The Literacy Characteristics of Navajo Readers and Writers.

Diane Clarite Greene

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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The literacy characteristics of Navajo readers and writers

Greene, Diane Clarite, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993
THE LITERACY CHARACTERISTICS OF
NAVAJO READERS AND WRITERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

Diane Greene
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1971
M.Ed., Louisiana State University, 1974
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May 1993
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Native Americans believe that each person's life is a vision quest. As we journey through our unique life path, there are special people, pathfinders, who are placed in our life to help us shape our destiny.

The labor of love that is found in this ethnography is an integral part of my own vision quest. I could not have completed this study if it were not for the pathfinders that comprised my committee. To Dr. Earl Cheek, my chairperson and mentor, I owe the deepest gratitude, love, and respect. He forged the path for me and never left my side during the trials of my journey.

Dr. Charles Teddlie, my minor chairperson and trailblazer, gave me the skills, knowledge, and courage to continue down a path that seemed at one point too risky to follow. Without his guidance and belief in my abilities, I would not have had the courage to live my dream.

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For the teachers on my research team I have the utmost admiration. Although I cannot give your names here, you will find yourselves in the study's narratives.

These acknowledgements would not be complete without giving thanks to the friends who brought light, joy, and hope to my journey: Gail, Wyonna, Kathy, Linda, Wanda, and Anthony. Your love gave voice to my wild mind.

My love goes also, to my beloved Akita, Kody Bear. You were my spirit guide on this vision quest.
And, finally, I express my unconditional love to my son, Dylan, who is the villain of my heart. Someday I hope you'll understand my passion and continue the quest in your own way.
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the children who attend Small Tree Public School District #4.

The battle's end can begin with you!
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VITA
DISCLAIMER

In keeping with the spirit of ethnographic research, pseudonyms have been used throughout this dissertation when a particular person or place has been discussed. In some cases gender and/or ethnicity have been changed to preserve the integrity of the culture being investigated and to protect the anonymity of the participants.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this ethnographic research was to begin the process of identifying the literacy characteristics of Navajo readers and writers. The study replicates aspects of the research project, *Home Environmental Characteristics of Successful Navajo Readers*, by Dr. David Hartle-Schutte (1988). Home and school discontinuities were investigated in a traditional Navajo environment to determine literacy development (Cazden, Courtney, 1982).

Ethnographic data collection consisted of six months of participant observations in two sixth grade classrooms. Structured interviews were used to gather information from teachers, students and parents about the school and community literacy characteristics. A researcher designed instrument was used to survey parents. Field notes were taken and emerging themes were analyzed to triangulate the data.

Two key Navajo informants provided assistance with the language and with sensitive community issues. School records were reviewed to determine tribal membership, socioeconomic levels of parents, attendance patterns, behavioral patterns and standardized test scores.

A reflective journal was kept that was used to record impressions of the emic observer. Photographs and videos were used as secondary reporting sources.

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This study was conducted at Small Tree, Arizona on the Navajo reservation. The classrooms consisted of one Navajo female teacher, one Anglo male teacher and twenty Navajo, Hopi and Anglo children ranging in age from eleven to thirteen years. There were eleven girls and nine boys represented.

The findings of this study are unique. First, this study offers an emic (within culture) view of how Navajo children in a traditional reservation acquire literacy skills. The researcher lived and interacted daily with the children and teachers.

Secondly, this study suggests that Navajo children in Small Tree achieve literacy in unique and varying ways. No home environment was the same. However, those homes that fostered literate environments through valuing reading and writing activities produced more successful readers and writers as determined by traditional academic standards. Authentic assessment procedures were also used to document students' writing performance.

Finally, the study suggests that sociocultural issues directly affected the literacy development of students. Cultural dissonance created home, school, and community tensions that increased student ineffectiveness and decreased teacher effectiveness.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to begin the process of identifying the literacy characteristics of Navajo readers and writers. The study replicates aspects of the research project entitled *Home Environmental Characteristics of Successful Navajo Readers* conducted by Dr. David Hartle-Schutte in 1988. Dr. Hartle-Schutte was a participant observer at Fort Defiance, Arizona which is a small community south of Small Tree, during the time of his investigation.

Definition of Literacy

Burns, Rowe and Ross describe literacy as the continuing emergence of the aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing that empower the learner to function successfully in his or her sociocultural environment. They go on to state that "by literacy is the ability to communicate and understand another language in addition to one's native tongue" (p. 654).

For the purpose of this study I have chosen to use this definition of literacy whenever any reference to oral literacy, written literacy, spoken literacy, second language learning or comprehension of the written word is made. References to the cognitive aspects of the act of reading are also inherent in this definition.
The Roots of Literacy

What are the characteristics that allow some Native American Indians to develop into proficient, successful readers and writers while a great many of their peers experience difficulty in school?

The search for the answer to this question was the focus of this study and required the investigation of many related issues. Those issues included social and cultural influences on literacy, historical and psychological influences, the discontinuities of expectations between the home and the school, the functions of literacy of Native Americans, and the process of becoming a reader and writer.

Native American children have been identified as having a generally much lower success rate in school than "Anglo" children (Rhodes, 1988; Platero, 1986). These assessments have, historically, been based upon conventional measures such as Standardized Achievement Tests, frequency of repeating grade levels, a high drop-out rate, and a low percentage of high school graduates. On all of these measures of success, the average success rate of Native Americans is much lower than the average success rates for anglo children (Cazden, Courtney and John V, 1977).

However, this process of developing group averages masks the fact that there are, in fact, Native Americans who can be considered successful (Ogbu, John, 1987b). By
using alternative methods for assessing individual students' reading and writing proficiency, even more Native Americans could be considered "successful".

Many researchers, by focusing primarily upon test scores of the less than successful minority students have overlooked a tremendous source of information in the performance outcomes of successful minority students. As a result, studies on unsuccessful minority students have contributed to a growing body of generalizations and stereotypes that are neither accurate nor helpful in suggesting ways of improving educational opportunities for the less successful students (Le Brasseur, M.; Frank, E., 1982). Studying the characteristics of unsuccessful minority readers and writers and excluding the characteristics of successful readers and writers, particularly in comparison to successful Anglo students can lead to erroneous conclusions. Furthermore, we can not hope to discover the literacy characteristics of successful students by studying only unsuccessful students. "The challenge is to explore more completely how economic, cultural, social structure, ethnic and other factors tend to create the orientation to literacy which exists within a home and school context" (Teale, 1986, p. 200).

The study reported here not only documents the existence of successful and unsuccessful readers and writers, but also provides insight into how this process
takes place on the Navajo reservation. It was a retrospective, ethnographic study of the families and individual students and it explored the multiple paths by which literacy can be achieved.

There has been an abundance of literature written about the academic failures of minority students and the presumed causes of their failures (Jensen, 1969, 1981; Johnson, 1970). With few notable exceptions (Durkin, 1984), little research has been reported on successful minority students. Numerous studies have shown that the average standardized test scores for minority groups are substantially lower than national norms, but seldom is there much discussion of the individual minority students who achieve at or above those norms. Neither is there much discussion of alternative means of determining "success."

In attempting to explain the group differences in achievement test scores, various researchers have suggested different reasons ranging from genetic inferiority (Jensen, 1981) and cultural deprivation (Bereiter and Englemann, 1966), to home school discontinuities (Cazden, 1982), poor teaching methods, and cultural bias of the testing instruments (Ginsburg, 1972). None of these explanations, however, adequately accounts for the minority students that are successful beyond expectations. It is important, therefore, to study these successful students to try to identify characteristics that lead to success.
There are many social factors that not only have an impact upon whether and how individuals become literate, but also how the larger society judges individuals. "Sue and Padilla (1986) claim that English proficiency occurs in a sociocultural context" (p. 35). Documentation revealed in Chapter VI of this study will support that claim. Writing proficiency is also a reflection of the way the author reacts with a given text (Wells, *The Meaning Makers*, 1986). Children evidence a higher degree of comprehension and fluency when responding to passages that have relevance and meaning to them. Samples of student writing will be provided to support this assertion in Chapter VI.

Reading "on grade level" is often viewed as an indicator of academic success. Using readability lists (Chall, 1967), teachers and educators label students in an effort to develop heterogenous reading groups. However, numerical data such as test scores do not always present an accurate picture of the characteristics of a successful or unsuccessful reader.

Further, there exists a narrow view of literacy learning that has, particularly in the past, focused exclusively on the school and on the reading program used in the school. David Doake (1981) researched the misconception that reading has to be directly taught and that this can happen only once the child attends school. This misconception has influenced many researchers to focus
on different teaching methodologies rather than on the process of learning how to make sense of written language.

More recently, however, many descriptive and ethnographic studies have focused on the characteristics of the home and community environment and on the child's developing knowledge of print prior to school (Durkin, 1966; Bissex, 1980). A number of these studies included children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and different socioeconomic levels, demonstrating that children growing up in a literate society develop concepts and knowledge about written and oral language no matter what their ethnic, linguistics, or socioeconomic background (Anderson, Teale and Estrada, 1980; Hernandez-Chavez and Curtis, 1984). These and other studies indicate that adult-child interactions can have very significant impacts upon the child's success in school (Tizard, Schofield and Hervison, 1982).

Looking for New Paths

The present study sought to extend the findings of Dr. Hartle-Schutte. It was my intent to replicate aspects of his study to investigate the emerging role of the school, home, and community partnership as an influence on the performance of Native American children.

This study extended Dr. Hartle-Schutte's study in the following areas:
1. Unsuccessful as well as successful readers and writers were identified and studied.

2. The sample population was middle school Navajo children taught by one Navajo teacher and one Anglo teacher.

3. Four case studies were also conducted. The researcher attempted to investigate two unsuccessful readers and two successful readers from the identified sample population.

