounter problems. "I can't evaluate the system there now, but at the time I went it was an excellent system. In fact, it was so good that when I moved away I helped a lot of people with their classes."

Fran's first encounter with formal education following high school occurred shortly after graduation. "I wanted to go into something that I could use, that I could complete
the training in a year, because at the time we were planning on getting married. So I wanted something that I could use and complete in a year." In view of this, "I went to cosmetology college. I graduated from cosmetology and got my license . . . in '61."

In addition, shortly after graduating she did get married, although not to the man to whom she had been previously engaged. They moved to a farm in another state, where she lived most of her life.

Fran's encounters with informal learning began when she got her insurance license. In addition, informal learning was gained as she raised her children and cared for her husband, the household, and the farm. She was also involved in motivational training classes for several years prior to coming to WCC.

Even though living on a farm in a small town may be insignificant to some people, Fran was subjected to a great deal of informal learning.

You learn self-reliance, to see what needs to be done and do it, instead of having to have somebody stand over you and tell you everything to do. Instead of that you go ahead and take care of everything that has to be taken care of. You go ahead and do it.

Fran emphasized that most of what she had learned on the farm carried over in her later life. For example:

I would say most of the positive things that have carried over have resulted from my family and my children. There again, the self-esteem, the self-reliance, the ability to go ahead and get things done. The sticking to things. The willingness to
stick your neck out. You have to do that every so often. You may get it chopped off, but it grows back.

Fran admitted some problems adjusting to incarceration, but, except for those rare instances when it was lost, "I've always been strong and had a lot of self-esteem . . . that's probably why I've managed to get through with as little bitterness as I have." She indicated that some of the treatment classes helped to restore her positive feelings about herself.

After a short period of adjustment to her confinement, and taking into consideration her age and experience, Fran was placed in a leadership position in vocational education. Regarding this training program and her aspirations:

I'm a quick learner. I have good comprehension and, as a general rule, if it's something that I can apply to what I learn, I can combine it with common sense, which a lot of people can't do. Intellectual learning is one thing, but being able to use it—and you don't use all of it—but . . . what . . . you don't think you'll ever use [does] come in handy at some time. I used a lot of that with the 4 or 5 women I work with.

Most of the goals down there are mine, because most of [the other women] don't know anything about setting goals. They're my goals and without them realizing it they'll say, "Okay, we'll do this right now." But in the [vocational training] I don't set them up for failure. I take them in small steps to succeed. It helps them build self-esteem. There's nothing like success to help build that.

Fran advised that she had found this activity a most rewarding learning experience.
Even though she considered herself "a strong person with a lot of self-esteem," Fran was careful in applying her caretaking tendencies at WCC. She explained:

One of the hardest things I had a time learning was not to let my caring go too far because I can do that real easy. I care about people and I want to help them. I want to see them get their lives together or to help them. You can't get too emotionally involved. You've got to get that balance. It's made my life much better because I can now, as a general rule, try to help somebody and be involved but not involved to the exclusion of everything else. I get a lot of satisfaction and that's the only satisfaction that counts. It helps with your self-esteem. It's a feedback on your self-esteem.

Fay was the oldest of the women interviewed. She had spent a good period of her adult life incarcerated for writing bad checks. Although Fay reported no abuse, she did admit to periodic loss of self-esteem resulting from personal and family situations. She claimed to have a postgraduate degree; however, correctional authorities were unable to verify this fact.

Fay did not recall a great deal about grade school, but she did remember informal learning experiences at a very early age. "I read from the time I was three years old, believe it or not. I always had books around me. The best that money could buy and then, of course, kid books too, because I was still a kid." She stated that, since "I was an only child, I had to improvise and do things to keep myself busy that you wouldn't find if I had five or six screaming brothers and sisters. So I was quiet and not
howling, although I was outgoing in the fact that I was outspoken." Emphasis on manners at home may have influenced this quiet behavior. "I was brought up where manners were number one. Your conduct and your behavior were always important. You were to be a real princess."

Regarding Fay's formal learning experiences, "I was always at the top of my class. I picked out the subjects that interested me. I loved literature." She recalled one particular class and a teacher who influenced her:

I loved English and History, and we had a marvelous teacher that was involved in Grecian culture. It was a chosen subject and I chose it. I was in her class 3 different times because she went from one step to another. That probably had more influence on me than any other thing in my life because it directed me straight to fine arts. This was in elementary school. My mother and father took me to all of the symphonies, all the ballets. We dressed formally and, of course, that also tied in with a lot of this Grecian influence and French influence I'd had.

Fay explained how these activities led to her further involvement in fine arts:

Then I also had private instruction from the fifth grade through high school with a famous fine art teacher. She was a dramatist and she was from New York City... In my last year of high school I studied voice with a voice teacher.

Fay stated that the only negative experience she recalled during her early schooling occurred in junior high school. This incident concerned her distaste for physical education class, and she explained how she avoided the class by forging her mother's signature on excuses.
Well, gym was a horror to me because we had to all dress and undress in the same room, run in the shower together. About 12 women, girls, and little girls running in the shower and I was very, super modest and I couldn't stand it. It drove me insane, so I signed my mother's name to excuses so I could sit under a big tree that they had outside and I could read my dramatic things and memorize some plays that I was going to be in. Or I would draw. I was always excellent in drawing and painting. Or sometimes I slipped off to the movies, and they were great movies in those days. This is in the 30s now, so it's just before high school, say junior high school. I was living it up, you know. I loved English. I was always there. I loved history. I was always there. I was in practically every play they ever had in elementary and junior high school and then later in high school.

This activity "went on for about three months," until Fay got confused on how the excuses worked.

You had to have an excuse from your parents, but I wasn't thinking at that early age and so I guess they thought I was bleeding to death. I'd say, "She has the curse in your class today and should not be out exercising." So I really wasn't thinking. They thought I was going to bleed to death. . . . So the principal called my mother and dad and told them something was drastically wrong. "Is she in the bed all the time? She isn't in school."

It boiled down to they sent for me and I thought, oh, oh. Now what? But ol' Fay went on the stage with head up. I went into the dean's office and here sat my mother and dad. Well, that shocked me.

During the encounter with the dean and her parents, Fay finally acknowledged why she hated gym class.

The dean said, "Now, princess, we want to get to the bottom of why you are sitting under the tree reading your poetry and your literature and not playing with the other girls." I said, "Because I can't stand the smell in the gym. It's filthy dirty. I'm not undressing in front of anyone." He asked, "What's wrong with undressing in front
of the other girls?" I said, "Because I don't like it. I haven't been brought up that way." So Mother jumped in and said, "Yes, it's true. She is a very bashful person and isn't going to strip in front of other people." The dean said, "Well, we are going to have to reconcile someway, somehow, or you are not going to graduate this year."

So I looked at my mother and dad and they were tearing their hair out. So Mother spoke up and said, "Now, isn't there something she can take besides gym, since it is so abhorrent to her, to where we can resolve this some way?" So we finally did. I was to do one hour of practicing on the piano and one hour of voice and that's what I did and I ended up being in three different productions that they did which were pretty good in those days. It was a smash hit and I graduated with honors. Now, that had the biggest impact on my life at that point, that I can think of.

Thus, in the end, her parents came to her rescue. Fay may have used similar avoidance techniques when she began writing bad checks. Again, she allowed her parents to come to her rescue and cover the insufficient funds.

Fay's love for the arts continued into high school and beyond. "When I got to college, I gravitated to philosophy. I loved philosophy, psychology, and sociology. I was interested in all of it. I wanted to know why, and how, and when." Much later "I went back to college just to take courses for me, not for another degree."

Fay's dislikes were clearly defined. "I didn't like calculus and things like that. I didn't like anything at all about chemistry." However, "I had very high grades in math. English, history, French, and Spanish, I loved. You had to have two separate languages to graduate college in
those days. So I chose French and Spanish." She also studied voice for several years in the summer. According to Fay, "Everything at that time was uplifting."

While she was in college, Fay relied upon her parents for all of her financial needs. However, after college her father's health deteriorated, resulting in a financial burden. During this time, Fay established an interior decorating business, which she maintained for 23 years. Also during this time, Fay's check-writing activities became excessive. Although she had maintained her own checkbook for years, whenever she overdrew her account her "father or mother had always covered the checks." This had been ongoing for many years, and there were times "I didn't even know that they had covered them up, but they did." However, her father's worsening illness, and the related financial hardship, precluded the family's further intervention on her behalf. At this point, Fay was forced to accept responsibility for her own check-writing activities; however, she frequently was unable to cover her bad checks. The combination of her father's illness, and her inability to accept responsibility for her own behavior resulted in a loss of self-esteem.

Another factor that may have resulted in a loss of self-worth was Fay's disastrous marital record. "One of the impacts of my life is that I've been married three times. I guess I was always looking for something that I didn't quite
have, and all three marriages were unsuccessful in a way." She emphasized that there was no abuse tied into these marriages, and all were mutually arranged, primarily for business purposes. However, her inability to succeed in marriage, even based upon these criteria, pointed to a failure on her part.

Fay was arrested and imprisoned in two other women's facilities before coming to WCC. These facilities were modern, with many conveniences, and the residents were accorded "respect" and given substantial privileges. She discussed her informal learning experiences there:

I ran the kiln and did all of the firing of the kiln. Taught ceramics. I ran the sewing room. I repaired things for the guards. Then I did the most exquisite bedspreads and comforters you've ever seen. All with donated things... so I had no expense because the thread was all donated, the material was all donated. All I had to do was sew it. I did and I made a quick killing. I sat on some of my money... .

Entering WCC was a drastic change for Fay, not only because of its general appearance and location, but also with respect to its treatment programs and lack of educational advantages. "It was repulsive to me." A cut in federal funding had necessitated the elimination of the college courses at WCC to all except those who could personally pay for them. Fay assessed the result:

We know we have more ignoramuses than we have masters of fine arts, don't we? Look at the educational setup in this institution. How many college graduates do we have? How many with no education at all? And what is that, for God's sake? What would happen if we closed all of the
colleges and universities in the world and everyone just waited and said, "Well, someday I'll get my GED." Wouldn't that make a fine world?

In spite of her negative overall feelings, Fay did find some of the treatment programs at WCC beneficial. "I had one class that was in self-recognition--recognizing your capabilities and your faults and things like that." Another class which she found rewarding dealt with relationships.

Codependency--I'm doing that. Sure, it's causing me to be more aware of why I do the things I do. More aware of actions that I take, where usually I do things without thinking about them. It makes me aware of what I am doing and why I am doing them. I really kind of like the class, although my main goal for getting through it is to get paroled.

These two classes, along with Fay's newly acquired personal insight, helped her come to the realization:

That you have to depend upon your own self, your own mind. You have to do it within the realms of an accepting society. Now what is that? What society [says about] whatever your demeanor is. I can say it because I am in here. It has opened my eyes. I cannot depend on a living ass but myself. I have got to do it my way. My way.

What her way was is somewhat unclear, except that she had to do it on her own. What she does in the future would depend on the circumstances, because "at some point you have to realize that you are your own person and responsible for your deeds and your actions. That's what I have learned since being here this time--not through any therapy." Fay concluded:

I have nothing left but my mind. Nothing left. My health is gone. It's going down, down, down. There is no help here. None. I've deteriorated.
I know how I've deteriorated. But mentally, my brain is sharper.

I feel safe but I'm just existing. The only place for salvation is in your mind. That's the only place and I thank God that I have the knowledge that I have.

Thus, even with its limited opportunities, WCC provided Fay with a realistic view of herself and a significant informal learning experience.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Social learning takes place in every situation in life, be it formal or informal. Moreover, how a person is treated in life will affect the learning process. This study illustrates the connectivity among formal and informal social learning experiences and home, school, and peer group relationships. Based upon the backgrounds of the women interviewed in this study, the conclusions derived may be broken down into the following topics: (a) psychological abuse; (b) physical and sexual abuse; (c) positive learning; and (d) negative learning. In discussing these areas, primary focus is on the interrelationship between abuse and learning, as well as factors affecting self-concept.

Summary of Study

The major focus of this study was to determine the impact of social learning experiences, both formal and informal, on the incarceration of adult female inmates. The study was conducted between September 1992 and August 1993 at the Women's Correction Center in Warm Springs, Montana.

There were 31 women interviewed, ranging in age from 20 to 72 years. Of that number, 28 women acknowledged
suffering from either physical or psychological abuse, and many suffered a combination of both. Three women had encountered loss of self-esteem at various times in their lives from circumstances other than abuse.

The perceptions of these women were collected with utmost respect for their personal, social, and cultural backgrounds. The data were collected by means of a private, recorded, non-structured interview process. This process provided an effective method of examining the personal and educational perspectives of the women, and great care was taken so that each individual would be able to speak freely, in a comfortable environment. Thus, their observations were comprehensive and informative. They disclosed how learning processes can differ from one environment to another, how abuse or loss of self-esteem affects those processes, and how incarceration further impacted their learning experiences.

