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Adult literacy training in theory and practice : a perspective of correctional institution programs

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San Jose State University, 1992

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ADULT LITERACY TRAINING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:
A PERSPECTIVE OF CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION PROGRAMS

A Project Report

Presented to

The Department of Linguistics and Language Development
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Ruth Ann Randall

December, 1992

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ABSTRACT

ADULT LITERACY TRAINING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: A PERSPECTIVE OF CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION PROGRAMS

by Ruth Ann Randall

This report will examine the development of literacy education for adults in the US to the present time, with a discussion of our past and evolving philosophical and sociological perspectives on literacy. A major focus is on present-day applications in correctional institutions in the US and Canada (prisons and jails) and the special problems encountered there, leading to a comparison with one particular program currently operating in a California county jail. The author is a volunteer tutor in that program, while also employed as an Adult Education ESL teacher in one facility of that jail. The relative strengths and weaknesses of the jail literacy program will be examined in a final assessment.

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Introduction

The issue of literacy or the lack of it in our society has today assumed a highly prominent position in popular discourse, whether accompanying despair over the decline of public education, the latest rise in unemployment figures, or the tide of non-English-using Asian and Hispanic immigrants into this country. Book and magazine article titles and newspaper headlines sometimes seem to compete for our attention in decrying the failure or the dearth of efforts to bring varied groups in our society up to an "adequate" level of reading or writing ability in English. These anxieties have even given rise to movements such as "English First," dedicated to making English the "official language" of the nation or of individual states, as some sort of desperate solution to a perceived crisis of alarming proportions. And while most knowledgeable people in the education field deplore extremist "solutions" to such problems, there is no denying that a literacy crisis does indeed exist. The difficulties arise over issues of the precise definition and limits of the crisis and--obviously much more difficult--how to resolve it.

More than a decade ago the Ford Foundation funded and published the results of an exhaustive study of literacy in the U.S., which brought the multiple issues of illiteracy into a clearer focus for many, even though the authors

stated unequivocally that "clear and agreed-upon concepts and definitions of literacy--what it is and how it can be measured--do not exist" (Hunter & Harman, 1979, p. 103). That judgment notwithstanding, their figures of 54 to 64 million American adults who are out of school, without high school diplomas, and disadvantaged because of their limited education, have become the oft-cited "60 million illiterates" who persist in this society, judged by some to be the source of many of our complex social, cultural, and economic problems. Harman tells us that the problem of illiteracy might be seen as a classic dilemma: "if we plunge in without taking time to study the problem, our efforts will be useless and possibly harmful; if we take the time to study it, the problem may deteriorate beyond our ability to solve it before we have devised a solution" (1987, p. 101). In the end, however, Harman is not quite so pessimistic, noting that in our efforts to understand and combat the problem, many people are benefitting every day in the acquisition of literacy skills.

In recent years many attempts have been made to arrive at some consensus regarding more precise concepts and definitions of literacy. But even Harman himself, writing almost a decade after his and Hunter's lengthy report, still found that "the attempt to define literacy is like a walk to the horizon: as one walks toward it, it continuously

recedes" (1987, p. 3). Above, the phrase "an 'adequate' level of reading or writing ability" was used, the adjective put inside quotes to mark its usage as problematic in itself. For the standards of that adequacy have steadily shifted upwards as society has grown more complex and sophisticated, especially in the latter half of this century since we have become inundated with words and ideas in print. In the not-too-distant past, Americans were considered "literate" if they could simply sign their own names (Lockridge, 1974). Now, within the span of just a few decades, our need for expanded literacy skills has even led to new word coinages for discussing the issue. The term "functional" literacy has arisen as an elaborated distinction from "conventional" literacy. Hunter and Harman suggest that conventional literacy be considered "the ability to read, write, and comprehend texts on familiar subjects, and to understand whatever signs, labels, instructions and directions are necessary to get along within one's environment" (1979, p. 7). Functional literacy, on the other hand, they describe more comprehensively as

the possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job holders, and members of social, religious, or other associations of their choosing. This includes the ability to obtain information they want and to use that information for their own and others' well-

being; the ability to read and write adequately to satisfy the requirements they set for themselves as being important for their own lives; the ability to deal positively with demands made on them by society; and the ability to solve the problems they face in their daily lives (Hunter & Harman, 1979, p. 8).

Functional literacy today has become the darling goal of educational reformists at a time when the nation's technological powers and demands for skilled workers are at increasing.

Having noted something about what literacy means in the context of present day society, we need also to consider who are the non-literates indicated in the wider discussion of this crisis. Most non-literates, not surprisingly, are found among the great amorphous group of our nation's disadvantaged adults, those who, by virtue of their social, economic, cultural, educational, physical, or ethnic status, "could be expected to suffer more deprivation than the rest of society, (including) the poor, the imprisoned, the elderly, the undereducated, the unemployed, or those employed at a low level...and the racially oppressed" (Childers & Post, 1975, as quoted by Hunter & Harman, 1979, p. 36). It is not without significance that Childers & Post, in listing the most deprived groups in society, put in second place (right after the legions of the poor) the imprisoned. Prison and jail inmates are probably the most widely despised population in America, if not in the entire

Western world, which is just one of many complicating factors that make it hard to reach the many incarcerated non-literates. This group, who will be closely examined in this paper, is an important factor in the literacy crisis if for no other reasons than that (1) the percentage of non-literates (or inadequately literate) among inmates is so much higher than in the total population at large (75% to 38%, respectively), and (2) the vast majority of these incarcerates are inevitably released back into society. At that time they are, more likely than not, in a worse state (economically, socially, educationally, psychologically, and emotionally) than when they went into jail or prison, as much research has shown (Criminal Justice Committee, 1983; Duguid, 1990; Graff, 1987).

The link between the imprisoned and the poor blurs insidiously when we look more closely at the incarcerated group, for "poor people, not necessarily the most dangerous ones [emphasis added] are by and large those arrested and kept in jail" (Criminal Justice Committee, 1983, Introduction). The great majority of inmates share with the unincarcerated poor a limited educational background, limited marketable job skills, youth, poverty, and minority ethnicity. One reason for these similarities is the judicial system's selection process which "removes from jail those people who are able to post money bail and to employ

private defense attorneys" (Criminal Justice Committee, 1983, Introduction).

But we have not yet found the limits of the problem. We must add to the very high incidence of non-literacy among the imprisoned and the inevitability of their release back into society (with even more problems) still a third hard factor: the imprisoned--plus the facilities to house them and the staffs to control them--are among our society's fastest growing elements. Amid the chill of these truths it is not hard to feel the winds of a forebodingly heavy storm rising. While no one change can produce a miracle solution and wipe out illiteracy, surely the more we understand about the real people behind the alarming numbers, their true life-conditions, needs, and desires, plus some of the brighter, more practicable ideas for improving their lot (and thereby the lot of us all) the better our chances of avoiding that impending storm. It is to that goal this work is directed.

Chapter One

A Brief History of Literacy

In the Old World

Harvey Graff (1987) has noted a threefold root system in the rise of Western literacy--political, religious, and economic--which he traces elaborately from earliest Western history, predating the Greek alphabet, through to present times. These three threads can be followed--sometimes operating singly, sometimes dually, or alternately--throughout the development of literacy in the Western world.

Beginning with the earliest Sumerian (3100 B.C.E.) and later Egyptian use of written symbols to represent words or phrases, it was the economic need of the state to keep accurate records of the movement of agricultural products that led to the development of the first word syllabic systems of writing. Eventually it was Phoenician traders who, in the course of regular commerce, took their cumbersome phonetic syllabary to Greece, where it fell on intellectually fertile ground. Sometime after 700 B.C.E., the Greeks added vowels to this system, creating at last a phonemic written language capable of serving far more than the commercial and administrative needs of that culture, as well as many others that borrowed from it. The Greeks used it to record their most treasured oral works of literature,

Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, while in no way abandoning the oral dominance of their language for written forms. Rather, they combined features of both orality and literacy for their own uses. Graff notes that "until the fifth century, the principal users and perhaps the inventors of the alphabet were craftsmen and traders" (1987, p. 21), and it was this "craft literacy" that slowly replaced preliteracy. But in Athens by the fifth or fourth centuries, popular participatory democracy (which of course excluded all non-citizens, women, and slaves) gave the ruling minority of free men the right, simply by virtue of citizenship, to sit in the important Assembly and on the Councils, and these men were usually literate. Indeed, literacy had become nearly universal in Athens by this period. It was these beginnings that gave birth to the Western tradition of an educated electorate, schooled in literacy to prepare them for citizenship. This also was the origin of our long-term linkage of literacy and democracy.

When the Romans incorporated the teachings of the Greeks into their own culture, they also continued Greek educational practices. But their society was more unequally stratified, with many more poor classes than the Greeks had known. Their education was aimed at a lower literacy level than Greece had to deal with. In a further difference, Roman bureaucracy had a great need for civil servants, and

later Emperors gave recognition and support, including direct state funding, to promote the education of chosen slaves to fill posts as skilled workers, clerks, accountants, etc. In the education of such persons, the Romans laid a new stress on civic morality, an approach that would find its echoes in Western societies a thousand years hence.

With the decline of Rome and the approach of medieval times in Europe, Christian schools took a more central role in literacy education. This was not the first time that religion had been a dominant force in such education (e.g., the Hebrews had been early proponents of writing in the creation of sacred texts to be learned by heart). But Christian schools at this time established a major legacy in their focus on morality education along with teaching of literacy and religion. Throughout the middle ages, literacy became greatly restricted, but did not disappear, especially in Italy and southern France where monastic schools preserved classical literature, transmitted literacy, and maintained scholarly activities. These schools' ideas of what constituted literacy were, as might be expected, not at all like ours today. Schooling was largely oral in Latin grammar, theology, and rhetoric. Latin had become the universal/international language of communication, but whether or not a scholar could spell his own name or write

it was irrelevant; professional (but menial) scribes did the writing. Indeed, the pairing of reading and writing as closely associated for literacy was a product only of the modern era, not an idea of ancient or medieval times. Learning was by rote for oral repetition, with memory the vital skill.

By the closing centuries of the medieval era, literacy survived through great waves of invasion and destruction, with some noteworthy guiding lights. In eighth century Gaul the Carolingian renaissance was, as Graff notes (1987, p. 47), essentially clerical, as Charlemagne's desire for an effective palace school was motivated by the need for efficient record-keeping and document production for administration of the state. Though the environment was still essentially oral, the Emperor regarded the written word as an extension of his spoken word, for reinforcement, and he initiated public posting of all his edicts, with the clear implication that they be read and understood by his court and all members of his leadership group. Later, under another enlightened regime in ninth century England, King Alfred assured his place in education and literacy history by virtue of his own writings. His earnest advocacy of learning took a note of ultimate desperation as the Danish invasions that eventually overran England continued to encroach upon his realm. Fearing the impending destruction

of all Latin learning at the hands of the invaders, he sponsored and personally aided in the translation into English of the most important works of that time. This spur to literacy was linked also to the expanding needs of state and trade, as well as with Christian and moral knowledge, a tradition that has lasted to the present day.

England, after the Norman Conquest in the mid-eleventh century, had to overcome great obstacles to reclaim literacy in English from the long years of French language domination. The Conqueror himself may not even have been literate in Latin, Graff notes (1987, p. 66). But by the twelfth century, William's grandson, Henry II, had no equal as a patron of letters and learning, and his administration was responsible for the first triumph of English literacy. In twofold reforms he extended learning to those "of knightly rank and modest fortune" (Graff, 1987, p. 67) and also promoted the use of the written word to guide secular rulers in the art of governing, a momentous shift from traditional reliance on memory as the chief mode of record-keeping in England. After this time, English civilization would be marked and conditioned by literacy, at least among the upper classes, and literacy would increasingly be required for administrative posts. Clerical tasks shifted from clerics to laymen whose loyalties were not divided between church and state. By the thirteenth century, not

only were virtually all royalty and the upper classes literate, but also many artisans. Clerical and lay schools had burgeoned and attained a higher quality while reaching a much wider audience. The clergy operated a wide variety of schools for children and though failing to reach the majority of the young, established a vital pattern for expanding literacy.

The Italian Renaissance in the fourteenth century, renowned for the flowering of high culture and art, was also important in the history of literacy. Adult male literacy in Italy at that time is estimated as being in the range of 25 to 35%, with literacy perceived as having both functional and economic value commercially. The attitude of investing in education in hopes of future success was taking permanent root in Western thinking. In fourteenth century England, though literacy was spreading in urban centers, its coming to the rural poor was slow, but aided by the Lollards, who put great emphasis on Bible reading. The rise of Protestantism had strong links to the emphasis of literacy with the use of the vernacular, and the Protestant Lollards were a group of wandering preachers who spread God's word orally. Then John Wycliffe and his followers took up the distribution of translations of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into easy vernacular English, making these works' appearance fairly common throughout the countryside.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are of central importance to literacy in Western history. While no one would deny the vital importance of the invention of moveable type or printing to the spread of literacy, Graff shows that its original impact was neither immediate nor dramatic. The distribution of handmade manuscript books was already quite widespread among literates, and a wider impact of printing waited for some time. "The level of literacy was not raised rapidly by printing," he tells us, and continues:

One must distinguish between literacy and habitual reading. Not all of those who learned to read and write became book readers. The oral focus in reading instruction persisted and apprenticeship learning (learning by seeing and doing), the use of mnemonic devices and memory reliance continued. Important uses of older ways remained sufficient among the already literate elites of Western Europe (Graff, 1987, p. 117).

After a few decades, however, educators came to see the potential of printing for building a literate population into a moral, God-fearing, and civil society. Mass literacy could at last be envisaged by humanists and social reformers. The study of uniform grammars, in both Latin and vernaculars, was enormously increased to the widespread benefit of learning. Standardization and mass communication were now possibilities also for vocabulary, orthography, and diction, though needing further centuries to attain their goals. Printers' first contributions were not new works, but greater quantities of older ones, and the earliest

printers simply chose their own idiosyncratic spelling and grammar, with no concern for establishing any standardized forms.

In Western history the Protestant Reformation is considered by many as one of the greatest positive forces toward the spread of literacy and schooling. Protestant evangelical Christian teachings demanded, for the salvation of individual souls, that all people must be able to read God's Holy Word in the Bible. Literacy education was seen as necessary not only as an instrumental skill, but also as a transforming moral force. Protestants rejected the idea of priestly intervention, placing emphasis on personal responsibility for salvation. The person who could not read was regarded as lacking in moral development, and therefore prey to sin and eternal damnation. Thus, the earliest secular teachers of literacy were like lay missionaries whose task was to teach religious and moral lessons along with reading skills (Fingeret, 1989). The reformers assumed that one must begin with the young, as indoctrination is required for religious and moral gains, and that this must be the job of public schools. In this way the Reformation took on far wider significance than just the religious, involving economic, political, cultural, and social issues that had their roots in the middle ages, and many of the reformers' resolutions were delayed for still another

century or more. The full impact of the Reformation was greatly dependent on the printing press and use of the vernacular. Leaflets, pamphlets, and posters were effective communications, and Luther's theses and later writings were given wide circulation, especially his Bible translation into German. Protestant reforms often were directed mainly at families and households, many of them specifically educational. A central Protestant tenet was the need for a literate head-of-household as a minimum for social reform, and this was the focus of much printed literature for families. In Sweden, an astonishingly successful campaign was conducted for family-centered literacy instruction at home. From a level of approximately 50% male literacy in 1645, a 98% level was attained in Sweden by the early eighteenth century. A key role was given to women in this endeavor--one of their first acknowledgements--by the Lutheran Church. It is noteworthy that Swedish women in general at that time could read, but not write.

The above accounts represents only the highlights of the history of literacy as it transpired in Europe and its environs. While far from complete, this account sets the stage for a continuation of that history in North America.

In the New World

The history of literacy education in the United States is a passage marked with many changes in focus, continually

redefining "literacy" and what it means to be "illiterate." These, after all, were concepts fairly new in the Western world, barely a few hundred years old. The roots of traditional literacy instruction practiced here were established in post-Reformation Europe, and the Christian lay-missionary tradition came zealously to our shores with the migrating religious-freedom-seekers fleeing Europe. For most of the first 200 years in both the United States and Canada, teachers were viewed as having a missionary role, even if they had no connection with any church (Fingeret, 1989).

Of colonial New England, Kenneth Lockridge (1974) suggests that it is impossible to find more than the faintest signs of modern ideas or practices in the social context of literacy practiced there; the American colonies were apparently strongholds of educational "conservatism" in this view, though such a judgment can only be one of hindsight. As history has shown elsewhere, people who leave life in established lands to begin anew in a distant place, especially a largely unsettled land like North America in the eighteenth century, tend to bring their chosen ways with them and cling to them in the absence of any opposing force toward change.

Lockridge's study of literacy, based pinpointedly on an examination of the level of signatures among a wide sample

of persons leaving wills in colonial New England, is painstakingly drawn and considered, with elaborately extrapolated conclusions. We can take this as evidence of one present-day requirement of a literacy definition: that literates must be able to write their own signatures. Lockridge acknowledges that "the level of signatures is always somewhat above the level of writing, and somewhat below the level of reading" (1974, p. 109), but he makes a case for its being the best index available, given the time and circumstances, while calling for much further research. His evidence shows that between the middle of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth, New England "evolved from a society little more than half-literate to a society of nearly universal male literacy" (1974, p. 13). He claims this as part of a slow trend toward higher literacy throughout the Western world, but adds that it rose faster and to a higher level in New England than elsewhere. Lockridge describes a 1660 society base in which only 60% of the men could read fluently, fewer than 60% could write, 20% were semi-literate, and 20% illiterate. Such a society had a long way to go toward universal male literacy, especially since, he tells us, only 30% of the women at this same time could sign their own names. This fact would seem to bear out the generally reduced status of women and low regard for their education

at the time, despite the recognition that they had charge of the rearing of children and childhood education at home. The greatest increases in literacy in succeeding years were found among rural farmers, artisans and laborers who constituted more than three-fourths of the male population. Farmers alone rose from 45% literacy in 1660 to 80% in 1760, and 90% by 1790, nearly doubling their rate in a century, and approaching universal levels in just thirty more years. Women rose in literacy rates comparable to those of the men, but their rate stabilized at a much lower level.

In discussing possible causes for this remarkable development, Lockridge concludes that the source of the literacy rise lay in the Puritan ideology of these immigrants (1974, p. 43). Their impassioned belief in education because of the necessity to read the scriptures led them inevitably to home and family education in outlying areas where there were no schools available, and to passing laws mandating state support for schools where they were possible in more populous areas, as indeed they did.

By the early nineteenth century in the United States, education took on some secondary roles, the first to unify an expanding nation. Children's school primers (e.g., McGuffey's Eclectic Readers) featured moral maxims meant to serve as a taught basis for the nation's shared values, and teachers dutifully performed this inculcation. Then later

In the century the coming of industrialism, with its concomitant factory system, made our newly-powerful owner-manager class aware of the greater need for morality instruction for the working class to keep them sober, orderly, and dutiful in the workplace (Graff, 1979). Reading teachers were told to teach their students "what to read as well as how to read to ensure proper moral development" (Fingeret, 1989, p. 6). By the end of the nineteenth century the massive waves of immigrants to the United States and Canada were giving rise to a national anxiety about maintaining our "purity," and literacy education was again asked to bear the burden of socializing new arrivals into mainstream American norms and values. Now literacy for citizenship became another focus. By this time illiteracy was widely perceived as a kind of personal moral failure and, as such, strongly stigmatized.