4. Writing proficiency was assessed along with reading proficiency. Dr. Hartle-Schutte proposed that investigating the writing development of identified successful Navajo students might provide valuable information that would further extend the existing contemporary research on the link between reading and writing development.

5. Small Tree is located in the most remote area of the Navajo reservation. The only contact with urban areas is through television and the Gallup Independent newspaper. There are no paved roads or modern shopping facilities. Dr. Hartle-Schutte suggested that a study similar to the one he conducted in Fort Defiance be replicated in an area where children were not as acculturated. This might reveal significant findings of how the
social/cultural factors of a community affect learning.

6. Participant observation was the primary source of information. The researcher lived on the reservation in Small Tree. During this study she served as Assistant Principal at Small Tree. This allowed her to personally observe the home, community, and school interactions of the identified population. The research project conducted by Dr. Hartle-Schutte was limited to interviews and document searches.

The above questions not only defined what this study investigated, but also the methodological approach. The significant people in the sociocultural environment of the identified successful readers were the main source of information. Interviews with the students themselves, their parents, their teachers and the Chapter House President provided much of the information on each student. Other sources included school records, artifacts, and direct observations in the students' homes.

Why Study Successful Navajo Readers and Writers?

By focusing upon successful Navajo readers and writers this study will help challenge myths about Navajo and Native American academic failures. This study documents the existence of successful Navajo readers and writers and
provides insight into the developmental process of becoming literate in a reservation setting.

Little is known about the varieties of home environments that are supportive of the development of literacy, particularly in Navajo populations. Most studies to date have documented primarily homes of middle-class, non-minority students. This study focuses on ten Navajo children who have become successful readers and writers in one community on the Navajo reservation. While many commonalities emerged in this study, it also became very clear that there is no single path to literacy, even among this relatively homogeneous group. The multiple paths to literacy discovered in this one community illustrate the need for caution in proposing any universals in literacy development within a single community, much less across cultures.

Characteristics that are associated with statistical correlations with reading and other academic success in Anglo populations are often assumed to apply to all populations. Differences between Anglo populations and minority populations have been assumed to be causal factors in the different reading success rates of the different groups. Thus, socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic or other differences, are presumed to explain the different success rates. Schiefflin and Cochran-Smith (1984) caution against such cross-cultural assumptions.
Whether consciously or not, some researchers tend to use school-oriented, middle-class literacy values and patterns as the baseline against which we compare other patterns of literacy use (p. 5).

These assumptions become problematic when one is confronted with successful readers from different cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds, and unsuccessful readers from middle-class Anglo homes.

Finally, with increased knowledge about certain characteristics of the development of successful Navajo readers, educators and parents will be in a better position to make informed decisions about how to provide more appropriate help to less successful Navajo readers.

Historical Perspective: The Setting

There are 487 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States with 280 different languages and cultures (Costello, 1977). Through the socialization process Indian children from these tribes develop language, cultural values and ways of learning and organizing knowledge that not only reflect tribal differences, but that are different from mainstream society.

The Small Tree Community consists of about 650 families scattered over seventy-five miles throughout the Navajo reservation. One section of this land has been in constant dispute between the Hopis and Navajos concerning ownership rights. Teachers and students expressed concern over the effect this has had on the students at Small Tree
School. For years Hopis and Navajos have intermarried and the children of these unions are now facing serious decisions as to which tribe they will vow their loyalty to. The present educational system is not addressing this need. The ineffectiveness of this system is exemplified by a high drop-out rate, teen pregnancies, alcoholism, drug abuse and a poverty level that is well above the national average.

This study will explore the cultural conflicts evidenced in community and school interactions. Research conducted by Phillips (1983) on the Warm Spring Indian Reservation will be used to study participant and communication structures found in the classroom. Does the Native American child learn a different system of organization before they enter school? This is one question that the researcher will investigate during the study.

A Brief History of Indian Education

In order to develop an understanding of the sociocultural conflicts experienced by the researcher, a brief history of Indian education seems appropriate here. The history of Indian education is generally one of attempts by the Anglo society to pacify, civilize and Christianize the Indians (Weinberg, 1977; Price, 1978). "Education has been one of the major weapons of forced assimilation since the establishment of the first colonies" (Deloria and Lytle, 1983). However, the Anglo educational
goals have frequently been at odds with the goals and desires of the Indian people. Havinghurst (1972) relates the following response to Benjamin Franklin from Indian leaders concerning Anglo offers of education for Indian youth.

But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it; several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were Bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, not Counselors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it, and to show our grateful sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them (p. 3).

Neither the Anglo educational goals nor the tactics were benign. In a scathing summary of the history of Indian education in the United States, Weinberg (1977) describes treatment of Indian children in mission and federal Indian schools. Children were rounded up by soldiers and sent to distant schools. Students were punished for speaking their own languages. Many were beaten. Many were required to do forced labor, with little or no pay.
In a personal interview with Leroy Tso, a Road man with the Native American Church in Small Tree, the following testimony concerning his treatment at the hands of Mormons at a federal Indian school was described:

You ask me why I distrust Belaganas (whites)? When I was six years old I was sent to a BIA School in Salt Lake City. The Mormons cut off my braids and put white paint on my face. They thought that eventually my skin would bleach out if it was covered from the sun. If I spoke in Navajo, I was whipped. When I tried to pray in my native tradition, I was made to recite the Book of Mormon. I could not practice any of the ceremonies of my elders because they were viewed as pagan. But I never gave in to the Belaganas' ways. Inside me there was a drum—the drum of my forefathers. When I grew sad, I listened within to the drum. It beat in harmony to my heart. The song it echoed was the song of Mother Earth. I vowed to come home to Small Tree and continue our sacred ceremonies and I did (personal testimony).

Leroy Tso, September 13, 1991

In the Treaty of 1868, the Navajos were promised a schoolhouse and teacher for every thirty children. The federal government did not live up to this commitment. Twenty-four years after the treaty was signed, a grand total of only 75 students attended the single school on the reservation (Weinberg, 1977).

Throughout contact between the Indian societies and the Anglo society, the dominant point of view of a "successful" Indian was one who had given up the Indian culture and had adopted the Anglo culture. The Report of the Superintendent of the Indian Schools in 1898 stated:
In our efforts to humanize, Christianize and educate the Indian we should endeavor to divorce him from his primitive habits and customs. . .We must recreate him, make him a new personality (Szasz, 1977, p. 45).

This attitude prevailed until 1928, when the Meriam Report was issued, containing recommendations such that:

. . .education be geared for all age levels and that it be tied in closely with the community. . .(and include). . .the introduction of Indian culture and revision of the curriculum (Szasz, 1977, p. 3).

Under the sponsorship of John Collier, Indian Commissioner during the New Deal, there was a period of innovation and federal commitment to Indian education. Progressive education, innovative staff development programs, bilingual and bicultural education, increased funding, construction of many new schools which became community centers, and the development of appropriate curricula and materials were key elements. However, this progress was short-lived, disrupted by World War II, and momentum was lost (Szasz, 1977, Fuchs and Havinghurst, 1973).

In the mid-1940's the dominant program again became one of acculturation of Indians. Additional Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools were located off the reservations in order to isolate the children from their families and culture (Fuchs and Havinghurst, 1973). In the late 1940's and early 1950's, Congressional resolutions were passed, attempting to terminate federal financial
assistance to Indian tribes. Public schools began to have a larger impact upon Indian education as they enrolled larger and larger percentages of the Indian children, except in the most rural areas like Small Tree. In the Navajo reservation area, it was not until 1968 that public schools enrolled as many students as the federal BIA boarding and day schools.

However, as Havinghurst (1970) reports, the curricula in both the BIA schools and the public schools paralleled what was common in other public schools in America. He attributed this to the accrediting agencies, state guidelines, teacher education programs, and the textbooks that were used.

Often, the curriculum appears to reject, attempts to eliminate, or simply ignores the Indian heritage of the child (Havinghurst, 1970, p. 31).

...most schools and educators have expected Indian children to accommodate to styles of instruction and curriculum which were not designed with reference to the special requirements of Indian youngsters (p. 8).

This study will explore the short-term positive effects that a whole language philosophy coupled with a strong Title VII Bilingual program has had on the curriculum and students of Small Tree School. In investigating these effects the researcher relied heavily on the language acquisition theory and how its findings have empowered second language learners.
Language Acquisition Theory

Noam Chomsky (1959) first posited the language acquisition theory and two other researchers have extended his findings to focus on Native Americans as second language learners. Dr. Jim Cummins and Dr. Steve Krashen are linguists/social scientists who developed two theoretical frameworks which they called "models of intervention." Incorporating the theories of Hilda Tabu, E. B. Smith and L. Rosenblatt, Dr. Cummins and Dr. Krashen proposed alternative methods for structuring curriculum that would meet the needs of minority students. The beliefs inherent in their models reflect the following assertions:

1. Language learning is a self-generated, creative active process. Children acquire language through purposeful dialogue about meaningful events (Cummins, 1980). Therefore, a student's primary language (LI) must be effectively incorporated into existing school programs in order to ensure minority academic success.

Steve Krashen stresses the incorporation of oral stories is his Language Acquisition Device (LAD) model. These stories are considered "active generators" of knowledge that can support the learning experiences of children (Krashen, 1981b).
3. Both researchers advocate a "reciprocal interaction" between teachers and students. By this they mean an environment that is collaborative in nature and that encourages risk-taking. In this climate a teacher acts as a facilitator rather than authoritarian. The focus of attention is on higher order thinking skills, metacognition, and intrinsic motivation.

4. Lastly, both Cummins and Krashen address the assessment dimension as a component of their models. Each researcher firmly states that testing issues must be seriously reviewed and reformed in order to ensure that minority students are afforded a reasonable opportunity to achieve results that reflect their actual potential for success. This can be done by involving minority consultants in the development of standardized and informal assessment procedures.