General Statement Concerning Abuse And Negative Behavior

As a result of this study there was a connection made between learning and negative behavior. Most generally, the connection was made through the medium of abuse in its various forms. Abuse at home was frequently found to affect learning and peer relationships in the school environment, which were exacerbated when issues were either not properly resolved or were not addressed at school. As a result,
abuse relates not only to learning and the educational system, but to later behavior as well, as was evidenced by the negative behaviors of the women interviewed.

During the course of the study, issues concerning abuse, negative behavior, and learning were major areas of interest. As far as abuse was concerned, there were two major categories. One was psychological, which includes verbal abuse, and the other was physical, which includes sexual and substance abuse. In most cases, the negative behavior which resulted in incarceration was related in some way to abuse. Learning was affected by abuse and/or low self-esteem in all cases.

Another major area of concern was social learning, which included both formal and informal learning experiences. These learning experiences were divided into positive and negative categories, and within these categories were included activities from home, school, and life-long learning situations.

**The General Learning Environment of the Women**

For most of the women in this study, abusive environments formed the foundations upon which learning was accomplished. Indeed, as previously mentioned, 28 of the 31 women had suffered some type of abuse. Frequently the abuse was both psychological and physical. On occasion there may
have been limited or no abuse in childhood; however, spousal or relationship abuse surfaced later and became the pervasive maltreatment. Some of the women had suffered from all types of abuse for as long as they could remember, even from as early as three or four years of age.

Abuse affects learning through observation and experience. Likewise, it affects the development of attitudes, values, and beliefs. Thus, since most of the women had suffered pervasive abuse, a better understanding of their world and how abuse affected their learning, could be gained by studying their whole environment.

A key component of this process related to understanding the learning and unlearning processes of the women interviewed. Because their negative learning processes influenced their learning experiences generally, one could naturally assume that it would be necessary for them to unlearn bad behaviors and replace them with positive learning in order to survive outside of the corrections system.

**Psychological Abuse**

Psychological abuse can also be defined as emotional and mental abuse, and includes verbal abuse as well as emotional abandonment. Among the women interviewed, psychological abuse was often found to be pervasive, and many times it left the victims more scarred than when
physical abuse had occurred in limited or short durations. Frequently, both physical and psychological abuse had occurred, although only the psychological aspect will be dealt with here.

Issues Surrounding Psychological Abuse

During the interviews, various issues appeared repeatedly concerning psychological abuse. They fall into the following categories:

(a) Some of the women reported double standard treatment of, or favoring, one child over another by a parent.

(b) Deep-seated psychological problems involving a parent or parents resulted in the psychological abuse.

(c) Ongoing incidents of observing abuse or deviant behavior by others, such as parents and other role models, constituted a form of psychological abuse.

(d) A parent's interpretation of the female role in society as being subservient and/or dependent to the male resulted in psychologically abusive behavior designed to cast the child into such a role.

(e) Many of the women interviewed recalled periods of emotional abandonment, or disaffection by their parents.

(f) Frequently, they felt as though they were on a road to self-destruction, which included suicidal thoughts or actions.
(g) Many experienced a need to fulfill negative expectations established by their abusers; this is an example of a self-fulfilling prophesy.

(h) Often there was an overpowering desire to escape the psychological abuse.

(i) All too frequently, the women indicated that they reflected on their actions only after it was too late to do anything about them.

(j) Only a few blamed others, such as their abusers, for their problems.

Double Standard Treatment and Favoritism. This type of abuse was illustrated frequently during the interviews in varying degrees. For example, Agnes, unlike her older siblings, was treated like a baby with few expectations. In Abbie's case, however, the favoritism was clear-cut, with her being denied access to adequate feminine hygiene while her sister was not. This type of activity on the part of parents can affect the psychological development of a child. It may also affect the attitude of a child as to how she sees herself as a person. This self-concept process may cause her to envision herself as a "baby" (Agnes) who cannot do certain things, but who may rebel against the limitations imposed upon her. Another attitude may be the direct loss of self-esteem, where the child may perceive that she is inferior to her siblings and others (Abbie).
Deep-Seated Psychological Problems of a Parent. This type of treatment was relevant in the case of Ada, whose stepfather "punished" her by physically abusing her for being born as the result of the rape of her mother. In other words, he believed, and would have her believe, that she deserved the treatment because she was a "bad seed."

Carrie, on the other hand, was conceived because of her mother's irrational feeling that having another child would save a faltering marriage. Carrie was made the object of verbal abuse, her mother telling her that the marriage failed "because you're no good."

Finally, in the case of Elsa, her obsessive "drill sergeant" parents required that "everything had to be done a specific way," including folding hand towels in a certain manner. No wonder Elsa became obsessive as well.

As can be seen, this type of psychological abuse may encompass other types. However, it primarily exemplifies the extent to which some parents are psychologically disaffected. It is difficult to understand how a parent, who should be perceived as a viable caretaker, can subscribe to this type of treatment when it comes to a child. Generally, the rationalization appeared to be punishment under the guise of positive parental guidance, and the interactions ran the full gamut of pervasive psychological abuse by parents who were neurotic, psychotic and/or had been victims of abuse themselves.
Observational Abuse. This issue involved the women's reported observation of physical abuse directed at others and/or the observation of deviant behavior of parents or other role models. Frequently, it was combined with actually being the victim of abuse, as, for example, in the cases of Abbie, Didi, Della, and Cassie. They were not only abused themselves, but they also witnessed the abuse of their mothers, brothers, and sisters.

In other situations, as in the cases of Ada, Anna, Bess, and Billie, the results of the abuse were far reaching. Anna, Bess and Billie, for example, tried to stop the abuse by physically attacking or killing the abuser. When the abuse was directed against siblings, as with Ada and Bess, these women protected their brothers and sisters. Another example of aggressive behavior by the observer of abuse was Dottie, who attacked her stepfather when he came after her brothers and sisters with a baseball bat.

Another observational issue concerned witnessing the deviant behavior of mothers, fathers, and other role models, which negatively influenced the women. One relevant case was that of Cammy, who reported that her mother was always sleeping with "men she'd just met" claiming that "she was head over heels in love with them. . . . "[I] had to listen, and that hurt.

In other instances, the observation related to parental drug and alcohol abuse within the home environment. Bea,
Cammy, and Dannie reported that their mothers drank or used drugs to escape marital and personal problems. Observation of this behavior supported their attitudes that substance abuse was sanctioned by authority figures, in this case their mothers. Observation of deviant behavior was not confined to mothers, however. One of the most significant examples of observing parental drug abuse occurred in the case of Cathy, who at the age of eight, witnessed her father's drug use when she saw him sitting in a tub of hot water with a needle sticking out of his arm. This incident marked the beginning of Cathy's drug use, as it became "a family thing."

Ideas of a Woman's Role in Society. This was a somewhat difficult issue to identify and categorize, since it related to attitudes and values of an earlier generation. However, during the interviews several of the women identified conflicts with their parents involving beliefs about women's roles in society, and they recognized these conflicts as having some significance in the psychological abuse they experienced. Although imposition of specific roles for women was not accomplished in an overt manner, Billié and Dusty grew up with the idea that a woman's place was in the home where she was subservient to her husband. They were taught that the woman's role was to marry, do household chores, and rear children, and it precluded
working or seeking entertainment outside of home and the spouse's purview.

Dusty became aware of these issues when she was emotionally rejected by her adoptive mother because she did not accept traditional roles, and she sought the attention of her father by helping him in his garage. When her adoptive parents had their own child, it intensified her desire to make a life outside of traditional roles. Her desires were not fulfilled, and she ended up in co-dependent and/or abusive relationships until her incarceration, which resulted directly from her subservient role in a relationship.

Although Billie fulfilled the traditional female role prescribed by her family, deep-seated convictions against divorce, even in the face of pervasive spousal abuse during her second marriage, resulted in the loss of her self-esteem. It also led, ultimately, to her crime and incarceration.

**Emotional Abandonment or Disaffection.** Even though many of the women interviewed had encountered physical abuse, some of them came from psychologically abusive situations which related specifically to lack of care and structure. Dusty, as previously noted, was emotionally abandoned by her mother because she failed to adopt traditional female roles, and later by both of her adoptive parents when they had their own "natural" child.
Bea, on the other hand, was emotionally and physically neglected by her drug addicted mother. She admitted that she was "starved for cuddling" and had never received "direct care." She reported that these factors, coupled with her rape at age 16, led her to "become a real chronic drug addict."

**The Road to Self-Destruction.** If a person feels that nobody cares, then self-destructive behavior may prevail. For example, Candy was subjected to severe criticism and little, if any, parental attention. Eventually she ran away from home, and became a heroin addict at the age of 13. She developed the idea of not caring about what she did. After years of drug abuse, she said, "I don't see the joy in my life." When she was interviewed, Candy did not have overt suicidal tendencies, but she had seen herself on the road to self-destruction and had come face to face with suicide in years past.

Candy felt that no one cared. Since she had been in and out of some type of confinement for much of her life, Candy had good reason to believe that we live in an uncaring society. This attitude probably added to her further assessment that, since no one cared, why should she? Unfortunately, this was a feeling that many of the women shared, both in and out of incarceration.

**Self-Fulfilling Prophesy.** Bea exemplified this theme, because she had been told for years that she was "always a
bad girl, from [childhood] on. Bad girl, ya know, naughty, bad girl. That message is . . . I owned up to every bit of that, and I'm sitting here today still owning up to being the bad girl."

Dana, on the other hand, was dominated by a authoritarian, perfectionist father, and she turned to the "positive side" of the prophecy by becoming a perfectionist. She always had to do things right and learned to please other people. However, being perfect did little to restore her battered self-worth.

Escape. Some escape behaviors can be positive, such as finding escape in reading or school, as Edie and Dottie had done. Nevertheless, for Dottie, when she transferred from parochial to public school, the loss of viable authority figures (the nuns) caused her to escape again. This time the escape was to the streets, where she considered herself to be "at home" because she was accepted for what she was.

There was also the case of Elsa, whose father was a principal and later superintendent of her school. She escaped his insistence on her being perfect by escaping into her art.

However, it was disclosed during the interviews that negative forms of escape were sought more frequently. For example, Cammy, whose mother rarely cooked a meal for her, lived on junk food purchased with food stamps until she
escaped to the streets. Unfortunately, the situation did not improve because on the streets she was forced to obtain food from "garbage cans and trash bags."

As far as escaping restrictive school environments was concerned, there were a few women whose backgrounds illustrated this type of behavior. One such case was Bess, who ran away because she felt the school and related caregivers were forcing her back into a situation where abuse had originated.

Regardless of the abuse, the cries for help by these women were rarely heeded. As a result, another escape mechanism arose in a large number of the cases, because it was easier to escape into addiction than to face the real problems.

Reflecting on Actions After it was Too Late. This issue may appear extraneous, in that it is obvious that all of these women were constrained to reflect upon their actions after it was too late. However, most of the women, upon reflecting on their actions, admitted that what they had done was wrong and showed some desire to change their lifestyles. There were exceptions. Agnes and Cassie admitted their guilt but were unwilling to accept responsibility or to change their lives; and Dusty and Fran, who had been convicted of violent crimes, declined to admit any responsibility at all.
Blaming Others. It was assumed during the interviews that most of these women would blame somebody or something for their predicaments. However, only a few actually named other individuals as the cause. For example, Carrie explicitly blamed her mother, father, and stepmother because they abandoned her emotionally. Both Allie and Cassie saw the faces of their abusers as they committed their crimes. Candy, a non-violent offender, rationalized her actions because "nobody cared," thus blaming everybody. Fran, likewise, blamed the system.

Regardless of these conclusions, there may be those who have difficulty separating their abused selves from the individuals who must accept responsibility for their actions. In that case, it may be said that some of the women were misdirecting responsibility for their actions onto external factors, which would include caretakers and/or the existence of abuse. If this is the case, then an in-depth look at parenting is required, since the home was the primary source of the abuse in most of these cases. Such consideration has been undertaken and will be addressed later under Recommendations.

Physical And Sexual Abuse

Physical and sexual abuse are defined to encompass substance and spousal abuse, as well as rape. It also includes self-inflicted, or substance, abuse. Among the
women interviewed, physical abuse was pervasive and even life threatening at times. Physical abuse carries with it various degrees of psychological ramifications. The recollections of the women interviewed illustrate the extent to which some of them endured abuse at various times in their lives.

**Issues Surrounding Physical and Sexual Abuse**

Several issues were raised during the interviews concerning physical and sexual abuse and its effects. They fell into the following categories:

(a) Many of the physically abused women experienced an overwhelming need to get even with others and/or to exert physical control over others.

(b) Frequently, they felt as though they were on a road to self-destruction, which included suicidal thoughts or actions.

(c) There was frequently an overpowering desire to escape the physical and/or sexual abuse.

(d) Without exception, physical or sexual abuse by parents, role models, or authority figures resulted in extreme loss of self-esteem.

(e) Most often, deep-seated psychological problems involving the parents resulted in the physical or sexual abuse.
(f) Sexual abuse is not limited to parents; it can also involve siblings, other relatives, baby sitters or other non-family members.

(g) Physical abuse does not always include sexual abuse, as in the case of neglect and abandonment.