The twentieth century brought the impact of two world wars into our classrooms and saw further shifts in the focus of literacy education. During World War I, the armed forces became concerned over the high percentage (25%) of recruits who could not read necessary training materials or follow printed directions (Costa, 1988). Fingeret tells us that from this the development of psychometric testing was stimulated, for the first time making formal the use of external norms to judge literacy levels and set teaching

directions. Teachers active in the newly popular adult evening schools (the model known as the Moonlight Schools, founded in Kentucky in 1911) started special night school sessions for illiterate draftees, which in turn led to the first government-sponsored literacy campaign. Now the public perception of the main cause for illiteracy began to shift from a moral failure of the individual to the failure of the public schools, many of which were charged with not enforcing the compulsory education laws. Illiteracy came to be equated with ignorance, regarded as shutting one off from the enlightenment of scientific knowledge. Hence, it was seen as a threat to the nation's burgeoning industrial development, as well as to democracy itself. In 1917 the U.S. Congress passed a bill (over a presidential veto) requiring future immigrants over age 16 to pass a literacy test, proving their ability to read in some language, whether or not it was English. The following year the Immigration and Nationality Act provided federal funds to aid public schools in the teaching of English, history, government, and citizenship programs for immigrant candidates for naturalization. Then in 1920 the U.S. Census Bureau defined as "illiterate" any person age 10 or over who could not write in any language, regardless of ability to read, still another shift in our literacy focus.

Our entry into World War II reawakened concern of the

military over draftee illiteracy, and the armed forces launched their first large-scale effort at adult literacy instruction. Their approach was functional, dealing with skills and materials related to military life. U.S. Army schools for illiterate draftees reported that between 1949 and 1952, over 250,000 soldiers were brought to fifth grade competency level through a program requiring seven to eight months of a draftee's service term. But the military had no wish to take on literacy education as a continuing responsibility, and issued a series of reports encouraging public action. A major theme of these reports was that illiteracy was a threat to democracy because it left citizens and prospective soldiers vulnerable to Fascist (and later substitute "Communist") propaganda; illiterates were seen as "fair game for demagogues" (Fingeret, 1989, p. 7).

Illiteracy had become an international concern by the war's end, negatively linked with modernization and development goals. As talk grew of eradicating this problem, the concept of illiteracy as a "disease" came to the fore, so characterized in diplomatic circles throughout the 1950's as:

a kind of cultural pathogen analogous to small pox or malaria and, like them, susceptible to complete eradication. The preferred treatment was the general administration of primary schooling in a more or less standardized form (Levine, 1982, p. 252).

Peripherally also at this time some other noteworthy

developments were taking place in literacy education. In 1955, Frank C. Laubach founded Laubach Literacy International (LLI) based on his approach, the Laubach Method, featuring phonics teaching materials which utilized alphabet and picture associations. It would eventually employ a world-wide network of volunteers who would operate under the slogan/dictum "Each one teach one." This program will be discussed at length elsewhere in this paper. Then in 1957 the first effort to use television to teach literacy was launched in Memphis, Tennessee. This small, Laubach-based effort succeeded in bringing just three percent of its target group to fourth grade level in its two years on the air.

Throughout the sixties and seventies American literacy education programs existed within the framework established under Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and the War on Poverty. Disadvantaged and deprived adults were the focus, and they were seen as living in "psychological and economic poverty," lacking not only the necessary skills for their own "social mobility or economic stability," but also the necessary personal "qualities of character" (Fingeret, 1989, p. 7). In 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act initiated the Adult Basic Education program (ABE) for adults age sixteen or over who had less than twelve years of schooling and were not currently enrolled in public school. This was the first

time the federal government had set aside funds directly for literacy education. By this time the "disease" metaphor for illiteracy had to share the stage with a "war" metaphor, with illiteracy being the focus of "attacks" and "battles." This development came in response to nationwide civil unrest and growing international pressures. At home anti-Vietnam War protests combined with Cold War paranoia following the Cuban missile crisis to create fears of a U.S. internal collapse. Literacy programs took on the intent of saving the system and somehow getting our marginal adults to fit in, with white middle-class norms providing the framework. Now the goal was to change students' attitudes and culture, while also teaching literacy skills. This focus took in all areas of adults' lives, including "childrearing, marriage, nutrition, personal hygiene, housekeeping, cooking, citizenship, and employment" (Fingeret, 1989, p. 8). By 1969, the U.S. Census Bureau had begun to base its literacy statistics on grade completion, with the assumption that anyone who had completed six years of schooling was literate.

In the early seventies the concept of "functional" literacy became narrower and more stringent in its goals: the ability to read and write sufficiently well to get and hold a job. In conjunction with this were anticipated the attainment of variously termed "life skills," "coping

skills," or "survival skills," with the emphasis on "training, treatment, and adjustment rather than consciousness-raising, critical awareness, or the pursuit of social or political change" (Thompson, 1983, cited in Fingeret, 1989, p. 8). These survival skills seemed to be regarded as the best one could expect for or from this group of individuals who might never become capable of taking charge of their own lives. Also in the seventies competency-based adult literacy education became a new buzzword, by which concept, at least in theory, students could choose a "competency" they wished to attain, and chart a course to do it. But, as Fingeret notes (1989), in practice these programs tended to judge an adult's existing skills according to a pre-determined list drawn up by middle-class educators, reflecting their own ideas about supposed necessary and correct activities for people who wanted either to join or work for that same middle class. Our standards turned out not surprisingly to be self-serving, however altruistic their earlier motivation.

In the eighties this pattern continued, whereby educator-made decisions were offered up to illiterate students whose only options were to conform or remain on the outside of the system. A further voice was now added to the urgent plea for increased literacy, as corporate America recognized its growing need for technology-literate workers.

In 1985 the first National Conference on Adult Literacy and Computers was held in Minnesota to promote computer use in adult literacy programs and disseminate information on computers and other forms of technology, including hardware and software selection. The message we have heard most often since then is that literacy enables workers to keep pace with advancing technology, and thereby helps support the role of the United States in the economic world order. To some critics today it appears that literacy programs are designed not primarily to meet the expressed needs or wants of students, but the needs of those in positions of power who have jobs they need to fill.

[It] appears that a functional competence [in literacy] has been defined so that it is merely sufficient to bring its possessor within the reach of bureaucratic modes of communication and authority (Levine, 1982, p. 261).

No one complains that the power-brokers have jobs to offer to the newly literate, but that the assumptions upon which the literacy training programs are based are fundamentally flawed, and therefore pre-doom these efforts. There are two common complaints regarding the whole panoply of public and private programs offered to eradicate illiteracy: first, that too many of the planners have accepted a notion of non-reading adults as a group of fundamentally incompetent, unskilled, ignorant, helpless persons who must somehow be pulled into society's mainstream; and second, that virtually

no one has asked (among this truly diverse group of non-readers) what they as individuals need or want from such programs. The programs then often meet with rejection or failure by the learners, and bewildered disappointment on the part of the program promoters (Levine, 1982; Fingeret, 1989; Omni, 1990). These issues will be considered further elsewhere in this paper.

Whatever the merits of the literacy education programs we have made operational in this country, they have not achieved remarkable success. The U.S. Office of Education in the early seventies, using newly designed Adult Performance Level standards, found that 57 million Americans lacked even the skills to perform the most basic tasks (Kozol, 1985, p. 9). In 1979 Hunter and Harman, in their well-known study, reached a similar conclusion, and Hunter, updating the study in 1984, estimated a figure in excess of 60 million, representing one-third of our entire adult population. Perhaps even more discouraging is the fact that if we combine all the federal, state, municipal, and private literacy programs in the nation, we still manage to reach at most only four percent of the illiterate population, according to Kozol. The United States, with the world's highest per capita standard of living, ranks forty-ninth among the 158 member nations of the United Nations in its level of literacy (Kozol, 1985, p. 5). Our rosy goals, if

not receding, have perhaps never seemed more distant.

The disadvantaged groups in our society, for whom these goals seem most distant, have of course provided the impetus in recent years not only for countless studies, but also for conflicting theories regarding literacy itself--its roots, its nature, and its consequences. In the next chapter we will consider a variety of these theories and some of the approaches developed in consequence of them.

CHAPTER TWO

Recent Views of Literacy

There are a variety of approaches to a subject as wide-ranging as literacy today, but since many theorists divide on the issue of its consequences, it can be useful to begin with this feature as a focus. In an introduction to their collected articles on literacy, Kintgen, Kroll, and Rose (1988) suggest that recent ideas about the consequences of literacy can be separated into three different types: cognitive, economic, and social, with leading theorists supporting each of these "camps."

The cognitive theorists argue that the acquisition of literacy affects the fundamental way people think, improving their basic processes of cognition. Where non-literate thought is simply concrete and primitive, they argue, literate thought becomes transformed to the conceptual, thereby being made capable of logic, generalization and abstraction. These theorists associate the historic development of literacy with progress, civilization, and the growth of democracy. By this theory, literate thinking capacities lead people to a sense of history, the development of the sciences, and ideas of individual liberty. This notion of literacy-conferred superiority is

most comforting and flattering to advanced, dominant, First-World nations and cultures like our own. At the same time, we also offer it as the carrot at the end of the stick to non-literate cultures of the world, in effect telling them, "If you get a [literacy] outfit, you can be superior, too!"

A second and cognitive-related approach to literacy theory is economic, relating to an idea about literacy presumed by many to be its most important "predictable" variable. It has become a widely popular, common-sense view that economic success can be predicated upon becoming literate: "Learning to read and write will get you a better job." Most people simply accept this as an article of faith upon seeing that most illiterates live in joblessness or poverty while most literates live in varying degrees of employed comfort, security, and wealth. Frank Laubach's popular, world-wide literacy program promotes this economic-improvement-through-literacy idea, and many thousands every day take heart thereby for their literacy achievement efforts. UNESCO made this linkage a central theme of its ambitious world literacy campaign, declaring the necessary "takeoff" point for a country's population to be a 40% literacy level for the attainment of Western-style economic security. But the proof of this idea remains stubbornly insubstantial, and UNESCO's goals are in large part still

unattained. Critics charge another failure of the false linkage, post_hoc, ergo_propter_hoc, a case where no real cause-effect relationship exists between these separately observable phenomena. This presumed linkage between education and jobs had previously been strongly challenged (Berg, 1970), and the concept has now been labeled as part of the "literacy myth," after Harvey Graff's extensive studies, to be discussed below.

The third approach to the study of literacy is social. More recent researchers have focused on the social aspects of literacy, arguing that it is the social context of literacy that determines both its uses and its effectiveness; the consequences otherwise are completely variable. This focus has produced perhaps the most fruitful research, explanatory evidence, and practical results to date, with studies and experiments over a wide range of cultures and locales from the past as well as the present, in cultures both advantaged and disadvantaged, foreign and domestic, as will be examined below in greater detail.

The Cognitive Theorists

The cognitive literacy theorists have constructed an elaborate set of arguments that Brian Street (1984) has examined comprehensively. He has applied the term autonomous to describe the model of literacy detailed by these theorists, and has cogently analyzed that body of

principles and their ramifications. Over the years a few changes can be seen in the autonomous model. The original or "strong" autonomists of early years (e.g., Olson, Hildyard, and Greenfield) saw a "great divide" between "savage" or "primitive" and "modern" cultures and those people's abilities to think with complexity or sophistication (the distinction between pre-logical and logical thought stages) (Street, 1984, p.5). A widely-used quotation attributed to M.C. Wallace shows the romanticized stereotype of the "fundamentally incompetent" non-reader: "The mind of an illiterate person is like an unplanted seed. Inside the shell there is the germ of life waiting to be awakened and quickened" (Fingeret, 1989, p. 10). This fanciful notion supposedly explains that illiterates do not have any higher order intellectual ability; it can only be developed through literacy education. This idea remains today the thinking behind the great majority of literacy programs throughout this country and the world.

Jack Goody, a leading social anthropologist and more recent literacy theorist, recognizes, on the other hand, that the idea of the "great divide" has now been discredited. He substitutes for it a notion of distinction between literate and non-literate cultures, claiming the greater usefulness of this latter idea, which relies on the inherent superiority of the written word in particular; the

transmission of cultural heritage actually changes once people have writing, and oral practices become downgraded by literate practices. Cognitivists see a single, linear direction, tracing the development of literacy throughout history. Literacy can be isolated as an independent variable, they believe. They associate literacy with civilization and progress, as well as with individual liberty and social mobility. Goody himself sees a direct "causal connection between writing and logic" (Goody & Watt, 1988, p. 18). He believes the greater ease of writing and reading after the development of the alphabet was "an important consideration in the development of political democracy in Greece....Democracy as we know it...is seen from the beginning association with widespread literacy" (Goody & Watt, 1988, p. 19). Literacy, say these theorists, affects the cognitive process by facilitating empathy, abstract thinking, rationality, critical thought, detachment, and the processes of logic which are exemplified in different aspects of formal language.

Brian Street quotes Hildvard and Olson as challenging the prevailing opinion that all peoples share basic functions of the mind, such as logical and abstract abilities. They find this to be an "alarminq" view, since, if that were true, what would make legitimate the enormous efforts and resources poured into compulsory schooling?

Street, 1984, p. 19). Ignoring a greater number of sociological and political validations for this effort, Hildyard and Olson respond to their own question by saying that education systems are justified on the grounds that they promote "intellectual competence that would otherwise go largely undeveloped" thus confusing literacy and schooling (Street, 1984, p. 14). But as Street points out, this can soon be seen as suggesting that the autonomous model is an elaborated construct with a specific political purpose, to justify the tremendous expenditure "on western education systems" (1984, p. 19), not exactly a welcome notion to most. The argument becomes circular as the tests for success are those of the education systems themselves.

Further challenges to this model can be itemized. First, the tests claiming to demonstrate the working of logic as a result of literacy have been shown instead to be tests of such factors as explicitness, whose nature is culture-based, not cross-cultural. Street notes that Evans-Pritchard, Levi-Strauss, and Labov have made sound challenges in this regard, while no one otherwise has found a reliable measure or assessment technique by which different performances of logic across varying social groups can be judged. A further challenge holds that the available examples of literacy in different societies suggest a greater concern with discipline and the exercise of social

control by restrictive, hegemonic societies than with independent, critical thought or individual liberty. Additionally, the literacy autonomists' claim for a shift toward the supremacy of literate (i.e., written) modes over oral modes is not a reality, as virtually all societies utilize some mix of both modes in a variety of social uses. Ruth Finnegan bears out this argument in a 1981 analysis of the subject (Street, 1984, p. 46). Street argues, too, that the autonomous model of literacy dominated the social anthropology field after Goody, and colored these researchers' descriptions of "the process of social change and the nature of political ideology in these countries" (Street, 1984, p. 6). A final set of challenges to Goody and Watt is levelled by Street over their virtual single-minded, idealized focus on the ancient Greek model for their "literate society." Goody and Watt see this reference as indicating alphabetic literacy in a society which widely assumed it in public life. This idealized picture of the literacy situation (reconstructed by theorists speculating about the limited society for whom it was operative in that culture so remote from our own time and experience) is fraught with problems. The contributions of other peoples and forces cannot be overlooked. Ultimately, Goody and Watt cannot prove that it was writing *per se* that made Greece flourish; as Pattison notes (1982, p. 45) and Murray argues

persuasively (1990, p. 56), the skeptical, logical, historic and democratic qualities of the Greek mind were not made so by writing; rather, the Greek mind offered fertile ground for the nurturance of these predispositions when the time was ripe.

The Economic Theorists

The economic literacy theorists are closely connected to the cognitive group in origin, and share the same autonomous model's glittering generalities for their starting premises. It was C.A. Anderson in 1966 who claimed that a society required a 40% literacy level for economic "takeoff" (Street, 1984), a tantalizing term and idea popularly reiterated in many literacy program outlines ever since. One central problem with this term is that no-one knows specifically what literacy skills or practices are intended in that elixir designation, though Anderson allowed that there would be substantial differences in practices between cultures. His hypothesis has possibly been taken more literally than he intended. In the catch-phrase, "40% literacy level," literacy is treated like one homogeneous attainment, with its variety and relationships to different social conditions reduced to one statistical measure and an ill-defined economic function. Street summarizes:

The homogenization of such variety which is implied by the statistical measures and the economic reductionism of [this approach] fails to do justice to the complexity of the many different kinds of

literacy practice prevalent in different cultures. It also tends to privilege and to generalize the writer's own conceptions and practices, as though these were what literacy is. (Street, 1984, p. 2)

The largest organization to adopt Anderson's "formula" as a goal was UNESCO which, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and several individual governments, launched the first world-wide literacy campaign in 1966. The Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) was divided into eleven separate projects (for the eleven participating countries: Algeria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Iran, Madagascar, Mali, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Republic of Tanzania). An air of stewardship seemed to motivate this massive assault on illiteracy, an almost universal and altruistic rejection of the alarming growth of that handicap in societies around the world. All member nations of the UN were united in their desire to "do something" to stem the tide of adult illiteracy. The governments of 88 countries sent delegates to the Teheran World Conference in 1965 to plan strategies. But, as the later UNESCO EWLP evaluation report does not shrink from admitting, some analysts concluded that:

The strength of the desire to make people literate (which led to EWLP) did not always and necessarily imply its purity....The motivation was not to "do something," but to appear to do something, i.e., to hide a deep determination to maintain the status quo behind a mask of superficial change. (UNESCO, 1976, p. 116).

This view, while not universal, is a telling commentary in

retrospect. In a further cynical reference to literacy as it was specified in the program, N. Salame is quoted as saying, "It is no coincidence that financial and business circles are showing more and more interest in literacy work....It might provide the dying man with bread--but so as to ensure that others eat cake" (UNESCO, 1976, p. 117).

Such deep cynicism after the fact indicates a depth of disillusionment in the wake of the earlier "stewardship" motivation that makes one wonder what happened. There is no need to look far from the vantage point of those gathered at the Persepolis International Symposium on Literacy ten years later, when the overall failure of the UNESCO program was faced and analyzed. But first we need to look at the role of theory at that earlier time.

The original planners of the EWLP, with virtually no dissenters present, were captivated by the relatively new notion of "functional" literacy which formed the basis of their thinking. IN 1962 a UNESCO statement defined a literate person as someone who:

has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing, and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills toward his own and the community's developments. (UNESCO, 1976, p. 183)

This was a solidly representative definition of someone functionally literate. Its apparent practicality had for

most people an enormous appeal, both then and to the present time. As Street notes, it was open-ended enough to capture the interest of everyone, while its "relativity subsumed the variety of political and ideological positions represented by a UNESCO conference," without explicit reference to any ideology or to local circumstances in the countries where the program would operate (Street, 1984, p. 183).