**Significance of Study**

This study has the potential to improve school programs dealing with the development of literacy among Native American students. Knowledge of the multiple ways to institute a whole-language curriculum school-wide may help to alleviate the high rate of drop-outs, low standardized test scores, and the increasing percentage of
students addicted to drugs and alcohol. Involvement of the community in the school-partnership concept might increase the cooperation and communication between the school and students' families. This increased involvement could have significant results in reading and writing.

Furthermore, the development of a whole language curriculum by Native Americans for Native Americans could serve as an impetus for traditional tribal members to recognize and support the importance of school. This literacy program must have clear goals and a rationale that embraces the culture and traditions of the Navajos residing on the Small Tree reservation.

This study contributes to research in the following areas:

1. There is a body of research that suggest a strong link between reading and writing development. This study focused on both processes in an effort to extend these findings to include the Native American population.

2. Standardized test scores have historically been the sole measurement of successful readers. This research investigated authentic assessment procedures as a more appropriate means to determine reading and writing achievement for Native Americans.
3. Studies that support the use of a child's primary language in participant structures have positively affected the literacy development of Native American and other minority populations. This study sought to link those findings through the replication of methods developed by the researcher and the Small Tree staff. These methods were intensive and reflected the findings of Dr. David Hartle-Schutte, Dr. Terri McCarty, and Drs. Ken and Yetta Goodman.

**Research Questions**

This study investigated the implementation of a whole-language curriculum developed by the teachers, students and staff, of Small Tree Unified School District #4 in Small Tree, Arizona. This school serves 854 students with a certified staff of 52 teachers and a support staff that includes 25 Teacher Assistants, 2 full-time clerical workers, 1 social worker, one part-time nurse and two full-time substance abuse counselors. In particular the researcher attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the literacy characteristics of successful Navajo readers and writers?

2. What are the sociocultural factors inherent in a reservation community that affect the literacy environment of the school that operates there?
3. What are the aspects of oral and written language development that influence the learning of Native American children?

4. Is the underestimation of successful Navajo readers and writers a result of inappropriate instruments traditionally used by districts to determine academic achievement?

5. Will the Native American child experience greater success in school if his primary language is used concurrently with his second language in a consistent, uniform, meaning-based curriculum?

One of the characteristics of naturalistic research is that preformulated and specific hypotheses are avoided, since they may limit the scope and direction of the inquiry and the interpretation of the data (Kamil, Langer and Shanahan, 1986). The inquiry instead begins from broader, more general questions.

For the naturalistic inquirer the design can be given in advance only incompletely; to specify it in detail would place constraints on antecedent conditions or outputs or both, thereby altering the nature of the inquiry from naturalistic to conventional modes. In the naturalistic inquirer situation, the design emerges as the investigator proceeds: it is in constant flux as new information is gained and new insights are formed. Thus, emergent
variable designs are among the hallmarks of naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1978, p. 14).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Four areas of research were relevant to this study: research on current practices of evaluating reading and writing ability; research on the use of standardized assessment tools to determine the success of Navajo students; research on the sociocultural factors that influence the learning of Native American children; and research on effective procedures for implementing the whole language philosophy into a school’s curriculum.

Two retrospective ethnographic studies were used as the basis for the development of the present study. Dr. David Hartle-Schutte’s research on the Home Characteristics of Successful Navajo Readers was the primary source investigated. Dr. Hartle-Schutte conducted his study on the Navajo reservation in Fort Defiance, Arizona. This community is 120 miles south of Small Tree.

The second body of work examined was a case study of a first grade classroom on the Yaqui reservation in Southwest Arizona. Dr. Karen Guilfoyle conducted this study and her findings can be found in her dissertation entitled Teaching Indian Students: An Ethnography of the Social Context of One First Grade Classroom, Arizona State College, 1988.

Research on the Current Practices of Evaluating Reading and Writing Ability

A commonly held view of reading has been that reading is a set of skills that had to be formally taught, that
oral language must be mastered prior to learning to read, and that there are certain "reading readiness" skills that must precede reading. School was viewed as the place where learning how to read must take place.

During the last twenty years new theoretical models of literacy development have led to new ways of assessing success in reading and writing. Each of these areas provides an important background for understanding literacy development among Navajo children. Following is a brief review of the research in these areas.

Literacy Development and the Influence of the Home

Many researchers (Y. Goodman and K. Goodman, 1981; Teale and Sulzby, 1986) have come to the conclusion that literacy development is a process similar to oral language development. They maintain that, while reading and writing are not the equivalent of "talk, written down," they are both language processes that can and should develop in the natural manner that oral language develops.

Just as a child, surrounded by the meaningful use of oral language develops control over the oral language system without formal instruction (Halliday, 1975) he or she can develop control over the written language system if surrounded by meaningful uses of written language (McGee, L. and Richgels, D., 1990).

Frank Smith draws a useful distinction between the process of learning and language and the process of becoming literate.
Children are less likely to discover possibilities of written language from their own spontaneous experimentation with writing than they learn about spoken language from their babbling and early speech. They need to see what written language will do for readers or writers. Children must be entirely dependent on literate others to lead them into literacy, to show them how written language can be used (Smith, 1984, p. 145).

Part of the increased difficulty is due to the "situation-independent" nature of much printed material, particularly extended texts (Smith, 1984). Examples of situation-independent print would include books, magazines and newspapers. Encounters with these types of materials require the mediation of a literate person to help the emerging reader make a connection between the printed symbols and the meaning.

Children do very well at making connections between "situation-dependent" print and meaning because there are many cues within the social setting that provide that meaning. Examples of situation-dependent print are printed on some signs, product packages, and print on television. Readers utilize environment and contextual cues to predict meaning (McGee, L. and Richgels, D., 1990). The environment surrounding situation-independent print does not, however, provide the reader with as many cues to the meaning of the print. Thus for an emerging reader, it is through the interaction with literate others that they begin to make the correction between meaning and print and
learn the functions and uses of written language (Vygotsky, 1978).

In my role as Principal at Small Tree School I observed the growth pattern of transitional first graders through the use of scaffolding or support from a literate other. These students were identified as at-risk through the Bilingual Language Syntax Inventory and the Window Rock Oral Language Inventory. Their primary language was Navajo and they came from homes where Navajo was the primary language. Thus, they experienced difficulty decoding and interpreting English in Kindergarten. With the help of a Navajo teacher and a Teacher Assistant fluent in Navajo and English, 85% of these twenty students progressed to the first grade.

Chomsky (1970), Read (1975), Soderbergh (1977), Clay (1972, 1975), Beers and Beers (1981), Bissex (1980), and others have compiled substantial quantities of evidence that children discover graphophonic relationships without direct instruction and that these "invented spelling" patterns are logical, systematic, and often more regular than standard spelling. However, these young children did not independently create hypotheses about the nature of written language. In each of these studies, there was at least one significant literate other that provided answers to the questions that these emerging writers posed, and demonstrated functional uses of written language.
The phenomenon of early readers has been investigated by many, but the classic studies are those by Durkin (1966). She found that the early readers came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, represented a wide range of I.Q. scores, and were much like any other children their own age except for the fact that they could read prior to school. These early readers were interested in writing, often producing writing well before they were reading. They came from homes that could be best described as literate environments: homes where stories were read to children, writing materials were available to children, and where reading and writing were valued and used for functional purposes.

Clark (1976, 1984) conducted a similar study in Scotland with children from a variety of family backgrounds who were readers prior to attending school. Clark found very similar results with the exception of I.Q. scores. In her study, the I.Q. scores were above average with the verbal scores generally higher than performance scores. In an earlier study of poor readers she had found lower verbal scores and higher performance scores. She explained that, in her opinion, the higher I.Q. scores were not causal factors in the early reading abilities of the children.

Already, however intelligence tests are being questioned as measures of innate ability and the extent to which they are a combination of innate potential and environmental enrichment must be considered. . . . It seems more appropriate in light of recent research in this area, the
present results on the psychological measures, and the communication skills shown by the children in a variety of situations, to consider their early reading as one off shoot of their developing language skills (Clark, 1976, pp. 23, 24).

In a book length case study, Bissex (1980) traced her son, Paul's literacy development from age five to ten, providing an extremely detailed insight into the process of learning the written language system without a teacher. Unfortunately, once Paul began school there was a wide gap between the limited assignments that were given, and his capabilities as demonstrated in his spontaneous writings at home.

In another case study, Soderbergh (1977) recorded in great detail the process of her daughter's independent construction of graphophonic relationships at the age of three. The daughter had been instructed in reading using Doman's (1964) sight word method of teaching. Without instruction or assistance, she was able to develop hypotheses about the structure of written language and the relationships between sounds and letters.

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984), in a study of three, four, five, and six-year old children found that all children have developed a large amount of knowledge and concepts about print. They also found that the commonly accepted prediction factors in success in reading in school (sex, race, socioeconomic status) were not obvious
predictors of the children's responses to print prior to schooling.

Other studies (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1983; Y. Goodman and Attwerger, 1981; Haussler, 1982, 1984) investigated and documented many of the concepts about print that young children develop prior to any literacy instruction. These studies suggest that there is a continuum of development in written language development, much the same as in oral language development, that occurs without any specific instruction. Some researchers (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1983; Y. Goodman 1983; Clay, 1975; Holdaway, 1979; Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984); go beyond this, stating that specific skills instruction, particularly of abstract rules, actually interferes with this natural learning of reading and writing.

Denny Taylor (1983) in her ethnographic study of six different families and the development of literacy in young children, describes in rich detail the type of environment and interactions that encourage this "natural" literacy development. She, as other researchers before her, found that literacy developed easily and quite naturally when children are surrounded by meaningful uses of print, where they have the opportunity and the encouragement to experiment with print, and where literacy is valued. These so-called "literacy events" included a wide variety of uses of written language including: lists, notes to family
members, signs for lemonade stands, rules for club membership, greeting cards, parents and older siblings answering questions about written language, pretend menus, and a variety of narrative writing.