(h) Strict religious convictions on the part of parents does not preclude their abusing their children physically and sexually; sometimes the abusers used religion as an excuse for the abusive behavior; and other times another caretaker stood by, allowing it to continue in the name of religion.

(i) Sometimes it is role models and/or authority figures who are the abusers.

(j) Physical and sexual abuse are not limited to children; frequently abuse carries forward into adulthood and adult relationships, including marriage.

(k) Incidental sexual abuse, such as rape, including gang rape, had far-reaching effects on many of the women interviewed.

(l) Substance abuse was an often-repeated theme, and involved engaging in self-inflicted physical abuse by the women.

(m) Frequently, abused individuals end up being abusive themselves, even though they may resolve at an early age not to fall into this role. Conversely, the victims
sometimes go so far as to make excuses for, or protect their abusive parents.

**Getting Even.** Some of the women interviewed perceived their criminal acts as getting even with their abusers, even though the victims actually had nothing to do with their abuse. The most vivid example was Allie, who visualized all the men who had abused her in the past while she attacked her victim, who himself was a convicted child molester. At the time, although Allie was influenced by drugs and alcohol, she validated her behavior as "getting even."

A second example was Ada, who got even with her abusers by attracting men, allowing them to fall in love with her, and then rejecting them for no reason other than to make them suffer and hurt as she perceived she "had been hurt."

A third, somewhat different, illustration of this issue involved Agnes, who became a prostitute. In so doing, she believed that when she took a man's money, she was actually receiving payment for what had been taken from her when she was abused as a child.

In all of these cases, childhood abuse transferred negatively to adult behavior and relationships. The most extreme variations involved Cassie and Allie, who killed or brutalized their victims, ostensibly to "get even" with their past abusers. Use of drugs and/or alcohol may have intensified their perceptions.
Like Allie, when Cassie brutally killed her physically abusive boyfriend, she felt she got even for the abuse she had encountered most of her life from her father, her former husband, and her past boyfriends. She did not remember the actual attack, only that she wanted to end the abuse.

Thus, these cases reflect a need on the part of the abused to somehow seek retribution for that abuse. In many cases, the retribution was swift and harsh.

The Road to Self-Destruction. Several women experienced this feeling, but Daisey's case is particularly noteworthy. Although she could not remember being sexually abused by her father as a teenager, she exhibited all of the symptoms of a sexual abuse victim, which included seven suicide attempts. In the years following, her life changed dramatically from one filled with love, care, and structure to a life of abusive relationships, drugs, and the pervasive sense of being on a "road to self-destruction."

Cassie, who has previously been discussed, also embarked upon a course of action designed to lead to self-destruction. Indeed, she freely admitted during the interviews that, because of her overwhelming self-disgust, she would eventually destroy herself, and she saw no reason to alter this course of action. Thus, even though the events leading up to their crimes differed for Cassie and Daisey, both had similar attitudes about self-destruction at the time of the interviews. However, the only difference
was that Daisey was desperately trying to correct her outlook while Cassie seemed neither to care nor to have any intention of changing.

Betty, in response to childhood abuse by her father, "learned" that only violence and aggression could help her achieve what she wanted. She became increasingly violent, "to the point where I stopped giving a shit," hence exemplifying the feeling that destructive behavior was her only option in life.

**Escape and Self-Inflicted Abuse.** For most of the women, this theme involved escaping from childhood abuse into some form of negative activity—usually substance, or self-inflicted, abuse. However, some of the women found escape in positive pursuits, such as school, books, art, and music, such as in the cases of Edie, Elsa, and Effie. Incidentally, Effie later also found escape in over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Finally, some of the women found escape on the street or in gang-related activities.

In the cases of Candy and Dottie, they felt that the streets were havens from the physical abuse they had experienced at home. They also felt that they gained some degree of self-worth as they were "with their own kind," doing what they wanted to be doing. Even Allie seemed to feel better off than at home, where there was no love or caring, because in the gang there was some degree of structure, however disjointed. It is appalling to realize
that for some of these women the worst streets in America were safer than their own homes, which were not places of shelter, structure, or safety. Most had come to terms with that fact that their homes were unsafe, but many were still learning the realities of their situations.

Self-inflicted abuse appeared in many forms among the women interviewed, and included substance abuse, eating disorders, and sleeping disorders. These behaviors represented an escape from the anguish of abuse and from the feelings of low self-esteem experienced by all of the women. Left unchecked, substance abuse became addiction and, once the addiction was established, efforts to support it increased. Often this meant resorting to even more negative or illegal behavior. For example, Allie joined a gang, which provided her an unending source of drugs; Cammy, Candy, and Dottie all resorted to selling drugs, writing bad checks or prostitution to support their addictions. For the latter three, their supporting activities directly resulted in their convictions.

Loss of Self-Esteem. The extreme loss of self-esteem also resulted from physical or sexual abuse by parents, role models, or authority figures. In this regard, the cases of Anna, Didi, Elsa, and Bess bear mentioning here.

In Anna's case there was a two-fold reason why she killed her mother. Her mother had abused her for most of her life, and then Anna suspected that her mother abused the
granddaughter during a wild party. Her thoughts were also clouded at the time of the crime due to the influence of drugs and alcohol. Nevertheless, after she killed her mother, her self-worth depreciated to the point where "nothing in this world can ever hurt me again the way I hurt myself." Those feelings were present for Anna some time later, even at the time of the interview.

In the case of Didi, who eventually became a prostitute, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse was not so "horrible," because such treatment "meant that I was loved, [because] that's what I had grown up with." In addition, she obtained a false sense of self-esteem when she was high on drugs.

Elsa and Bess both exhibited a severe lack of self-esteem. At the time of the first interview, Bess appeared to be extremely depressed. The interview revealed the reasons for her demeanor. As a young child, Bess was subjected to the rituals of a satanic cult by her father, where she was the victim of and witness to all types of abuse, including even witnessing the sacrifice of newborn infants. Memories of her childhood pervaded her being and resulted in depression.

According to Elsa, her punishment and physical abuse had gone on at the hands of her mother and father, who acted like "drill sergeants" all the years she was growing up. She had a particular fear of her father, who was principal
and superintendent of the schools she attended. Indeed, she lived in fear of his entering her classroom. Elsa reported that she had been fearful, timid, and shy all of her life, and after years of abuse at the hands of her husband, she had enough and killed him. At the time of the first interview at WCC, she appeared less shy and uncomfortable; however, an apparent return of her timidity was evident at the time of the second interview at the BPRC. She had particular problems functioning in situations where she was required to deal with people, such as job interviews, and she was being considered for return to WCC.

Deep-Seated Psychological Problems of Parents.
Frequently, a parent's own psychological problems result directly in the abuse. For example, in the case of substance abuse, if a parent is addicted, it is reasonable to assume that the children will be exposed to the abuse. Thus, in Cathy's case, drug use was a "family affair" where several members of the family gathered in the kitchen to do drugs. According to Cathy, "We would all do drugs together," when she was considered by her parents to be "mature" enough to participate. Although Cathy was reared for the most part by her grandparents, she spent enough time with her parents to be influenced by their behavior, and her adult problems reflected this fact.

Anna's mother, likewise, was addicted, and when she was under the influence of alcohol she was violent and
physically abusive. The abuse had occurred for as long as Anna could remember, beginning when she was approximately four years of age. When she reached adulthood, Anna also became addicted, and, when she had a child of her own, she came home one night to discover a wild party in progress and her daughter crying hysterically, as though she had been beaten. At that point Anna, who was under the influence of drugs and alcohol, made the decision to end her mother's abuse of her and her daughter for good. She subsequently killed her mother.

Substance abuse was also present in the cases of Bea, Cammy, and Dannie, although there were others as well. These women, as children, had been influenced by their mothers' excessive use of over-the-counter pills, prescription drugs, wine, hard liquor, and marijuana. Specific involved the excessive wine consumption of Dannie's mother to Bea's mother, who supported her in growing a marijuana tree in the backyard of the family home. Needless to say, the family environments of these women during childhood were utterly disaffected.

Other examples of how parental psychological problems influenced negative or deviant activity on the part of the women are the cases of Bess and Dana. Thus, the examples of Dana's father, who made Dana bring the instrument with which he would beat her, and Bess's father, who brought her into a
satanic cult where a wide range of abuse occurred, illustrated the perversity of some of the parents.

Much of the behavior that occurred in the above illustrations took place under the guise of viable parenting. By today's standards, however, such behavior is abuse.

**Sexual Abuse by Other than Parents.** Frequently, sexual abuse by individuals other than the parents constituted parental abuse, because the parents may have known it was occurring but either ignored the activity or failed to intercede on the child's behalf. Moreover, the abusers were often authority figures themselves.

The sexual abuse Allie endured at the hands of her brothers and uncles has already been discussed. In her case, she was raped by these individuals who were determined to "make a lady of her."

Della's sexual abuse by a police officer with whom her mother worked, is another example. In Della's case, her mother was relatively unmoved by the incident and took no steps to prevent it.

In Betty's case, the father's sexual abuse of all of the girls in the family resulted in the siblings' carrying on the practice by sexually abusing one another. Thus, the abuse exhibited a somewhat "generational" feature. This element appeared in Agnes' case as well, although not to the same extent.
In the case of Carrie, the sexual abuse occurred at age seven and involved her female babysitter, who was almost twice her age. At the time of the abuse, Carrie played the role of the man for the babysitter. Later, Carrie molested a boy because "I got so curious about sex I wanted to see what it was like to actually do it with a man." She was not prosecuted in the matter until she was 18. Needless to say, both Carrie and her victim were dramatically affected by the sexual abuse, as were their parents. Carrie's psychological and emotional trauma were still present at the time of the interviews.

Neglect and Abandonment. The subject of neglect or abandonment can encompass psychological abuse, as in the case of withholding affection, or emotional abandonment. These facets were discussed under "Psychological Abuse." However, this section deals primarily with physical neglect or abandonment, which involves removal of or failure to provide basic physical needs. The most illustrative of this type of abuse was the case of Cathy, whose mother abandoned her in a park when she was approximately four years old. The physical neglect continued whenever her mother assumed care of her. Her only relief was when she lived with her grandparents, who provided for her emotional and physical needs. Had the grandparents not provided for her physical needs as well as a loving, caring environment, she probably would not have survived.
Religion and Abuse. In some cases, when physical or sexual abuse is committed by a religious parent, it is under the guise of punishment, either for not having done God's will or for being inherently evil. When this is the case, the other parent often ignores or makes excuses for the abuse. This happened in the case of Effie, whose minister father sexually molested her because "if I didn't do what he wanted . . . I was evil." This case would undoubtedly also qualify under the theme of parents with deep-seated psychological problems.

Often, in cases such as those described above, the non-abusive parent may ignore or excuse the abuse, thereby allowing it to continue or supporting it, which in itself constitutes abuse. This is true whether there are religious overtones or not. Thus, although all of the abuse encompassed psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, the trauma suffered resulted directly from the abusers, whether overt (abuser) or covert (other parent ignoring abuse). Several of the women reported their mothers' lack of intervention in their abuse. Probably the most extreme instance of a parent ignoring the abuse was in the case of Dottie, whose mother allowed her friends--both men and women--to abuse her daughter.

On the subject of religion, Didi's mother even went so far as to preach "no sex before marriage," yet acquiesced, by her inaction, to the grandfather's sexual abuse. Della's
mother read the Bible while Della was being molested; and Betty's mother, so involved in her religious sect, excused her children's sexual behavior as "experimentation."

In all of these cases, most of the abusers were role models or authority figures, whether family members or not. As will be noted later, this fact had resounding effects upon the women's general attitudes toward authority.

Abuse in Adulthood. Many of the women carried the abuse they suffered in childhood into adulthood and into abusive relationships, including marriage. Cassie had been physically abused most of her life by her father. She wound up in a physically abusive marriage and, subsequently, in an abusive relationship, the latter resulting in the homicide for which she was incarcerated. At the time of the interview, she had virtually no self-esteem and lacked any desire to change her attitudes or values. Her only aspiration seemed to be to get back on the streets where she could drink and do drugs to escape the pain.

Although Cassie's case might be considered the most extreme, the other women also exhibited the same type of victimization. Ada, for example, was severely abused, both psychologically and sexually, as a child. As an adult, she found herself in several abusive relationships. She became unable to form healthy relationships, and ended up attracting men only to reject them and hurt them, as she had been hurt in the past.
Effie was unable to maintain viable relationships with men, ostensibly because of the sexual abuse she endured at the hands of her father.

Finally, Agnes and Didi both became prostitutes in adulthood in response to their childhood abuse, possibly to avoid more permanent relationships, but also to exploit and manipulate men.

Incidental Sexual Abuse. This theme concerned the women's reports of specific incidents of abuse which affected their lives, as opposed to ongoing, pervasive abuse.

Abbie was raped on two separate occasions by the same man as she walked to and from town on school errands. In both cases she was threatened by her assailant not to discuss the matter, so she internalized the trauma.

Bea was the victim of rape at age 16. Subjected primarily to psychological abuse throughout her life by her addicted mother, she revealed during the interviews that this incident—the rape—was the ultimate motivating factor in her escape to the streets.

