

Childhood Abuse and the Female Inmate

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A Study of the Teenage History of Women in Oregon Prisons

Oregon Department of Corrections
Information Services Division
Research and Analysis Unit

July 1993

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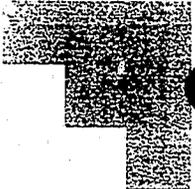
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Childhood Abuse and the Female Inmate

Executive Summary

This study of the background of childhood physical and sexual abuse among female inmates in Oregon prisons was initiated by Kimberly Kenaston, a student at Willamette University, and carried out in cooperation with the Research and Program Analysis Unit of the Department of Corrections. Eighty-nine women inmates were interviewed regarding their teenage experiences in their families, school, and other areas of their lives. Measures were developed regarding family interaction patterns and several aspects of behavior as teenagers. The women were also interviewed regarding their experience of physical and sexual abuse.

The women have generally low education levels, and a background of family and other difficulties during childhood. Two-thirds of the women ran away from home at least once while growing up, and half were arrested at least once. Two-thirds had parents or siblings who had been arrested. A third of the women report their families got along most of the time, but nearly a third were injured by their parents at some time.

Nearly half the women suffered physical abuse from some source (most often a parent). Two-thirds were sexually abused as children. In about two-thirds of the cases of physical and sexual abuse, someone else knew about the problem but usually provided no support for the victim.

The women's teenage behavior (especially criminality, substance use, and running away) correlates with sexual or physical abuse, household instability, and family violence. Experience of abuse is associated with younger age of substance use, younger age of delinquency and increased level of delinquency, and with earlier and more frequent running away.

Abuse and juvenile delinquency are both associated with earlier adult criminality, but not with measures of intensity or severity of adult criminality. For example, the women who reported experiences of abuse during childhood were not statistically more likely than other women in the sample to have been convicted of assaultive crimes as adults.

In general, physical and sexual abuse appears to be just one of several elements comprising a general complex of dysfunctional family behavior. **While the incidence of physical and sexual abuse in this population of women inmates is considerably higher than the incidence reported for the general population, experience of abuse during childhood did not statistically stand alone as a determining factor in the later criminal behavior of the women in this sample.** Other common factors in this population, such as high proportion of relatives who are criminal, frequent family structure disruptions, and poor education, intermingle with childhood abuse in the overall mix of factors influencing adult behavior.

It is clear, however, that a high proportion of the women in Oregon's prisons experienced sexual and/or physical abuse as children, and had little assistance in dealing with the trauma of those experiences at the time. It is likely that at least some elements of their current behavior, and the behavior which led to their incarceration, are related to earlier abuse.

Childhood Abuse and the Female Inmate

I. Background and Procedure

In March, 1992, Kimberly Kenaston, a Willamette University student interested in undertaking an interviewing project with female inmates, contacted the Oregon Department of Corrections. She requested the cooperation of the Department in interviewing female inmates regarding any physical and sexual abuse they may have experienced during their childhood, with the goal of relating the experience of abuse to other aspects of the inmates' lives and criminal histories. The Department had little information of this type and agreed to facilitate Ms. Kenaston's study. The Research and Program Analysis Unit was responsible for assisting in the design and implementation of the research, arranging interviewing access to the female inmate population at Oregon Women's Correctional Center and Columbia River Correctional Institution, and insuring that the work complied with Department rules regarding access to offender data and participation of offenders in research projects. In return, the Department received a copy of the coded questionnaire data, with all identifying information removed. This report is prepared by the Research Unit based on an independent analysis of the interview data.

The Research Unit and Ms. Kenaston together developed a structured interview schedule. The questionnaire focused on experiences of the inmates' teenage years, and covered topics related to the inmates' family composition, interpersonal relations with parents and siblings, activities as a teenager (including school, work, and delinquent behavior), any criminal activity of her family, use of drugs and alcohol, self-esteem, and experience of physical and/or sexual abuse. A random sample was selected from all female inmates not under maximum security custody or disciplinary segregation at Oregon Women's Correctional Center (OWCC) and Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI). The samples were stratified between institutions, and the CRCI sample was further stratified between general population inmates and those in the Turning Point alcohol and drug treatment program. Those who agreed to participate signed an information release and were individually interviewed by Ms. Kenaston. Interviews took between 15 and 25 minutes to complete. In all, 89 inmates were interviewed: 46 from OWCC, 24 from the CRCI general population, and 19 from the CRCI A&D program.¹ Most inmates were cooperative and appeared interested in the questionnaire. Thirty-four inmates contacted declined to participate.