**Research on the Use of Standardized Assessment Tools to Determine the Success of Navajo Students**

In general, success for Indian children has historically been defined by the Anglo society by the degree of acculturation and achievement compared to Anglo cultural norms. Most of these assessments are based upon standardized achievement and other test scores. There is much evidence that minority children fail to achieve at the Anglo norm on these tests.

It has been well documented by the Coleman Report (1966) and numerous other studies that the average achievement test scores of minority children are significantly lower than the national norms. Some researchers have taken these results as evidence that there are either genetic inferiorities (Jensen, 1981), cultural deprivations (Bereiter and Englemann, 1966), or restricted language abilities (Cummins, 1980) that account for this lack of success. Blatantly ethnocentric and racist statements appear in the literature:

> With no known exceptions, studies of three to five year old children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have shown them to be retarded or below average in every intellectual ability (Bereiter and Englemann, 1966, p. 3).
These and other deficit model researchers accept standardized tests as accurate assessment tools and have devised various theories to explain the differences in scores they find for different ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The assumptions behind these standardized measures are not examined by these researchers. It is important, therefore, to study the history of standardized testing, how the tests were developed, and how the results are used.

The formal movement in testing intelligence began in the last half of the 19th century with Sir Francis Gatton. James Cattell, an American psychologist, introduced the term "mental test" in 1890. In France, Binet and Simon developed the first individual intelligence test in 1905 to identify students whose aptitudes were so low as to need special schools, and this test was revised and translated into the widely used 1916 Stanford revision. The Binet test was administered to immigrants on Ellis Island to judge their mental capacities.

The test results showed that 87 percent of Russians, 83 percent of Jews, 80 percent of Hungarians and 79 percent of Italians were feebleminded. Consequently, the percentage of aliens deported for feeblemindedness rose by 350 percent in 1913 (McKenna, 1977).

The impact of I.Q. tests is important to consider in education because of fairly high correlations between I.Q. scores and school achievement (as measured by achievement
tests) and because of its frequent use in educational research studies as a controlled variable.

As early as 1922, Walter Lippman was expressing concern over the growing use of intelligence testing:

"Because the results are expressed in numbers, it is easy to make the mistake of thinking that the intelligence test is a measure like a foot ruler or a pair of scales. It is, of course, a quite different sort of measure... But intelligence is not an abstraction like length and weight; it is an exceedingly complicated notion which nobody has yet succeeded in defining" (quoted in Cadenhead, 1987, p. 436).

Jensen (1981) still equates intelligence with the I.Q. score. Differences in I.Q. scores in his view reflect differences in innate intelligence. Jensen claims that I.Q. is primarily genetically determined and that it is largely unaffected by learning. This is a very dismal and racist view indeed when he reports that Blacks’ I.Q. scores average 15 points below the average for Whites. Jensen’s theory depends upon the assumption that intelligence tests yield valid and reliable estimates of the intellectual functioning of all students.

For example, a study by Rich (1985) of adopted children who were placed in either white or black homes showed that those placed in white homes achieved significantly higher I.Q. test scores, indicating that environmental, culture and mother child interaction patterns can have a significant effect upon I.Q. This evidence supports the theory that performance on I.Q. tests
is environmentally influenced, culturally based, and subject to improvement through coaching.

In spite of much evidence to the contrary, I.Q. tests are still often viewed as valid measurements for the intelligence of minority children. The mere existence of numerical values on these and other standardized tests established an aura of "scientific" measurement of students and their abilities.

While Bereiter and Englemann (1966) also appear to accept the validity of I.Q. scores, they also subscribe to the view that through proper training children with these deficits can catch up. They attribute the alleged cognitive deficits to environmental influences, and not specifically to racial considerations.

Citing Bernstein (1960), they go beyond his concepts of restricted and elaborated codes to suggest that there are children from lower socioeconomic classes that have no language.

Language is apparently dispensable enough in the life of the lower-class child for an occasional child to get along without it altogether . . . (p. 31).

As the preceding observations suggest, many disadvantaged children of preschool age come very close to a total lack of ability to use language as a device for acquiring and processing information. . . (p. 39).

This "semilingualism" or non-lingualism concept has also surfaced in the work of ESL researchers (Cummins,
Cummins (1980) developed the concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and the "Threshold Hypothesis" to explain some second language learner's school failures. What was intended as an advocacy for bilingual education and initial literacy in the home language was actually another deficit model. Cummins claimed that there are two distinct types of language: a lower level one for basic interpersonal communication (BLCS), and a higher level one for school and academic tasks (CALP). He theorized that many bilingual children experience failure because they have not developed this higher level of language.

Edelsky (et al., 1983) severely criticized this theory, disputing the constructs, the data and the interpretation. Ginsburg (1972) and Edelsky (et al., 1983) cite evidence by Tabor, Hymes and others that point to the critical factors of participant roles, pragmatics, and social interaction that affect the type and quantity of language produced in different situations. Cummins based his theory primarily on the differential success rates of various groups of children on standardized tests. Edelsky (et al., 1983) claims that standardized test scores give inaccurate information, especially for bilingual and minority children.
To his credit Cummins (1986) has substantially altered his position, recognizing that interactions between minority students and the social, economic, and educational institutions of the majority culture are the major factors in empowering or disabling minority students.

Numerous critics have examined the content and the consequences of standardized testing. The national Education Association devoted most of one issue of Today's Education (March-April, 1977) to the problems associated with standardized testing. Their major conclusion, based upon weaknesses of the tests and uses and abuses of test results, was that group administered norm referenced standardized tests should not be used in schools.

Dr. Jim Cummins supports the discontinuance of standardized tests as the sole means of determining a minority student's success in school. In his article titled *Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention* (1986), Dr. Cummins criticizes the ambivalence of test makers in their failure to address cultural bias in their instruments. He asserts that Native American children have culturally--specific experiences that might affect their interpretation of a test item.

*Research on the Sociocultural Factors That Influence the Learning of Native American Children*

Cooke (1986) demonstrated the importance of sociocultural considerations in determining performance in a school setting. Phillips (1983) also identified
communicative patterns in different Native American and Native Hawaiian communities that are fundamentally different from the expectations of a typical public school classroom.

Although her study does not deal specifically with literacy, it does approach the problem of school success for Indian children.

In this book I argue that the children of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation are encultured in their preschool years into modes of organizing the transmission of verbal messages that are culturally different from those of Anglo middle-class children. I argue that this difference makes it more difficult for them to then comprehend verbal messages conveyed through the American school’s Anglo middle-class modes of organizing classroom interaction (p. 4).

Both authors suggest that those differences account for differences in classroom participation and the students ultimate success in school.

There is also research to support the importance of the family linkage to outside institutions and how this relationship can support or impede the literacy development of children. Heath’s (1983) landmark study provides detailed information on the language development and literacy exposure of three difficult communities in the Piedmont Carolinas. Roadville is a white, working class community. Trackton is a Black working-class neighborhood with a recent rural connection, and Maintown, represented the White middle class geared towards culture prevalent in most United States schools.
The Maintown children were surrounded with literacy events, and much emphasis was placed on the value of books. The types of questioning, and the daily bedtime stories in these homes parallel the experiences encountered in school. Therefore, the Maintown children entering school had advantages over children without similar experiences.

While the Roadville children also had experiences with books, the books and the interactions with the adults differed greatly from Maintown homes. The books and the adults using them emphasized individual words, numbers and the alphabet. These children were successful in school when confronted with skills based reading programs, but did poorly when confronted with comprehension questions.

The literate environment of the Trackton children differed from these of the white communities. The children were not surrounded by books and did not participate in bedtime stories, but they did have experiences with print. The print they came into contact with was a natural part of their environment. They distinguished labels and prices, selected television channels and programs, and they passed on mail to the correct neighbors. Their exposure to print were also reinforced with oral communication; in a meaningful social context. However, the print experiences they had were different from the expectations and approaches to literacy in school, consequently they did not often succeed in school. Heath attributed their
difficulties to the school's inabilities to adopt to the different literacy experiences of the students.

Teale (1986a) also reports on the insensitivity of schools to acknowledge the effectiveness of the home-school partnership. She cautions that many factors are overlooked by the schools in their design of programs.

As a result many home intervention programs simply attempt to overlay mainstream interactional patterns on lines which are not mainstream. Long term effects are not pronounced in such situations. It would seem that the secret to developing more literacy oriented homes is, in essence, to get the families to "need" more literacy (p. 200).

Cazden (1982) discussed continuity and discontinuity between aspects of children's lives outside and inside the schools as being important determiners of success within the school. The implication was that in some social groups, behavior that is evident of success in the home and community may be viewed differently by the school.

Ogbu (1987b) claims that the differential success rate in minorities can not be totally explained by discontinuities between home and school. He cites evidence from both the United States and other countries that often minority groups with greater language and cultural differences have higher success rates than those with a lesser difference. To explain these differences he proposes that there are three distinct categories of minorities that have differential success rates: recent immigrants who have moved for economic betterment and
autonomous minorities that have not been subordinated generally fare better than the "caste-like" or subordinate minorities who were originally brought into United States society involuntarily through conquest, slavery, or colonization. The differences are due to societal barriers, school barriers and cultural barriers.

While there are certainly individual differences of opinion concerning the value of schooling and literacy among Navajos and other Native Americans, Havinghurst (1970) found "broad consensus" among parents, students, teachers and community leaders in American Indian communities that "...the most important function of the school is to prepare Indian students for employment in the dominant economy" (p. 33). An important distinction to note is that success was not defined in terms of being successful in school, but in terms of being prepared for life beyond school. To the extent that schools achieve that, and to the extent that they evaluate students on that basis, then success in school can be equated with parents' definition of success.