Finally, although Anna was subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse by her mother, being gang-raped by six Black men created a deep-seated hatred for and fear of Black men, even though her biological father was Black.

Substance or Self-Inflicted Physical Abuse. As noted, substance abuse was frequently experienced along with or as
a direct result of the other types of abuse, although it is more accurately described as self-inflicted abuse. With few exceptions, substance abuse pervaded the lives of the women interviewed. In fact, even Flo, who claimed never to have been abused, admitted some drug and/or alcohol abuse while a teenager.

Substance abuse included over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs, alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs. Often it appeared that substance abuse grew to be more of a problem than the abuse which was inflicted by others. Nevertheless, the conclusion can be drawn that when substance abuse was mixed with one or more of the other types of abuse, problems were exacerbated and, in some cases, fatal.

Another facet of self-inflicted abuse concerned escalation of the substance abuse. For example, some of the women embarked upon their addictive lives by taking such seemingly innocuous items as over-the-counter pills or prescription drugs, beer, or marijuana. Many had watched their parents, usually mothers, consume such drugs, and this observation sanctioned their use.

Dannie turned to illegal drugs primarily because their illegality was more "exciting" than legal drugs. On the other hand, Ada, Becky, and Cassie turned to alcohol as their initial or primary addictions. Anna, Betty, Didi, and Ellie were equally addicted to both alcohol and drugs. Some
of the addictions occurred when the women were very young. For example, Allie, Bea, Candy, and Dottie were drug addicts by the time they were 15. All of them were living on the street. For most, selling drugs was their sole means of support. Agnes, Didi, and Dottie supported their addictions through prostitution. Finally, Effie did not become heavily involved in substance abuse until adulthood, beginning with over-the-counter medications and culminating in use of illegally obtained prescription drugs.

Although the examples are not all inclusive, it is apparent that, almost without exception, the women engaged in some type of self-inflicted, or substance, abuse, primarily to escape the pain and trauma of some type of psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse that they had previously experienced. Moreover, in the cases of Allie, Candy, and Dottie, they were addicts most of their lives.

The Abused Becomes an Abuser. As noted above, many of the women were subjected to the substance abuse they observed in their parents and other role models, and they also became substance abusers. They frequently protected or made excuses for their abusers, especially if the abuse involved their parents. In addition, women who had been physically or sexually abused as children became sexual abusers themselves. For example, Carrie, who was abused by a babysitter when she was approximately seven, subsequently abused a child she was babysitting. Allie violently
sexually assaulted a convicted child molester. Finally, Ada, Agnes, and Della psychologically abused men in their relationships, by either rejecting them, taking their money, or manipulating them.

A primary example of protecting or making excuses for one's abuser is the case Elsa, who was convinced by her parents that their physical abuse was corrective in nature. Didi felt that she was beaten by her parents simply because they loved her. Conversely, many of the women had or were going through periods of hate and/or animosity for their abusers, especially when the abuser was their mother. It is difficult to comprehend what impetus led some of the women to make excuses, while the others hated their abusers. For example, Ada killed her mother, yet made excuses for her mother's abuse.

**Positive Learning**

Positive learning encompasses that which enables an individual to behave and interact with the environment on a positive basis. It can be developed through formal, informal, or social learning experiences. Given that the learning environments of the women interviewed were generally interspersed with abuse, positive learning was a difficult task. The effects carried over from home to school, and from school to home. In some of those cases school became a refuge from abuse.
Learning generally developed in one of two ways—positively or negatively. Positive and negative learning in formal, informal, and social settings were analyzed from the standpoints of home, school, self, and peer relationships in other environments. Other environments refer primarily to prison life.

The Home Environment

Primarily because of abuse, which generally occurred at home, few of the women related any positive learning experiences from home. However, when positive learning did occur, it revolved around two elements: (a) the presence of a positive caretaker; and (b) positive escape into pursuits which facilitated learning. However, positive learning in the home did not prevent the women from committing crimes.

Positive Caregivers. Generally, the positive caregivers, or role models, were not the biological parents of the women interviewed. Most often they were grandparents or foster parents, such as the case of Allie, in whom her grandparents fostered the importance of a good education. Another example was Cathy, who was sheltered from the toxicity of her parents' home environment by grandparents who provided stability in her life. The principal exceptions were the three women who comprised the Non-Abused group. What is significant is that in most cases, absent aggressive outside intervention, the presence of a loving
caregiver or role model was not enough to countermand the abuse and prior negative learning. Thus, the women ended up incarcerated, and some were for violent crimes.

**Escape.** Escape refers to action whereby the women dealt with pervasive abuse by "escaping" into other pursuits. In most cases the escaping activities were negative, such as addictive behavior. However, some of the women found escape by excluding themselves by reading or engaging in other positive self-directed learning.

The most notable example of positive escape was the case of Edie, who developed a desire for reading. Through reading, she escaped the abusive environment into imagined adventures. Thus, even as an adult, reading was one of her favorite pastimes. When her health prevented her from engaging in other more physical activities at WCC, she again found escape by reading. Other examples of engaging in positive activities to escape abuse were Effie, who found solace in her music, and Elsa, whose art, and later her writing, was a source of comfort.

**The School Environment**

There was a considerable amount of information gathered from the women concerning positive learning in the school environment. This learning centered around (a) school providing an alternative environment to an abusive home; (b) caring teachers who are crucial to positive learning
experiences; and (c) recognizing individuality in learning styles as important to good experiences.

School as Alternative Environment. Several instances were reported where schooling became an alternative to abusive home life situations, and there is one overriding reason why this issue became so important. Generally, school became a refuge or escape from an abusive or dysfunctional parent who impeded normal home situations. Thus, for Didi, Della, and Dottie, early schooling was generally positive. Both Didi and Della attempted to counteract the psychological abuse from home by delving headlong into their school environments. Both benefitted from the positive reinforcement they received when they did well in school. Dottie, on the other hand, embraced the strict and structured environment of parochial school because it differed so drastically from her home life.

Caring Teachers. The interviews revealed that most of the women respected the teachers they found to be caring and helpful. Most felt that the characteristics of good teachers included taking the time to work with them on an individual basis, or providing positive feedback and reinforcement when they did well. In fact, with many of the women, because support from their parents was either non-existent or minimal, the teacher became not only a positive reinforcer but a role model as well. This concept of teachers as viable role models carries over into all facets
of learning, including social learning, where the teacher may be a friend, a spouse, or a parent.

Recognition of Individual Learning Styles. Learning in school must be more than simply using one method or expecting students to learn from a single learning style. Because most people learn differently, allowing students to work at a self-established pace and according to different learning styles is a teaching method that recognizes the individual, thus allowing for more positive learning experiences. The teacher may be active in setting the boundaries for establishing or developing a student's particular learning style. When a teacher accommodates individual learning styles, a subsidiary result may be the formation of good learning habits by the student.

For example, Anna, from the Under-Educated group, did not learn to read until she was 9 years old. She indicated that she learned by observing others. "I even watch people today." Flo, on the other hand, indicated that she preferred having the teacher give her the information and allow her to work at her own pace. In other words, she saw little need for instructions, and was a self-motivated learner. Betty, too, learned more when she was on her own which resulted in a positive learning experience for her in school, even though she did not graduate from high school.

Because all of the women at WCC were involved in self-help treatment programs, as well as other training, the
importance of recognizing individual learning styles was emphasized even more. Dottie is a prime example of this situation because she was able to take advantage of all of the programs offered at WCC. There the women learned in a structured environment and then utilized what they had learned in class by relying on their own learning styles.

Regardless of whether it is formal or informal, positive learning at school is crucial to developmental growth. The lessons learned affect whether a student continues in a positive direction. While positive school learning may not offset negative home learning and abuse, if they are to substitute for the negative family environment schools must be more effective at overriding negative learning.

Self-Learning

As with positive learning in school, the women provided considerable information about developing a positive self-image and learning about themselves. Again, the abuse factor must be taken into consideration because most of the women had a weak or negative self-concept before coming to WCC. Consequently, since many of them had only known abuse, they were understandably not cognizant of the fact that they did not have to submit to or remain in abusive environments. An important aspect of positive self-learning was the availability of various treatment programs at WCC. These
programs involved self-help techniques, including self-reflection, as well as treatment plans designed to help the women deal with such problems as abuse, drugs and alcohol, and anger. Much of the work done in these programs was structured around adult education classes. The classes involved non-structured, self-directed learning. With these tools, most of the women were able to attain self-realization and positive self-images which they had previously lacked. Some of the concepts around which they learned were (a) self-reflection in order to learn from past mistakes, (b) learning to like themselves, (c) establishing positive, rather than negative, attitudes and behaviors for problem solving, and (d) learning self-affirmation.

Self-Realization and Learning from Past Mistakes. As the women developed new techniques of looking at themselves introspectively, they became able to monitor themselves positively in an effort to learn from the mistakes they had made in the past. Based upon the interviews, almost all of them had learned to recognize what caused their negative behavior and to channel their feelings into more positive behavior. Many were eager to learn more about themselves. Effie exemplified this technique when, in reflecting on her realizations, she stated, "I learned that I just don't want to survive. . . . I want to live life and there's a lot of difference." Dannie, as well, ultimately learned that "There's consequences for your actions."
Learning to Like Themselves. By the time many of the women were interviewed, they had begun to understand the necessity of liking themselves. "Liking" oneself transfers to personal respect, as Bea insisted, "If I expect to get respect from anybody I must . . . respect myself." Another element of self-realization came from Dannie, who stated that "you [have] to find you." Finally, Ada was able to say, "What I had to do first was to like myself and to believe I was worth liking. I've learned to get over my self-centeredness and to rise above thinking that I'm God."

Establishing Positive Attitudes and Behaviors. The newly acquired techniques which had been gained from treatment and self-initiated learning were assets to the women in establishing more positive attitudes and behaviors in dealing with problems in their everyday lives. Adopting appropriate methods of resolving problems was evident in the way the women interacted at WCC. One of the main techniques they learned in positive problem solving was that of utilizing assertive versus aggressive behavior. Following the classes, many of the women felt that they could use assertive rather than aggressive behavior in their interactions with other people. Previously, they would strike back or get angry when confronting negative treatment. However, with the newly discovered awareness of assertive techniques, they could specify when they would not accept any additional abuse without violence. Beth, whose
aggressive/assaultive behavior had gotten out of control during her adolescence and was the underlying basis for her incarceration, was not able to control her aggression until she came to WCC. There, her aggression was supplanted by assertive behavior, and through treatment and self-directed learning she found, "I know now I can control what I do."

Learning Self-Affirmation. As the women engaged in the positive self-learning processes, their experiences had either a direct or indirect impact on their consciousness. Part of this element of consciousness, which Freire (1970) refers to as self-affirmation, involves reality and how one adapts into his or her environment.

Most of the women interviewed had in some way approached some degree of self-consciousness. Some had been able to adapt this concept into their lives; others were struggling with the issue of self-consciousness at the time of the interviews; and some were nowhere near self-affirmation.

To illustrate what personal consciousness or self-affirmation embodies, consideration may be given to what one of the women had to offer. Anna, who at one time had little to live for, summed it up this way: "I've learned a lot. . . . It's okay to be an . . . addict . . . but it's not okay to be in denial or to stay in your addiction."
Learning from Peer Relationships

This theme focused primarily on the living environment and peer relationships of the women at WCC. Women learned not only from the special classes and training offered at the facility but also through their peer interactions. One way in which they interacted and learned from their activities was to discuss the treatment and training programs they had attended and to share with one another the knowledge they had gained. This is where much of the informal, social learning took place within the confines of WCC and BPRC.

One of the problems that the women worked on together was the problem of how to cope with being incarcerated. As Babs said, "I knew I had to survive this or go crazy ... so I've made a lot of changes." Talking with others in and out of treatment helped Babs tremendously.

Bea initially had similar feelings about coping with incarceration, and by the time of the second interview she had been transferred to BPRC, where she was working within the community! This progress would not have been possible had it not been for treatment programming and interaction with her peers while at WCC.

Cathy summed up the entire peer interaction process at WCC. "I learn at the same time with these people. ... You learn a lot just being in any type of group." In agreement
was Effie, who observed, "Not only can you learn lots from them, you get a lot of education here about other people."

**Negative Learning**

Negative learning, as opposed to positive learning, encompasses that which causes an individual to behave and interact with the environment on a negative basis, including engaging in criminal or deviant behavior. Like positive learning, it can be developed through formal, informal, or social learning experiences; and it relates to home, school, self and peer relationships in other environments.

Negative learning may relate to the observations of McKenna, Conti and Fellenz (1994) in discussing the general problems inherent in adult learning. Thus, "many people have not learned the things they need in order to be productive citizens in today's changing world."

**Home Environment**

Unlike positive learning in the home environment, about which little information was disclosed, the women offered an abundance of information and experiences concerning negative learning in the home. This can be attributed to (a) the effect of a lack of loving caregivers or role models, (b) negative learning even in the presence of loving caregivers, (c) the overwhelming need to escape from abuse, and (d) learning to manipulate an abusive environment.
Lack of Loving Caregivers or Role Models. The absence of loving caregivers or positive role models has numerous ramifications. In the cases of the women, the psychological and physical abuse most of them endured was administered by uncaring individuals and it resulted in a great deal of negative learning about themselves and about others. Didi honestly believed that being hit meant that she was loved.