Once the interviews were completed, the Department provided selected public record information to Ms. Kenaston for matching with the interviews; the interviews were coded and the data entered into a computer file. Answers to certain individual items were combined to form indicators for the following concepts:²

¹ This represents 25% of the OWCC population and 29% of the CRCI population (18% from the general population and 40% from Turning Point). Turning Point was oversampled in order to have enough cases for separate statistical analysis of that sub-population should it be necessary.

² Some scales were adapted from measures used in other studies reported in the literature; the self-esteem scale is that used by the Department alcohol and drug treatment program. Internal scale reliability was tested by means of Cronbach's alpha, which ranged from .69 (Family Interaction) to .91 (Self-esteem).

Childhood Experience Indicators

Indicator	Description
<u>Family Interaction:</u>	Extent to which the inmate "got along" with her immediate family, and how well the family got along with each other.
<u>Parental Concern:</u>	Extent to which the inmate perceived her parents cared about her activities and supported her well-being.
<u>Family Violence:</u>	Extent of physical violence between parents, use of corporal punishment on child, and injury of child from discipline.
<u>Family Crime:</u>	Have parents or siblings been arrested, convicted or incarcerated.
<u>Juvenile Achievement:</u>	Did inmate as a child receive any awards, hold a job, participate in extracurricular activities; includes average grades and level of school completed.
<u>Juvenile Delinquency:</u>	As a child, was inmate ever arrested, brought to court, or convicted, or engaged in other delinquent behavior.
<u>Age of Substance Use:</u>	Average age at which inmate first used alcohol and drugs.
<u>Self Esteem:</u>	Score on 10-item scale measuring positive/negative self-perception. While internally reliable, this scale does not significantly relate to any of the other measures of the respondents' behavior or past history.

As presented here, these indicators are used as a means to simplify the discussion of results obtained with this particular sample and interview procedure. The issue of the overall validity of the measures as "true" indicators of these concepts in a wider population is beyond the scope of this project.

II. General Characteristics of the Inmates

When the interviews began, OWCC had a population of 184, and CRCI had a female population of 147, including 48 in the Turning Point program. Characteristics of the sub-populations were compared across all questionnaire items and composite scales. In general the three sub-groups are not significantly different from each other. Differences were found only on six measures (see appendix 1).

On all other measures, including number of offenses, seriousness of major crime, childhood environment, juvenile achievement and delinquency, and experience of physical or sexual abuse, the subpopulations are not significantly different from each other. For this reason, the survey data will be analyzed for the entire population, and the subpopulations not discussed separately.

INMATE BACKGROUND

Family Background

The inmates sampled averaged 32 years old, and ranged from 18 to 59. Sixty percent grew up in Oregon, with 35% being raised in Portland or another metropolitan area.

Just over half (51%) reported they lived primarily with both natural parents during childhood, and almost two-thirds had lived with both natural parents at some time while growing up, compared to about two-thirds of all children nationally who live in two-parent families through most of their childhood. Thirty-six percent reported that at some time when they were growing up, they lived with foster parents or relatives other than parents or siblings. Over a third (36%) lived with five or more different adults during their childhood and 24% report living with three or four adults at different times when they were growing up.

The number of other siblings in the family ranged from none (2 cases) to 13; one quarter of the interviewees had 1 or 2 siblings, 45% had from 3 to 5, and 28% had more than 5 siblings.

Two-thirds ran away from home at least once. Most (45% of those running away) stayed away for less than a month, but a third stayed away for more than a year.

Two-thirds of the inmates have been married at least once, and 80% have children (41 have 1 or 2, 16 have 3, and 14 have more than 3). Only 31% were married or in a long-term relationship at the time of the interview, however. Fifty-five percent of the inmates with minor children had custody of them prior to their incarceration. At present, children of 63% of the inmates are being cared for by their grandparents, their father, or other relatives, while for 23% of the inmates, her children are split among 2 or more homes.

Teen Activities

Most of the inmates in the sample (89%) worked at some time during their teen years, two-thirds for periods of 4 months or more in a single job. For 62%, employment was in unskilled restaurant or service jobs. Their education attainment is low: only 28% graduated from high school, though most of those (22 of 25) continued to some college work. Forty more (45%) have completed a GED, in some cases after entering prison.

Just over half (52%) of the sampled inmates had been arrested at least once as a juvenile, the youngest at age 11, and 20 were first arrested before the age of 14. (See Figure 1.) Thirty-six were convicted, most commonly of a property crime as their major offense. Eighteen spent time in Hillcrest (a state facility for juvenile delinquents) or another reform institution.