Another major sociocultural factor that influences learning is the language differences of minority students. These differences can appear in the "invented spelling" patterns of students, as well as their oral language. Phillips (1983) analysis of participant structures within classrooms in the Warm Springs Indian reservation contends
that Indian children develop different modes of organizing verbal messages before they enter school. This enculturation process makes it difficult for them to comprehend the Anglo messages that are conveyed through tradition middle-class modes of organizing classroom instruction.

Hudelson and Rigg (1986) describe homes of immigrant Southeast Asian children who are becoming literate in English. Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith (1984) report on Sino-Vietnamese children learning to read and write in their second language. Again, the home environments are not at all like the homes described by Durkin (1966) and Taylor (1983), yet the children have become literate in a second language prior to attaining oral fluency.

Edelsky's (1986) study of a bilingual program presents evidence that children can become literate in two languages at the same time. While she noted frequent code switching in their oral speech, there was almost no code switching in writing. This seems to indicate that the children had little difficulty in keeping the writing systems separate, and that literacy development (approached in an appropriate manner) can proceed in both languages concurrently.

In Chinle, Arizona a program entitled Navajo Parent and Child Reading Program has had encouraging results. It has been in operation for the past three years. Children in the experimental group read to their parents two to four
times a week. These children were compared to students who had no intervention, and to students who had daily help from a reading specialist. Murphy (1991) reports that preliminary results show that the experimental group had significant advances in reading compared to students in the two control groups. Two video tapes for parent information have been produced in Navajo and in English and shown to all participant parents. Murphy indicated that there is a high degree of acceptance and excitement about the program. Parents have reported that even younger siblings are becoming actively involved in the reading sessions.

Two researchers who continue to pioneer theories that support language differences in second language learners are Jerome Harste and Steven Krashen. Harste (Harste and Mikulecky, 1984) relates the idea of multiple intelligences to literacy by referring to the semiotic system beyond oral and written language. In his model of communication Harste describes how art, math, music and language all have their own kind of syntax or ways of organizing information and showing relationships, as well as their own sign vehicles. Changing from one sign to another is called transmediation. For example, when students draw pictures to represent part of a story they have read or heard they are crossing media or transmediating. In the process of transmediation, students also transform language to represent their knowledge using another sign system. Accessing a variety
of sign systems in this way expand students' communication potential.

Steven Krashen (1985) developed the natural approach in his text entitled Insights and Inquiries. Although the natural approach follows the traditional sequence of listen, speak, read, and write, there is some recognition of the value of reading and writing simultaneously. Krashen (1985) found that "reading exposure or reading for genuine interest with a focus on meaning" provides second language learners with reading "comprehensible input." He argues that reading contributes to second language acquisition in the same way as listening to oral language does and proposes that reading contributes to competence in writing just as listening helps children develop the ability to speak. Methods such as the Communication Potential and The Natural approach lower what Krashen calls the affective filter by allowing students to relax and understand what they are hearing before being forced to produce the new language.

In a recent article by D. Stanley Eitzen (1992), four social forces are identified that are also rooted in sociocultural issues. Eitzen writes:

I believe that four social forces account for the differences between today's young people and those of 15 years ago—the changing economy, the changing racial and ethnic landscape, changing government policies, and changing families. Moreover, these structural changes have taken place within a cultural milieu, and they combine with one another and with that
culture to create the problems students face today. We must understand this sociocultural context of social problems in order to understand problem students and what we might do to help them (Eitzen, p. 586).

Eitzen goes on to discuss instances of institutional racism that ethnic groups exhibit toward each other. No where has that been more apparent than the interactions I witnessed on the Navajo reservation. Institutional racism came in the form of social isolation, cultural deprivation, overt verbal and physical abuse and emotional abuse. More of this documentation will be reported in chapters four and five.

However, the most significant social and cultural influences on learning that might impact the findings of this study are the significant differences that can be found between the Navajo elders and the teen/pre-teen generation.

The elderly are more likely to be dominant or monolingual Navajo speakers, live in traditional hogans, be traditionally oriented, and have little formal education. The younger Navajos tend to be dominate or monolingual speakers of English, and be more interested in the "teen culture" of the Anglo society as opposed to traditional culture of Navajo society.

Catholic and Protestant missionaries have also had an impact on Navajo traditional practices. However, Navajos are known for their adaptability and have incorporated many
of these practices into their lives without giving up their Native customs.

There is a remarkable contrast also, between the isolated rural areas and the more urban areas of the reservation such as Shiprock, Window Rock, Tuba City, and Kayenta. The rural areas have remained much more traditional than the urban areas, but they have also been subject to change over the last decade as a more contemporary group of students has mixed with the traditional group.

These urban centers have less than 10,000 residents and do not have nearly the amount of commercial development of comparable towns off the reservation. However, through tourism, government employment, cable television, travel off the reservation, and the hiring of many non-Navajo professionals, there is probably more outside contact than in most small towns in the United States.

Another major difference in the urban and rural populations is the contrast in housing. In the urban areas houses have running water, electricity, sewers and gas. They are primarily mobile homes or frame houses of two or three bedrooms. The community or Navajo Tribal Authority rents these houses to the families on a first come first-serve basis. Many are located near paved roads, as is the case in Small Tree. Along with these modern conveniences
comes the monthly obligation of rent and utility payments which requires a steady income.

Rural homes, on the other hand, are generally hogans and one or two room cinder block and frame houses. These homes are generally owner-constructed, have no running water or electricity. They are generally heated with wood or coal. Most of these homes have outhouses. Often they are built in clusters providing separate but close homes for extended families. All have livestock, mainly sheep, goats and horses. Most have poultry and gardens. Most, except in the case of Low Mountain, are located near paved roads. These roads, however, become impassable during the fall and winter months. By necessity the rural reservation dwellers are more economically self-sufficient. They do not rely on a wage economy for subsistence or pleasure.

In Small Tree even the most educated of the community members choose to live in traditional hogans. Billy McCabe is the Chapter House President. In an interview with Mr. McCabe, his reasons for living as he did were described.

**Researcher:** You have kindly agreed to share with me your views on rural versus urban housing and why you live in a hogan. Would you begin by telling me why a hogan is shaped like it is?

**McCabe:** A hogan is built in the shape of a female's breast. It is round on all sides, but the top is pointed. The female is the giver of life. We call the Earth, Mother, because the Earth bears the plants and the water that sustains us. Without Her we would not exist as a people or a planet.
Researcher: So the female holds a place of honor and respect in Navajo culture?

McCabe: Most definitely. As you have already learned, this is a matriarchal society. Young men like Leroy Begay will not go to school in Farmington because he doesn’t want to leave his mother alone with an alcoholic father. He will never leave the reservation.

Researcher: Is there any significance to the opening of the door to the east?

McCabe: Yes. Navajos pray to the East because it is in that direction that the sun rises. We get up before the sun rises and pray until He acknowledges us. The East is the direction of light where the sun continuously shines on the Sacred Mountains. It would be dishonorable to our Elders to begin the day in any other way.

Researcher: Did you have a choice about where you and your family would live in Small Tree?

McCabe: Yes, I did. My number came up to live in the community housing by the Country Mart. We made a decision not to leave Blue Gap.

Researcher: Would you mind telling me why?

McCabe: Even though I have a college degree from Berkeley, I am still a traditional Navajo in spirit. To be true to my beliefs I must live like my forefathers. You White people have forgotten your values, your children disrespect the old. They curse and laugh at you. I do not want Priscilla and Anthony to grow up like this. If they live traditionally, I believe they will act traditionally.

Billy McCabe, like many others in Small Tree, still contend that western society has poisoned the Native American culture and values. A strict adherence to the
Native American church and ceremonial ways is the only hope they feel they have to maintain their customs for the young people in Small Tree.

Health care is another area that has had a significant impact upon the Navajo population. The Navajo traditional view of illness is that an individual has fallen out of harmony with the forces of nature, and this discord has allowed the sickness or injury to occur. In order for healing to occur, harmony must be restored. While a Navajo herbalist might be called upon to provide temporary relief from symptoms, an appropriate ceremony is the only means to restore harmony, and thus effect a cure.

The introductions of modern medicine by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1920 reduced infant mortality, tuberculosis and pneumonia, but behavioral problems associated with alcohol and drugs increased. Though western medicine continues to gain acceptance, traditional ceremonies are still widely used.

As Principal of Small Tree School I encountered numerous conflicts in regards to the ceremonial rituals of the Navajos. The sociocultural issues prevalent during my tenure precipitated a high absenteeism among my Navajo teachers. Ceremonial leave is a valid reason for taking sick leave on the reservation. Because there was a Hispanic Superintendent and an Anglo Principal all of my Navajo staff applied for this ceremonial leave.
During this seven day absence the participant fasted, prayed and took large does of peyote. He would then enter into a sweat lodge for four days to "purify" himself for future contact with the Anglo and the Hispanic intruders. After four days a medicine man would pray for the protection and safety of the participants. On the fifth and sixth days a feast would be prepared by the young man or woman's clan. On the seventh day the Navajo who was involved in the ceremony would rest. This ceremony was called an Enemy Way Ceremony and although Chinle Hospital was the sole health provider for my Navajo faculty and parents, when given a choice all opted for the traditional Enemy Way.

There have also been enormous changes in the typical means of livelihood on the Navajo reservation in the last fifty years. Prior to World War II the traditional lifestyle was raising livestock, subsistence farming, and the production of arts and crafts. Today the Navajos are much more dependent upon the government for wages and assistance. This dependence has also created social and economic opportunities where the development of literacy is valued, useful and necessary.

Research on the Effectiveness of Implementing the Whole Language Philosophy into a Native American School Curriculum

The research in this area is so very sparse that few successful programs can be documented. However, there is
one significant program that is being implemented. At Rough Rock School in Rough Rock, Arizona, Dr. Terri McCarty and a team of colleagues incorporated the theory of a meaning-based curriculum into the existing curriculum. Using the process developed by Hilda Tabu in the early 1960’s, Dr. McCarty developed a framework that supported inductive reasoning, cooperative learning, and critical thinking (1989).