Lack of or low self-esteem impacted all of the women in this study. For example, Abbie felt that her problems emanated from her mother, who kept reminding her that she would never make anything of herself. Many of the others had likewise been told by a caregiver that they were bad, and they believed it. Many of them assimilated that knowledge into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some even used the knowledge as an excuse for enduring continued abuse. For example, Ada felt that "I must be bad else why would my stepfather treat me this that way."

Because learning stems from basic Maslovian drives and is developmental in nature, withholding love, which is a basic human need, inhibits normal development and, hence, learning. By inhibiting positive learning, negative learning is achieved.

Loving Caregivers/Misguided Role Models. Although many parents may be loving, the information they frequently impart to their offspring can be misguided and can lead to problems in adulthood. A classic example is Billie. Her
parents were loving enough, but they taught her that a woman's role was to be submissive to men. Thus, she endured many years of abuse from her husband because of what she had learned from her parental caregivers, and she ultimately committed homicide.

Fay, likewise, grew up with loving parents who unfortunately imparted upon her the conception that they would aid and protect her forever. Thus, when she wrote bad checks, her father covered them until he became too ill to help out. Then Fay had nobody to rely upon, but she did not know any other way to behave so she continued writing bad checks until she was arrested and convicted.

In another type of situation, Allie received care and love from her grandparents after escaping from an abusive home situation, which included being raped by her brothers and uncle. However, that care was not enough to override her negative experiences, and, ultimately she was incarcerated for assaulting a known sex offender.

Finally, Beth was extremely close to her mother, who was not only loving but who was also protective of her daughter. When she discovered that her husband had sexually abused Beth, she brutally beat him. Beth, upon observing this behavior, "learned" that violence was a viable means by which to control others. She was later convicted of assault.
Escape. Escape is a pervasive issue in abuse and in learning. While some of the women escaped into more positive pursuits, the majority of the women related negative experiences. The principal escape was into substance abuse. Effie, for example, became involved in buying prescription drugs illegally, which she had learned helped her to escape the pain which had built up from years of abuse. Candy, on the other hand, learned that the street provided more security than her home, and that is where her escape took her. Generally, the abused became abusive to herself by engaging in self-inflicted abuse such as drugs, alcohol, or other addictions. Most often this action was taken to escape the pain of abuse. Of course, most of the women learned this behavior at home from their parents, who were also substance abusers. In fact, many of them were addicted by the time they reached adolescence, including Bea, Candy, and Dottie.

Manipulating People and the Environment. In an effort to control their environments, many of the women engaged in manipulative techniques, which they learned from the home. This included lying and using other people. For example, Bea and Cammy learned manipulative behavior from their mothers, who also stressed the importance of money and/or appearance as being more important than other values and beliefs. Cammy's mother, for instance, used the system by having children in order to stay on welfare.
Didi learned at an early age to manipulate in the home, in school and in social situations. Illustrative of her attitude toward others, she believed that if she "showed a little cleavage," she could get what she wanted out of men. She learned to lie and to fabricate stories so that her bad checks would be accepted. A product of an alcoholic family, and caught in abusive relationships, she had learned to do everything in her power to survive; it ended for her when she was arrested.

The School Environment

Along with negative learning in the home, there was an abundance of information concerning negative learning in the school environments of the women interviewed. School and home were interrelated and to a certain degree had carryover effects on one another. Throughout the interviews, specific issues were raised by the women concerning their school learning experiences. These included: (a) the perception of school as a safe harbor from an abusive home life; (b) negative experiences with teachers; (c) boredom in school; (d) learning disabilities or underdeveloped academic skills; and (e) peer pressure. Thus, while each of the women may have experienced distinct school environments, each distinguished specific incidents or situations which led to negative learning.
Using School as a Safe Harbor from Abuse. Several of the women admitted or inferred that they had used school as a refuge from abusive home environments. For some, however, attending school became a negative experience because the effects of their home life carried over so pervasively to school. Indeed, for Ada, she either skipped school entirely or went to school drunk. However, in her perception, school was better than home because it did offer a safe harbor, although in her condition she no doubt was unable to experience positive learning.

Another example of finding refuge in school was Bess, and her situation, too, was primarily negative. Escaping from home, she sought safety in the school environment. However, upon seeing physical evidence that she had been abused, school officials took steps to have her returned to the abusive home. Thus, even though the school system was required by law to contact the police, its action returned her to the abusive environment from which she was escaping. Needless to say, her concept of authority and authority figures was learned from this type of activity. Regardless of the situation, negative learning of concepts can and did have lasting effects on all of the women.

Negative Experiences with Teachers. One of the most significant issues expressed by the women concerned the influence of teachers upon their learning experiences. As role models and authority figures with whom children spend a
great part of their time, teachers exert a great deal of influence upon their charges. Effective teachers are crucial to positive learning environments. Conversely, then, ineffective or unskillful teachers and those using inappropriate teaching methods result in negative learning.

The women related a wide range of examples of ineffective teachers. One of Beth's teachers handed the class textbooks from which they were expected to learn without the benefit of instruction or lectures. Anna's teachers were totally oblivious to the fact that she was unable to read; her foster mother discovered it accidentally when she was nine years old. These examples exhibit a lack of caring or the presence of apathy on the part of the teachers. At the other extreme, Cathy encountered a teacher who was not only physically abusive but who was also openly racially prejudiced. Conversely, when Dottie went to a parochial school where corporal punishment was administered, she did not feel that it was negative; however, when she transferred to public school and was subjected to brutal humiliation in the classroom, it was reflective of the abuse she had endured at home. Thus, school became so negative that she sought escape on the streets.

Poor judgment by a teacher can lead to negative learning. This is compounded when combined with classroom humiliation, physical mistreatment, and racial prejudice.
Examples include Becky, whose teacher forced students to stand in front of the class with gum on their nose; Cathy, whose teacher employed a dunce cap; and Dottie, who had to stand in the corner. In most of these examples the results were compounded when other students got into the act and contributed to the humiliation.

Boredom in the Classroom. Many of the women expressed having been bored in school. The cause of boredom could have resulted either from a lack of interactive teaching skills or from the women's own inability to grasp the subjects being taught. One of Beth's teachers, for example, simply handed the books to the students and instructed them to get the information from the books. In addition, Dannie's math teacher made learning difficult because he did not fully explain the concepts. Other women related their disinterest stemmed from preoccupation with problems at home. Agnes, on the other hand, was simply disinterested in the formal learning process, and she was still disinterested at the time of the interviews. Whatever the reason for the boredom, whether it was teachers or general disinterest, positive learning cannot occur or is seriously impaired in such an environment. Negative learning, on the other hand, is enhanced. Negative learning can also result from poor study habits, daydreaming, truancy, and other causes.
Learning Disabilities or Underdeveloped Academic Skills. Many of the women interviewed described some of their classes in terms of distaste. "I hated it," and "It didn't make any sense to me," were frequent criticisms they expressed. Many of the women expressed problems with the more abstract courses, such as math.

Learning disabilities may be as complex and varied as the students who possess them. If an individual does not acquire the necessary learning skills from school, such skills become increasingly difficult to learn later in life. This leads to dysfunction in adulthood in adjusting to many of society's standards.

Peer Pressure and Mistreatment. Many aspects of abuse in the home and peer interaction in school are interrelated, and the combination resulted in negative learning for many of the women. For example, several of the women interviewed felt that their religion, beliefs, dress, and appearance had a bearing on their being mistreated by their peers at school. In Bess's case, the mistreatment related directly to the abuse she endured at home, because attention was called to her plight when school authorities called the police. Agnes, likewise, encountered mistreatment based on the abuse she received at home by peers who claimed to know what had been happening to her at home. In response to mistreatment or perceived mistreatment, Fay and Edie isolated themselves and avoided peer relationships and
pressure. They did not participate in some school activities because they felt as though they would not be accepted.

Regardless of whether mistreatment in school comes from teachers or peers, the result has far-reaching effects on self-esteem and creates increased negative learning about one's self and one's environment. Thus, it is understandable that many of the women sought the streets as a safer place than either home or school.

**Negative Self-Learning**

Numerous issues arose during the interviews relating to negative self-learning. Most of the social, negative self-learning experiences occurred during childhood and school years prior to coming to WCC. Based upon abuse at home and negative school experiences, the women developed strong negative attitudes about themselves including (a) being isolated, alone and without caring support from others; (b) being on the brink of self-destruction; (c) refusing to take responsibility for their actions; (d) needing to do whatever it takes to survive, whether legal or not; and (e) generally lacking interests or goals.

**Isolation.** Many of the women interviewed had encountered feelings of isolation or being alone. For example, although Edie's feelings of isolation resulted in the relatively positive activity of escaping to her books,
her general self-concept was negative. Candy's self-concept came to encompass the idea of being a loner, and her retreat was to the streets since she felt no one cared. The same was true for Babs and Dannie and several others. Billie, on the other hand, felt imprisoned at home by an oppressive husband, and escape was impossible because she had no other means of support.

Consequently, the feelings of isolation and aloneness often resulted in escaping behavior or the desire to escape. Much of the escaping activity in which the women engaged included substance abuse and addictive behavior.

On The Brink Of Self-Destruction. Many of the women interviewed had, at various times in their lives, come face-to-face with the prospect of dying or with the concept of self-destruction. Thoughts of and attempts at suicide were not uncommon among them; indeed, approximately one-third of the women related experiences in this regard. Some of them were reluctant to discuss their suicide attempts other than to admit that they had considered the possibilities. Still others were more than willing to discuss suicide and went into great detail.

Cassie did not indicate any tendencies toward suicide. However, her activities seemed to lead to self-destruction even after she was incarcerated, because she admittedly despised herself.
Addictive behavior can generally be seen as self-destructive. Most of the women engaged in some type of addiction, including substance abuse and eating disorders. Thus, it was evident at the time of the interviews that self-destruction appeared in different forms. It became a basis for some of the treatment programs at WCC.

Denying Responsibility for their Actions. Denying responsibility for one's actions is a direct result of a negative self-image, and several of the women interviewed stated or implied that they had occasionally avoided responsibility in the past. Didi, for example, was an alcoholic and a drug abuser, and she supported her habits by writing bad checks and engaging in prostitution. Likewise, Edie wrote bad checks, excusing her activity as "survival." Elsa, on the other hand, seemed to have learned to use her illness to avoid responsibility for many of her actions.

Edie, Flo, and Fran were reluctant to identify the harm their non-violent check writing crimes had caused since they had not hurt anybody but the large corporations to whom they wrote checks. Moreover, Dusty and Fran denied involvement in the homicide-related crimes for which they had been convicted. Finally, many of the women were unable to accept accountability for their actions because they had not learned that they had responsibility to themselves or to others.
Survival. The survival instincts of the women were prevalent during the interview procedure. Not only did the women have to find ways to survive before their incarceration, but some were still struggling with survival at the time of the interviews. Others would probably see these survival techniques surface again once released from incarceration. The problem was that the survival techniques employed by most of the women involved negative, deviant, or criminal behavior.

For example, Edie's commitment to survive at all costs led directly to her check writing activities, especially when she could no longer work because of a worsening back problem. In order to survive on the streets, Cammy had to resort to "eating out of garbage bags and trash cans." Pervasive abuse, loss of self-esteem, and addiction to drugs and alcohol, all culminated in Cassie's violent crime, which she saw as her only means of survival.

Lacking Interest or Goals. During the interviews and subsequent observations, it was evident that some of the women had not matured, as some continued to play childlike games with peers and staff, avoided responsibility, and even appeared to be incapable of handling developments within their environment, even though due consideration had been afforded them in being given opportunities to take part in education or treatment, work at various job opportunities, or even gain parole. Regardless of the opportunities, lack
of interest or life goals on the part of the residents was often evident.

Agnes was the most extreme example. She simply did not possess any lifetime goals and saw no need for schooling or to improve herself; after all, she had "got by" in years past. Beth, too, admitted that she was "not very motivated anymore."

On the other hand, Edie, Elsa, and Fay had physical infirmities which prevented them from attaining many goals even though they tried. Edie and Fay felt that the facility had placed restrictions on their physical activities because of their ages and physical condition. As far as educational opportunities, they were not motivated to attend because WCC did not offer the courses they preferred. Ostensibly because of the toxic psychological abuse from her "drill sergeant" parents, Elsa had little desire to accomplish anything unless it was in her specific area of interest.

Learning from Peer Groups And Other Environments

Although the issues involved in positive learning from peer groups and other environments involved primarily the environment at WCC, negative learning took place prior to incarceration for most of the women in environments other than the home and school. These were predominantly (a) on the street; and ultimately (b) at WCC. Generally speaking, the learning was of an informal, social nature.
The Streets. Most of the women who escaped to the streets had experiences that were as bad if not worse than they had found at home. Bess found peer pressure to exist even on the streets. Her foremost concern at times was making sure she was popular enough with the street people to stay in their good graces so that she would have a place to live.