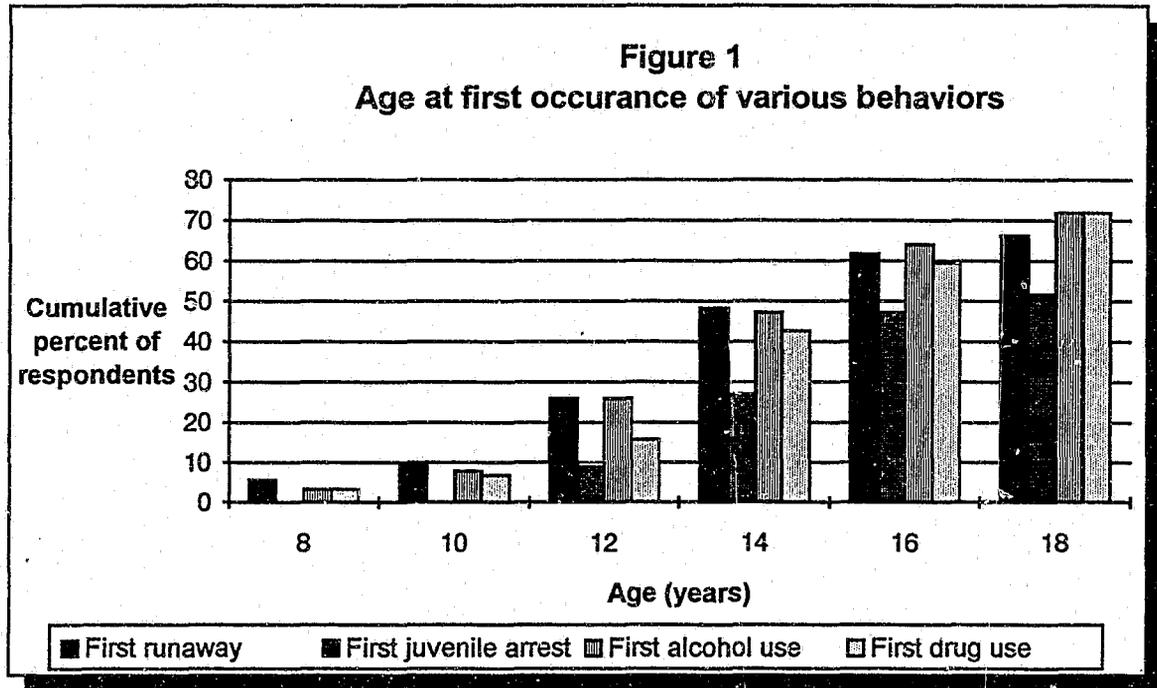
The inmates come from an environment which is characterized by criminality: 36% report at least one parent had been arrested at some time, and only 37% have no history of arrests among their parents and siblings. Twenty-eight percent had an immediate family member (parent or sibling) who had served time in prison, and 20% had an immediate family member convicted of a person-to-person crime. At the time of the interviews, 29% of the inmates had been convicted of only one offense, while 22% had 5 or more

convictions to their record.

Virtually all inmates reported using alcohol and illegal drugs. Ninety percent have used alcohol, 91% used marijuana or hashish, and 84% report using drugs other than cannabis. Age of first alcohol use ranged from infancy for two inmates whose parents fed them alcohol to 38 years old. Figure 1 shows the pattern of first use of alcohol and drugs with age. Most (52%) started drinking between the ages of 12 and 16, while eleven of the 80 drinkers reported first using alcohol at or after age 21. Initial drug use shows a similar pattern: most (62%) started between 13 and 18, and 21% started after age 18.

Inmate Background: Summary

- Average age: 32.
- Age range: 18 to 59.
- Raised in Oregon: 60% .
- Lived mostly with both natural parents: 51%.
- Lived with foster parents or other relatives: 36%.
- Ran away at least once: 66%.
- Three or more siblings: 73%.
- Graduated high school: 28% (GED: 45%).
- Alcohol/drug use experience-- alcohol: 90%, marijuana/hashish: 91%, other: 84%.
- Married at least once: 67%.
- Has child/children: 80% .
- Currently married or in long-term relationship: 31%.



Family Relationships

Three scales were constructed to measure different aspects of family relationships. *Family interaction* was measured by a 5-item scale asking such questions as "What about your relationship with your father when you were a teenager? How much of the time did you get along with him?" Possible answers were "All the time", "Most of the time", "Sometimes", "Seldom", and "Never". Similar questions were asked regarding the respondent's relationship with her mother, other members of the family, overall interaction within the family, and parents' interaction with each other.³ A third of the respondents scored over 18, indicating that they and their family on the average got along "most of the time".