On the other hand, illiterates, under the widespread stewardship motivation, were viewed collectively as a group of marginals. A 1965 UNESCO report says, "illiteracy among adults implies the non-participation of entire sections of the population" in community life, and is simply the manifestation at the educational level of factors preventing whole groups "from participating in the process of development going on around them" (UNESCO, 1976, p. 117).

It is known from learning research that accurate assessment of the target group is essential for teaching success, and that teaching methods that are sensitive to the learner's "felt needs" are the most effective. Yet all entrants to EWLP were simply presumed, without careful inquiry, to be fully illiterate, which was far from the case. But regardless of how the student population was classified, the illiterates' interests were widely defined and interpreted without their input by literates within the power groups who designed the programs and set teacher

standards. The EWLP student dropout rate overall was considered to be very high--over 50% on average--with many expressing disappointment and disillusionment with both materials and teachers (International Council for Adult Education, 1979).

The naivete of such policies now seems patently an invitation for problems, and it was soon seen necessary to rethink these ideas. Activist advocates of a more explicitly ideological approach mounted a critical challenge to the neutrality and naive conventionality of the earlier conference. Among them were the followers of Paulo Freire, whose work will be discussed below. Several speakers at the Persepolis Symposium discussed the accelerated evolution of the functionality concept, noting that it had been broadened under the influence of Freire and others to acknowledge that economic production-related objectives could not be separated from other objectives involved in transforming economic and social structures. They claimed their new insight, that "the effectiveness of literacy training - as with education in general - depends upon the political and ideological functions it is expected to fulfill, both in the productive set-up and in the society as a whole" (Street, 1984, p. 183).

As with other literacy campaigns, the UNESCO endeavor had been to treat literacy as a neutral, cognitive

attainment, as a technology. But many close observers of the program in action saw that analogy as being too simplistic. In 1975 Carol and Lars Berggren claimed that literacy was neither neutral nor simply a technology, but contained "the moral philosophy of a particular society and its education system" (Street, 1984, p. 184). The functional literacy concept had camouflaged the relationship of their particular literacy program to deeper political and ideological structures. The UNESCO effort had "subverted the interests of foreign investment and multinational companies on the premise that productivity and profits could be raised if literacy levels were raised" (Street, 1984, p. 184). Capitalist investment inevitably became the dominant model, and the profit motive overcame the stewardship motive. The goals of international capitalism were based on the cognitive/autonomous model of literacy, which had led the power brokers to take as gospel the 40% literacy level economic takeoff idea, which did not prove reliable. The EWLP proved to be a costly experiment with disappointing and highly uneven results of confusing complexity, everywhere tainted by a monetary profit motive that ignored the true needs of the very people it purported to reach. One sadder-but-wiser note is struck in the closing analysis of the report:

The need for more modesty on the part of those planning literacy work is an important lesson of EWLP. Study of

the programme led A. Meister to denounce the tendency to confuse book knowledge with human intelligence, man's understanding of his relationship to the world and other people...Meister found that programs had often underestimated the illiterate's intellectual possibilities. But...through the process of trial and error engaged in during EWLP, the image of the adult illiterate has emerged enriched. (UNESCO, 1976, p. 119).

Just how widespread this validly reconsidered judgment is remains problematic, however.

The Social Theorists

The social consequence, (or social change) literacy theorists initially found common ground in denying that the results of literacy are automatic or invariable. Coming from a variety of backgrounds (e.g., anthropology, linguistics, psychology, history) they have individually challenged various claims and assumptions of the cognitive theorists, finding significant data to justify a rejection of the concept of literacy as a neutral technological phenomenon, and have found instead that the nature and practices of literacy are related to aspects of the social milieu in which they function. Street has grouped these separate researches together to form an "ideological" model of literacy, as opposed to the autonomous model previously discussed. It is his contention that "what the practices and concepts of reading and writing are, for a given society, depends upon the context, [and]....how they are imparted depends on the nature of the social formation"

(Street, 1984, p. 1).

If we look first at the past, an extensive body of evidence shows that literacy has been adapted to the society that uses it, with a variety of consequences that argue against cognitive/autonomous effects. Kathleen Gough has made a study of literacy practices in ancient traditional India and China in a search for data relevant to the conclusions of Goody and Watt. She found convincing evidence of the levels and spread of advanced literacy and complex, contextual thought comparable to those of classical Greece (Gough, 1988). Gough reached some surprising conclusions, some of which are contrary to Goody's hypotheses. First, the alphabet was not essential for widespread literacy (China rejected the alphabet, and India clung to a semi-syllabic script). Second, widespread literacy did not necessarily produce democracy (neither China nor India developed democratic ideas or practices). Third, neither did those highly literate societies produce experimental scientific thought as the West defines it (India's search was mystical while China deeply explored "social verities"). Fourth, individualism (as the West identifies it) did not develop, and Gough speculates that it seems more a product of capitalism than of literacy (a concept which Greece's commercial practices might support, while neither India nor China produced any such concept).

Fifth and finally, social classes, whether modern or ancient, are based primarily on division of labor in relation to the means of production, and differences in reading habits and levels of literacy arise from these features rather than producing them. Gough concludes further that literacy "appears to be, above all, an enabling factor," permitting a wide variety of organizational and systematic intellectual practices to develop and thrive (Gough, 1988, p. 55). But whether these developments occur, or whatever their focuses, seems to depend less on "knowledge of writing than on the overall development of the society's technology and social structure" (Gough, 1988, p. 56).

Other research which adds to the disavowal of a necessary link between literacy and economic advancement is Erik Johansson's definitive study of the highly successful Swedish literacy campaign in the late 17th century. Literacy was promoted in post-Reformation Sweden for religious reasons as a result of the King's Church Law of 1686, which required every person to be able to read before being confirmed to the dominant Protestant Lutheran faith. In turn, confirmation was required for marriage - making indeed a powerful set of incentives for literacy. Without formal schooling to aid it, literacy was family taught in the home with strong support from the parish clergy,

focusing only on reading ability without writing. But even though a virtually universal literacy rate was attained by the end of the 18th century, little or no economic impact ensued. There was no noticeable change in employment patterns, personal income levels, or national economic status (Graff, 1987).

One of the most influential and persuasive bodies of evidence in support of social theory was the wide-ranging study by Harvey Graff (1979) of literacy patterns in three Ontario cities in the mid-19th century. In studies based upon analysis of extensive city and other governmental statistical records, Graff's research demonstrated that for these communities literacy had much less importance for economic success and jobs than did many other factors, such as social class, ethnicity, gender, or religion. These were the real barriers to social equality, cutting across all literate/illiterate demarcations. Public leaders then, as now, did not scruple to make a public show over the shame of illiteracy to assert social control over lower groups considered "disruptive," even when this illiteracy charge had no basis in fact, but was simply a convenient label or cover for a bias against the poor, the Irish, women, blacks, immigrants, the servant and working classes, or Catholics. Indeed, Graff found that the very characterization of literacy as a neutral or autonomous concept was itself a

part of the attempt of ruling groups to promote their own control over feared lower class elements, to keep them out of power. Under these circumstances, schooling and the usual techniques for teaching literacy (promoting discipline, learning rules, and discouraging independent thinking) became a form of hegemony antithetical to developing critical faculties or logical functioning. Thus the entire contention that literacy, in and of itself, will lead to social advancement, civilization, democratic institutions and economic success constitutes the heart of what Graff calls the "literacy myth," which has dominated our thinking throughout the modern period.

Specifically, Graff found that illiterate workers were not a majority at any occupational level; that fully 3/4 of the laborers and 93% of the semi-skilled possessed literacy skills; and that almost 1/5 of illiterates gained artisan or skilled work in which manual dexterity, "knack," and good sense "contributed more to job skills than a common school education" (Graff, 1979, p. 74).

Several other elements of social inequality proved to operate quite independently from literacy in Graff's study. For example, gender was found to restrict "virtually all women who sought to work," regardless of literacy status (Graff, 1979, p. 75). Then too, advancing age handicapped all workers regardless of literacy, which proved to have

remarkably little impact on their status. Religion also was a major factor in this English-Protestant dominated society, dooming Catholics (most of whom were literate) to the bottom rungs of society. But ethnicity, more than any other factor, influenced the structure of inequality, overwhelmingly determining the place of individuals in this strongly class-divided society, whether they were literate or illiterate; literacy by itself was no advantage to an Irishman, just as illiteracy was not necessarily a handicap to an Englishman--or a Scotsman. Illiterates were not a homogeneous group; social stratification among them placed the English at the top in skilled job placement, with even Canadian-born Protestants and Scots rating lower, but with a wide gap between them and the Irish, whether Protestant or Catholic. Last came the Catholics, whether Irish or Canadian, bringing up the rearmost ranks of the employed. Graff concludes that ethnicity "directly influenced occupational placement, cutting deeply into any contribution that literacy might make" (1987, p. 77). So the overwhelming numbers of Irish Catholics fared badly in these three cities, regardless of education, and were unlikely to escape their low status even with literacy and education. One final element, race, carried an independent influence, Graff notes that blacks in this society fared even worse than the Irish Catholics, as for them "education brought no

discernible benefits, and illiteracy no detriments" (1987, p. 31).

Yet, coexisting with all these anomalies staring that society in the face was the public majority's unflinching acceptance (promoted by demagogic politicians and a popular conviction of the supreme value of education) that all those disadvantaged groups were unworthy by virtue of a lack of education, and were thereby a blight and a burden on the rest of society. The conclusion seems inescapable that today's world is very little different in this regard.

Since mid-19th century North Americans could presume with such ease that education could cure so many social ills, it should probably be no surprise that they felt it could also prevent, if not cure, criminality. Graff quotes one high government official in education as proclaiming: "A system of general education amongst the people is the most effectual prevention of pauperism, and its natural companions, misery and vice" (Graff, 1979, p. 235). Ignorance and crime were linked with each other, as well as with illiteracy, the highly visible indicator of a lack of schooling. Education was seen as the inculcator of restraint, order, discipline, and integration, all believed to be the correct and essential cornerstones for stability in a changing society, and the antithesis of criminal behavior. Morality without literacy was seen as impossible,

another manifestation of the "literacy myth," and an idea that still finds echoes in social expectations today. Criminality was and is popularly equated with arrest and conviction; but since ethnicity, class, sex, and the crime itself (rather than illiteracy alone) determined conviction, it was those who had the fewest resources who were usually convicted. In popular thinking at the time, the cause-effect continuum could be delineated as follows, with ignorance and illiteracy as the chief causes of poverty and crime: "Ignorance caused idleness, intemperance, and improvidence [all products of individual behavior, it was believed] which resulted in crime and poverty" (Graff, 1979, p. 240). Idleness and ignorance were also labeled as offenses, both considered "voluntary" evils. People's logic in ordering these "causative" social features never led them to see poverty as a possible cause of illiteracy or ignorance, nor "to recognize poverty as a structural feature of capitalist society" (Graff, 1979, p. 241).

Education was seen as the panacea for all these ills, and the way to educate was through state supported public schools, making them a kind of "police force in behalf of morality" (Graff, 1979, p. 242). As one official claimed, "If potential young offenders could be kept "off the streets and in the schoolrooms, the prisons would be emptied of the great bulk [95%] of their numbers" (Graff, 1979, p. 243). No

evidence was apparently ever offered in support of this claim. Where illiteracy did decline with education, no corresponding reduction in crime was ever reported, revealingly. But also absent is any public demand for proofs--so convinced, apparently, were people of the truth of the basic faulty assumptions, or so uninterested in the issue altogether.

What happened when, over a decade, illiteracy was diminished, yet it was very clear that crime figures did not go down correspondingly? Such unsettling discoveries did not stop the government officials who had predicted the contrary. They simply retreated to an explanation that blamed poor environment, immigration, poverty, heredity, failure to attend school, or the wrong kind of education. Schools were charged with failing to teach morality (in other words, with false education). "Much of this moral degradation and social danger must be charged on the neglected or perverted culture of the schools," claimed the Chief Superintendent of Schools in Upper Canada (Graff, 1979, p. 247). An examination of jail registers for 1867-1868 in one Ontario county reveals a complex interrelationship of factors relating to crime, punishment, morality, and literacy. Graff reports that while both the Irish and English were arrested in disproportionate numbers, it was the Irish who were most often convicted. Those men

and women arrested who professed lower class occupations, though currently unemployed, were treated more severely than other groups, as were also those arrested for crimes related to drinking and vagrancy. Among the arrested, the better-educated outnumbered illiterates, though this was never acknowledged by the school promoters. Fewer than 1/4 of convicted criminals were illiterate, and fewer than 1/5 of the arrested were uneducated. Regarding morality arrests, immorality frequently bore no relation to illiteracy. In arrests for "intemperance" (which meant immorality not further specified) almost twice as many arrestees were literate than were illiterate. Prostitutes were among the most highly literate of all women arrested. Interestingly, the crime for which most arrests were made--property offenses--saw the lowest number of convictions, with suspects most often literate. So, in the final analysis, most judicial action focused on crimes of idleness, intemperance, and disorder (usually victimless crimes) which were generally attributed to ignorance. Graff concludes, "Both educational promoters and the judiciary, in accepting and disseminating the 'literacy myth,' presumed [emphasis added] the illiterate (or ignorant), the Irish, and the idle to be guilty of social offenses and criminality. It is not surprising that they were found guilty so often" (Graff, 1979, p. 267). Then as well as now, society's expectations

but their influence on decisions about justice, by both police and the courts, even when the supposed link between illiteracy and criminality is not thought to be at issue.

Of truly great influence in the development of social change theory have been the work and writings of Paulo Freire, an experienced practitioner in the literacy education field, both in his native Brazil and later in many other countries the world over. From his teaching experience and strong theorization arising from it, Freire was a powerful challenger of the UNESCO view of literacy in the 1970's, which he saw as serving the interests of the Capitalist nations. In Street's terms, Freire sees the acquisition of literacy as an active process of consciousness-raising, not merely the passive acquisition of content, a process identified as (translated from Portuguese) "conscientization," or the development of critical consciousness. But even more strongly, Freire himself describes literacy as "a form of cultural politics," and as "a set of practices that functions either to empower or disempower people" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. viii). Advocating only the empowering form, Freire clearly and boldly has stepped into a leading position in the ideological camp of literacy theory and is, not surprisingly, highly controversial in his anti-capitalistic teachings. He analyzes literacy as to whether it serves to

reproduce existing social formations or instead to promote democratic change, which he believes must be emancipatory by making people aware of their exploitation and its political and social causes. Literacy, he believes, cannot be reduced to the mere mechanical treatment of letters and words.

Rather, we must transcend a view of literacy in its etymological content, and begin to view it as the relationship of learners to the world. In his literacy program participants not only learn to read and write words, but also to question critically "why they have been illiterate, oppressed, silent....Learners are empowered by the knowledge they are learning [as they] are not empowered by mechanical programs that emphasize reading skills and vocabulary development" (Omni, 1990, p. 76). He sees the latter kind of programs as authoritarian, merely "grooming illiterates to become complacent workers [to satisfy] the demands of the marketplace" (Omni, 1990, p. 87).

Freire has an obviously far-reaching social philosophy with a religious base which sees human beings as intended by God to be subjects rather than mere objects or victims of their world. Humans have an "ontological vocation...not to live passively in First World tenement houses with rats, Third World slums with no sanitation, or chic condominiums in resplendent isolation from our poorer brothers and sisters" (Omni, 1990, p. 76). It is the task of humans to

transform the world and to free the world's population majorities who are "victims, oppressed by authoritarian governments and social policies, silent mutes, really. Illiteracy is a symbol of oppression" (Omni, 1990, p. 76).

Not surprisingly, Freire has constructed a special pedagogy for his socially and politically conscious literacy programs. His "Culture Circle" groups of students are asked first to survey in their minds their farms and villages and collect the names of places, activities, tools, etc. that are centrally important in their own lives, a necessary part of "reading the world." These collected terms Freire calls "generative words" which he organizes onto "discovery cards," a kind of "vowel grid, a do-it-yourself lexicon generator," as Ann Berthoff describes it (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. XV). From these words, the sounds and letters in syllables are matched with one another and with meanings or definitions to make new words and sentences the students learn. This is a program based on the production of texts by the students themselves, without any other printed books or materials provided. Encoding and decoding are learned simultaneously in this process, which Freire finds to be a strong advantage over both phonics and look-say techniques favored by American educators. His program provides recognition with re-invention in the learning process. To stimulate discussion, the teacher ("animator") uses

specifically selected pictures that show realistically some social inequities relative to the students' own locale and background (e.g., a sketch of a typical house in these students' community). Students are asked to use their own knowledge to describe and evaluate the realities shown in the sketch or photograph. The animator's role is limited to asking questions that draw out the students' own knowledge to show them they can think independently. Generative words are elicited in this process, written down, and used to make new words. Freire stresses the participatory and cooperative nature of this program, utilizing groups and dialogue, rather than instruction by the teacher, to emphasize community and sharing.

As already noted, Freire's explicitly ideological approach to literacy teaching gives him powerful credentials in that group so designated in Street's classification. Nonetheless, some social change critics still find inconsistencies or problems with Freire's model. His analysis is said to reveal some parallels to cognitive theory in falsely relating literacy to rationality, a charge made by Street himself (1984, p. 14), making the Brazilian educator perhaps less radical than otherwise indicated. Secondly, his egalitarian program is criticized by some for a reliance on a "petty bourgeois" class of skilled educators to conduct the program; the class position of the teacher,

as a part of methodology, cannot be divorced from its political aims, say these critics. Then, on a much less theoretical level, Freire's model is not easily adapted to all languages. The sound/letter-vowel/consonant combinations of this word-building system work well with the Portuguese language of Brazil and other former colonies of Portugal, as also with Spanish language cultures (e.g., Nicaragua and Cuba) and some other languages. But the complex orthography of English, for example, makes the system very difficult to adapt for students learning this now world-wide language.

Thus, refinements in Freire's theory and model of pedagogy may still be made. But having said that, it must be emphasized that Freire's ideas have had a truly revolutionizing effect on the way educators in adult literacy all over the world now look at their task. He, more than anyone else, has demonstrated in practice that not only is literacy education more than a technology; it is inevitably also a communication of ideology that is influenced by and has impact upon the entire social milieu of the culture in which it operates. These connections can be utilized either to promote the learners' ultimate control over their own lives as a result of their education, or to promote their continued dependence upon a system that would deny them genuine access and social mobility. After Freire,

there is a new set of questions to be asked and answered about literacy education systems and how to improve them.

There have been other important contributions to social change practices in literacy education in recent years, many adapted from the Freirean model. In this regard a variety of community-based organizations in North America and overseas have arisen as providers of literacy education, though a long way from becoming the dominant mode in current use. In these groups Freire's ideas have been a highly productive inspiration. Wherever there is an unmet need for literacy education, a community class can be formed. Since those in need are most prevalent among the poor or the disadvantaged in any society, most community classes in the United States are in large urban centers where they are set up to serve the poor, whether as welfare mothers, laborers, racial or ethnic minorities, immigrants, school drop-outs, parolees, ghetto residents, or even neighborhood gangs. Regarding this latter group, Michael Holzman says that for classes of socially undesirable people, "the point is to make human interactions possible by forming socially beneficial equivalents of gangs, neighborhoods, and street corner associations that will enable those who are not encouraged by their cultural environment to value schooling to do so" (Holzman, 1989c, p. 137.)