Similarly, Beth and Becky both sought popularity to some degree when they quit school to be with their friends or to hang with their respective social groups. Thus, although they did not technically live on the streets, much of their social learning was derived from this environment.

Allie went to live with the Hell's Angels. Although she felt a sense of camaraderie with her peers, there she had many negative experiences, such as being raped by her uncle and brothers who were teaching her to be "a lady."

Cammy escaped to the street at an early age for a period of time before she went to live with her father. There, she learned to sell drugs to survive. Dannie was also very young when she went to the streets, and she also became actively involved in the manufacture and sale of drugs. Both Cammy and Dannie engaged in manipulative behavior on the streets, using people whenever they could.

WCC. During their treatment programs at WCC, many of the women learned that if they told the guards, teachers, or counselors what they wanted to hear--that is, what was
expected of them--then the incarceration would proceed more smoothly or in some cases they would be given preferential treatment. Thus, it did not matter what the women actually felt as long as they verbalized what was expected. In addition, the majority of the personnel responsible for providing mental health care at WCC lacked the degrees and credentials which would be required in other treatment programs.

Several women referred to the vast amount of prescription and non-prescription drugs available at WCC. What can an alcoholic or drug addict learn about drugs or drug use when medications are being handed out regularly?

Favoritism was another topic which was discussed during the interviews. A number of the women observed that the guards showed favoritism to some of the residents in enforcing rule changes. Some of the favoritism was felt to result from racial prejudice. For example, two of the women indicated that they were denied some privileges accorded others because they were Native American.

There were other detailed reports by the women of preferential treatment, sexual favoritism, and outright practicing of homosexual and drug activities among the inmates and staff. Although these reports are unverifiable, several of the women interviewed reported that they had been victims of or had encountered these violations.
Thus, it seemed that many of the same abuses suffered by these women and similar negative learning experience and behavior in which they had ever engaged were present and even pervasive at WCC. What can an incarcerated individual learn about positive behavior in such an environment?

In conclusion, learning takes place in every situation in life, whether formal or informal, and the study of these women has illustrated that how they were treated affected how and what they learned at home, in school, and in relation to society. Moreover, while studies regarding abuse and self-concept could conceivably have been conducted from psychological, sociological, or historical viewpoints (Rowland, 1994), this study envisioned the problem from an educational perspective, which addresses learning in its most basic form. Therefore, the recommendations, which encompass a holistic approach to problem solving, hope to foster within this limited environment and conceivably larger environments the idea of endowing or restoring a positive "way of knowing."
CHAPTER 8

A PLAN FOR CHANGE

The conclusions delineated in Chapter 7 demonstrate a need for change based upon what the women in this study had to say about abuse, learning, and the essential elements that were lacking in their past and present lives. Most of them were in the process of restoring a sense of self-consciousness during the interviews; however, since many of them were like many other adults who have no idea what they need to know to survive in a complex society (McKenna, Conti, & Fellenz, 1994), they were unable to pursue a new way of knowing (Rowland, 1994).

Based upon the conclusions, a viable solution to addressing the problems in the corrections environment is warranted. The solution involves a humanistic, holistic approach to problem solving which addresses the entire situation from a proactive standpoint.

One version of a holistic approach already exists and is exemplified by Savory's Holistic Resource Management model (1988), which was developed for use in land-based ecological systems. Savory's model generally appears as a linear plan, but it is meant to work in a circular or revolving manner. Inasmuch as humans interact within the
ecological environment, the model has been adapted to encompass a sociological interpretation (see Figure 3) so that it can be applied directly to the corrections environment and ultimately to general learning environments. The circularity of the model facilitates constant change and continual re-evaluation and circulation of ideas, which are essential to its functionality.

A brief description of the components of the plan includes the steps necessary to implement the model. These steps include: (a) perceiving the problem; (b) developing a solution; (c) testing the tools for implementation of a solution; and (d) implementing a solution. The steps taken must consider the whole system as well as each component thereof when making or implementing changes. Moreover, because holistic/critical problem solving in this environment includes intervention at all developmental stages of learning in the macrocosm, the implementation of the plan into the corrections system should do much to reduce the prison population in the microcosm. Thus, in the following discussion, each stage will be related first to the microcosm of the prison environment, and next to the macrocosm of other systems or society as a whole.
THE WHOLE
(who, what, where, when)

Maintain:
- personal, organizational, cultural growth
- flexibility

Develop:
- management guidelines
- financial & biological planning

The Processes:
- ecosystem
- human system
- energy
- motivation
- water / minerals
- knowledge / human resources
- succession
- community stability & dynamics

IMPLEMENT SOLUTION
PERCEIVE PROBLEM

IMPLEMENTING

Monitor, Control, Adjust

Compare with Reality, Individual, System, Society

Knowledge, Cause, Cooperation (self / team)

Human Creativity, Effort, Vision

TEST SOLUTION

DEVELOP SOLUTION

Guidelines for Sustainability:
- cause / effect
- weak link
- whole system

Guidelines for sustainability:
- goal (value), objective
- quality of life expected
- future condition
- new paradigms / tools / action

Figure 3. Sociological Adaptation of Savory, Kolb, and Montagne's Models
Perceiving the Problem

The Microcosm

In order to adapt Savory's model so that it refers to a sociological environment, it is first necessary to transform the sustaining elements of the ecosystem (energy, water, and minerals) so that they become the sustaining elements of the human system (personal motivation, knowledge, and human abilities or talents). This change enhances the idea of succession in community dynamics, as the community evolves from the simple to the complex. Thus, the forces of change and accomplishment depend upon the capabilities of each environment and each individual within this transition. For the purposes of this plan of change, the human system refers initially to the corrections environment and next to society in general.

The primary problem of an ineffective corrections system might well be found in the dichotomy involving the system's overall objectives—that is, the controversy within corrections and within society as to whether the ultimate intention of prisons or corrections facilities is to punish or to rehabilitate. In other words, is the purpose of corrections to reinforce negative learning (punishment), to bring about "unlearning" the negative and learning the positive (rehabilitation), or to implement both?
This study identified the educational levels and various learning processes which resulted in incarceration for the women involved. The common denominator present in all of the women interviewed for this study was that they had suffered abuse and/or loss of self-esteem. All of the women involved in this study had experienced loss of self-esteem, and all but three of them had suffered from abuse of some type which resulted in the loss of the sense of self.

Through past formal, informal, and social experiences, all of the women learned about themselves, about authority figures, and about societal norms. Since most of their learning was negative, they all employed negative behaviors to deal with their environments, and these behaviors ultimately contributed to incarceration at WCC.

The Macrocosm

Negative learning is encountered at all stages of development. It results from what individuals learn about themselves, about authority figures, and about societal norms. When learning is negative or when positive learning is inhibited, it results in negative behaviors which similarly have negative consequences. As has been demonstrated, the loss or non-existence of self-esteem is instrumental in the negative learning process. Therefore, perceiving the problem in the macrocosm would require looking at the learning environment as a whole and
identifying potential problem areas where loss of self-esteem might occur and negative learning might begin. In other words, applying the model to the macrocosm is aimed more at preventing negative learning and behaviors than correcting them.

Developing a Solution

Microcosm

Once the problem has been identified as a need to implement positive learning in the corrections environment, it is necessary to develop strategies which would ultimately result in attaining the goal of reversing the negative learning process. Thus, in the case of the women in this study, it is necessary to reverse or supplant their negative learning about themselves, about authority figures, and about societal norms. Because this process envisions a holistic approach to problem solving in the corrections environment, every aspect of the system must be considered individually and collectively. Moreover, it should be recognized that although the problems already exist in this environment the solutions must encompass proactive measures which seek to solve the problems or causes rather than solely to address the resulting symptoms.

The first step in the process is to evaluate the goals and objectives of the facility in relation to each individual. That is, is the nature of the incarceration
punitive or rehabilitative? This is not to say that a punitive environment would be totally devoid of rehabilitative programs and opportunities or conversely that a rehabilitative program would lack punitive measures. A better decision-making process needs to be utilized in deciding whether the purpose of corrections is punishment, rehabilitation, or both, depending upon the individual and the circumstances relating to the incarceration. This decision-making process may involve long-term or short-term strategies.

The goal of the holistic model as it relates to the microcosm is to return productive, useful citizens to society. The objectives for attaining this goal involve (a) restoring lost or non-existent self-esteem, (b) imposing structure in the lives of the residents, (c) replacing ineffective authority figures with positive role models, and (d) teaching positive attitudes which more readily conform with societal norms and "unlearning" negative behaviors or responses.

According to Savory's model, once the goals and objectives have been identified, it is necessary to develop tools which will be utilized to carry out the objectives toward attainment of the ultimate goal. Through brainstorming techniques, a large list of potential "tools" is developed. The term tools is meant to refer to processes or methods which can be utilized within the environment to
assist in attaining the objectives. For example, in addressing the objective of restoring the women's lost self-esteem, numerous processes or potential methods have been identified. These processes or tools, discussed in detail below, have been uniformly "tested" and narrowed down to include only those which are feasible within the environment.

**Macrocosp**

The holistic model as applied to the macrocosm is designed to perceive potential problems as part of a holistic/critical approach to problem solving. Thus, where the women at WCC had experienced negative learning early in life which affected their adult behavior and ultimately contributed to their incarceration, the objective here is to prevent the early negative learning and to inculcate positive perceptions of self, authority figures, and societal norms into larger populations. This process commences when learning begins and it continues throughout life. Therefore, lifelong learning approaches are needed.

Negative learning is encountered at all stages of development. The holistic model seeks to prevent such negative learning from taking hold. Thus, early intervention, positive teaching techniques, continual monitoring, and adjustments are imperative both in the home and in school. The goal of the holistic model in the
macrocosm is to deliver viable, productive adults into society. The objectives in accomplishing this should involve (a) instilling self-esteem, (b) imposing structure, (c) providing effective authority figures and role models, and (d) inspiring positive attitudes and teaching positive behaviors and responses in conformity with society's norms.

Once the objective has been identified, based upon the holistic management approach, it is necessary to determine how the objectives will be attained. A large number of processes relating to each objective has been developed through "brainstorming" techniques. As a result, a number of "tools" have been developed which would facilitate the attainment of the goal. Each tool, as discussed in detail below, has been uniformly "tested" as to how it will interact in the system, and the final list of tools has been selected for implementation of the model.

Testing the Solution

According to Savory's model, testing the solution involves setting up a uniform set of criteria or questions to apply to each tool. Each tool is then individually tested by applying the questions to it. If the question cannot be affirmatively answered, the tool is usually rejected. If a shortcoming exists, it can be addressed at! that time, and adjustments made to the tool or process. In this manner the final list of tools is developed.
As noted, testing the solution involves taking a large number of tools and uniformly selecting those which are most feasible for implementation into the model. In accordance with Savory's approach, several questions or criteria are developed by which to complete the selection. Applied individually, each tool is evaluated based upon all of the criteria and either chosen or rejected on its feasibility. The criteria involves the following questions:

(a) What overall impact (result) would implementation have on the system/society?

(b) Are the effects of implementation long-term (proactive) or short-term (reactive)?

(c) Does the tool or process address the weakest link in the plan?

(d) Will implementation be accepted by the community or otherwise conflict with or impact on other systems within the community?

(e) Is the anticipated result worth the time, energy, and money expended?

(f) Will implementation move us toward our objectives and overall goal?

The testing procedure has identified the following processes as viable tools for implementation in the microcosm: (a) providing positive feedback; (b) training inmates in useful trades and skills; (c) involving inmates in community services; (d) establishing fair and consistent
451 regulations for staff and residents; (e) setting up a definitive system of rewards and punishment; (f) establishing consistent time schedules; (g) hiring responsible, ethical, and conscientious employees at all levels; (h) attracting viable employees by providing adequate compensation and incentives; (i) requiring that teachers and treatment specialists be licensed and certified; (j) requiring continual monitoring, educating, evaluating, and adjusting of staff; (k) providing encounter groups as part of treatment; (l) providing challenging academic programs and college level courses; (m) dispensing medications as needed rather than routinely; (n) providing ongoing counseling after release; (o) establishing a mentoring program for newly released residents; and (p) continuing to educate, monitor, and make adjustments where necessary, not only for residents but for staff and counselors as well.

In addition to the tools outlined above for the microcosm, the testing procedure has further identified the following additional processes as viable tools for implementation in the macrocosm: (a) considering individual learning styles in the school; (b) training both parents and teachers to identify potential problems which might result in loss of self-concept; (c) offering effective parenting and relationship classes; (d) re-evaluating hiring practices for community representatives, such as police officers and
other authority figures; (e) monitoring peer relationships; and (f) teaching children to respect themselves and others.

Implementing the Solution

The next step in implementing the holistic management model will involve putting the selected tools into use. In order to do this, it is necessary to (a) select an appropriate site and obtain preliminary approval, (b) procure adequate funding, and (c) obtain final approvals.