Parental concern for the respondent was measured by a 5 item Likert scale, with questions such as "When I was a teenager, my parents didn't care if I existed", and "When I was a teenager, my family encouraged me when I did well at an activity". The respondent was asked to indicate her strength of agreement or disagreement on a 5 point scale. The distribution of scores indicate that in general respondents felt their parents had been supportive and concerned when they were growing up.

The *extent of violence* in the inmates' families of origin combined questions regarding fighting between the respondent's parents, and corporal punishment or injuries received within the family (see footnote 3). Most inmates reported relatively low violence: 56% scored 6 or less (the possible range was from 4 to 18). However only 24% of the respondents report never having been struck or physically disciplined, and 30% report having been injured (ranging from bruises to burns to broken bones) by their parents.

History of Abuse

A significant proportion of the women interviewed had experienced physical and or sexual abuse as children, but being the object of beatings or punishment was not always defined as abuse.⁴ Forty-five percent report physical abuse, and most of those were abused on more than 10 occasions. Nearly two-thirds of the women (64%) report having been "molested, raped or sexually abused" before the age of 19. A third of those (21 of 57) experienced sexual abuse more than 10 times, while 11 report only one incident of sexual abuse. On both the physical and sexual abuse questions, the respondent's evaluation of what constituted physical or sexual abuse was accepted. The nature of the abuse itself was not explored. Thirty-seven percent of the women had experienced both physical and sexual abuse before age 18. Comparative statistics for the U.S. report that women who have experienced sexual abuse before age 18 range from around 20 to 40 percent of the population.⁵

³ Because many respondents had little experience living with their father or stepfather, there are 14 cases where 3 or more of the items were not answered. These cases are dropped from any analyses involving this scale.

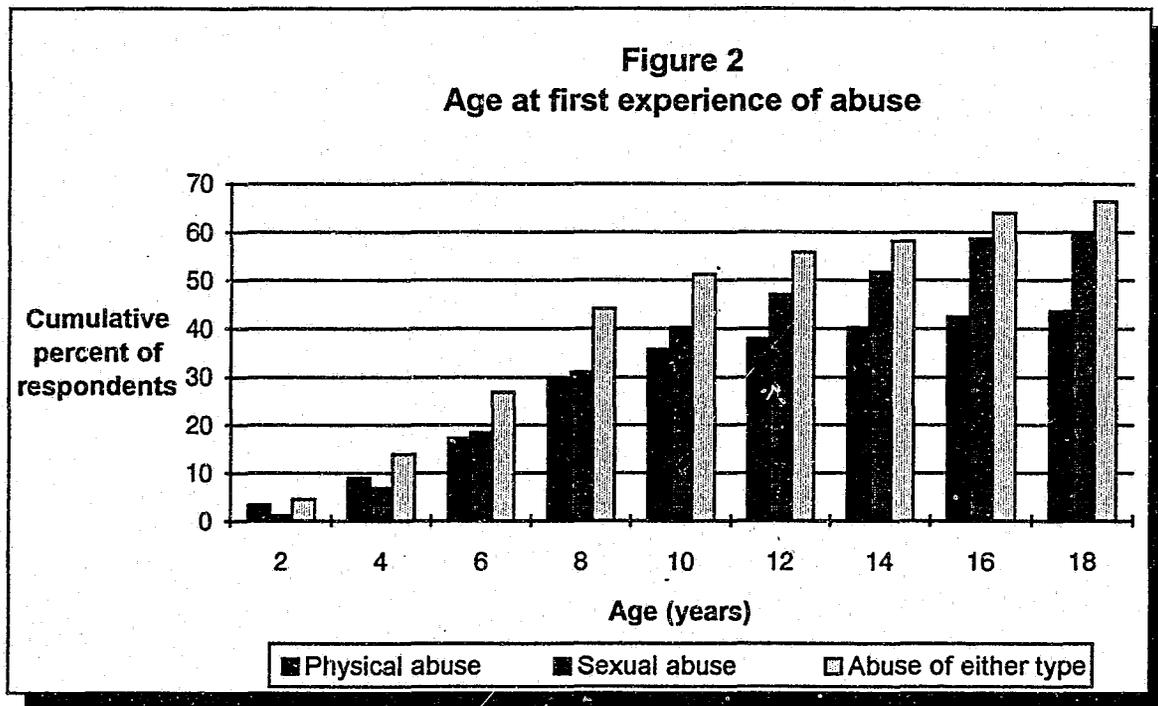
⁴ The questions were worded as follows: "Would you say you were ever physically abused while you were growing up? (under 18)" and "When you were growing up, before you were 19, would you say that you have ever been molested, raped or sexually abused?"