Whether they are called "participatory," "cooperative,"

or "education for liberation," these community literacy programs have several factors in common (Fingeret, 1989). First, they focus on the education of their adult learners as a group, not as individuals (no one-to-one tutoring, as literacy is social and collective). Then they promote a sense of community among the learners, leading them to an awareness of their own powers and abilities, as well as their social and political group status. The goal of each class is the learners' empowerment, to enable them to take charge of their own lives in order to bring about change for the improvement of their community as well as themselves. Another feature of these classes is that the teacher is not "omniscient"; he or she does not lecture to the class, but rather frames questions put to the group, often with relevant pictures, to draw out students' own knowledge and ideas, thus demonstrating to them that they can think independently and trust their own knowledge. There the teacher is immersed in the process so initiated, not above it or aloof from it; however, he or she must still remain an observer of the process in order to interpret it for the group to ensure that class discussion maintains its focus and that everyone contributes. The teacher's roles are questioner, facilitator, scribe, and interpreter. Class discussions develop generative words and themes (a la Freire) used to build vocabularies, practice pronunciation,

and develop dialogues through conversation. Some groups focus on writing personal histories or cultural tales developed from group conversations. As with Freire's groups, the students learn to think critically about their own and others' ideas and their relationship to the world, making them better able to articulate their own real needs and demands. In this way they learn to bring about changes and improvements in their own lives.

Another feature of participatory community classes repeatedly mentioned is a strong student sense of classroom "ownership;" learners must feel actively that this is their forum, and they, not the teacher, must finally determine the agenda, content, and pace of the class work. There are no standardized texts or workbooks; the students develop their own texts from their dialogues which they all read and study. As they are the text creators, their own contributions to this material are of direct interest to them individually, and in this way boredom, alienation, or failure to understand are usually avoided.

Community-based organizations do have their critics, however. Michael Holzman, though reporting favorably on a number of such programs, says that "in general, community-based organizations are not useful sites for educational services--that, on the contrary, most are essentially unsuitable for reforms that privilege the role of teachers"

(1989a, p. 175). He then adds a caveat, however, that these organizations may do an excellent job in providing education for those who cannot get it elsewhere.

Holzman has noted that, for most people in need of literacy education, the issue is not their total inability to read or write, but rather "the way in which literacy is lived" (1989b, p. 171.) The development of the concept of literacy--the increasing sophistication of our definitions of that term and the growing list of it's ramifications throughout the 20th century especially have indeed weighed heavily on our ideas of how such learning should be imparted. As Holzman continues, literacy lived as a "nearly useless set of decipherment and inscription skills" is no longer sufficient (1989b, p. 171). It must be made an active way of learning, he says, a process of great complexity not unlike an odyssey of "emigrating to a new culture" (1989b, p. 171). It is that complex journey of activating passive literacy skills that we have spent particularly the last one third of the century coming to understand. Institutional resistance has slowed progress, and many remain unconvinced that old ways must change to fit new social and political realities. We are increasingly pressured on all sides to recognize fully at last the human needs of people in all walks of life. Literacy education must be made to serve a great variety of society's

disadvantaged humans whose contributions we cannot afford to continue to waste as we have in the past.

One such group is made up of those illiterates confined in our jails and prisons. The great majority of these individuals will certainly be returned to society sooner or later, and they will find roles to play there. Considering the massively negative impact of imprisonment on the human psyche, if we want these post-prison roles to be constructive we must prepare inmates for them, and in this effort, literacy education is a fundamental requirement. Probably the world's largest private literacy education program, operated as Laubach Literacy International, has also been the dominant operation in the prison literacy field. It is the program used by the Jail Inmate Reading Program, a major focus of this paper. Thus, in both its worldwide applications and its prison literacy education roles, the Laubach program commands our next consideration.

The Laubach Way

Laubach Literacy International (LLI) also known as the Laubach Way to Reading, was begun by Frank C. Laubach in the 1930's when he went as a medical missionary to the Philippines, armed with degrees in medicine, teaching, and theology. On the island of Mindanao, Laubach devised a phonetic system to teach the native population to read their own language, Maranaw, by teaching pronunciation of

syllables. As Laubach explained, this teaching was "as easy as child's play," because Maranaw has only one sound for each letter, and only 16 letter/sounds in all, thus enabling students to learn the entire alphabet in just two days (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 3). He called his system the "Each One Teach One" method when, in order to facilitate its widespread use, he had all his initial learners teach new students what they had learned in a one-to-one tutorial interaction, and found that it worked beautifully. He came to see that his system could be used equally well for other languages of the world--e.g., Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, the Malay languages, or any language of Africa--all of which have just one sound for each letter. Once a student has mastered all the basic sounds of such a language, he can "pronounce every word in his language," within mere days, as Laubach gleefully claimed, the rest of full reading skill being simply practice to gain facility (1960, p 4).

The philosophy on which Frank Laubach based his literacy teaching method, then, was what we would now call a "bottom up" model of reading: reading is taught as a sequential series of steps starting with the alphabet and specific letter/sound associations (to which Laubach later added picture clues). Reading is seen as a code-cracking process for mastery of phonics and specific skills, utilizing in English a numbered set of four phonics-based

skill books. Vocabulary is highly controlled, with emphasis on phonetic regularities and short sentence practice. This method has been adapted for more than 300 world languages with many refinements, but without fundamental changes in its more than 50 years of use. Before attempting a present-day assessment of this program in its English language version, however, we should look at its development as its founder experienced it.

Laubach detailed his early system, recounting the initial search for a few "key words," some of which used all 12 of the consonants in the Maranaw language. He found three such words and printed them, separated into syllables, on large charts to teach his students phonetically:

Ma-la-ba-naa, ka-ra-ta-sa, pa-da-na-da

(a town in Lanas) (paper) (to learn)

(Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p.4) Then by mixing the three other vowels into these syllable patterns he formed and taught other Maranaw words in the same way until soon the students could make their own combinations and build simple sentences. After only three days, the Maranaw student could independently pronounce every new word. Laubach was elated, noting how different this was from the troubles of American school children learning to read English.

Word of Laubach's early success with the key words method spread rapidly throughout the Asian countries where

it continued to work well for languages with dependable spelling/phonetic correspondences. In the late 1930's Laubach went on a world tour to promote his method, trying it next on the Hindi language in India. India's many languages proved much harder to adapt to his method because of their much more complex alphabets. Nonetheless, with characteristic optimistic enthusiasm, Laubach said of these experiments, "I found that the difficulties were even greater, but I still felt confident that with enough effort we could make lessons that were easy to teach and to learn" (1960, p. 9). He did not document or even mention any achieved success, however. Of India he did say, "We experimented in 20 languages, gradually getting better and better, though they never were as good as they needed to be in order for 'each one to teach one'" (1960, p. 10).

It is of some interest that Laubach's Indian teaching materials were gathered according to the advice of governmental "experts" rather than by any independent assessment of the student population's needs or desires, a practice unquestioned and still followed all over the world until very recent challenges (already discussed in this chapter). Laubach was proud to proclaim:

The best available experts in agriculture and health were consulted. They were asked this question. "What are you trying to teach the village people? What do you believe they need to know most? You tell us in your vocabulary and we will translate it into their vocabulary." They

gave us about 90 subjects they considered important. (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 30)

Laubach went to considerable pains 30 years ago to contrast the difficulty of learning English by his method with its ease in other languages. To teach English by his method, he said then, "is nearly impossible because of its chaotic spelling," and as proof he listed ten separate sounds for "o," nine sounds for "a," five for "i," and nine for "e," as well as a variety of sounds for various consonants (1960, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, the examples he cited

"should prove that English pronunciation can be achieved only by memorizing every word. Nobody in the world knows how to pronounce every word in English correctly because there are no sure clues to pronouncing new words which are found almost daily in reading English....The quickest way to teach people to read English is to teach them the words through stories" (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 4).

Some years later, when he first described his creation of the "Streamlined English" series to teach the regular basic sounds phonetically, he acknowledged that even then the student must learn many common words by sight after much teacher repetition of their pronunciation. He admitted that teaching English by these methods could take 30 times longer than the one-sound-per-letter languages, even after which the student would continue to have trouble because of the many irregular words. In succeeding years, however, his confidence in his phonetic system grew to allow him

enthusiastically to embrace English teaching with no looking back to his early reticence.

Though changes in the method have been few over the years, after World War II Laubach introduced into his basic primers the association of pictures with the letters. The shape of the letter would be identified with a pictured object whose name began with that letter, the picture taking the shape of the letter. Demonstrating this with English, he said "To teach the letter 'k' we might use the word 'kick' and show a man kicking one foot high in the air," his body in the shape of a k, or the letter 's' might be depicted as the body of a snake (1960, p. 11). He acknowledged, however, the difficulty of finding common objects for each language that look like the letters, and then the problem of locating skilled artists to draw the pictures. Indeed, to many looking at them without explanation, some of these patterned picture/word associations without explanation can be quite puzzling and contrived-looking.

Laubach developed graded readers for his students after they had completed the basic literacy primers, with supposed mastery of the phonetic system and the alphabet. These readers again featured a strictly controlled vocabulary, introduced at the rate of ten new words per lesson, and extensive repetition of words to tell a very simple story in

short sentences. A sample from a translated chapter of a Hindi reader demonstrates the pattern:

Anand Learned to Read

Anand learned to read.

He learned to read.

Anand learned to read books.

He learned to read books.

Anand learned to read good books.

He learned to read good books.

Anand was a good man.

He was a good man.

Anand said to his wife

I have learned to read good books.

He said to his wife

I have learned to read good books.

(Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 32)

To critics who found this material boring, Laubach defended his system stoutly against charges of its lacking interest, and especially lacking in plot. His strong feeling was that it is more important to teach students to read quickly, to give them an immediate thrill of accomplishment and spur them to greater efforts. Otherwise, if the students should find these first pages difficult, they would feel no thrill of accomplishment and might give up, feeling either stupid or cheated. One almost senses the concrete hardening around his feet as he adamantly commands, "Interest must never be attempted at the expense of simplicity" (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 16).

Robert Laubach continues the work of his famous father. The younger Laubach has focused on production of written materials for new literates, founding in this country The

New Readers Press for this purpose. He staunchly defends the repetitiousness of passages like those above with a very specific argument:

The new literate loves to read the repetition when it is varied a bit, or when different characters say it. It gives something of the flavor of the epics and ballads which they love, in which there is repetition - a sort of verse and chorus effect. So, what to western eyes and ears may seem boring repetition, is to the new literate easy and delightful reading. And it is good teaching, too, for every fact is repeated again and again. Psychologists say that after we have heard or read a fact five times, we begin to believe it! (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 156)

Laubach might not encounter dispute about his first point - the pleasing similarity of these materials to ancient literary forms--but his second point regarding its "good teaching" qualities must be explored.

Today in the United States many thousands of nonliterate are attempting to overcome their reading and writing disabilities by studying the materials--attending classes or working with volunteer tutors--of Laubach Literacy Action, or the Laubach Way to Reading. The combined forces of the Laubach group and the National Affiliation for Literacy Advancement (NALA) constitute the largest private organization engaged in this effort in the U.S. and Canada. It is without doubt a highly popular program and growing more so daily, as public consciousness of rising illiteracy rates reaches alarming proportions and the popularity of volunteer programs grows.

The Laubach way has a long history of more than 50 years of growth in this country. This surely sounds like success, and why would anyone quarrel with success? Much depends on how "success" is defined, of course. Is popularity a sufficient criterion? We have surely seen the popularity of the literacy myth rise steadily, and yet must face the fact of its fallacy. If we must look for concrete results among Laubach students, how available is proof of such results? Must it not count in the program's favor that the Laubach leadership has dedicatedly fine-tuned this program over all these years, even if they haven't made fundamental changes? As the preface to each teacher's manual states, "The Laubach Way to Reading maintains the proven techniques in the previous Laubach series (the New Streamlined English Series) while incorporating results of experience and research, including a survey sent to more than 2000 users of the...series" (Meyer & Keefe, 1988, p. 8). How reliable is the axiom, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"? How do we decide - and who should we look to in guidance of that decision - whether or not this famous and (by many) beloved literacy teaching method is, at last, "broke"?

We can look first to a study done by Valerie Meyer and Donald Keefe, who have reviewed the Laubach Way to Reading program and other LLI materials, including the four phonics-

based Skill Books, the Teacher's Manuals, story books and "checkup" tests. While Keefe and Meyers are not themselves phonics advocates, they have evaluated the Laubach materials as compared with the best of current phonics knowledge. Citing work done by Cunningham, 1983, and Bower and Zintz, 1977, they have found some serious flaws, first, in the order of consonant presentation. Laubach, as we have seen, presents the consonants in alphabetical order, whereas other phonics authorities contend they should be introduced in the order of frequency and utility. Confusing letter associations, such as b/d and m/n should not be presented on the same page or taught at the same time, as in Laubach materials. Also, consonants with more than one predictable sound, such as c, g, s, and t, should be taught last. The order of Laubach's presentation of vowels is also faulted for starting with the short vowel sounds rather than the long ones which are more easily learned, being more predictable. Laubach's extended emphasis on vowel sounds overall is seen as somewhat out of balance, in Books 2, 3, and 4--with 20 lessons in Book 4 on the long sound of "u" alone, but only one lesson on "how to read a medicine label" (Meyer and Keefe, 1988, p. 9). Consonants, after all, carry most of the burden of surface structure meaning in English, as can be shown in a cloze sentence exercise: Th_s s_nt_nc_ w_th__t v_w_ls c_n st_ll b_r_d. Also, many abbreviation

forms are comprehensible with vowels omitted, as in "bldg." or Blvd.," while one could never say the same for vowels. The whole reliance finally leads the Laubach group to limit their lessons to a highly controlled vocabulary and exclusive use of active voice, which in turn results in unnatural and childish-sounding stories, with no whole language use, as noted earlier in the "Anand Learns to Read" example.

Apart from phonics, Keefe and Meyer found that, as a reading education system, the Laubach program has problems. There is too great a reliance on a skills approach to reading, with the result that learning to read is separated from reading to learn. Throughout all four Skill Books, graphophonic objectives predominate (45% in a sample profile of chapters) while 35% are vocabulary objectives, and only 19% are given to comprehension objectives. "Real world" reading makes its first appearance in Book 3, and even in Book 4, only 5% of the skills could be considered as applying to everyday materials.

Writing lessons promised in the Laubach program turn out to consist of word fill-ins, word lists to write, and sentence or paragraph dictation. Even practice exercises in adding word endings are considered as "writing." The term seems not to be related to composition skills in the program.

Not only is vocabulary repeated over and over, but skill teaching is also highly repetitive. We noted above the 20 lessons devoted to long vowel "u" in Book 4; the -ed word ending is dealt with variously in all the last three books, mostly in review. Meyer and Keefe found all the skills to be taught in this way. It is hard to believe that many, if not most, students do find this tedious.

The Laubach materials are intended for adult, not child learners. The program designers do not seem to acknowledge that these real-life learners, for all their ignorance of reading, come with a rich background of human experience and language facility waiting to be used in reading. They deserve stimulating materials to let them capitalize on that background. The Laubach program designers seem to believe such things are too sophisticated for these people. Both students and tutors therefore must work with an antiquated theory of reading that reveals a lack of sensitivity to the needs and overall abilities of these eager learners.

We must look again at the popularity of the Laubach program. Throughout the nation many state boards of education and library systems (as in California) either advocate or endorse this program, and some states (e.g., Kentucky) have made Laubach the centerpiece of their adult instructional system. Much of this kind of support is based on Laubach/NALA claims of success with their system. But

several researchers report that when they press for some sort of proof or documentation for these claims from the national headquarters, all they get is information about the numbers of volunteers, volunteer hours expended, and the number of adults served. "Data regarding the gains made by adult learners is either absent, or includes very small numbers of learners who take a post-test" (Meyer & Keefe, 1988, p. 10). Other researchers have studied groups of past participants in the program and found as much as a 70% dropout rate by the time the class was 50 hours into the program, which could be accounted for by a variety of circumstances, of course, though success in or satisfaction with the program are unlikely to be among them. One detailed study of six Laubach programs in the U.S. and Canada resulted in this statement in the final report: "No one knows who learns to read and who does not; no-one knows who the successful tutors are and those who are not. In point of fact, no-one knows when the Laubach/NALA approach works and when it does not" (Meyer & Keefe, 1988, p. 10, quoting Wurzbacher & Yeannakis, 1982). Their conclusion is that, in most cases, Laubach/NALA has not developed awareness and support, tutors who teach, or students who read, and is therefore probably ineffective. It is simply persists in the program who are reported on.

There are other possible reasons for the program's

popularity, and some of them have little to do with reading. Myers and Keefe suggest that the mechanistic and repetitive approach has the appeal of being both easy to follow and time-consuming. Being highly structured, it acts as a "security blanket" for volunteer tutors, and makes students feel that something is going on; all those charts and letter sounds seem comfortingly technical and authoritative - it must be good stuff! There is also the impressive longevity of the Laubach program; it seems well-nigh blasphemous to question the effectiveness of a 50-year-old operation that is so widespread. It is further true that an undoubted emotional high is felt and communicated between sensitive, caring tutors or teachers and their eager students that would go far in making this program feel successful to its participants. Frank Laubach himself was highly sentimental in his dedication to his work and to his students. His encouragement of them and his complete joy in their achievements was sincerely and generously communicated and reciprocated. In a passage of his book entitled admonishingly, "Love Your Student," he gushes unabashedly:

Whether telepathy or some gentle smile on one's lips reaches the student, I do not know, but whatever the cause, he responds with a new light in his eyes and a new ring of confidence in his voice. His shoulders go back, he laughs with delight at this, the profoundest stirring of his soul since he was born. To have felt this new awakening in hundreds of illiterates sitting by my side has, I testify, been my greatest source of happiness. I do not recommend the teaching of

illiterates primarily as the duty of educated people, but as the source of one of life's keenest joys (Laubach & Laubach, 1960, p. 36).

Many Laubach tutors have feelings akin to this, if not so lavishly identified, and they get a similar "charge" back from their students--all of which contributes strongly to create a high regard for such activity, whether warranted in actual achievements or not.

Jonathan Kozol, a leading spokesman on behalf of improved public literacy education, has some observations on the Laubach program and its leaders that may help us put into perspective the issues we have been discussing. Kozol suggests that Laubach programs may well be very successful with the portion of the population they can reach--i.e., the relatively few "persisters" we see being counted by L.L.I. and the NALA. Kozol believes that the Laubach leadership understands their low "real numbers" problem very well, and also understands why they reach so few. He found Peter Waite, the national director of L.L.I., to be very straightforward on this matter--privately. Kozol talks of Waite and other literacy group leaders who

 speak in private conversations of the absolute constraints that limit their effectiveness to those who represent the least oppressed, the least intimidated, and in short, the closest to that state of mind that grows out of the confidence and likelihood that, with a modest effort they shall win their place within the mainstream of American success....[These leaders] speak of the programs they conduct as "creaming operations". The "cream" that they skim off the surface of

illiterate America constitutes the 2 to 4% of all illiterate adults who now are reached by [such programs as Laubach's]. If political restraints and economic fears inhibit them from speaking in these terms [for publication] it is their private honesty that I accept, and it is their private recognition of an artifactual impotence which I respect (Kozol, 1985, p. 30).