The project began in 1980 when the Navajo School Board in Rough Rock approved the development of an integrated social studies and language curriculum. (McCarty, Wallace, Lynch, 1989). McCarty, Wallace and Lynch joined the project as consultants funded by a three year grant from the Indian Education Act. The project soon tapped into earlier work by the Native American Materials Development Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The emphasis here was on Hilda Tabu’s theory that curriculum should be grounded in the learner’s social environment.

Learning in school does not begin with a clean slate," Tabu observed "the knowledge, ideas, values, and sensitivities acquired in children’s social environments determine what the students will, can, and need to learn (p. 53).

McCarty and her team surveyed over 100 Navajo parents as part of their curriculum design. She states that virtually all of the 100 respondents agreed that Navajo students need the skills to prepare them for full participation in the off-reservation economy (McCarty,
1989). All said that they wanted their children to maintain a respect for the continuing significance of K'E', a central Navajo concept meaning kinship, friendship, and respect for others and nature (McCarty, 1989).

What emerged was a curriculum based on the three-phase process of inductive inquiry described by Tabu in her text entitled *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice* (1962). Students were encouraged to use prior knowledge to construct or predict new information from text or oral discussions. Their oral responses to questions, as well as their writings, served as an evaluation of the depth of their understanding.

Funding for this project ended in 1990. The materials implemented and the effects of their use were not evaluated. This problem is intrinsic to federally funded Indian schools which rely on a variety of short-term funding sources to support academic programs. There is little consistency and virtually no follow through with well-meaning and sound educational programs.

However, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. McCarty at Small Tree School last year. She was hired to be the consultant for the Title VII Program in our district. In an interview with Dr. McCarty, she reports that the Rough Rock Demonstration Project has been successful in the areas of increased self-esteem and
reduced student absenteeism and personal communication (McCarty, 1992).

Another Native American whole language program that met with similar results is the one implemented by Dr. Karen Guilfoyle. Dr. Guilfoyle researched the social constructs of Native American students in a first grade classroom in Tucson, Arizona.

Dr. Guilfoyle, like Dr. McCarty, was hired to be a special projects coordinator at Awakening Seed School. During this two year period, Dr. Guilfoyle focused on the inquiry based strategies developed by Tabu, as well as the natural approach to learning adhered to by Steve Krashen. Studying one first grade classroom, Dr. Guilfoyle provided leisure reading material to the students that was high interest, low level (Guilfoyle, 1988). She then proceeded to observe and record their silent reading habits. Dr. Guilfoyle noted that these Yaqui students would pick text that was "short in length, bright in color and contemporary in content" (Guilfoyle, p. 62).

A favorite among the first graders was Stone Fox. In this story an Indian boy leads a sled dog race to the brink of victory only to have his most beloved dog, Searchlight, die before the race is finished. Interviews with the students revealed their intense love for animals and for their grandparents. Stone Fox is the elder in this story, and the students admired his courage and wisdom.
Writing samples from these students supported Krashen's argument that reading for meaning contributed to writing competence (Guilfoyle, 1988). During this two year study, these first graders showed growth in fluency, syntax, and English proficiency. The samples were scored holistically by teachers at Awakening Seed School. Benchmarks were determined through correlation with the Arizona Student Assessment Profiles and the Bilingual Language Syntax Inventory.

Like the Rough Rock Project, no follow-up occurred after Dr. Guilfoyle's departure from Awakening Seed School in 1990. In a telephone conversation with the current principal at Awakening Seed, information about the project seemed virtually unknown. The target group of first graders, now fifth graders, have been heterogeneously grouped. No data was available on reading or writing growth since 1988 due to the lack of interest and a yearly turn-over in personnel at that school.

In my research on successful whole language Native American programs I did find an ongoing curriculum in place at the Choctaw reservation in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Here in this rural, isolated area there exists five Choctaw schools with a Native American enrollment of approximately 600 students. I first came across information about their program in the summer of 1988 when I called Dr. Yetta Goodman at the University of Arizona. Dr. Goodman told me
to call Dottie King in Philadelphia, Mississippi. She assured me that Ms. King would support my enthusiasm for Native American literacy efforts and that she would be more advantageous to me because she was closer to Louisiana.

I did contact Ms. King and that summer I was invited to give a presentation for the staff at Red Water School on Process Writing. I have kept abreast of the Choctaw’s educational efforts ever since.

This summer I took a trip to Red Water School to talk to Dottie King about the whole language program and its impact on student learning. Ms. King is now the curriculum supervisor of the Choctaw School System. She was delighted to see me. Although no formal research projects are currently being funded, Ms. King showed me data that indicated a strong commitment to the whole language philosophy.

For example, every classroom at Red Water School has the mission statement posted. Each teacher has allowed the students to have a voice in the discipline rules for her classroom. Functional print and authentic student work are in evidence throughout the rooms and hallways. Language experience stories are displayed in lower elementary classrooms. In the middle school thematic units are taught through an integrated discipline approach.

Ms. King reports that there has been a renewal in the interest of the Choctaw language. It is her hope that
students will be taught in Choctaw during the early childhood years so they can become more competent in their primary language.

The Choctaw reservation is experiencing the same sociocultural dilemmas as the Navajos. There are few professional Choctaw educators who stay on the reservation. Fewer still are interested in becoming knowledgeable about school law and policies. Currently, there are only five Choctaw students enrolled at Mississippi State University, the closest university to the reservation (Choctaw Tribal Council Newsletter, 1992). One of these students is in the College of Education and the other four are in agriculture.

In summary, documentation of successful Native American whole language programs will increase awareness of the diversity and richness of their culture and language. A greater awareness will heighten the needs to network and strengthen the existing programs so that successful models can be implemented in all Native American schools throughout the United States.
CHAPTER III

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE NAVAJO TRIBE

The Navajo tribe is unique in its history and in the way that social and contemporary factors impact literacy learning. Because of this uniqueness a brief historical perspective will be presented in this chapter that will describe how Navajo education evolved and the particular aspects of Western culture that continue to shape its future.

Prehistory of the Navajo Tribe

The written history of the "Dine" (meaning "the people" in the Navajo language) was not recorded until after contact with western explorers, colonizers and anthropologists. The Navajos had not developed a written language of their own, but had passed on their culture through an extensive oral tradition. This oral history is imbedded in the stories, chants and ceremonies of the Navajo people. Even here, knowledge of this pre-literate time is almost exclusively through the eyes and interpretation of non-Navajos.

Anthropological theories claim that the Navajo came from the north, originally across the Bering Straits land bridge, and through one of several suggested routes to the southwest. Evidence supporting this theory is the linguistic relationship between Navajos and other Athabascan speakers now living along the northwest Pacific
coast, in Canada and Alaska, as well as the Apaches of the southwest and evidence from archaeological sites.

The Navajo oral tradition, on the other hand, maintains that the "Dine" were "brought into being by the gods themselves, and these gods came out of the earth in Old Navajoland" (Underhill, 1956, p. 18). From the very beginning, the western educational and scientific system was at direct odds with the Navajo's own oral tradition teachings.

Even when the Navajo traditional teachings were described in anthropological accounts, they were often accompanied by the pejorative label of "myths," while the western theories were based on "scientific evidence." It was not until the publication of *Navajo History, Volume 1* by the Navajo Curriculum Center at Rough Rock Demonstration School (Yazzie, 1971) that Navajo people themselves were in control of producing a written account of "tribal prehistory." Whether interpreted literally or figuratively, these ancient stories cannot be lightly dismissed as "myths and legends," because they are one of the primary vehicles of the transmission of the Navajo culture. Contained within the stories are moral lessons, behavior codes and spiritual instruction; kinship and clan organization; and geography, botany, zoology and ecology instruction; as well as the intricate story of the creation of the Navajo and their land. This traditional life and
learning is holistic, contrasted with western education's compartmentalization and specialization, and emphasizes "hozho," a Navajo concept of beauty, health, happiness and harmony.

**Recorded History and Educational History of the Navajos**

As with the prehistory, the recorded history of the Navajos is written almost exclusively through the eyes and interpretation of non-Navajos. The following brief historical synopsis draws heavily from Dr. Hartle-Schutte (1988), Tonigan and Associates (1987), and Bailey and Bailey (1986). Their sources include Clyde Kluckholn, Dorothy Leighton, Edward Spicer, and Ruth Underhill.

The Navajos are believed to have migrated into the vicinity of their present homeland about 1000 A.D. They were originally a society of hunters and farmers who carried on trade and intermarriage with their Pueblo neighbors. The first contact with western culture began with the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. This relationship was an uneasy one of occasional trade and raids for slaves by the Spanish, and counter raids by the Navajos. Navajos did not emerge as a distinct cultural or political entity until the early 18th century; until that time they were scattered small bands of farmers (Bailey and Bailey, 1986).

By mid 18th century, livestock also had become an important part of Navajo life. While they adopted items of
Spanish culture (weaving, livestock, material goods, silversmithing) and aspects of Puebloan society (ceremonial practices and farming), their social and political life was autonomous and relatively free from external threats. Many of these cultural additions were introduced when thousands of Pueblos fled the Spanish reconquest of the Pueblo villages during the 1690's. Many of these Pueblo refugees continued to stay with the Navajos, which led to the establishment of a number of contemporary Navajo clans.

Unlike the Pueblos, with population concentrations, the Navajos never were subjected to the Spanish mission system, and little changed with Mexican independence from Spain in the 1820's. However, the situation changed drastically after 1846 when the Mexican government relinquished the southwest territory to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The United States Army was sent to take possession of the newly acquired lands, and to "pacify" the Indians.