⁵ Mary Koss and Mary Harvey, *The Rape Victim* (Lexington, MA: Stephen Greene Press, 1987) pp. 5-6; Diana E.H. Russell, *The Secret Trauma* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), ch. 2.

The age at which the respondents first experienced physical or sexual abuse varied greatly, as shown in Figure 2. Of the 40 physically abused girls, 29% (12% of all respondents) were first abused before they were 6, and 47% between 6 and 9 years old. The most common abuser was the girl's natural father or step father (23 of 61 persons reported as being abusive), followed by the girl's natural mother (14 cases). Brothers account for 5 cases of abuse, and boyfriends for 4 cases. No other relation or category of unrelated person was mentioned more than twice.

The inmates who experienced physical abuse were asked if anyone else knew of the abuse at the time. Of the 33 cases where someone knew, only 10 tried to help directly or contacted authorities. Fifteen of the 33 who knew either did nothing or advised the victim to keep quiet about it.

Of the 54 women who reported having been raped or sexually abused as children, 22% (13% of all respondents) were first abused before age 6, 37% between the ages of 6 and 9, and 19% each between the ages of 10 and 13, and age 14 to 17. This contrasts with the conclusion of Koss and Harvey that sexual victimization in the general population peaks between age 16 and 19.⁶ A quarter of the 54 had been abused by three or more persons. The most common offender reported was a male friend (20 cases of 100 reported offenders), followed by natural fathers and uncles (11 cases each), and step-fathers and male acquaintances (10 cases each). Strangers are cited in 9 cases, but other categories (including aunt, brother, grandparents, husband, neighbors) are reported in fewer than 5 cases.



⁶ Koss and Harvey, *The Rape Victim*, p. 6.

As with physical abuse, others who knew of the sexual attack or abuse did very little. Of 31 people who knew of the abuse at the time it occurred, only 7 (23%) attempted to assist in a constructive way - taking the victim to the hospital, reporting the abuse to authorities, or other assistance; ten either did nothing, blamed the victim, or urged silence.

Forty of the 89 respondents (45%) report being "raped, or forced to have sex when (they) didn't want to" after the age of 18. Only 11 of the reported assailants were strangers, while 11 were the victim's husband. Fourteen assailants were friends, boyfriends, or acquaintances, and four were customers of prostitutes.

In general, we find that the sampled inmates often experienced family disruptions, are relatively poorly educated, and do not report strong achievement in school or other activities while growing up. Yet most respondents perceive their family environment as having been at least moderately good, and some report strong parental support for their activities. Whether the relatively high reports of family interaction and parental support are accurate or reflect low standards of relationship of the inmates cannot be determined. A majority of the respondents had been arrested as juveniles, nearly two-thirds had close relatives who had been arrested, and nearly all had used illegal drugs. Over two-thirds of the respondents had been subjected to either physical or sexual abuse during childhood.

III. Family background and juvenile behavior

A central goal of this study was to evaluate the relationship between family background and the incidence of abuse in a woman's childhood, and to further assess the impact of abuse on the woman's later behavior. Details of an examination of interrelationships among the different measures of family environment, juvenile behavior, and adult criminal behavior are presented in Appendix 2. Highlights include:

- Parental concern (the extent to which the parents were perceived as caring and supportive) is significantly related to many other family environment measures. High scores on the parental concern scale were associated with high scores on the family interaction scale, and with low scores on the family violence scale.
- Seriousness of delinquent behavior (arrest, trial, or reform school) is significantly related to lower age of alcohol and drug use, lower age at first juvenile arrest, and frequency of running away from home.
- Women offenders who had experienced abuse were more likely to be arrested at a younger age, use alcohol and drugs at a younger age, to be placed in a temporary home or shelter, or to run away from home. Abused girls scored higher on the delinquency measure, and as adults were first incarcerated at a younger age than non-abused offenders. Furthermore, the age at which the girl was first abused is associated with the age at first juvenile arrest, age at first runaway, and age at first alcohol or drug use.
- Sexually abused girls on the average were first arrested 1.5 years earlier than non-abused girls. For physically abused girls, the difference was 1.3 years. Girls who had been both physically and sexually abused were first arrested 1.9 years earlier than non-abused girls. Similar patterns are found with age of alcohol and drug use, and age at which they first ran away from home.