Kozol's remarks help us get a better perspective on the Laubach effectiveness issues, and on the larger issue of the number of nonliterate adults that we have not yet learned how to reach: the most oppressed, the most intimidated, and those farthest from "the state of mind that grows out of confidence that with a modest effort they can win their place" in society, as Kozol (above) put it. These are many of Laubach's 70% who drop out--the truly unempowered in this country and around the world. Harvey Graff told us about them in part, the analysts of the EWLP failure told us some more, and Paulo Freire acquainted us with them more deeply still. Repeatedly, the empowered establishment--even when they have the best of intentions, (which is not always the case)--seems to promise that they will help these socially lost individuals. They seem to offer them a way up and out of their despair. But each time, when claimants come forward to try, the offerings turn out to seem more like stone than bread, geared to the notions of others regarding nonliterate adults' needs and their ways of seeing the world. Will we in the middle and upper classes of society ever come to understand how the world really looks to the totally

powerless among us? There is a view devoid of hope for improvement in a real world for which the tools we try to give them are often simply incomprehensible. As Meyer and Keefe conclude, "Liberation and empowerment are not found in phonics and skills. Literacy instruction should begin with the needs and desires of each new reader, not with the letter b and a bird" (Meyer & Keefe, 1988, p. 10).

In the next section of this paper, we turn from an examination of programs to one of settings as we look at the setting provided for literacy education in jails and prisons, observing also the impact of that setting on all the participants in the corrections education picture.

CHAPTER THREE

Teaching in the Correctional Setting: Special Problems

There are certain fundamental characteristics inherent to correctional institutions which set them apart from all other educational settings. Jails and prisons have often been aptly described as total institutions housing an involuntary and problematic population. In such a setting the normal societal compartmentalizations of time and space that enable us to maintain our sanity, our marriages, our friendships, and our ability to work are destroyed. Inmates must daily perform all their activities with the same people in the same place and according to the same schedule-- sleeping, eating, working, playing, and learning with the same set of individuals, day in and day out, with virtually no personal choice regarding any of these features. It is, of course, easy for "outsiders" to say very factually, "For criminals, what else should anyone expect? They're there to be punished for crimes they committed." It must be said that this argument has problems at once, since, at least in the jails, most inmates are still in mid-trial or have yet to be tried on their charges, and in time may well be found innocent and released. In any case, our concern in this writing is not the guilt or innocence of prisoners, but the

problematic nature of the carceral setting as a base for educational programs, and its impact on all participants in such programs. For no single participant--whether inmate/student, teacher, or corrections officer--is exempt from such impact. Not to recognize these effects at the outset is a recipe for folly for all concerned.

There are special problems which must be dealt with concerning the institution policy-makers and administration, the inmate/student population, and the educators in an ongoing tripartite relationship, and we will examine these areas one at a time. One further point at the outset is the inevitable intermingling of the terms "prison" and "jail." In modern American usage these may describe separate settings--prisons considered as housing convicted felons, and jails housing minor offenders and arrestees awaiting or undergoing trial, a pre-sentencing population. However, as accused/incarcerated persons, these two groups are alike for most purposes in the discussion of correctional education (CE). Except when otherwise specified, I will use the two terms interchangeably, as have most sources consulted. Initially there are a few basics to education in any setting that, in the case of CE, are chronically ill-supplied (Davidson, 1988). Perhaps the most obvious of these is classroom space. Most classrooms, especially in older institutions, are converted "temporarily" from inmate living

space of some sort--often a section of a dormitory common area--with highly inadequate storage, little or no chalkboard space, poor lighting and ventilation, and student seating areas or arrangements not conducive to study. Also government funds are limited (predictably) for this politically unpopular branch of education. Thus libraries are non-existent or poorly stocked and available to only a fraction of the inmates; essential texts and print materials are in short supply, with photocopies generally mandatory for student use; materials teachers usually take for granted as supplied either the students must do without or the teacher must purchase for her own students without reimbursement, since inmates can neither purchase their own nor have others bring them from outside (Goldin & Thomas, 1984, p. 127). Teachers are also in short supply for the numbers of students who would like to be in an educational program. In sum, these problems--hampering, but not crippling--are simply the basic frustrating "givens" of CE in general.

Administration and Staff

More specifically, as one source in the wider problem area, the administration and correctional staff in a carceral education setting offer a mixture of support and hindrance to teaching efforts (Davidson, 1988; Goldin & Thomas, 1984; Duguid, 1988). The root of the problem lies

in the one central and overriding concern of corrections against which everything else is evaluated: security (Cheatwood, 1988). This seems an obvious and legitimate preoccupation--inmates must be confined and prevented from doing harm to themselves and their fellows, or to corrections officers (C.O.'s) or teachers. But the constraints of "security" on educational programs, practices, and their implementation in the classroom are far-reaching indeed. They frequently can and do amount to harassment, as Goldin and Thomas report.

An appropriate environment for classroom learning can be easily disrupted by harassment from non-participants, especially staff. One instructor complained that during his first few weeks at Statesville, guards would disrupt the class by noisily opening and closing the classroom door, stomping into the classroom and looking around, or by breaking up the class earlier than scheduled, only to have students stand around in the corridors until time to return to cells (Goldin & Thomas, 1984, p. 128).

These disrupting procedures are not predictable (Cheatwood, 1988). A C.O. may decide that there is too much socializing going on in a class where a teacher has a group activity in progress, or that too many students are at a given table when a teacher has grouped them by ability levels. Often a teacher's explanation can save an activity, but the officer's word is always final. Complaints may simply never get a response, or the response may come weeks later in the weakest possible terms. Teachers could probably adjust to

any one of such examples if it represented the rule, even though a vital lesson or activity might be lost in the process. But the application of such "rules" is often so completely arbitrary that it becomes very destructive of classroom morale and program delivery. Any single member of the correctional staff (virtually none of whom has any teacher training) can at any time, at will, and without explanation, close a "questionable" activity or feature of practice on grounds of his or her personal interpretation of "security" demands, which often translate to mean "administrative convenience." As one leading CE authority has said, "Disrupting and dismantling instructional programs for the sake of administrative convenience is a continuous feature of the organization of the modern prison" (Davidson, 1988, p. 76, citing six additional sources). Goldin and Thomas also found that real cooperation between Adult Education agencies and penal institutions was somewhat illusory.

Symbolic cooperation is expressed by penal institutions in the establishment of formal structures of education programming which may partially satisfy judicial, legislative, and public pressures, but substantive cooperation in program implementation is much less apparent. The observed conditions in the classroom demonstrate that...correctional education continues to play a relatively minor role within the prison itself (Goldin & Thomas, 1984, p. 124).

One might well ask, given such marginality of support, how educational programs can survive in the correctional

setting. The answer unveils a fascinating ambivalence in correctional thinking. While on the one hand many in corrections may hold a low opinion of the value of inmates as human beings undeserving of education, on the other hand the policy-makers and professionals (caseworkers, psychologists, program coordinators) fall in with a large proportion of our society who firmly believe in the popular "literacy myth" elaborated by Harvey Graff (see Chapter 2). The concept seems to have broadened now to the education myth--that education is securely linked to employability, and employability to an inmate's "going straight" after release. This latter, slippery issue of educating offenders to reduce recidivism is the core of most C.E. theory, and indeed, pro-education forces eagerly seek conclusive data to prove that education programs do reduce recidivism.

This focus is unfortunate, since, regardless of program effectiveness, the problems faced by the released inmate on his re-entry into society are exceedingly complex and difficult to evaluate. He is trying to re-establish relations with his family (if it has survived his incarceration, as it often does not); he is trying to find a home and a job (much harder in already hard times for an ex-convict); and he is probably struggling to find any legal way to get enough money just to live in this high-cost society. His efforts in these major areas may--and often

do--fail, and he may then feel desperate that he has no alternative but to take up the all-too-easy illegal ways of making money in crime. These things can happen regardless of his resolve to "go straight," regardless of his prison classes. It is inappropriate to link the success or failure of CE so exclusively to this overwhelmingly complex issue of recidivism (Duquid, 1988).

On the workaday level, the ambivalent attitude of corrections is shown when C.O.'s are heard at one moment to label their inmate charges as various forms of low-life undeserving of this educational "coddling," but in the next breath expressing satisfaction that programs keep the inmates quiet, busy, and out of trouble the officers would otherwise have to deal with. Regarding the first attitude opposing educational programs, security staff members, it should be noted, frequently have educational and employment histories not unlike those of most inmates, and officers often "resent seeing prisoners having opportunities for which they themselves would have to pay tuition and give up leisure time" (Davidson, 1988, p. 76).

The second attitude favoring education as a form of prison management--rehabilitation with social control--is a nearly ideal solution for administrators: school is in place here because it meets "the delicate objective [of providing] a non-threatening way to maintain custody, and yet appear to

deliver treatment" (Davidson, 1988, p. 77). However it is seen, the administrative/custodial sector of the carceral education picture is indeed complex and problematic.

Inmate/Student Population

Yet surely the inmate/student population sector offers no less complicated a part of that picture. Precisely who are the inmate students? Looked at as a group, these candidates for CE are highly diverse, yet share a number of noteworthy characteristics. A leading correctional educator, Stephen Duquid, has assembled some identifying statistics for this population. He profiles a representative sample Michigan prison population as follows: 60% are black; fewer than 5% have any college experience; and 26% have less than an eighth grade education. Regarding their offenses, crimes against persons (assault, robbery, rape, etc.) constitute about 60%, and those against property 25%. Nationwide, between 20% and 50% of inmates cannot read or write; about half are unmarried; more than half are in the 20-35 year age group; about 25% are judged to be severe drug addicts; and 17% are judged to be mentally deficient. In one location, among repeat offenders, the average age of first conviction is 14; 50% of these repeaters are alcohol dependent; 33% have at least one brother also in prison, and a majority were, before arrest, either unemployed or in manual labor jobs (Duquid, 1988, p. 175).

Generalizing about this unique collection of people, we can say that poor educational backgrounds, histories of anti-social behavior, dysfunctional family histories, substance abuse, high concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities, and a predominantly youthful age characterize the prison population. Yet these are just the surface features; there are further complicating factors.

As a result of the above-noted profile characteristics, inmates usually show evidence of deeper-seated personality and behavior problems in the classroom. Initially it is difficult for any member of this group to escape memories of bad school experiences on entering yet another classroom. The unmistakable attitude of a typical first-day entrant to the program is one of apprehension, awkward embarrassment, confusion, or painful insecurity--conditions which, if continued, would obviate any real education. Furthermore, teachers repeatedly must deal with the students' short attention span and poor ability to work without direct supervision. "The stress of incarceration, separation from family, marital problems, and parole denial often affect a student's motivation and performance in the program" (Anderson, 1981, p. 20). In the jail setting, men who enter classes are frequently newly arrested and are obsessed with their own very real problems--facing an uncertain future and perhaps long internment, with wives and children left

without support. Authorities on all sides relentlessly prevail upon them to plead guilty, usually without private attorneys (too costly for most who are plagued by a lack of funds). Overworked public defenders struggle weakly or totally fail to defend them, while also mandated to try to keep court calendars from becoming clogged.

There are still more powerful negatives that must be acknowledged for inmate learners. Darrel Cheatwood discusses this learner and the "presenting culture" with which he enters prison, referring to the values and attitudes carried by the inmate from the outside world into the institution. At least two of these cultural features are most relevant to teachers' understanding at the outset. The first is that these men probably have a far greater familiarity with the atmosphere of prisons and "the rules and roles played out in them" than does the teacher (Cheatwood, 1988, p. 184). Based on their likely prior experiences in the street subculture, the "hustle" has become an accepted part of life, making them better prepared to deal with prison's unwritten, survival oriented, warped codes and conflicting, competing reward/punishment systems than are teachers with their middle-class backgrounds.

In this regard, Cheatwood discusses the two overriding concerns of all inmates that a teacher may not at first fully appreciate: confinement and the restriction of

luxuries. In other words, trying to get out and trying to get as much as possible of the limited amenities that are allowed to them in prison are their two main preoccupations, giving them motivations in the classroom quite different from those of an outside student. The prison administration's reward/punishment system feeds into this mentality, which is further complicated by a subcultural inmate reward/punishment system. The administrative system grants or withholds privileges--and increases or decreases confinement--based on the inmate's attitude and conduct, while the inmate subculture works on the social status and mutual obligations of individuals in this dense and pressurized population. This is a hostile environment, often gang-dominated, where loyalty to one's group may be a survival essential, and any loner is extremely vulnerable. The two reward/punishment systems compete and interlock in highly complex ways that impact on student behavior and are critical to understanding the role played by education inside prisons.

The second feature of the presenting culture outlined by Cheatwood is an anti-education bias. The great majority of inmates have a past history of school failure and the negative attitude frequently associated with it. This negativity may be toward education and formal learning in general, in which case "street smarts" have taken their

place as a legitimate and often proud substitute. In other cases the negative attitude is turned inward and the inmate student feels deeply insecure about his own abilities, fearing further school failure as proof of his own "stupidity."

Since most classes are attended by students voluntarily, why then do such negatively-oriented students actually choose to go to school in jail? Cheatwood offers four basic reasons (1988, pp 184-5). First, education may be seen as a potential source of the luxuries that are a basic goal of an inmate in this grimly deprived environment. Opting to attend classes may get him better housing in an educational dormitory, or give him access to a teacher with a soft heart who might do him favors, or at least have a sympathetic ear for his preoccupying troubles. Education might also give him increased status with staff in the rank-conscious society of prison. Secondly, education is seen as potentially helpful for securing early release. It offers concrete evidence for judges, probation officers, or parole boards that the inmate is trying to improve himself. As Cheatwood points out, "This is the perception of education, not necessary learning," and in this light, prison schools are no different from other schools (1988, p. 185). Interestingly enough, there is little evidence that educational activity has any real impact on early release;

the decision-makers for this issue (i.e., judges, probation officers, parole boards) apparently put much more weight on other factors such as evidence of remorse, an improved "attitude" (i.e., compliant docility) and thereby a lack of unfavorable reports on file. A third reason for taking jail classes is to consume time and avoid boredom. An activity in the social atmosphere of the classroom is, for many, greatly to be preferred over the stultifying routines of the cell or the dayroom. The fourth reason Cheatwood pessimistically lists as applying to only a few inmates: a genuine interest and involvement in the process of learning. It is these inmate students who keep CE functioning, who work to make the educational system prosper, and who are the examples keeping the teachers going. It should be said that in the area of literacy education and ESL classes, there are probably more of such students than in the general prison population. While on the outside it might be genuinely difficult for many illiterates or immigrants to attend school because of job commitments, feelings of personal embarrassment, or other constraints, the time spent in incarceration can be an unexpected opportunity to acquire better speaking, reading, and writing skills. Though they may be fearful of school failure, and may be inept students with poor self-images, they are more likely than the rest of their fellow inmates to be open to real education.

The Educators

The third element in the CE setting's tripartite relationship is made up of teachers and tutors who are undoubtedly the most naive of the three groups, at least initially. The middle-class background, previous teacher training, and psychological mindset about teaching that characterize most present-day educators do not adequately prepare them for the unique CE classroom experience. The day of a typical CE teacher, as revealed in the following sample diary entry, shows a few of the special, problematic circumstances recognizable to all corrections educators.

Once again there has been a complete turnover in the class. Last Friday two students were transferred to [another institution], two were withdrawn by their caseworkers to attend the drug awareness program, one dropped out, and another is in segregation until the weekend. Since last week four inmates have started. F. expects to be around for six months, J. thinks he will be out in a month if a space opens up at the half-way house, T. wants to be on the work crew...and A. is so heavily medicated I cannot understand why he was placed here (Davidson, 1988, p. 76).

It is obvious from this passage that among chronic problems the teacher must face daily, the first is the lack of continuity in his or her teaching program. Students come and go constantly--daily, weekly and monthly--perhaps with no warning, and certainly beyond the control of either teacher or student. There can seldom be any more than a day or two for a recognizable teaching unit if the instructor hopes to reach the same group of people with all the

material or information. Second among teaching problems, there is really no sense of student progression. The teacher who depends on seeing progress in her students as confirmation of her own teaching abilities is set up for a maximum of frustration in this position; most students are simply not there long enough for this to show, and she will usually not be able to maintain any one unit or topic from a simple level to a culminating, more complex level without bypassing at least half of her group along the way. Thus a third problem of CE is that class membership--both in numbers and in identifying characteristics--is always unpredictable. In this respect, jail classes are more difficult than prison classes, since jail terms are generally a good deal shorter than those in prison, and jail inmates may miss many more days of class when their trials are in court. As a fourth problem, the teacher has little or no control over the kind or level of student who comes into his class, as can be seen when the teacher-diarist says of the heavily-medicated student, "I cannot understand why he was placed here." A teacher can usually have a totally inappropriate student removed from the class, but the custodial staff will expect the teacher to offer some proof of that student's unsuitability; merely saying "He doesn't fit in with the level of the rest of the class" is not usually sufficient grounds for exclusion. CE teachers are

routinely expected to accommodate multiple levels. There must also be an opening for the student in another part of the facility before he can be removed from a class, if the present class is held in his dormitory.

There are other identifying characteristics of CE teaching that, while they may not be unique to this setting, still serve regularly to complicate the teaching atmosphere. Teachers must overcome a highly distracting environment if the class is held in a section of the dormitory dayroom or common area. Students are constantly being called out for the periodic daily "pill calls," dental, medical or legal appointments, or court appearances. Toilets are flushing, announcements are called out loudly from the C.O.'s station, people not in the class may be talking and laughing, or another group may be watching a movie or television program. These rooms are predominantly hard-surface areas, and all sounds echo. A teacher's voice can get lost in reverberations. When these inmate-students with their characteristically short attention span cannot hear clearly, they quickly tune out and are lost.

There are also teacher problems arising out of the structural system itself that "decouple" the goals of education from their implementation. As Goldin and Thomas note, educational goals and "the goals of what might be termed 'human warehousing' are essentially contradictory"

(1984, p. 129). These researchers, along with others, have found that the dominance of security and custody functions dramatically interferes with program effectiveness in ways that directly impact upon instructors. Goldin and Thomas recount an incident with which many CE teachers can readily identify. An instructor had briefly detained a student after class, thus inadvertently making him late in returning to his cell. When an officer began to berate the student for his lateness, the instructor tried to intervene, explaining that he was the cause of the problem and it was not the student's fault.

The officer virtually ignored the instructor, increased his verbal assault on the student, and threatened him with disciplinary action. The guard's response toward the prisoner sent an implicit warning to the instructor, making it clear that guards, not instructors, control the movement of prisoners, and that even if guards are not able to retaliate directly against an instructor, they can indirectly communicate their animosity by harassing and insulting prisoners in the instructor's presence (Goldin & Thomas, 1984, p. 128).