By 1851, a supply depot and military residence was established at the site of Fort Defiance, in the center of Navajo territory. Treaties were signed with individual clans' headmen, to cease hostilities, but they failed because of incomprehensible and unacceptable terms (such as giving up all grazing rights in the surrounding valley) and because the Navajos were not united under a single chief.
In 1860, several Navajo leaders united, and attacked the fort with more than 1,000 men. However, the Army had superior firepower, and drove the Navajos off, killing many of the attackers.

The fort was abandoned in 1861 during the Civil War, but the Army returned in the fall of 1863 under the leadership of Lt. Col. Kit Carson. Carson and his men burned Navajo fields and hogans, destroyed orchards, and slaughtered thousands of sheep in an attempt to starve the Navajos into submission. By the beginning of 1864, approximately 8,000 starving Navajos had surrendered, and were forced to march in mid-winter 300 miles to Fort Sumner in eastern New Mexico. Over three hundred Navajos died on the forced march, which has come to be known as the "the Long Walk."

The conditions at Fort Sumner were harsh. The government had intended for the Navajos to become farmers in easily governed villages. However, the dry soil was highly alkaline, the water was bad, food and shelter was insufficient, and firewood was limited. Hunger and disease were rampant. Over 1,000 Navajos died during the three years they were imprisoned. It became clear that the experiment was a disaster.

By June 1, 1868, twenty-nine Navajo headmen signed a treaty with the United States government which gave the Navajo about one-fifth of the land they had used before
their internment. The Navajos promised to remain on this land and to never again fight the White Man. The United States government issued approximately two head of livestock to each adult Navajo, as well as a limited amount of tools and farming implements. The government also promised to provide a schoolhouse and a teacher for every thirty children.

Navajos and Anglo Educational Systems

Nearly 7,000 Navajos left Fort Sumner, again on foot, to return to a portion of their homeland. They joined as many as 2,500 other Navajos who had managed to elude their captors. The administrative center of the Navajo reservation was established at Fort Defiance, and the first school was begun by Miss Charity Gaston, as a mission school funded by the United States government. However, no Navajo student ever attended this school consistently, and it was closed after two years.

The Navajos' reception of the educational offerings was not enthusiastic. They did not hold the same view of the benefits of formal western education as the government or missionaries. By 1882, reportedly only 25 out of 16,000 Navajos could read. Realistically, one could question the benefits of literacy on the reservation at that time. One of the primary uses of literacy at that time was for reading various scriptures presented by the missionaries. Literacy certainly did not assist the Navajos in
maintaining their own culture, but rather assisted the erosion of it.

Part of the reason for the lack of enthusiasm resided in the schools themselves. Children were whipped and locked in the school’s cellar for speaking Navajo, even though they knew no English. Those who unsuccessfully escaped were whipped and their heads shaved. Many of these aspiring escapees, moreover, were so motivated simply because they did not have enough to eat. Half the school day consisted of classroom instruction; the other half was for farm work needed to raise the food eaten by the children (Tonigan, 1987, p. 6).

The Compulsory Education Law passed in 1887 brought parental resistance to a head as Indian Police forcibly carried children off to boarding schools in Oregon, California, Nevada, Oklahoma, and off-reservation cities in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. The Navajo population continued to grow rapidly, and reservation lands were expanded through executive orders in the 1890’s and early 1900’s, and additional Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools were constructed on the reservation.

Under the leadership of John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the New Deal, the BIA instituted many sweeping reforms in its schools. The Navajo area BIA schools became model progressive schools, with innovative staff development, bilingual and bicultural education, and the development of materials and curricula appropriate to Navajo life. Collier’s local popularity was short-lived, however, when he ordered a program of involuntary livestock reduction to combat extreme soil erosion caused by
overgrazing and drought. This program was bitterly opposed and had devastating effects on the economic and emotional well being of Navajo families. An unanticipated consequence of this action, however, was increased enrollment at the BIA schools. Many Navajos began sending their children to boarding schools not because of new interest in education, but in order to insure that their children would be fed regularly.

This brief experiment with progressivism in the BIA schools was interrupted by World War II, and it never regained momentum under subsequent commissioners. The war had other profound effects upon Navajo life. More than 3,600 Navajos served in the armed forces, and some 15,000 engaged in defense work in various parts of the west. These outside experiences, in combination with the development of mineral resources, the effect of missionaries and education, and the introduction of paved roads and automobiles all eroded geographic and, to some degree, cultural isolation.

Religious missions and associated schools were established throughout the reservation, and had in fact been partially funded through the United States government beginning in 1869 (Spicer, 1962). The conditions in these mission schools were similar to those in force in the Indian Service schools. Ankle chains and solitary confinement were common practices. Children were forbidden
to speak Navajo, even though they spoke no English. A Navajo principal related a horror story from her childhood when all the children in her school were lined up and given tonsillectomies on the same day. No one had thought to inform the children in Navajo what was going on, and the word rapidly spread down the line of children that the doctor was cutting out their tongues, so that they would no longer speak Navajo.

Instruction at these schools also included the doctrines of the particular sects, and preached against the evils of native religious practices. Through Collier's expansion of BIA schools in the 1930's and the elimination of funding for the mission schools, their influence diminished, but was not eliminated. Now, many of the mission schools currently on the reservation are locally well respected.

After the more enlightened era of the 30's, the dominant program of the BIA schools in the mid-40's and 50's was one of acculturation of Indians. Schools were viewed as the appropriate vehicles to accomplish this task. During this time also, Congressional resolutions were passed, attempting to terminate federal financial assistance to the Indian tribes.

Contemporary Education on the Navajo Reservation

The first public school on the Navajo reservation was established in Fort Defiance in 1936 (Hartle-Schutte,
1988), originally for the education of the children of non-
Navajo employees in the area. Ironically, this school was
established in the same community where the first Indian
Service school established on the Navajo reservation
failed, because of lack of interest on the part of the
Navajos. However, once the public school was established
in 1936, Navajo parents began demanding public schools for
their own children. Whether this was in recognition of the
benefits of education, or whether by comparison to the BIA
boarding schools, the public schools appeared more
attractive is not known. The benefits of local day schools
were that the children could attend school, receive meals,
and still not be removed from the families. By 1968, more
Navajo students were attending local public schools than
BIA boarding and day schools, throughout the reservation.

There are now more than a dozen different public
school districts teaching Navajo students on the
reservation. Most of these districts have governing boards
that are totally Navajo. However, although there is this
local control, the curricula and materials found in both
the public schools and the BIA schools (with a few notable
exceptions) are very similar to what is common in schools
throughout the United States. The exceptions would include
the BIA contract schools such as Rough Rock and Rock Point,
which are community controlled. It is not surprising that
the educational system generally mirrors the schools of the
dominant Anglo society, since the board members and the Navajo teachers are the relatively successful products of those types of schools in previous generations.

There are now four major types of elementary and secondary schools on the reservation: those run directly by the BIA; community-controlled schools funded through the BIA; private mission schools; and public schools. Historically, there has not been significant coordination between the various types of schools, and in fact there has been a certain degree of competition for student enrollment. The majority of off-reservation BIA boarding schools have closed within the last decade, and they now have little impact upon the local school population. The establishment of the Navajo Division of Education in 1973 has meant some increased tribal involvement in those four different school systems, but each still remains autonomous in most respects.

Another educational program that has had significant and highly controversial impact upon the Navajo people is the Mormon placement program. Through the Mormon church organization, thousands of Navajo children have been taken off the reservation, primarily to Utah, and placed in non-Navajo homes in what might be considered a voluntary foster care program. Joining the Mormon religion is a requirement for participation. The children are isolated from the Navajo language and culture throughout the school year,
returning home only during summer, and sometimes Christmas vacations. Proponents of the program claim that children are given educational and other opportunities that are not available on the reservation. Critics claim that it encourages destruction of the Navajo culture and family life, and causes emotional and identity problems for the children that have gone on placement. Under pressure from the Navajo tribal government, the annual Mormon recruitment drives and the scope of the placement program have been greatly diminished in recent years.

Educational opportunities beyond the secondary level have been expanded, with the establishment in 1973 of Navajo Community College, and a tribal scholarship fund, which has grown from $30,000 in 1954 to over $30 million today. In spite of these developments, the Navajo high school completion rate lags significantly behind other minority groups and the United States national average. The problem is difficult to study, because the annual transfer rate for Navajo students is estimated to be approximately 30%, but the most current, admittedly generous, estimate of high school completion rate for Navajos is 69%, compared with 79% for blacks, and a national average of 86% (Platero, et al., 1986).

At least in a historical sense, and an educational sense, the Navajo people definitely fit Ogbu’s description of subordinated, exploited minorities. With the exception
of the schools for a short period of time under John Collier, the major thrust of contact between the dominant Anglo society and the Navajos has been one of either benign neglect, outright hostility, or an attempt at "civilizing" or acculturating the Navajos. Even under Collier, social implications of the educational advances were probably negated by the effects of the despised stock reduction program.

Society and Culture in the Literacy of Navajos

In Third World countries, the development of literacy for mothers has the highest correlation of any variable with the following reducing the birth rate, decreasing infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, improving health conditions and raising the standard of living (Gwatkin and Brandel, 1982; World Federation of Public Health, 1986). On the Navajo reservation, family literacy can certainly be tied to the level of income. Literacy for the Navajo people is a recent phenomenon, becoming necessary only because of contact with outside cultures. The rewards for literacy, particularly for women, are available and improving as the demand for white collar workers increases on the reservation. However, literacy does not come without a cost to the culture. Increased literacy has an acculturating effect.

Employment is frequently dependent upon literacy and high school graduation. The parents in this study have
both higher educational levels and a higher employment rate than the averages for the Navajo reservation. Parents in three of the fourteen families or 20%, are not employed, compared to a reservation average of approximately 35% (Triplet, 1988). All of the mothers in this study who work outside of the home have white collar jobs, while only three of the nine fathers work in white collar jobs. Except for a limited number of jobs with the coal mine forty miles away, white collar jobs pay much higher in this area. Did the men's generally lower success rate in school affect their job choices or options? Were the women more comfortable applying for white collar jobs because of their relative success in school? How do these experiences and their reactions to these experiences affect their children?