Selection of Site

WCC could be recommended as an appropriate site to implement the Holistic Management Model for several reasons: (a) WCC is a relatively small facility which will lend itself well to some of the processes described in the solution, such as distance learning; (b) in spite of its size, WCC represents a reasonable cross-section of social, economical, racial, educational, and cultural backgrounds; and (c) it closely resembles a microcosm of society, exhibiting many of the problems of its larger counterpart. Therefore, if it can be found successful in this smaller environment, it may possibly be applied to the larger environment with the same degree of success.

At the time the initial study was conducted, WCC was situated in Warm Springs, Montana, on the grounds of the
Montana State Hospital. Although efforts were underway at the time to move the facility to a larger site by 1995, the move was accelerated and occurred in September of 1994. WCC was moved from an extremely rural location to a more urban site in Billings, Montana, which has a population of approximately 80,000 people. This move will impact the planning stages for implementing the model because a detailed site survey will be required to determine precisely what steps will be involved in carrying out this phase.

Secure Funding

Prior to implementing the holistic model, it will be necessary to evaluate the project from an economic standpoint, including money, time, and effort. Much of the plan entails implementation on current budgets because it only involves reorganizing existing structure. However, additional funds will be required in some cases. The first step in obtaining the funds will be to determine and obtain the source. For a small-scale implementation such as the one proposed, public grants are the most feasible source.

The second step, which is also a part of the grant-writing mechanism, will include preparation of a detailed budget outlining the associated costs. In this regard, consideration must be given to both personnel and equipment, which will necessitate outlining specifically what personnel and equipment are required. This would include, for
example, interactive video equipment for distance learning and personnel to run it. Distance education and the necessary equipment and technical personnel would enable the offering of college courses and other types of training which would facilitate learning that may otherwise not be available in the corrections environment. In the case of video equipment, collateral grants, gifts, or donations may be sought from telecommunications companies.

The time and effort needed to set up this phase of the model must be carefully evaluated and included in any grant proposals. Time required for training existing and additional staff at the site as well as making any physical modifications to accommodate the plan should be included in this phase.

Approvals

Concurrently with acquisition of funding, obtaining the necessary administrative approvals will be required prior to implementation of this phase. It will involve meeting with the administration at WCC to outline procedures, listening to concerns, making compromises where appropriate, and eliciting their cooperation.

Because WCC is located in a populated area of Montana, the community's support and cooperation must be sought prior to proceeding with this plan. However, current trends in public opinion point again to the dichotomy relating to
punishment versus rehabilitation. Moreover, there is an ever-present fear of releasing criminals into society, which will present yet another obstacle. Public meetings are the best means by which to approach these problems.

Thus, to elicit the community's cooperation with this project will require convincing arguments and careful explanation of (a) the differences between violent and non-violent crimes; (b) the benefits of rehabilitation, punishment, and the combination of those two elements; (c) proposed steps to be taken to ensure security; and (d) what is hoped to be gained by this project.

**Microcosm**

Once the residents are incarcerated, they are categorized generally as to whether their crime was violent (punitive) or property-related (rehabilitative). Then they are segregated into populations of residents who have committed similar crimes. Those who have been convicted on non-violent, or property related charges, are housed in either minimum or medium security areas of the facility. Violent offenders are housed in a maximum security area. Alternatively, a decision could be made to implement community corrections, which encompasses probation, house arrest, or electronic surveillance.

Further breakdown of the incarcerated population could be made based upon individual need such as psychological or
educational profiles. While further breakdown is not specifically called for in the model, it could be useful in the corrections situation. For example, individuals exhibiting suicidal tendencies should be housed in medium security. In addition, by having individuals of similar educational backgrounds share rooms, positive peer interaction is facilitated.

Restoring Self-Esteem. Because lack of self-esteem was the one element which all of the women had in common, more consideration was and should be given to this issue. The primary way in which people learn to like themselves is through positive feedback. For most of the women in this study, positive feedback was minimal or lacking. Positive feedback needs to be an ongoing, life-long process. If provided on a consistent and regular basis, the positive feelings that this type of feedback elicits have the potential to transcend the negative feelings about oneself.

In the prison environment, corrections personnel need to know that positive behavior on the part of the residents should be praised just as negative behavior is punished. Moreover, the residents would learn how to give respect if they in turn were treated with respect. Generally, however, when one is treated respectfully, respect is naturally returned. The residents themselves must be taught to treat one another respectfully and to praise good deeds. Finally, self-help treatment or programs should teach the residents
to reflect upon their good behavior rather than to dwell on their bad behavior.

Another way to build or restore a sense of self-esteem especially for residents with limited education would be to train them in useful trades or skills. This does not include training in such tasks as making beds, scrubbing floors, and waiting on tables, although such activities could be used as part of a positive household management program. Useful trades or skills could include such non-degree courses as computer training, accounting, secretarial and business courses, machine shop training, or automobile mechanics. This type of training provides not only a sense of accomplishment but also a viable means of support on the outside.

Involvement in community services outside of the corrections environment aids others and engenders a positive sense of self. Within the correction environment, there are a number of ways in which residents can become active in community services. For example, the women who participated in this study overwhelmingly expressed pleasure at being part of this project which was designed with the hope of improving the future corrections environment. Thus, participation in studies can be a non-threatening yet positive means by which to enhance self-esteem. For residents in minimum security, visiting and lecturing at other organizations such as high schools or youth
organizations provides not only a constructive service but is also an invaluable means by which to instill a sense of self-worth. Moreover, as a collateral effect, it is possible that providing lectures to others is also a way of self-reflecting, since the lecturer would be recounting her own experiences.

**Structure.** Many of the women interviewed reported that structure was missing from their childhood environments. Where structure was minimal or nonexistent during early developmental stages it will be necessary to establish rigid rules and regulations in the corrections environment. Rules and regulations must be established not only for the residents but also for staff and administration as well so that the whole system is addressed. This would facilitate fairness and consistency for the residents and would eliminate preferential treatment. It would also aid in re-establishing reliable role models and authority figures. By implementing structure and carrying it out consistently, the residents will see that it can be effective at all levels of the environment.

Ideally, staff turnover should be kept to a minimum, and wherever possible custody personnel should be assigned to each group of individuals on a permanent basis to reinforce the idea of structure and continuity. By maintaining smaller groups, implementation of the system will be more effective.
Within the scope of developing structure, a definitive system of rewards and punishment should be established and maintained. It must be borne in mind that the punishments should be fair and designed to fit the infractions, and the rewards should be such that they establish an incentive to do good work. Where possible, the system should screen out manipulative behaviors and apply deterrents to such activity.

Finally, time schedules which involve meals, classes, treatment, and free time are to be structured at least initially so that the women have a sense of scheduling and use of time. This will instill a sense of structure where it was lacking all of their lives. Once the idea of structure and complying with rules has been firmly established and internalized, individuals can be granted more flexibility in their schedules. The idea of structure must always be maintained; however, it must not be so rigid that it destroys the objective of building self-esteem or prevents the residents from assimilating to life outside of incarceration.

Authority Figures and Role Models. Because most of the women came from abusive environments, few of them had positive experiences with authority figures. In fact, much of their social learning regarding authority was extremely negative. Thus, whether the goal is punishment or rehabilitation, viable authority figures and role models
must be present upon entering a correctional environment. This includes prison staff such as guards and post-release staff such as parole officers. This task is intensified by the extreme lack of respect for authority that most of the women exhibit because of their backgrounds. Thus, "authoritarian" personality types would not be acceptable.

The primary authority contacts with residents on a day-to-day basis are custodial personnel, teachers, and treatment specialists. Guidelines for behavior of prison personnel must be established at the time they are hired and strictly enforced by the administration. Setting guidelines must be a cooperative effort among staff and residents, be subject to continual review by staff and administration alike, and be flexible and changeable depending upon the suggestions and input of custodial and other staff based upon their day-to-day experiences. This requirement is based upon the presumption that rules will be more strictly followed if those following them have had a hand in setting them. The guidelines should be in writing and be enumerated to all applicants for positions at the time of screening. Moreover, special care should be taken to ensure that ethical conduct is employed in all situations where specific written guidelines are not available.

One way to hire responsible, ethical, and conscientious employees in any position is to provide adequate incentives. This would include a salary schedule which is not
inconsistent with the requirements of the position. If the job requires the applicant to possess specific interpersonal skills, a college degree or licensing, or if the job imposes risk upon the individual, due consideration should be given to an appropriate salary. Advertising for positions in correctional facilities should set forth salary ranges designed to attract quality applicants. Other perquisites, including medical insurance, must be a part of the overall employment package. Applicants should be qualified by their education or training to deal with correctional residents. Thus, it is essential that new recruits have some background or training in penology, criminal justice, sociology, and psychology.

Staff hired as teachers or treatment specialists must be licensed and certified in their respective fields as are similar positions in other organizations. Most importantly, individuals who treat residents for psychological or emotional problems are required to be qualified to diagnose and evaluate and to follow established, accepted methods of treatment. These professionals should understand the unique nature of the residents with whom they are relating. Such requirements and standards are necessary because the teaching staff and mental health professionals constitute the primary role models with whom the residents come into contact.
Finally, full implementation of this aspect of the plan requires continual monitoring, education, evaluation, and adjustment from the custodial personnel up through the administrative staff. The monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment could be conducted through peer assessment or outside consultants or both.

Teaching Positive Attitudes and Unlearning Negative Behaviors. A great deal of unlearning is necessary where a lifetime of negative learning has been experienced. Foremost, of course, these women learned negative facts about themselves—"I am bad" or "I am a bad seed." Moreover, because these women did not have viable role models growing up, they developed negative attitudes and values concerning ethics, morals, and the law. In addition, many learned that their roles in relation to males was subservient and submissive. Frequently, they learned to employ manipulative techniques for controlling situations and people. Moreover, most of them learned and utilized escape mechanisms which were destructive and often illegal. That is a lot of information to unlearn, and it may not be possible during the incarceration to succeed in replacing all of the negative information with new learning. However, a start must be made, and with the implementation of lifelong learning processes and re-education it can continue after release from the facility.
Treatment is a primary area where old ideas can be unlearned. This is why it is so important for the treatment staff to be licensed and qualified in their field. Structured treatment is provided on a regular basis in the areas of substance abuse, anger management, positive parenting, co-dependency, and relationships, as these are the primary problem areas which were related by the women during the interviews.

While one-on-one counseling is beneficial, group encounter should be utilized extensively relying on qualified facilitators. These sessions provide a less threatening environment, and they provide peers with the opportunity to interact and to supply and receive feedback concerning their behaviors and that of their peers. Observing one's own behavior in another person's actions has a great deal of impact when it comes to recognizing negative behavior. This is a fundamental step in learning about oneself. Thus, once the behavior is seen in another and is identified as being negative, then steps can be taken to replace it with positive behavior.

Classroom activities within the corrections environment should include academic courses which challenge the residents. Simply providing GED and ABE classes is insufficient because of the wide variety of educational levels reported by the women. Developing marketable skills including computers and other business courses is essential
in preparing some of the women for life outside of the corrections environment.

College level courses are now available through distance learning in the Montana University System. The distance learning involves interactive video telecommunications which provides off-site classroom situations where teachers and students can interact during the class. This learning environment utilizes a facilitator or technician rather than on-site teaching staff; therefore the cost is kept to a minimum and one teacher can cover many sites in a wide area. Moreover, various commercial telecommunications agencies have provided grant money for exploring distance learning, and this might be a viable source of funds for such a program and would provide diversity, challenge, and a wide variety of coursework to incarcerated women. The possibility of establishing such a system is currently being investigated.

Classroom activities need to include more than academic and business skills courses. They should also include such trades as mechanics, engineering, and drafting. Such courses provide not only alternative means of employment on the outside, but they also tend to supplant the negative learning experienced by the women as to their gender-oriented roles in society. Such courses can include work-study or internships which could provide services for the corrections facility. For example, students in automobile
mechanics could be responsible for repairing and servicing the vehicles at WCC or even for the community. This would provide a source of funds which might defray the cost of the training. Again, in this instance, the interconnectedness of the holistic model is apparent. Learning a viable trade, preparing oneself for life on the outside, and learning to interact with the community on a positive basis can instill a positive sense of self in the women. Moreover, the community can benefit not only by receiving inexpensive services but also by observing the positive behavior of incarcerated women.

The learning and unlearning process that takes place in the daily routine outside of treatment and the classroom is more subtle in nature and more difficult to describe. However, much of it is designed to provide positive role model emulation. This is where having qualified, viable authority figures in custodial personnel is important.

A simplified means of instilling a sense of community and positive interaction at WCC would be the sharing of chores such as busing tables, mopping floors, and general housekeeping. Care should be taken to ensure that the entire population is equitably involved in these duties. Much can be done to inculcate a sense of pride even at the corrections level when the community works as a whole. The reward and punishment system would also be beneficial to the women in helping them to unlearn negative behaviors and
learn new, positive alternatives. Thus, if an individual knows that positive reactions will achieve positive results an incentive is gained to behave positively.