Such practices are not only invidious, but unfortunately highly effective in keeping instructors "in line." They are grossly destructive of both student and teacher morale and any kind of adequate learning environment.

Reflecting again on the teacher's diary entry, we can sense this issue of teacher morale, though it is not stated directly. The teacher reveals a weary frustration with his job. This is perhaps the single largest cause of CE teacher

dropout or burnout. There are few opportunities for a real sense of accomplishment growing out of the daily work of CE teaching; the hostile setting and the varied difficulties of these students simply put up too many barriers to "good" education, however one defines it. Those teachers, this writer included, who feel a sense of accomplishment or success and stay in the field over a number of years usually find some ancillary source of satisfaction in their work, whether it be some worthwhile relationships established with individual students, or some aspect of the teacher's personal ability that strikes a responsive chord, even with these transitory and troubled students. Feelings of success certainly do not "come with the territory."

There is another problem for teachers--in this case, female instructors especially--that is too rarely dealt with in CE research which, perhaps in this field more than most (?) is dominated by male writers and scholars. But a group of Quaker women volunteers, long-experienced in prison work, pooled their suggestions to new female volunteers in a relatively small pamphlet entitled, "What We Wish We Had Been Told When First Going Into Prisons." This document is a gold mine of extraordinary insights, information, and advice concerning most prison issues. But one issue these gallant women tackle boldly is left virtually unmentioned in other research literature, and the void without such

information yawns huge and empty in the total picture of the carceral education setting called for in this writing. That issue is the problem of sexual attractions as women enter this realm of sex-deprived men whose human needs, quite apart from sex, are overwhelming.

The great majority of teachers--inside or outside of penal institutions--are female, and many of them are between the ages of 25 and 40, very close to the age bracket most heavily represented in the male inmate population. In general, teachers are (by training, if not by nature) sensitive, caring people who empathize with student needs. We say this proudly when the student population is made up of children, but even when it is not, the attitude is still there, and for a good teacher it should not be otherwise. Given this circumstance, and recalling Cheatwood's description of classic inmate needs, attitudes, personalities and methods of operation, it seems only logical that sex issues would be a likely problem area in the CE setting, and they are. The beginnings of the scenario are described well by the Quaker women:

Expect to feel an unfamiliar, very heady and very addictive "super star" feeling, especially at first. It may arise from sexuality in a deprived environment, from the unfamiliar real power to help the helpless, or other sources. Do not let it go to your head. Remember that you will be constantly tested and probed by prisoners and staff alike, and that no leading lady's image can survive the footlights forever. If your mascara runs in the heat, remember to be real. (What we

wish, n.d.)

The "constant testing and probing" referred to by the writers is an all-too-accurate assessment that adds in a very real way to the higher stresses of the CE teacher's job. Their use of the "super star" and "leading lady" metaphors earns high marks for its sophisticated understanding that allows the readers to whom the piece is directed to feel less appalled by (more accepting of) the picture of themselves as possible performers in this shocking role. Panic and total rejection of the whole idea is the natural first reaction, and the writers have realized they had to get beyond this. The issue is fully joined in the 14th--and longest--item on the entire list of the observations and advice of the full document.

Expect to be sexually turned on some time early in your prison work. Almost nobody escapes this experience, from beautiful and innocent young girls to happily married (or widowed) matrons of a certain age; not to mention single women, divorcees, engaged women, gay men, and those who have foresworn all such relationships and feelings. When this happens to you, it may possibly be the beginning of something that may mature into a viable relationship in time. But it is also possible that other romantic, but more powerful elements enter into it. When it happens to you, don't panic and don't go overboard. (What we wish, n.d.)

The writers' use of "when" rather than "if" is a vital, purposed usage emphasizing the universality or inevitability they ascribe to these events, further calming the fears of denial-prone readers. They continue:

Examine yourself to see whether the feeling does not contain one or more of the following elements:

- a) The sexual deprivation of prison life creates an electrical charge in the very air when a woman enters into this environment - a charge that no woman can fail to respond to, or at least to feel. (What we wish, n.d.)

Few teachers will deny the accuracy of this statement, though the issue is so taboo that it is difficult to talk about freely. But the womens' observations grow still sharper:

- b) The balance of power between free women and imprisoned men. One of the few milieus in our society where a woman is more powerful than a man is in the prison situation where the woman is free and the man is a prisoner. As men have long known, but women frequently do not realize, the possession of power is a sexual turn-on. Indeed, women have had so little experience of the phenomenon that they may not recognize the sexual overtones of power, and may mistake it for love.
- c) The inaccessibility of the man for a normal everyday relationship. This allows both parties to fantasize, but commits neither to live with the results of a relationship in the real world....The dark side of this is that you may be exploiting another person without being aware you are doing so - by projecting your fantasies and your needs on him or her as a promise that in the real world you cannot or will not keep. Experience shows that neither sex is guiltless of this kind of exploitation. (What we wish, n.d.)

These controversial ideas about emotionally-charged, real issues--especially the sex/power relationship--are of such daily, practical significance in CE teaching routines as to

demand introduction into full-blown orientation sessions for new teachers, though such sessions are now a rarity. The consequences of ignoring or denying such truths can be highly dangerous. The women writers continue: "A sexually deprived environment breeds violent jealousy and other strong emotions...." Such feelings could provoke severe physical consequences in this volatile setting at any time. The following observations and advice are cool, astonishingly wise, and balanced:

Be discreet in dress and body language. Remember that a prison, all appearances to the contrary, is a very puritanical place. If inmates and prison staff share nothing else, they share a conservative value system in sexual matters. Remember also that many men have to spend long years in this deprived environment, and that it is important for them to adjust to the realities of doing time. (What we wish, n.d.)

Ultimately, it is critical, Cheatwood tells us, for corrections teachers to understand and face honestly their own motivations and priorities in their work, and fully understand the nature of the institution where they work. Its frustrations are inherent in all corrections systems, and "to try to educate while acting as if they were not is to defraud your students" (Cheatwood, 1988, p. 186). While Cheatwood did not have in mind the particular issue discussed above by the Quaker women, his words have as highly valid an application to that issue, as to all the others in CE. The teacher who understands the inherent

limitations and hazards in the system, with the pressures they impose, and can yet continue to work successfully under them, he tells us, is "the best hope for the students and for corrections education" (Cheatwood, 1988, p. 186).

The last word regarding CE teachers and the problems inherent in the CE setting must again go to the Quaker women:

Prisons have proved that people do not learn very much from punishment....Human experience proves that they frequently do learn from example. What you do in prison, therefore, is more important than what you say there. (What we wish, n.d.)

Discussing the importance of promises - of not making any you cannot keep, and keeping any that you make, the women observe:

A broken promise to a caged and powerless person is even more painful than in normal life....It is an act of cruelty. Even worse, it will further disable that person from learning to trust [which is] essential for reintegration into a community....[A broken promise] may further alienate and destroy the victim. (What we wish, n.d.)

The women conclude with a solemn but fitting analogy. "In spite of everything, going into prison can be a very rewarding experience. Jesus was not kidding when he said, 'I was in prison and you visited me.'" (What we wish, n.d.)

We will next consider a jail program in our area whose volunteer practitioners constitute one of the groups most generous of their time and energy, and among the most dedicated in pursuit of their educational goals: the

literacy tutors who staff and operate the Jail Inmate Reading Program, a Laubach-based training system. The focus will be on a detailed examination of that program--its goals, practices, and problems in the jail setting--as they compare with models representing the best of current education theory already discussed in this paper.

Chapter Four

The Inmate Literacy Program

History and Background

The Reading Program Inmate Literacy Project is an outreach branch of the County Library Reading Program, which is one of 84 such public library literacy programs in California. The greater reading program was founded in 1984, and serves non literates and reading learners throughout the county. It offers free one-on-one tutoring in English for adults age 16 and over, providing free teaching materials for both tutors and learners. Originally fully funded for five years by the California Library Service Act (CLSA), the reading program in 1990 obtained funding from the county library, the County Department of Corrections, Friends of the Reading Program, corporate sponsors, and others. Since 1985 the program has trained some 1,350 tutors and taught basic literacy skills to more than 1500 learners. Of these learners, 67% in 1991 were recruited from traditionally under-represented ethnic minority groups, with 56% female enrollees, an increase of 10% over the previous year's figures in each category (County Library Reading Program, 1992).

The Inmate Literacy Program (ILP) has operated as an

arm of the County Library Reading Program since January, 1990. This program is virtually unique among library literacy operations in California in sending its tutors right into the jails. It operates in the jail as the supported guest of the Department of Correction, not as a mandated, autonomous program--a situation that has serious ramifications for its continued functioning. It matches inmate learners with either volunteer community tutors or peer inmate tutors in one-on-one work to improve basic literacy skills in the county's four correctional facilities, including the Women's Division. The Inmate Literacy Program's statement of purpose is "to provide one-on-one tutoring to inmates who are in need of improving their basic literacy skills. The inmates are empowered to trust in their own abilities, and by this action their self esteem will be raised sufficiently to realize that there is power through education" (Inmate Literacy Program, 1991, p.1). In its first two years the program matched over 200 inmate learners with individual community or peer tutors (ILP Fact Sheet, 1992). The inmates who participate in the program are those adjudged to read below the 8th grade level and who ask for help to improve their reading, writing, spelling, or math skills, or to prepare for the GED test series.

Recruitment of Learners and Tutors: Assessment Procedures

Recruitment is of course basic to the program's function and is a prime focus of the program Co-ordinator who recruits learners by making spoken presentations in various jail dormitories. Interested learners who expect to be detained at a given facility for three months or longer are encouraged to sign their names and booking numbers on a list, and the Co-ordinator or a designated staff member will return to assess the inmate's reading abilities.

Assessment of learners by pre-test is based on materials from the Reading Evaluation Adult Diagnosis (READ) published by Literacy Volunteers of America (1982). The test is in four parts: (1) Sight Words (four lists of high frequency words each); (2) Word Analysis Skills (letter name and sound recognition, plus vowels and consonants in lists of one-syllable combinations) plus classification of errors; (3) Reading/Listening Inventory (short paragraphs for reading aloud, testing for fluency, comprehension, and ability to use context clues) plus a table for estimating grade level of reading skills; (4) Summary Sheet (to aid in planning instruction for the learner) (Literacy Volunteers of America, 1982). The test requires from 30 minutes to one hour to administer, depending on how advanced the test-taker's skills are. Test-takers are not told their scores, nor told whether any answer is "wrong" or "right," and all

those who test below 7th grade level are accepted into the program. Those reading below 10th grade level are still eligible for tutoring if they show specific problems with writing, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary or basic math. Most inmates who sign up for the program either lack the confidence to enter a classroom environment; want to continue their education but don't want to leave their dorm; or are on a waiting list for an Adult Education dormitory, a dorm housing only inmates who are participating in a specific Adult Education taught course, such as ESL, GED, or Independent Study for a high school diploma. In this third eventuality, the program will match the inmate with a tutor pending his or her admission to an education dorm, with the learner's option of continuing with a tutor even after entry to the ed dorm, if desired. All applicant learners are asked why they are not in an ed dorm, and are encouraged to apply there as well as to go back to school when they leave the prison system.

Community tutors for the ILP are recruited among community organizations, service clubs and churches, with public service announcements on radio and with press releases to newspapers, especially on the occasion of award or graduation ceremonies. Also, at the monthly Community Reading Program tutor training sessions the Inmate Program Co-ordinator, with the help of a correctional facility

tutor, makes a promotional presentation. All volunteers are then invited to attend an orientation at the Oakwood facility to aid in making their final decision.

Tutor Orientation

The two-hour Tutor Orientation is the last step in the selection process, given by program-supporting members of the Correctional staff who explain to prospective tutors the rules and regulations relevant to working in this system. The hard facts of the restrictions on and the responsibilities of volunteers are presented in combination, first, with encouragement to take on this challenging work, and second, with expressions of support and appreciation from both the jail and ILP staffs. After this orientation, if candidates choose to become jail tutors within the community program, they must submit to the standard procedures for a security clearance (e.g., a criminal records check, fingerprinting, etc.) and issuance of a required clearance badge to be worn at all times on the jail premises. Their next step will be Tutor Training.

Inmate Tutor Selection and Training

Candidates for inmate peer tutoring are chosen on the basis of three criteria: (1) the inmate's written statement about why he or she wants to be a tutor; (2) a personal assessment interview with the program Co-ordinator; and (3) information from the candidate's dormitory Corrections

Officer regarding that inmate's conduct with others in the dorm. The functions of inmate tutors are as follows: (1) to assist those inmates who have been matched with community tutors when they need help with lessons; (2) to promote the literacy program in their own dorms; (3) to encourage interested inmates to have their reading skills assessed by the Co-ordinator, or to request placement in an education dorm; and (4) to do one-on-one tutoring with an inmate of their choice. It is this fourth aspect that forms the core of the inmate tutoring program, the part to which most beginning tutors aspire. Those applicants who meet the above criteria are given a 15-hour training similar to community tutor training, but with stronger focus on sensitivity to the needs of others, and on patient, non-aggressive behavior essential in one-on-one tutoring.

Peer tutoring in the jail has turned out to be a most highly valuable feature of ILP work, rewarding in ways not entirely foreseen. When the tutoring match is a good one, the self-esteem and confidence of both tutor and learner are raised--against great odds in the stultifying environment of the jail, which can otherwise produce a virtually poisonous atmosphere. For the successful peer tutor, there is the invaluable, socially-healing knowledge that he or she is contributing to another human being something of great personal value. For the learner, there is the equally

healing knowledge that not only can he learn and grow, but also that another person in this terrible place honors or cares about him enough to help him by sharing his valuable higher knowledge--not just "street smarts."

Yet of course, peer tutoring matches are not without problems, as the program Co-ordinator notes (Myers, 1991, p. 4). Peer tutors usually leave the training sessions highly motivated and excited about the possibilities of their work, and most find learners in their dorm very quickly. Then very often a disappointingly frequent pattern begins to unfold, based on the sad fact that inmates normally have little respect for each other. I speak of male inmates here, since the program among the women is so new that less is known about their relationships at this time. First, the learner begins to lose motivation when he finds his tutor to be too "pushy" about how frequent and how long their tutoring sessions should be; the learner expects this service to be provided only when he feels like receiving it, which is not the case with community tutors. Next, the learner's "homeboys"--his jail buddies or fellow-countrymen who may have known him on the outside as well--begin to interfere by applying peer pressure against the tutor, undermining his effectiveness. Then finally the learner decides he would rather have a community tutor, or loses motivation altogether and drops out of the program. This

series of events damages both tutor and learner. In contrast to this scenario, the most successful peer tutoring situations are those between dorm-mates who already know each other and are compatible, with a mutual attitude of trust already established.

Tutor training sessions prove to be lively events with a minimum of theoretical lecturing and a maximum of discussion and hands-on, experiential exchanges. In the absence of documentation on the substance or specified procedures of tutor training (apparently conducted from memory, given the Co-ordinator's long experience), I can only report on my own experience in such a session, plus verbal information from the Co-ordinator and staff. The Community Reading Program offers 27 training workshops a year through the joint efforts of several of the area's community colleges, the county Department of Correction, the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the Reading Program staff. Eleven of these trainings (from 10 to 15 tutors each time) are held in the correctional facility to train volunteer inmates as peer tutors, and I attended one of these sessions as an observer/participant.

The workshops are designed to help tutors address specific, expressed needs of inmate learners. Given the special circumstances of the jail setting and the backgrounds of both the incarcerated prospective learners

and tutors, it is not surprising that more time is spent in working on personality and psychological issues concerning tutor/learner relationships than on issues of curriculum or materials. All tutors are asked to commit to tutoring any given learner for six months, meeting with him or her at least two hours a week. Tutor trainees are shown the range of print materials available (to be discussed below) and their use is explained, demonstrated, and discussed. Materials are restricted to print media simply because the hardware of recorded audio materials, etc., is not permitted in jail between inmates. Prospective tutors are advised to consider the learner's interests, needs, and desires in selecting appropriate materials. Trainees are directed repeatedly along these lines: Use whatever works! Try different things and different approaches, but don't continue to use or do anything that gets a negative response from your learner; move on to something else without complaint. Second, be patient, understanding, and respectful of all learner efforts, even if you find them disappointing or inadequate. Never ridicule, never label your learner or his/her work "stupid" or any other derogatory terms even in jest. Third, think and speak positively, supportingly, and always behave as a helper, a friend--not as a lecturer or critic.

Experienced Reading Program staff members simulate

likely tutoring session situations and set up role plays of these for trainees to analyze and discuss. Trainees take turns playing both learner and tutor to feel "how the shoe fits" in specific situations. The need for patience with the learner is strongly emphasized, as the lack of this attribute is a central cause of tutoring failures.

Common Tutoring Problems

Not surprisingly, some common problems develop among community tutors who go into the jails, despite the care taken to prepare them for this setting. While many tutors make a good match with their learners and get along without problems, a few find the task more than they bargained for. Some drop out, having become emotionally overwhelmed by the heavy life-problems of their learners and the obvious great class differences between themselves and their learners, the enormity of the crimes with which some learners are charged, or the prospect of the long prison terms that may lie ahead for them. The Co-ordinator must then deal with tutor burnout. After long and productive sessions that have spawned a friendship between tutor and learner, both may anticipate the learner's release. Then suddenly and unexpectedly he may be sent off for a long prison term, leaving the tutor devastated. Such events are heavy realities when one confronts them for the first time. After tutor training is completed, the right matching of tutors

and learners in the one-on-one program is of critical significance to the ultimate success or failure of the entire operation. This sensitive task is the function of the Co-ordinator with the aid of her staff, who together first try to learn some critical characteristics of the involved individuals' personalities and desired learning/teaching focuses. A student who aspires to become an auto mechanic will, where possible, be paired with someone who has math and mechanical or engineering knowledge. A mature recognition of a few likely problem areas leads the Co-ordinator to try to avoid problematic combinations. For example, one effort will be to avoid matching young, highly attractive female tutors with young equally attractive male inmates, or vice versa. Also, learners who exhibit obvious racial, ethnic or gender biases are not paired with tutors whose identities might arouse these prejudices to the detriment of learning, hence leading to failure of the tutoring effort. The most important consideration is that a tutor and learner get along together without complication in their relationship, whatever its basis.

Culmination Ceremonies

The Co-ordinator and staff of the ILP give great significance to culmination ceremonies, and at the end of tutor training sessions make a concerted effort to assure

the presence of top echelon correction and community leaders, who make brief, celebratory, commencement-like speeches. Simple but attractive food and decorations (made, whenever possible, with inmate help in order to create a sense of caring involvement) make the room and the occasion festive. Formal, handsome certificates are carefully prepared and presented to the graduates, while cameras record the events for each participant, as well as for program publicity. Prearranged signed permission is obtained from each inmate photographed to protect those who might not want their photos made public. Polaroid snapshots are available to all participating inmates to keep or share with their families. A similar but much more elaborate version of this ceremony is scheduled annually to honor both learners and tutors with certificates for their joint achievements, as well as corrections officers who have been particularly helpful to tutors, learners, ILP staff members, and Adult Education teachers as well. The awards to officers are truly earned, but their bestowal is undoubtedly meant also as an inducement to other officers to improve their attitude toward all educational programs in the jail.