- Half (48%) of the girls who had been both sexually and physically abused had been arrested at least once before the age of 15, while of those who had not been abused, 89% had not been arrested before the age of 15. Similarly, 84% of multiply-abused girls ran away from home, and 59% ran away four times or more. In contrast, 44% of the non-abused girls ran away, and only 15% ran away four times or more.
- Physical and sexual abuse are not, however, associated with most of the measures of adult behavior obtained in this study. Specifically, experience of abuse as a child is not related to the marital status of the interviewee or the number of times she has married, her number of convictions, or to adult conviction for assaultive crimes or drug crimes; abuse is weakly related to age at first adult probation sentence and prison sentence. Abuse is also not related to the inmate's score on the self-esteem scale at the time of the interview.

Considering all the relationships among abuse, juvenile behavior and adult behavior, it appears that abuse has proximate effects on the girl's behavior, but that longer-term effects are more subtle or difficult to identify. Abuse is only one factor in the life history of these women; it is significantly associated with juvenile delinquent behavior, but is a less important factor than other variables considered. Delinquent behavior itself is strongly related to age at first probation and age at first incarceration, but is not related to other measures of adult behavior and criminal behavior such as number of convictions, or convictions for assault or drug crimes. We do not have data regarding the interviewees' parenting behavior, and thus cannot investigate the often-presumed relationship between subjection to abuse and inadequate parenting of one's own children.

IV. Implications of the study

While a striking proportion of the inmates interviewed in this study had experienced physical or sexual abuse as children, we cannot conclude that abuse causes adult criminality, or even that it causes juvenile delinquency. While the study finds correlations between experience of abuse and some aspects of delinquent or criminal behavior, certain other relationships are not found, and delinquency in particular is predicted by several measures in addition to abuse.

The findings suggest, rather, that abuse is one element of a family behavior complex which also includes disruptions in household composition, frequent resort to violence within the family, poor interpersonal relationships, and lack of parental interest in the child. All these factors are correlated with experience of abuse, and are also related to delinquency. While these family background factors may contribute to the likelihood of abuse in the family, it is difficult to argue unambiguously or convincingly for causal relationships. All of the behaviors noted continue over time and likely interact with each other within the family system. In addition, the measures used here are based on adult recollections of childhood situations. These memories and interpretations may be colored by later experiences or understandings which cause the respondent to remember her family situation differently from how she actually experienced it while growing up. Acknowledging the experience of abuse as an adult may, for example, cause a woman to report her parents as having been uncaring, while she would not have made that evaluation as a child.

Certainly not all abused girls become delinquent or criminal. For this sample, the

data suggest that most of those who were abused received no support or help from significant others regarding the abuse. In the absence of constructive coping strategies, one alternative is escape - either by physically running away from the home situation or through drug or alcohol use. Acting out her anger and frustration in delinquent or criminal behavior may be another response. While abuse is by no means the only stimulus leading to juvenile runaway or substance use, one is tempted to suggest that experiencing abuse in the absence of a supportive family environment does increase the tendency toward delinquent behavior, particularly when the "other" parent chooses to ignore or minimize the child's abuse. In contrast, an abused child who is helped - either by a parent or by others - to cope with the experience and avoid guilt and self-blame, might be less likely to attempt delinquent or anti-social coping strategies. The strength of a girl's personality, her psychological resilience, or her access to support systems outside the immediate family (i.e. school, church, or a significant adult friend) may be other factors which contribute to less anti-social outcomes of abuse.

V. Summary

This survey presents a picture of women inmates characterized by low achievement, early delinquency, and high experience of abuse. The women have generally low education levels, worked at unskilled jobs as teenagers, and a high percentage used alcohol and drugs as teenagers. A third grew up without their natural father in the family, and a third had some experience in foster care or living with caretakers other than her parents. Families of origin tended to be large (average 5.6 children). Two-thirds of the women ran away from home at least once while growing up, and half were arrested at least once. Two-thirds had parents or siblings who had been arrested.

Family interaction varied from supportive to abusive. A third of the women report their families got along most of the time, and a similar number perceive that their parents were supportive and concerned while they were growing up. While the majority report little violence occurred regularly in the household, three-quarters of the women were physically punished or beaten at least once and nearly a third were injured by their parents at some time. Nearly half the women report suffering physical abuse from some source (most often a parent) and two-thirds were sexually abused as children, with male friends, fathers, step-fathers, and uncles as the most common abusers. In about two-thirds of the cases of physical and sexual abuse, someone else knew about the problem but usually provided no constructive support for the victim.

Juvenile behavior (especially criminality, substance use, and teenage achievement) can be predicted by the various family environment measures. The women's experience of sexual or physical abuse is associated with household instability and overall family violence. Experience of abuse is also associated with younger age of substance use, younger age of delinquency and increased level of delinquency, and with earlier and more frequent running away. Abuse and juvenile delinquency are both associated with earlier adult criminality (particularly age at first incarceration), but not with measures of the intensity or severity of adult criminality. No relationship was found between experience of physical abuse as a child and conviction for assaultive crimes as an adult. Nor were direct relationships found between experience of sexual or physical abuse as a child and the other available measures of adult behavior.