Finally, most of the women in this study are alcoholics or have been drug abusers. One of the consequences of their negative environments was substance abuse. Therefore, the learning that resulted in substance abuse needs to be reversed. The purpose of drug rehabilitation is to bring about the reversal. However, if drugs are routinely administered at the facility, the residents will obviously receive contradictory messages concerning drug use, particularly if there is no apparent need for the drugs being administered other than custodial control. This practice only serves to exacerbate an already pervasive problem encountered by the majority of the residents.

Taken together, these changes in the educational system at WCC have the potential to reverse the attitudes of the women toward society as a whole. If they are being provided with positive experiences, their values, beliefs, and ethical concepts can undergo a positive change. This is crucial not only to their survival while incarcerated but even more so to prevent reincarceration in the future. Again, this education must be an ongoing process if it is to be successful.

Returning Useful, Productive Citizens to Society. All of the processes described above are designed to prepare the
resident for eventual return to society as a productive, useful citizen. Based on current statistics, such appropriately socialized citizens are not being returned to society, and recidivism rates are high. The purpose of the holistic model is first to reduce the rate of reincarceration and secondly to reduce the overall rate of incarceration. While all of the programs introduced in this model are designed to accomplish the socialization process and instill a positive sense of self in the women, successful implementation must include ongoing counseling, education, monitoring, and adjusting not only of the women but also of the facility's administration and staff.

Before a woman is released from WCC, she should be introduced to a viable role model with whom she can interact on a regular, non-structured basis. This role model, or mentor, can be a counselor or even a former resident who has completed training to be a mentor. Another aspect of this idea is to offer community training in mentoring similar to the Big Brothers and Sisters program, which provides viable authority figures from the community for at-risk children.

Staff and outside counselors such as parole officers must be trained to recognize the warning signs of relapse into old behaviors. Because of past behaviors whereby the women admitted to telling counselors what they thought the counselors wanted to hear, training could include learning to identify this manipulative technique. This, of course,
would also involve taking appropriate action to confront the behavior and act upon it in a positive manner.

Structure must be maintained after release into society to reinforce positive learning. This would include regular involvement with treatment programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous or group encounter sessions. Properly trained and monitored mentors and parole officers can help to adopt a structure which is based upon individual needs. This recommendation points to a need for additional staffing among probation officers. If parole officers are going to be an integral part of this plan, it is necessary to look at their numbers to ensure that one officer is not working with too many women.

Macrocosm

Learning begins in infancy, and it is a life-long process. Young children have not yet experienced a great deal, but they learn from their experiences whether they are positive or negative. Therefore, it is possible within the macrocosm to commence a more viable education process at an early age which would introduce positive learning before negative learning has been internalized. Adapting a holistic approach to this issue involves modifying the model as applied to the microcosm so that it encompasses more positive learning from infancy. Thus, where unlearning was
a major component of the model in the microcosm, positive learning becomes the most significant goal in the macrocosm.

**Instilling Self-Esteem.** A positive sense of self is essential for positive learning. Because learning begins in infancy, inculcation of a positive self-concept must be introduced at that stage of development.

Positive feedback even in infancy helps a child to learn to like herself or himself. Parents, teachers, and other authority figures need to be more aware of this need. Any evidence that this basic need is being repressed should be addressed and corrected immediately. Identifying and adjusting to potential problems are part of the parent and teacher training.

In the classroom, self-esteem can be instilled or raised when the curriculum does not insult the intelligence of the child or when it is not so advanced as to make the child feel inadequate. Thus, consideration of individual learning styles and adaptation to this concept are significant for promoting a sense of self. Specifically, to address individual learning, additional aid in the classroom is necessary. In this regard, implementing a practice of using high school students as mentors or student aids in the classroom provides a three-fold direct benefit. It helps the teacher provide individual learning; it aids the children in receiving individualized help; and it is a good source of self-esteem to the mentors or aids. A collateral
effect of this program could be the early recognition of learning disabilities or psychological problems.

The importance of a positive sense of self cannot be overemphasized. Self-esteem carries over into all areas of learning.

Structure. The corrections environment in this study provides housing to adults who experienced lack of structure as children. Thus, it is necessary to impose some sort of structure within the system. Likewise, children do not have enough life experiences to function without some type of structure or guidance imposed by their parents. When they are left to their own devices, they can learn negative behaviors. For example, in the home environment when parents are absent or neglectful, as exemplified by the women interviewed in this study, children make their own rules such as whether or not to go to school, to eat nutritional meals, or to get enough sleep. It is imperative that parents realize the influence they exert either positively or negatively over their children. The imposition of structure in a loving environment begins in the home and includes knowledge of the child's playmates and monitoring of activities to a reasonable degree.

Structure is important in the classroom as well, although it should contain flexibility for adapting to individual learning styles. Class schedules, meal times, and free time must be organized. Children should be taught
that there is an order in society to which they must conform until they are old enough to set their own schedules.

The interrelationship of the classroom and home is important. It is essential for parents to recognize potential problems in the school so that corrective action can be taken. Moreover, teachers need to be trained and empowered to identify and intervene when they suspect a child is not receiving enough structure at home to ensure well-being.

A viable reward and punishment system both at home and in the classroom would adequately encompass the holistic approach to positive learning. As with the corrections environment, however, it is vital that any such system be fair and consistent.

**Effective Authority Figures and Role Models.** Providing effective authority figures and viable role models encompasses much more than home and school. It also involves law enforcement, peer interaction, and the entire community.

For parents with young children, classes in effective parenting techniques need to be offered on a regular and accessible basis. They should be free and be offered to the entire population including couples or individuals contemplating having children as well as prospective teen mothers. Moreover, they should encompass all of the elements of a holistic approach and should particularly
emphasize the importance of self-esteem. It is essential that the instructors in these classes be trained in identifying potential problems in the behavior of prospective parents while it is still early enough for viable intervention. Concurrently with effective parenting classes, all couples who anticipate rearing children should be offered courses in forming healthy relationships. These courses like the parenting classes will help identify the sources of potential problems such as abuse or disaffection.

Teachers and school administrators must be cognizant of their roles as authority figures and role models in society. Strict guidelines need to be adopted toward that end as a cooperative project among administrative and teaching personnel. Thus, while the administration is responsible for enforcing the guidelines or regulations, input from teachers is crucial to their development. Finally, teacher training should encompass preventive actions and identification of potential problems in the behavior of school children. Teachers must be able to recognize and be empowered to intervene on behalf of children they feel are at-risk.

Respect for other authority figures such as police officers and other community representatives is important, but it must be a two-way street. Personality types which convey authoritarian attitudes should be screened out during the hiring process for such individuals because these types
do little to instill respect for authority. Indeed, they have been known to instill a strong sense of disrespect and mistrust for law enforcement.

Peer relationships provide the interactions whereby children learn to understand their world through investigation, communication, and sharing. Peers can become role models, and therefore it is important that parents be aware of and monitor their children's friendships. "Falling in with the wrong crowd" can do much to negate positive learning and can create rebellion in children based upon peer pressure. Hopefully, through implementation of a holistic approach, parents will be educated in how to provide positive learning for their children; thus, children will base friendships and other relationships on the values and ethics they have learned.

Instilling Positive Attitudes and Teaching Positive Behaviors. It is often easier to select a negative manner of reacting to a negative stimulus than it is to choose an appropriate response because it takes cognitive reasoning to form an appropriate response. For many situations, children do not have sufficient life experiences to be able to formulate well-reasoned responses. Therefore, they react to situations by throwing tantrums, pouting, or duplicating the negative behavior. This was also reflected in the behaviors which were learned by the women in this study when they encountered adversity. For example, in response to abuse,
many escaped into substance abuse and subsequently into a vicious cycle of supporting drug or alcohol addictions. Some of them learned manipulative behavior in order to control situations and people. Had they learned proper responses in childhood, many of them may not have ended up engaging in illegal behavior. Thus, it is of paramount importance that children be educated to respond appropriately to society's norms. It is also imperative that they be instilled with a strong sense of community and respect for others. However, one cannot respect others without first learning self-respect.

Effective parenting for caregivers and similar classes for teachers should include this concept from the outset. This is particularly important for teen parents, whose own ideas of appropriate behavior may not have matured.

Delivering Viable, Productive Adults into Society. If all of the above processes were implemented and were successful, the end result could be young adults entering society with a strong sense of self, respect for authority and society's norms, possessing the ability to respond appropriately to all situations, as well as a strong sense of community and respect for others. Unlike those women in this study who were unable to care for themselves or for their children, the young products of this program would be even more capable than their own parents were of forming healthy relationships and rearing their children. A
positive generational learning pattern can potentially be established based upon a holistic approach which encompasses the entire macrocosm. This could eliminate many of the conditions that contributed to the incarceration of the women in this study. Moreover, society in general could be improved as individual citizens become more interactive and accepting of one another. Learning and life experiences could become more positive, and abuse could be reduced. All of these improvements point toward a healthier, more productive society.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

OUTLINE FOR QUESTIONS USED DURING INTERVIEWS

AT THE WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL CENTER

AT WARM SPRINGS, MT

1993
I. Opening Questions

A. Tell me about yourself
   1. Who are you?
   2. Where did you come from?
   3. When did you come to WCC?
   4. What are you serving time for?
   5. How did you get involved in that type of behavior?
      1. To what extent were alcohol, drugs, or abuse involved?
      2. When did you first begin this type of behavior?
      3. How has this set of circumstances affected you personally?

B. Tell me something about a recent learning experience. Describe it and tell me how you feel about it.
   1. How did you see yourself as a learner in this situation.

C. What educational activities are you presently involved in? Explain.
   1. How are these activities affecting you at the present time?
   2. Describe the relationship between your teachers and yourself.
   3. How do you see yourself as a learner/student in these situations?

II. School Environment

A. Tell me something about when you were in school.
   1. How long were you in school?
   2. Where did you go to school?
   3. What courses did you like/dislike?
B. Think about when you were in school. As children, most of us had very positive and some very negative experiences. Think about one of the best experiences you had in school, and tell me about it.

C. Now tell me about one of your most negative experiences.

1. To what extent did these school experiences affect your present situation?

2. How did you see yourself as a learner in these situations?

D. Some of things that happen in school have the power to change our lives. What experiences from school can you recall that actually changed the way you believe?

E. What were any learning difficulties or special education needs that you encountered while you were in school? How did these difficulties affect your life?

III. Early Childhood and Family Life — Many people recall their first learning experiences.

A. What is the first thing that you recall from your childhood? (Relate own personal experiences if needed.)

1. Tell me about it. How did you feel at the time? Do you remember what effect it had on you at the time? Does it still have any effect on you? If so, please describe or explain.

2. Was it a positive or a negative experience?

3. How did this early experience affect your values? Your beliefs? Your attitudes? Did these experiences involve family members?

4. Were the members of your family supportive? Abusive or serve as a hindrance?

5. What was one of the values or beliefs that you have developed as a result of this experience?

   a. How did you come to hold this value or belief?
How did it affect you?

B. How do you remember your mother? Your father? Brothers? Sisters? Other family members?

IV. Peer Group Assessment

A. Tell me about the kids you hung out with in school.
   1. What were they like?
   2. Describe your best friend?
   3. What kind of kids didn't you get along with?
   4. What effect did your friends have on you?
   5. Would you describe yourself as a leader or a follower?

B. What other things outside the family had an effect on you?
   1. How did you feel about them?
   2. What effect did they have on you?

V. Summary/Conclusions

A. You have told me about how you learned things in school, with your family, and with your friends. Now think about an important experience that you had and tell me about it (ex. drugs, alcohol, abuse, etc.).

B. How have education/learning experiences, both in and out of prison, affected your behavior?

C. What have your learning experiences been as they relate to prison education? Explain.

D. What do you think of prison education for incarcerated women? Describe or explain.

E. How has correctional education affected your life? Explain.

VI. Follow-Up Interview (Questions to be asked if not already covered in initial interview)

A. Internal Questions
1. Now that you have had some time to reflect on the questions we discussed, to what extent do you see any connection between your early experiences and your behavior?

2. How did these experiences affect the way you thought about things? Your beliefs? Your values? Your attitudes?

3. What is one of the values or beliefs that have developed as a result of these experiences?
   a. How did you come to hold this belief?
   b. How did this value/belief develop?

4. To what extent did these experiences, values, and beliefs affect your present/past incarcerations?

B. School experiences

1. Some of the things that happen to us in school have the power to change our lives. What experiences from school can you recall that actually changed the way you believe?
   a. What effect did these school experiences have on you as you were growing up? Describe or explain.
   b. What were any connections between learning experiences and behavior that you may have noticed while you were in school? Since then? Now?

2. What were any learning disabilities or special education needs while you were in school? Describe or explain. To what extent did these affect your incarceration?

C. External Experiences

1. You have told me about how you learned things in school, with your family, and with your friends. Now think about an important experience that you had and tell me about it (Ex. Drugs, alcohol, abuse, etc.).

2. How have education/learning experiences, both in and out of prison, affected your behavior?
3. What have been your learning experiences with prison education? Explain.

4. What do you think of prison education for incarcerated women? Describe or explain.

5. If you had the opportunity to do this over, what would you do differently?

6. What change within women's corrections would you make if you had the opportunity?