All of these culminating ceremonies are very memorable, inspiring, and moving events for the honored inmates, especially as individual inmates are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings when they receive their

certificates from the hands of their own tutors, each of whom has first spoken in praise of his or her learner's particular achievements. Such occasions are genuine highlights in the turgid routines of jail life for all inmates, most of whom have never before experienced any ceremonial acknowledgement of personal success.

Tutor Support Groups

Once tutoring begins, tutor-support group meetings are scheduled regularly (either once or twice monthly) in recognition of the fact that successful tutorial relationships are not automatic, and that problems may arise naturally and continually, requiring resolution. This is true for community tutors as well as for peer inmate tutors. At these meetings tutors share their tutoring experiences with each other, air their concerns, ask questions of correctional staff, and receive from the ILP staff any new information related to their work. A second support feature is ongoing in-service training by Reading Program staff to teach new techniques and approaches in tutoring as needs arise.

Materials

The materials purchased by the Reading Program and distributed without charge to tutors and learners enrolled in the program consist mainly of a variety of print materials: teacher's manuals (to be returned to the

program) and workbooks for learners (not reusable); dictionaries, both standard all-English and bilingual paperbacks, as well as picture dictionaries in both mono- and bilingual editions; vocabulary flash card sets and a wide array of boxed games that feature language use (e.g., Scrabble and Perquackey, etc.); and elementary "survival" materials related, for example, to finding jobs or housing or living in an urban American community. True beginners' materials are virtually limited to Laubach-based phonetic charts and books in large type. Among more advanced materials are a varied collection of paperback modern stories and short novels written with new readers' skills and various cultural backgrounds in mind. Most of the Reading Program literature is purchased from New Readers' Press, Robert Laubach's enterprise to continue and expand on the efforts of his father Frank's worldwide literacy training work. The fiction features interesting people representing various ethnic groups in credible roles--both male and female, young and old--in involving, exciting situations, portraying suitable, attractive role models. Appropriate levels of language are used as whole language, not "dumbed down" in any way. At a more advanced level are several classics of American literature in the original text, unexpurgated, with attractive illustrations, helpful notes, and questions added. Also available are weekly

newspapers (again, published by New Readers Press) without commercial ads, featuring stories in national and world news in jargon-free English, with added "Q and A" tests, puzzles, and games based on the news articles for class discussion or reinforcement activity. All of these advanced materials are excellent.

Assessing the Program: Defining Success

A critical feature of the entire ILP must be, of course, the procedures used to assess its actual effectiveness, and the data to demonstrate this. A diligent effort is made to have all tutors arrange for a learner post-test prior to each learner's departure, or on completion of their agreed series of sessions. This is often difficult, however, given the unpredictability of jail terms and rehousing demands that have a complex rationale independent of all other considerations. The post-test is a repeat of the READ pre-test given by the Co-ordinator, and is used to assure continuity. Since no information was originally revealed regarding "right" or "wrong" answers, this is considered a fair and appropriate way of re-testing. ILP publicity literature is presumably based on this post-test information, though it lacks concrete data on the number of respondents, or the quantification of successes, dropouts or failures. The claim currently made to demonstrate the program's achievements seems superficial and

incomplete:

The least an inmate has improved in his reading, comprehension, and word recognition skills has been one grade level in less than three months. The most improvement has been six grade levels in less than seven months. We have also witnessed an increase in the number of inmates...released who are continuing to work with a tutor in the program, or who go on to volunteer [as tutors] either in our program or other programs in this area (Library Literacy Program, 1991, p. 2).

In the course of collecting information for this project, I made known my need for hard information, detailed statistical data, etc., on program achievements and assessment methods. Perhaps my request sounded hostile or implied disbelief in the program, though I tried not to make it seem so. In any event, little more than what I have stated was made available to me. I have heard spoken figures ranging from 70 to 98% "favorable returns on post-test results," but the validity of such figures, or what they really mean or refer to specifically remains unestablished. In the light of criticisms previously noted about the lack of such information on Laubach Literacy program achievements, this gap in information from the ILP seems particularly unfortunate. One can only speculate about possible reasons: first, that no scientific data on program effectiveness have been collected (which seems unlikely, given known efforts to collect it, plus computerized operation plainly in evidence in ILP offices); or second, that available data are not considered "good

enough" for public dissemination, and further checking or inquiry is awaiting completion. Whether such data reflect poorly on program achievements through perceived inaccuracies, or are considered valid, but simply too damaging for publication, or some other configuration of reasons, it is hard to tell.

Yet, one can sympathize with the frustrations of those operating at the center of programs of this kind if there is a reluctance to reveal data. On a daily working basis, one gets strongly positive responses from eager learners and tutors whose anecdotal presentation of belief in their own success seems compellingly and overwhelmingly convincing. The eyes of learners, tutors and teachers shine with delight and pride, morale soars, and efforts redouble along with the time spent on them. Expressions of gratitude for all the wonderful things learned "because of you, teacher," are heard on all sides. It is difficult indeed not to accept such credit at face value, to hold back and wait for hard evidence of achievement and attainments in the real world outside (which is likely never to be available) or even for good post-test scores. Our abilities in devising good tests are admittedly imperfect, and when test results do not live up to our high expectations, it is relatively easy to doubt their accuracy, or even deny them outright, and development of proof to the contrary is even more difficult.

All the participants in this large joint effort "know" they are doing constructive work--or that even, as one grateful student put it to me, perhaps showing his better grasp of the tenuousness of measurable success, "You're part of the solution." Even when we recognize that we and our efforts are only part of "the solution," and even without knowing the whole solution, we sense almost desperately that our part must not be diluted, denigrated, or abandoned simply because it is not more. These feelings are often enough for us to put denial or rejection of negative (or lack of positive) evidence on the side of the angels when we must go to outside sources for further funding, more volunteers, or simply for "credit due."

The other side of this coin is, of course, to examine present methods and approaches and revise them to obtain better results. But this, too, is problematic unless or until it is known which efforts are effective, and which are simply "wheel-spinning," or even counter-productive. At this point we can only look to past history and to recognized research findings for procedural guidelines. What do we know, or what has been shown, that might guide the leaders of the program in a probable direction for improvement? One more obvious feature of the ILP that we might call into question because of some rather serious charges leveled against it elsewhere (see Chap. 2) is the

virtually exclusive use of Laubach phonetic materials for entry and low-level students. Research has shown that adult second language learners develop along lines similar to first language learners, a group with whom whole language approaches are more effective in producing better readers more quickly. When teaching methods do not rely so exclusively on phonetic approaches, different testing materials for both pre- and post-instruction needs can be used, perhaps to more realistic and accurate effect.

There is surely more to be said in evaluating the Inmate Literacy Program currently in operation at Oakwood Correctional Facility. Rather than consider that information here, however, such remarks will be featured as a part of the concluding section to be treated next as Evaluations and Recommendations.

Chapter Five

Conclusion:

Evaluation and Recommendations

This writing has dealt at some length with many of the educational issues of Western literacy as it has evolved to the present day, and as it is currently taught in one particular county jail program. We have examined a number of theoretical views of literacy and its consequences--its various impacts cognitively, economically, and socially--in the lives of those adults who, in one way or another, find themselves at maturity in our culture without adequate literacy skills. Let us now examine the actuality of the jail literacy program as it compares with representative contemporary theories presented earlier to develop an evaluation and some recommendations for future changes.

If we look at the Inmate Literacy Program as it was intended to function, it fits most clearly with economic consequence theories, since the program's founders and current supporters, including the governing board and staff members, believe that those inmates who either become literate or improve their literacy skills under its guidance will, when they are released, secure better jobs and thereby stay out of jail. To be sure, fingers are

usually crossed for the last part of that claim. The truth, at least according to the most recent research, offers a much less sanguine picture. Only 20% of those released from prison use their prison training in subsequent employment (Duquid, 1990, p. 116). Whether or not learned English skills fare better in this area than do vocational skills, we don't know now. Also, recidivism rates have justifiably given rise to the prison gate as "revolving door" analogy. A 1987 study by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics found that fully 69% of 11,300 parolees in 22 states were rearrested for more than 36,000 new felonies or serious misdemeanors within six years. Other studies show similar results with a usual minimum rate of 50% return for any group of parolees (Duquid, 1990, p. 114). It is obviously very difficult for an offender to be successful in a job or to stay out of trouble once he has a prison record, the best of economic consequence theory notwithstanding.

We must stretch a bit to find cognitivist theory relevant to an evaluation of the ILP. Though they have dealt with only "traditional" and pre-literate societies in their theorizing, Hildyard and Olson (1978) should support such an effort as the ILP's, believing as they do that not all peoples share basic functions of the mind (such as logical and abstract abilities) and that educational

systems in general are justified on the grounds that they develop intellectual competence that would otherwise go largely undeveloped. They conjecture that literacy plays a central part in this process. Patricia Greenfield, who studied differences between schooled and unschooled children among the Wolof of Senegal (1972), saw school-taught literacy as the source of significant cognitive differences through writing in linguistic contexts and thus she might support jail literacy education, so long as writing is the main focus. But Jack Goody, frustrated by his colleagues' lack of attention to literacy per se, really had something to say on our topic, though the central message may be subject to interpretation. Goody strongly believes in the written word (as opposed to the oral) as essential to true literacy, claiming, as Street notes, that:

Writing is closely connected to, fosters, or even enforces the development of logic, the distinction of myth from history, the elaboration of bureaucracy, the shift from little communities to complex cultures, the emergence of scientific thought and institutions, and even the growth of democratic political processes (Jack Goody, as quoted by Street, 1984, p. 44).

If we are to live up to cognitivist ideals, clearly we should strengthen the writing component in the ILP.

When we come to the social theorists, there is no lack of applicability to critiquing the ILP. Their theories fall within the purview of Street's designated

"ideological" model, which sees literacy as being adapted to the society that uses it with a variety of consequences. Social theorists reject the notion that the results of literacy are automatic or invariable, and see the nature and practices of literacy as related to the social milieu, concentrating on the specific social practices of reading and writing. These theorists are concerned with the social institutions through which the literacy process takes place, noting literacy's real significance for specific social groups. All these ideas are in keeping with society's efforts to extend basic literacy skills (in reading, speaking, comprehension and writing) to its outermost members, such as those confined in the social institution of the jails.

Individual spokespersons within the social theory "camp" have ideas of direct significance for different aspects of such efforts as those of the ILP. From Harvey Graff's exhaustive study, we gain insights into issues of social, religious, and class prejudices and their political manipulation in recurrent literacy propaganda wars, with special reference to criminality and its supposed relationship to literacy. From Graff it is also clear that literacy is less relevant to economic success than is membership in the right social class, race, religion, or gender. It is worthy of note, too, how many minority group

members there are in jail who come from the "wrong" class for economic success. From Paulo Freire and his famed community literacy groups, especially, it becomes clear that literacy teaching can and should be about empowering the poor and the disadvantaged, promoting democratic change through the education of people to take charge of their own destinies--surely a central drive of the ILP. Freire sees the relationship of his literacy learners to the world, not just to their jobs or their immediate surroundings. In learning to read and write, his students also learn cooperation and group participation--the importance of sharing and building a community. Finally, following Freire's lead, social theory has seen the development in this country of community learning groups who have set up urban ghetto co-operative literacy education units to serve the poor, laborers, racial and ethnic minority groups, immigrants, school drop-outs, prison parolees, and even street gangs. Some learners for the first time get a sense of their own constructive power in communities of this kind.

Interestingly, these community literacy groups have taken an opposite tack to Frank Laubach's and the ILP's "each-one-teach-one" approach. Their emphasis, based on Freire's teachings, is on teacherless group education and community learning where no outside texts are used, and all

members contribute to a collection of class writings as their "text." Gone also from their groups is the Laubachian tutor. Instead, a leader serves as questioner and facilitator of group work, immersed in the literacy process, not above it. Such a program seems most unlikely in the future of the ILP, to be sure, given the jail setting with its authoritarian, security-dominated focus. It is difficult to imagine such autonomous community groups being allowed to function inside prison walls with the goal of training inmates, through literacy, for independence, self-determination, and self-empowerment. Yet, from a different standpoint, noting the lack of trust between inmates that often makes peer tutoring difficult, the argument could fall both ways: either one might say that the idea of community would never work here, or, on the other hand, that these inmates--perhaps more than other people--need to be shown their shared reduced status in the world outside of prison (to which they will eventually return) and their common bonds in humanity. Perhaps they need to be made aware of their natural communality for the post-prison world.

Evaluating the existing ILP and the general larger work of literacy education in the jail, at least for this writer, requires a juggling of several hats. Having worked in the jail predominantly as an adult education teacher, I

have observed the ILP functioning as a supporting, yet separate organization working toward the same goal: the education of an overall marginally-literate inmate population. But in my off-hours volunteer activity as individual tutor with the ILP (not the same students) I saw the ILP program, personnel, and problems through somewhat different eyes. Then again, withdrawing to the perspective of evaluator of the entire operation, a third "hat" must be put on over the other two. To say that the fit is not comfortable and not an easy one is perhaps to state the obvious, but hat number three unfortunately does keep slipping off. Perhaps presenting the three in order may secure a perspective.

As an adult education teacher, I originally viewed the ILP workers--both staff and volunteers--as earnest but perhaps ineffectual toilers in the field, as a beleaguered group only partially accepted by the jail corrections officers, and as practitioners with sometimes (I suspected) second-rate skills and/or materials. I also recognized some envy in my attitude, since theirs was the joyous luxury of focusing on one student at a time instead of the 20, 30, or 60 at a time that teachers must cope with, however unproductively.

When I began to volunteer as a tutor, however, my respect for the program, its achievements, and the skills

of its practitioners--as well as for some of their materials--grew rapidly. The dedication of everyone in the program is nonpareil, and moreover, theirs is generally an enlightened commitment as they regularly confer to face the latest problems, focusing on workable solutions, then persevering with patience and tenacity to a resolution. The staff members recognize as essential a strength of community in their endeavors, perhaps instinctively to counterbalance highly individualized tutorial efforts. What they achieve is an enviable solidarity generally lacking among adult education teachers, whose sense of individual autonomy often weakens their effectiveness as a group.

A third party evaluation of the ILP, then, must temper criticism based on theoretical concepts with the reality of the working program and its broader impact. There is much more going on here than might show in the annual report.

Materials

Exemplifying the complexity of evaluation issues, the issue of choice of materials is two-sided. One can with justification criticize the over-reliance on Laubach-based beginners' phonetic charts that do not show adequate respect for the mature and varied backgrounds of their most deeply non-literate learners. Yet it would be an unjust oversight not to note the superior materials used for high

beginners and intermediate students (detailed in the previous chapter).

Recommendation 1: The ILP should reach outside the supply lines of the New Readers Press or of the parent literacy organization to find supplementary basic literacy materials based on whole language use, whose content features positive acknowledgement of the broad spectrum of adult experiences and backgrounds shared by their learners.

Tutor Selection

There are still problems to work out regarding tutor/learner selection procedures, and no-one is more aware of these problem areas than the ILP Co-ordinator. Some inmate peer tutor applicants have as their main (but covert) motivation either simply to enhance their personal records for the approval of judges or probation officers, or just to relieve the boredom of dorm life, or merely to get the smiling approval and recognition of these nice people who periodically hold award ceremonies with a nice "spread" of food and drink. These are natural enough motivations for anyone, but there is a need to turn this kind of thinking into something deeper and more socially redeeming to forestall the "killer instinct" style of tutoring shown by some tutors in a superior attitude and an intimidating approach to their learners, a certain preliminary to the failure of tutoring. In this sensitive

operation, just a few bad apples can ruin many others. The Co-ordinator has instigated further procedures to improve the process of peer-tutor selection.

Recommendation 2: The ILP Co-ordinator should persist in efforts to improve inmate peer tutor selection and see these through to implementation.

Training Procedures

The question of the adequacy of technical training for ILP tutors is still a knotty one. Admittedly, beginning tutors cannot learn a great deal in just 15 hours of training. And this training is currently not given by professional teacher educators, but by various Reading Program staff members (with some teaching experience and backgrounds in literacy work). For peer inmate tutors, the Co-ordinator herself heads the training team, since her thoroughgoing experience in and knowledge of the jail is indispensable at this level of activity. Refinements in these training issues are clearly desirable. But we must still bear in mind that to make the process a lot more sophisticated might well deter the volunteers who are the heart's blood of this whole operation. We cannot reasonably require professional standards of unpaid volunteers to work in this already less-than-desirable setting of the jail.

Recommendation 3: The ILP should look into bringing on

board temporarily a professional consultant to study their operation and recommend specific, appropriate changes in training procedures. (If cost proves prohibitive for this service, independent funding might be sought, or other sources might be consulted for appropriate recommendations).

Recognition and Awards

A noteworthy feature of the complex ILP operation is the psychological acuity of the strategies used in dealing with problems relating to the jail administration. The ingenuity and finesse of the Co-ordinator and her staff in handling these matters is highly commendable. The award ceremonies conducted by the ILP have become highly festive, semi-dressy, invitational affairs for all the Corrections staff, with handsome certificates presented with flair to the most helpful officers, gracious speeches of thanks for their best efforts, and often photographs in the metropolitan newspaper. On these occasions also the officers get to see student inmate award winners at their best as well, witnessing first hand the proud achievers so easily labeled as "scum bags" during working hours. Gradually, the "better" officers are being encouraged to show more humane attitudes, even when some supervisorial staff members still favor the old hardline ways. The bully ways of the old order are beginning to fall before the soft

words of praise, the glad smiles, and the ongoing open search for new officers to reward the next time around. In this success we all succeed--ILP workers, adult ed faculty, hard-working inmates, and those officers who are able to liberate themselves from the insidious stereotyping responsible for much inhumane behavior on the corrections job.

Recommendation 4: The ILP should continue this focus, with stepped-up encouragement of adult education faculty co-operation in the process.

Minority Group Outreach

The ILP should also be given credit for its improving reach into the large community of the under-represented minorities of our society--the class, racial, ethnic, and gender groups so often bypassed by literacy education organizations elsewhere identified in this paper as "creaming operations." While even in the jail literacy training efforts do their own "creaming" of inmates who want to learn, simply operating inside jail walls reaches a larger percentage of these usually neglected individuals, and the ILP seeks continually to improve on its own record here.

Recommendation 5: A continuation of these efforts, with an added focus on attracting more tutors who themselves represent these minority groups. The current high

predominance of white, middle-class, female tutors and staff members would benefit from an increase in the number of minority group representatives.

Orientation Procedures

An area including, but also extending beyond the bounds of the ILP is the focus of some further recommendations. Both ILP tutors and adult education teachers are given a jail orientation by the correctional staff before they begin their work, and that is undeniably an essential part of preparatory training for these workers. However, beyond some basic features of this orientation, such as check-in-and-out security procedures, a list of "contraband" items for inmates, and an explanation of mandatory responsibility delegations on the job--the corrections staff is (regrettably, but undeniably) simply not fully credible in their admonitions to incoming personnel on such blanket-treated issues as the deviousness of criminal minds, the untrustworthiness of all inmates, etc. They project a generally-attributed inmate attitude of willingness to do or say anything if it will bring that inmate some immediate benefit or a quicker release, and from this tutors and teachers are told to make themselves immune. These features are present in many inmates, perhaps even most of them. But the best-intentioned and most honorably motivated tutor or teacher rightly rejects

the totality of such condemnation, and is thereby left vulnerable to finding out for him- or herself which inmates, if any, they really apply to. This is a dangerous vulnerability, needless to say.