In general, physical and sexual abuse appears to be just one of several elements comprising a general complex of dysfunctional family behavior; effects on behavior during the childhood and adolescence of the women interviewed are evident, but longer term effects in adult behavior are less clear. While the incidence of physical and sexual abuse in this population of women inmates is considerably higher than the incidence reported for the the general population, experience of abuse during childhood did not statistically stand alone as a determining factor in the later criminal behavior of the women in this sample. Other common factors in this population (high proportion of relatives who are criminal, unstable parental setting, poor education, etc.) intermingle with childhood abuse in the overall mix of factors influencing adult behavior.

It is clear, however, that a high proportion of the women in Oregon's prisons experienced sexual and/or physical abuse as children, and had little assistance in dealing with the trauma of those experiences at the time. It is likely that at least some elements of their current behavior, and the behavior which led to their incarceration, are related to earlier abuse. It follows that provision of opportunities to help women offenders recognize and come to terms with the influence of childhood abuse on their lives as adults, with treatment programs, education, cognitive restructuring and other interventions which develop new life skills, new interpersonal styles, and job-related knowledge, can be instrumental in the productive reintegration of women offenders into society.

Appendix 1

Differences between institution populations were found on only six measures:

(a) CRCI has a higher percentage of inmates with convictions for Possession of a Controlled Substance (42% of the general population, and 58% in Turning Point, compared with only 20% of OWCC inmates). However the difference in convictions for Delivery of a Controlled Substance is not significant, though the pattern is similar.

(b) OWCC has a higher percentage of inmates with convictions for assaultive crimes (44%, compared with 17% for CRCI general population and 11% for Turning Point).

(c) CRCI inmates attended school somewhat more as children: 83% attended at least through the 10th grade, while only 61% of OWCC inmates attended 10th grade or more. Self reported school grades were only marginally higher for CRCI. The difference in school completion disappears when later work for a GED is considered: 72% of OWCC inmates have either completed a GED or graduated from High School, compared with 74% of CRCI inmates.

(d) OWCC inmates experienced more violence in their families than CRCI inmates. 41% report injuries from beatings received from their parents, as compared with 21% for the CRCI general population and 11% for Turning Point inmates. Similarly, 41% of OWCC inmates score in the top third of the Family Violence scale⁷, compared with 23% of CRCI inmates.

(e) In all, 59 inmates (67%) reported running away from home at least once when they were young; the pattern is different among the institutions. Eighty-four percent of Turning Point inmates ran away at least once, and 26% ran more than 3 times. However only 58% of the CRCI general population ran away, but a third ran more than 3 times. In comparison, 74% of OWCC inmates ran away, 44% more than three times.

(f) Finally, according to their self-report, inmates have different experiences of drug dependency. In the Turning Point A&D program, 95% of the women admit to dependence, while 61% of the CRCI general population and 66% of OWCC inmates report having been dependent on alcohol or drugs at some time. The age at first use of drugs or alcohol is not significantly different among the subpopulations, however.

⁷ An additive scale including the following items: did parents ever physically fight with each other (never, a few times, many times); did parents ever slap respondent (same codes); did parents punish respondent physically (yes/no); number of times respondent received bruises or broken bones from punishment; number of times respondent received injuries from other parental beatings.

Appendix 2

Family background and juvenile behavior

A central goal of this study was to evaluate the relationship between family background and the incidence of abuse in a woman's childhood, and to further assess the impact of abuse on the woman's later behavior. To this end, interrelationships among the different measures of family environment, juvenile behavior, and adult criminal behavior were tested.⁸ The various scales measuring family background are highly interrelated. Table 1 summarizes values for Kendall's Tau C statistic among all the family background scales.

Table 1: Relationships among family environment measures
(Number is Tau C coefficient)

	Number of Adults	Family Violence	Family Relations	Parental Concern
Family Violence	.24			
Family Relations	-.31	-.44		
Parental Concern	-.32	-.42	.55	
Family Crime	.16*	.14#	-.26#	.24

Note: All relationships are significant at $p < .01$ unless noted:

*= $p < .05$; #=p not significant.

The cluster of juvenile behavior measures is also highly interrelated, as seen in Table 2. For example, seriousness of delinquent behavior (arrest, trial, or reform school) is significantly related to lower age of alcohol and drug use, lower age at first juvenile arrest, and frequency of running away from home.

Table 2: Relationships among juvenile behavior measures
(Number is Tau C coefficient)

	Delinquent behavior	Age of alc & drug use	Age at 1st juv. arrest	No. times runaway	Age at 1st runaway
Age of alcohol & drug use	-.37				
Age at 1st arrest	-.78	.33			
No. times runaway	.35	-.34	-.36		
Age at 1st runaway	-.35	.42	.37	-.78	
Juvenile achievement	-.21*	.02#	.16*	-.24	.05#

Note: All relationships are significant at $p < .01$ unless noted:

*= $p < .05$; #=p not significant

⁸ Because of the relatively small sample size, and the characteristics of the data, crosstabulations were the primary means of data analysis, with Kendall's Tau C being used to measure the strength and test the statistical significance of the relationships. Tau C can vary between -1 and +1, and can be interpreted similarly to a correlation coefficient. Most of the continuous scales listed in section II above were collapsed into three steps (low, medium and high), such that about a third of the cases fell into each step.

EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Being subject to physical or sexual abuse appeared to have immediate effects on the interviewees' behavior. Women offenders who had experienced abuse were more likely to be arrested at a younger age, use alcohol and drugs at a younger age, to be placed in a temporary home or shelter, or to run away from home. Abused girls scored higher on the delinquency measure, and as adults were first incarcerated at a younger age than non-abused offenders. Furthermore, the age at which the girl was first abused is associated with the age at first juvenile arrest, age at first runaway, and age at first alcohol or drug use. (See Table 3 below)

Table 3: Correlations Between Age at First Abuse and Juvenile Behavior Measures

Measure:	Age at 1st Runaway	Age of alc. & drug use	Age at 1st juvenile arrest	Age at 1st prison sentence
Correlation:	.52	.39	.34	.26

Note: All correlations are significant at $p < .01$

Sexually abused girls on the average were first arrested 1.5 years earlier than non-abused girls. For physically abused girls, the difference was 1.3 years. Girls who had been both physically and sexually abused were first arrested 1.9 years earlier than non-abused girls. Similar patterns are found with age of alcohol and drug use, and age at which they first ran away from home. The differences are summarized in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:
Age Difference in Juvenile Behavior
Comparing Abused with Non-abused Girls**

	Age at 1st runaway	Avg age of alcohol+drug use	Age at 1st juv. arrest
Physical abuse only	2.0 years	2.3 years	1.3 years
Sexual abuse only	1.1 years [#]	2.5 years	1.5 years
Both physical & sexual abuse	2.3 years	3.6 years	1.9 years

Note: all differences are significant at $p < .01$ except ([#])= not significant

Table 5 shows an example of the striking impact of being a victim of both physical and sexual abuse. Half (48%) of the girls who had been both sexually and physically abused had been arrested at least once before the age of 15, while of those who had not been abused, 89% had not been arrested before the age of 15. Similarly, 84% of multiply-abused girls ran away from home, and 59% ran away four times or more. In contrast, 44% of the non-abused girls ran away, and only 15% ran away four times or more.

**Table 5: Crosstabulation of Extent of Abuse
with Age at First Juvenile Arrest**

Age at first arrest:	Extent of Abuse:			Row total
	Not abused	Physical or sexual abuse	Physical <u>and</u> sexual abuse	
11	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (1%)
12	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	6 (18%)	7 (8%)
13	0 (0%)	4 (14%)	8 (24%)	12 (14%)
14	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	4 (5%)
15	1 (4%)	4 (14%)	2 (6%)	7 (8%)
16	3 (11%)	3 (10%)	5 (15%)	11 (12%)
17	3 (11%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (5%)
not as juvenile	17 (63%)	16 (55%)	10 (30%)	43 (48%)
Column total	27 (100%)	29 (100%)	33 (100%)	N=89

Physical and sexual abuse are not, however, associated with most of the measures of adult behavior obtained in this study. Specifically, experience of abuse as a child is not related to the marital status of the interviewee or the number of times she has married, her number of convictions, or to adult conviction for assaultive crimes or drug crimes; abuse is weakly related to age at first adult probation sentence and prison sentence. Abuse is also not related to the inmate's score on the self-esteem scale at the time of the interview.

Weak relationships are found between family violence and conviction for an assaultive crime and between family criminality and conviction for an assaultive crime (Tau C=.18 and .20 respectively, $p < .05$). Greater age at first prison incarceration is also weakly related to better intra-family relationships (Tau=.19, $p < .05$). There were no other statistically significant relationships between available measures of adult criminal behavior and interview responses regarding childhood family environment factors in this sample of women offenders.