Recommendation 6: Orientation procedures should be shared by jail staff and one or more outside psychological counselors experienced in the operation of the jail and familiar with its inmate population. Such a person might (a) instruct tutors and teachers realistically about the emotional problems they will face and how best to cope with them (similar to the previously documented advice of the Quaker women prison workers); (b) if possible, give some suggestions on how to distinguish truly malevolent "people-users" among inmates; (c) familiarize new personnel with available, approved, reliable sources to consult when questions arise about any inmate's "stories" or actual record, or when the teacher/tutor feels vulnerable to some precipitous action on behalf of an inmate.

Teacher Counseling

Let us turn for a moment away from the ILP to look particularly at the needs in the adult education sector which shares ILP educational responsibilities, in fact concerned with many times the number of inmate students covered by the ILP. For teachers, individual autonomy has loomed so large a priority that there seems to be too

little acknowledgement of the problems and needs they all share as a functioning group within an environment that is basically hostile to their individual and collective educational goals. For this group (teachers) I would identify a three-part recommendation:

Recommendation 7: First, teachers should share in the pre-employment psychological counseling recommended for ILP tutors and staff members, with an added profile of likely job-stress areas and how to cope with them, followed by full discussion, a question period, and any additional input from teachers. Second, the services of an outside professional psychologist available for private consultation (perhaps for a minimum of hours periodically) should be secured to help individual teachers to deal with the more serious job stress problems concerning their inmate students, correctional staff, or administration personnel. These problems (detailed previously in this paper) can often become too heavy a burden for teachers to bear alone, with grave consequences, though most teachers would now be hesitant to admit this publicly, fearing both embarrassment and job reprisals. The consequences are first felt emotionally, then become evident in job performance, to the detriment certainly of morale and also of the quality of instruction in the classroom. Psychological counselors should not be in the employ of the

Corrections Department or any jail-affiliated organization, in order to ensure the privacy of all exchanges. Perhaps the funding of this operation could be made a part of teacher health plan benefits, or undertaken by other teacher-support organizations discussed below. Third, teachers should affiliate with a union that would represent their interests before jail administration, Corrections Department, or other appropriate governing bodies of the institution. There is a critical need for standard grievance procedures and a full delineation of actual teacher rights and responsibilities on the job. At the current time, it is not uncommon for any given teacher to feel that he or she is totally without rights in this setting whenever there is an altercation between teachers and corrections staff, for example. There is no dependable source for defense or support of a teacher in such circumstances. Perhaps a part of union dues could be allocated to defray the cost of the counseling services mentioned above.

Re-examining Educational Goals: Literacy With a Difference

Saved until the last is the most comprehensive recommendation for reforming carceral education programs, since it is also the most profound and certainly the most difficult to attain. It is an idea expounded at length and repeatedly by Canada's leading prison education authority,

Stephen Duguid, who has had many years of practical teaching experience in prisons. Duguid sees the founding concept for the improved kind of education he proposes in an eloquent passage quoted from the writings of a famous humanitarian and political philosopher: "I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves. And if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it away from them, but to inform their discretion" [italics added] (Thomas Jefferson, as quoted by Duguid, 1988, p. 174). With criminals, of course we see a classic, extreme example of people who have failed to "exercise their control with a wholesome discretion," and an equally extreme example of our retaliation by taking away their powers by imprisoning them. Duguid does not argue that we should cease imprisoning such people, but rather that we should shape our educational efforts for these offenders toward their eventual re-entry into society by redirecting their empowerment in ways that will "inform their discretion."

All education should be empowering, Duguid notes, to enable people to make constructive choices and decisions for themselves. But the special focus here would be on issues of attitude change, the exercise of moral choice and judgment, etc.--not to be taught independently (for all

direct efforts to inculcate moral or ethical values are at once merely accepted as the current coin of knowledge, with nothing transformed into character-building substance). Thus, moral education cannot be a separate curriculum item, but rather the appreciation of morality and ethics must "infuse the curriculum....To be effective it must be a hidden [feature], indirect and non-threatening" (Duguid, 1988, p. 179). This should be true of the entire curriculum, from basic literacy to college level courses for inmates. The need for such a program as Duguid proposes originates with the concern that so many prisoners return to crime and to prison after their first release, starting out on whole lives of crime in their teens. Such a program focuses on the potential criminal as decision-maker, with the realization that not only are people the victims of their own history, they are also its authors. As developing human beings, we are all capable of change for the better. Our educational emphasis must be on moral reasoning, not on content and rules, since real-life dilemmas are far too complex to be subject to prescribed solutions. The theory recognizes that prisoner-students form a group with unique qualities and needs in an equally unique environment, and that, for inmate education, behavioral outcomes are fully as important as educational outcomes. Duguid envisages an individual developmental

agenda to facilitate the social and emotional maturation of the student. The assumption is that with most prisoners "the normal maturation process has been interrupted, stalled, or retarded," and that education can beneficially intervene "at any age and in any circumstance" (Duguid, 1988, p. 174).

Perhaps most controversially for today's prisons, Duquid sees as an essential component in the educational process a participatory democracy - a "democratic praxis" which he recognizes as "undoubtedly the most difficult to imagine and to implement," but that "the constraints of the authoritarian prison must be transcended" since "the development of moral reasoning must be applied to become internalized" (Duquid, 1988, p. 179). He elaborates:

Thus whether one opts for student councils and representative democracy, mass meetings on controversial decisions, or informed consultation networks, the involvement of prisoner/students in the educational process and in the administration of the program is essential for the leap to be made from abstract discussion to real choices. Schools do not build character, situations do [italics added]. To the extent that the school provides situations that involve genuine challenge, it encourages the testing of the strengthening of character. Russell Edgerton...noted that: "We can teach knowledge by telling, we can teach abilities by coaching, but when we teach deeper understanding and shifts of attitudes and values, we really have to involve the whole person" (Duguid, 1988, p. 180).

Among the results of such education for development, Duquid sees cognitive, motivational, emotional, and self

knowledge benefits: it increases intellectual flexibility and consistency, enabling the student to deal more rationally with conflicting arguments on both sides of controversial issues; it shifts the student's focus from simply exerting will power to breaking dependence on others - beyond rebellion and self assertion to a more mature identification with and acceptance of positive authority; it leads students to an increased ability to deal with ambivalent feelings and take pleasure in working with other people; and it enables students to develop "a more realistic, differentiated sense of their own strengths and weaknesses" (Duguid, 1988, p. 180).

With such an educational focus, which Duguid acknowledges to be old-fashioned and strongly humanist, we would be better able to do more than just try to get released inmates jobs, fill up their time of incarceration with busy bookwork, or provide them accreditation of one kind or another, Duguid notes. We would be imparting a new vocabulary and a new literacy, for with this "humanities package" would come cultural literacy, "a sense of being part of a polity rather than an outsider, and the option of a new world view, one which enables development to be a lifelong project" (Duguid, 1988, p. 180). It is worth noting that this is a view which reinforces the ideas of Brian Street, the social theorist earlier quoted at some

length.

My only addition to Duguid's vision might be a recommendation that his educational scheme be implemented not only in the jails and prisons, but also in the public education institutions for the rest of our morally/ethically malfunctioning society as well. Not only the imprisoned, but the free society, too, needs a second chance at "literacy education"--this time a rebirth of moral and ethical cultural literacy--learning for life, as all literacy education must be.

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Notes

¹These data come from county prepared documents, but are not further referenced in order to protect anonymity of the reading program.

APPENDIX

WHAT WE WISH WE HAD BEEN TOLD WHEN FIRST GOING INTO PRISONS

*(Advices from some Quaker women volunteers who are old prison hands,
to new women volunteers, Quakers and others)*

1. Prison is, to you, a foreign country. As in any foreign country, it is wise to be quiet, observe, listen, learn the language and identify the values of the prison culture before advancing too many strong opinions or taking any drastic action.
2. Don't be afraid to define yourself clearly. You are not required to be all things to all people at all times, nor to live up (or down) to any stereotype (including the one about the sainted Quaker lady). You are entitled, moreover, to define for yourself and for others what you choose to be or not to be, do or not to do. This will take some time, but you should be aware of the need to do it from the beginning of your prison visiting. Even after you have clearly defined yourself, expect to be tested, again and again, in many ways, including sexually, morally, and religiously. Eventually, however, if you are firm in sticking to your definition of yourself, others will adjust to it.
3. Expect to meet many tremendous and valuable people in prison. Expect also to meet some champion manipulators. Do not be surprised if these sometimes turn out to be one and the same person. Manipulation is a form of survival for the powerless (a fact that women, historically, have had ample cause to know).
4. Especially at first, you will find it helpful, as soon as possible after your prison visits, to share with a trusted woman friend the feelings generated by the prison experience. It is a rare woman who does not experience anger, fear, pain, outrage, wonder, and other strong emotions upon contact with the prison environment. These feelings, shared, can lead to much that is constructive and rewarding. Unshared, they can lead to emotional burnout and ill-considered actions. The need to share them, therefore, never ceases.
5. Expect to feel an unfamiliar, very heady and very addictive "super star" feeling, especially at first. It may arise from sexuality in a deprived environment, from the unfamiliar real power to help the helpless, or other sources. Do not let it go to your head. Remember that you will be constantly tested and probed by prisoners and staff alike, and that no leading lady's image can survive the footlights forever. If your mascara runs in the heat, remember to be real.
6. It is possible that you will feel alienated, after prison visiting, from other people who have not shared and do not understand this experience, and from the society that produced and maintains the prisons. It is a difficult ministry, but a ministry nonetheless, to share the experience and the light that you have in this area of darkness.
7. Expect to find in prisons all the corruption and evils of society, as well as all the goodness of human nature—both magnified larger than life. Therefore, resist the temptation to:
 - a) Romanticize the prisoner. If his being caged does not necessarily make him a monster, neither does it necessarily make him a saint. To assume otherwise is always inaccurate, usually patronizing, and sometimes dangerous.
 - b) Condemn the prison staff as brutes. Many of them are good people trying to do a hard and thankless job well. Perhaps almost all of them entered the prison system initially with the intention to do good as they saw it. And they are as vulnerable to being hurt by the system as anyone else.
8. Keep your eyes, ears, and gut feelings open to the possibility of allies on the prison staff. At the same time, do not be too trusting. The objective of a prison, after all, is total control of all people crossing its threshold. The nature of a prison is to make it easy for its staff to be hurtful but difficult to be helpful.
9. Expect to be lied to by everybody—prisoners, staff, administrators, other volunteers, and even colleagues working with you in volunteer programs or prison ministries. Some of the untruth is unconscious; it is nevertheless untrue. On the other hand, do not go overboard and expect everybody to lie to you *all* of the time. There is also honor among both the "thieves" and the "virtuous." Therefore:
10. Learn to "trust your gut" and heed it. Develop your awareness. Go cautiously at first; awareness comes with experience. The initial prison experience might be frightening of itself. If you have stuck with it long enough for this to wear off, and you find yourself afraid of a given person, chances are that he or she may be dangerous to you. If you feel resentful at demands being made on you, you may well be being hustled. Trust these feelings, act on them, and do not feel guilty about them. If after an initial exposure you find yourself fearful of the prison environment, you should not continue to go into prisons. This work is not for everyone, and there is also a ministry in serving as a support for other Friends who are active in it.
11. Do not under ANY circumstances bring ANY contraband into the prison, no matter how innocent the "contraband" may seem or how stupid the rule against it. For instance, a bandana or any piece of cloth that is non-prison issue may be used to make a handle for a home-made "shiv"; herb tea may be used to hide drugs; and the introduction of ANY prohibited article

by a volunteer is a misdemeanor at least, and may subject that volunteer both to criminal prosecution, if caught, and to subsequent blackmail.

As for rules in general, expect to find some that seem unnecessarily silly, unjust, or oppressive. Do not be afraid to protest them, to higher authority if necessary, and to try to get them changed; but never try to simply disobey them. Disobedience may have effects that you cannot anticipate, and will certainly put you in a position from which it will be that much more difficult for you to bring about change.

12. Expect that continued exposure to prisons may bring on negative feelings such as emotional numbness, helplessness, a feeling of inadequacy or of being overwhelmed. Prisons are destructive environments, and if you do not have a supportive community, dealing with them will burn you out.
13. It is essential, therefore, that you find a community that will offer you a safe place to vent your real feelings and to discuss your real problems, without fear of judgment or condemnation. At the same time, that community must love you enough to reach out to bring you back when you stray onto dangerous or unproductive by-paths. A Quaker Meeting at its best is such a community. The Oversight Committee of a prison Meeting exists, among other things, to provide such a community for the Friends, inside and outside, worshipping in the prison. If you do not have such a community (and a Quaker Meeting at its less-than-best may not offer it), then you must seek out such a community or build one for yourself.
14. Expect to be sexually turned on some time early in your prison work. Almost nobody escapes this experience, from beautiful and innocent young girls to happily married (or widowed) matrons of a certain age; not to mention single women, divorcees, engaged women, gay men, and those who have foresworn all such relationships and feelings. When this happens to you, it may possibly be the beginning of something that may mature into a viable relationship in time. But it is also possible that other and less romantic but more powerful elements enter into it. When it happens to you, don't panic and don't go overboard. Examine yourself to see whether the feeling does not contain one or more of the following elements:
 - a) The sexual deprivation of prison life creates an electrical charge in the very air when a woman enters into this environment—a charge that no woman can fail to respond to or at least to feel.
 - b) The balance of power between free women and imprisoned men. One of the few milieus in our society where a woman is more powerful than a man is in

the prison situation where the woman is free and the man is a prisoner. As men have long known, but women frequently do not realize, the possession of power is a sexual turn-on. Indeed, women have had so little experience of the phenomenon, that they may not recognize the sexual overtones of power and may mistake it for love.

- c) The inaccessibility of the man for a normal everyday relationship. This allows both parties to fantasize but commits neither to live with the results of a relationship in the real world. As long as one of them is locked up, the parties are, in a sense, safe from each other. The dark side of this is that you may be exploiting another person without being aware you are doing so—by projecting your fantasies and your needs on him or her as a promise that in the real world you cannot or will not keep. Experience shows that neither sex is guiltless of this kind of exploitation.

When you are seized by this strong emotion, whatever it turns out to be—give yourself plenty of time and room to find out what it actually is before you act on it. Hang in there, and you may get over it. Or hang in there, and you may find that the fantasy does not fit the reality. Or hang in there, and let the relationship mature into something worth having, if it will.

In the meantime remember that a sexually deprived environment breeds violent jealousy and other strong emotions, and do not flaunt your feelings in ways that may provoke gossip, violence, or loss of your own or your fellow workers' good repute. Be discreet in dress and in body language. Remember that a prison, all appearances to the contrary, is a very puritanical place. If inmates and prison staff share nothing else, they share a conservative value system in sexual matters. Remember also that many men have to spend long years in this deprived environment, and that it is important for them to adjust to the realities of doing time. To quote a respected and weighty Quaker prisoner, "a close woman friend, in prison, can mess up a man's head."

15. Do not be surprised if you become overly preoccupied with an individual prisoner. Romantic attraction is only one of the roots of such preoccupation. Others are compassion, admiration for a strong personality or a valuable talent, or a sense of perceived injustice. Try to keep a balance and not invest all of your valuable energy in one person where there is so much need in others also.
16. A woman should make a considered decision, in consensus with her family or people living in her household, whether or not to divulge her address and phone number. There are alternatives, e.g., use of a Quaker Meeting House as a mail drop, or rental of a P.O. box.

17. Prisons have proved that people do not learn very much from punishment. Quaker (and human) experience proves that they frequently do learn from example. What you do in prison, therefore, is more important than what you say there. Quakers acting religiously as ministers in prison Meetings should always be mindful that our being true to the manner of Friends is far more eloquent than our preaching about it. It is especially important in prison work not to make promises that can't or won't be kept. A broken promise to a caged and powerless person is even more painful than in normal life, and it is an act of cruelty. Even worse, it will further disable the person from learning to trust, and since trust is essential for reintegration into a community, a broken promise may further alienate and destroy the victim.
18. It is important always to remember that we stand for Quaker values and Quaker process based on consensus, non-violence, truth, and a reverence for God in the individual. These values are not likely to be found in prison guidelines for volunteers. They nevertheless are the most valuable thing we have to offer to the prison and the world, and we should never allow them to be compromised, no matter how strong the pressure is to do so.
19. In spite of everything, going into prison can be a very rewarding experience. Jesus was not kidding when he said, "I was in prison and you visited me."

TO SEE OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

Brainstorm of Perceptions of Women Friends in the Prison Environment

As Seen by Prison Administrators and Staff

- "Bleeding Hearts"
- Naive and over-emotional
- An unwelcome responsibility and nuisance to security staff
- Security risk because of sexuality and naivete, capable of provoking violence
- Potential carriers of contraband
- Guilty of causing discontent by promising more than we can give
- A threat to existing power arrangements; destabilizing
- Deliberately disruptive; amateur lawyers; political information carriers; legal and political activists.
- Arrogant, know-it-alls—believe ourselves to be superior and better educated
- Some see us as radicals/traitors/revolutionaries/gays/Communists and other "bogey women." Some even question whether we are a religious group or a plot to overthrow the Government
- Some see us as a public relations asset
- Some see us as a calming influence, and therefore an asset
- Some see our attempts to empower prisoners as a threat to their control
- Some are resentful because we're seen as the "good guys" and they as the "bad guys." This is made worse when we align ourselves with prisoners and manifest hostility to guards and other prison personnel.
- Some see us as looking for a husband, a lover, or sexual excitement; losers with men on the outside
- Willing to throw away our lives on prisoners; traitors to our class/race/whatever.

As Seen by Prisoners

- Willing suckers
- Bleeding hearts
- Rich, well connected, powerful (more than we are)
- Religious fanatics
- Post(wo)men and writers of letters to the Governor
- Parole tickets
- Support system for their families
- Competition that can be used to spur their girlfriends or families to greater efforts on their behalf
- Obligatory martyrs to their needs (or, if we decline to be this, "bad Quakers" and hypocrites)
- "Commie weirdos," radicals, revolutionaries, lesbians
- Neurotics; bored women with endless time
- Sexual targets or objects
- Man-hungry; hung up on caged men
- Troublemakers
- Naive
- Sexual teases
- Over-romanticized "good women"
- Link to different realities
- Sole link to outside
- Some want religion from us
- Some value us as people they need not be tough with
- Some try very hard to understand what we bring
- Some see us as people to protect
- Some feel we are people with whom they can feel some power
- Others see us as acting as Lady Bountiful and resent our rubbing their noses in their own powerlessness
- In sum, we are seen as sluts or saints—no middle ground.