In the school records section of Chapter IV it appears, on conventional measures of achievement that girls are more successful than boys in reading. Is this just a gender difference or is it due to a structure of this culture? Is there a differential response by the sexes to the subordination and exploitation of minority people as Ogbu (1987b) proposes?

This is an extremely complex sociocultural issue. One might ask whether girls are successful in school because schooling appears more necessary for the jobs women currently hold and whether both are less successful because the jobs that men hold do not necessarily require or reward
successful schooling. In other words, are there societal rewards for becoming literate? On the other hand, is it simply because females are more successful in school that they better qualify for the jobs that women tend to hold, and men don’t hold those jobs because they are less successful, and therefore less qualified? In either case it can create a cycle that limits the opportunities for Navajo men. Employment statistics for men and women and blue and white collar jobs in this area are very difficult to find. According to Mike Triplet (1988) of the support department of the Commission for Accelerating Navajo Development Opportunity (CANDO), unemployment is a significantly higher for Navajo men than women, and women hold more of the white collar jobs.

A notable exception to this pattern of women holding more of the white collar jobs is in the area of tribal and chapter governments. The elected positions and the political appointments are totally dominated by men. It is extremely rare for a woman to be elected or appointed to such positions. This is one area where literacy for men is expected and rewarded, but generally only if the man is a fluent bilingual speaker. However, since these jobs are elected and appointed positions, literacy alone is not enough to guarantee access to these jobs. Thus, even in this case, the rewards for becoming literate are not available to all.
Is this problem totally based in the traditional Navajo culture? The importance of the woman to the family in the Navajo culture can not be underestimated (Witherspoon, 1975). It is a matrilineal and matrilocal culture. The mother or maternal grandmother is expected to hold the family together and to provide for the welfare of the children. The ownership of the home and sheep, the traditional measure of wealth, is with women. Traditionally men have not been expected to have this responsibility. Alcoholism among Navajo's men is many times the rate of Navajo women perhaps partially because of this difference in family responsibility.

During this time of rapid cultural change the role of women is adjusting to a wage economy, while maintaining the traditional responsibility of providing for the family. Achieving literacy is a great part of that adjustment.

Navajo males, with traditionally much less family responsibility, do not perceive a real need to achieve literacy. Until that need and that perception change, there will continue to be a differential success rate in achieving literacy. Within individual families where children see literate males, this need or desire may be heightened, and the young males will grow into literacy and be prepared for those opportunities that require literacy. It is within the power of the family as a sociocultural unit to create those changes, but it is particularly
difficult to achieve in homes where there is not a literate male role model. Three of the four successful male readers in this study came from intact families with literate fathers, but it does not appear to be nearly as crucial to the successful female readers, half of whom come from broken families. They each also have the benefit of literate mothers.

If this apparent differential success rate is to be changed, then there needs to be fundamental changes within the job sector, the schools, and the families to create a need and a desire for Navajo males to become successfully literate. Again, this is a cultural issue to be addressed by the Navajo people themselves. As recommended in the final chapter, this issue needs further investigation to determine if the discrepancy that is apparent in literacy rates of Navajo males and Navajo females in this study is reflective of the larger Navajo population.

In summary the future of the Navajo tribe is being shaped by the images that are projected in the Western pop culture as well as by the images of the past traditions. A renewed interest in Native Americans was precipitated by the commercial success of "Dances with Wolves." Robert Redford has taken a proactive stance in his efforts to free Leonard Peltier. This has met with approval by the Lakota Sioux, as well as the Navajo tribe.
Personal testimony from students at Small Tree School reflect the positive effects that exposure to Western media has had on the Small Tree community.

"Bon Jovi came to Small Tree last summer to film a video. He autographed my baseball cap and told me to stay in school. That was neat" (student 10, personal interview, April 6, 1992).

A longitudinal study of the two distinct populations might provide quantitative data to verify this descriptive information.

Ventures such as these have been accepted enthusiastically by the teen Native American generation and unenthusiastically by some of the elders. Endeavors such as these have been a catalyst for the young people to think more positively about their cultural roots, but they have also caused a clash in the more traditional Navajo families.

"What film makers and pop stars are now doing is not a panacea for the existing problems that exist within the Navajo tribe. But having lived in this area for thirty-seven years, it is my personal opinion that the positive images being projected by respected directors, actors, and songwriters have increased the self-esteem of the young people in Small Tree. I see it in their eyes, their work and in their language. I hope this cultural exposure continues on a national basis" (Goldtooth, personal interview, March 18, 1992).

Further investigation should also be undertaken in the Small Tree community to compare the effects that the television as a vehicle for western fads has had on the teen generation in this area. Dr. Hartle-Schutte (1988)
recommended that a less acculturated population than Fort Defiance be studied and the variables such as television and music be considered in the findings to determine the impact of the pop culture on literacy.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This is an ethnographic study that was conducted on the Navajo Reservation in Small Tree, Arizona. The investigation of literacy characteristics of Navajo readers and writers was intensive, beginning in October, 1991 and ending in March, 1992. During the time of this study the researcher lived in the teacherage and served as Principal of the school in which the research was conducted. The length of my contract was from September, 1991 to June, 1992.

The types of question I was interested in influenced the research approach I took. Had I assumed there was only one way to become literate, a statistical study would have been feasible and appropriate. However, I believe that literacy is achieved in a wide variety of ways through interactions with literate others. In order to discover the significant factors in Navajo children becoming literate, it was necessary to study the literacy development within that specific, sociocultural environment. Naturalistic inquiry, then, was the most appropriate research methodology for this type of study. An overview of recent ethnographic studies will, I believe, support my choice.

Ethnographic Research Methodology

Parents, teachers and critics of education are asking hard questions about how children become readers. Researchers in several fields
have argued the need for information concerning children’s early experiences with print and printed materials. The present need is for studies that are longitudinal, naturalistic, and systematic in terms of observation, interview and analysis. These studies would be based on a perception of context that includes both the immediate verbal and physical environment and the value system of the adult community. They would document young children’s experiences as they learned to use both the oral and written language strategies of home, school and community (Cochran-Smith, 1985, p. 1).

Positivist, experimental design has long dominated educational research. The majority of research studies published in journals such as Reading Research Quarterly, Journal of Reading Behavior, and Research in the Teaching of English continue to be dominated by the experimental/positivist paradigm, in spite of the calls for a variety of other research methods.

There are, however numerous examples of naturalistic, descriptive studies based upon small sample sizes that have significantly added to our knowledge about reading and other language processes.

Halliday (1975), Heath (1983), and much of Piaget’s work in language and concept development was based upon studies of one, two, and three subjects, respectively. Bissex (1980) followed the development of her own son’s literacy development for a period of six years. Soderbergh’s (1977) study of developing literacy was likewise a case study of one child. McGee and Richgels (1990) studied writing development through a small number

As long ago as 1974 the editors of Reading Research Quarterly (Farr and Weintraub, 1974), were calling for an end to the "methodological incarceration" caused by the nearly exclusive use of experimental research design that didn’t permit investigation of important questions:

It seems absurd to accept the notion that a field of study is not able to investigate important questions because the methodology that is generally held to be acceptable is not able to cope with such questions. . . We are sorely in need of research designs and new approaches that allow variables to emerge from the situation being studied, that admit to a lack of answers and even to a lack of questions, that allow for study in a natural setting, and that provide for the researchers biases as well as alternative interpretations. Such inquiry approaches are available in other disciplines (p. 550).

Two years later, in a guest editorial, Wolf and Tymitz (1976) followed up on Farr and Weintraub’s complaints, suggesting that ethnographic research "offers the most promise for the future of reading research" (p. 8).

". . . It does not rely on large samples in fact, exploring settings that involve few children are desirable--particularly at first. . . It is only through flexible,
sustained observation and sensitive probing that such complexity can be revealed" (p. 10).

In response to the controversy surrounding early application of ethnographic/naturalistic methodology, Wilson (1977) cited the long history of use of the methodology in other disciplines, and asserted: "The methodology of ethnographic researchers is as rigorous and systematic as that of other researchers" (p. 260).

Guba (1978) and Guba and Lincoln (1985) describe in detail the philosophical, theoretical and methodological differences between naturalistic research and experimental/positivist research. They state that "the best way to study a process is to observe it directly."

Spindler (1982), an anthropologist who has done quantities of ethnographic research in classrooms, lists a number of criteria for good ethnographic research into schooling:

1. The observations are contextualized.
2. Hypotheses and questions for the study emerge as the study proceeds.
3. Observation is prolonged and repetitive.
4. Emic (within culture) view is presented.
5. "Instruments, codes, schedules, questionnaires, agenda for interviews, and so forth, are generated in the field as a result of observation and ethnographic inquiry" (p. 7).
6. The ethnographic interviewer must not predetermine responses by the kinds of questions asked.

It is clear that although the dominant research paradigm of the past for educational research has been experimental/positivist, ethnographic research in education is an increasingly accepted and frequently used paradigm that has provided important information about reading development. Another benefit from this research perspective was stated by Heath (1982):

In the past, emphasis was centered on ways to change individuals through formal schooling. Ethnographic studies should enable schools to broaden and expand the tasks individuals encounter in schooling (p. 52).

Thus, educational research can be not only a process of coming to understand learners and their learning process, but can also lead to changes for increasing the effectiveness of educational institutions.

It is the method of research that "considers how the experience of the individual, group or society is influenced by and, in turn, influences its surrounding context" (Kamil, Langer and Shanahan, 1986, p. 71). This study was ethnographic because it embodied the following qualities of this emerging postpositivistic design (Spindler 1982).

1. The observations of the Navajo students were contextualized. They took place within Small
Tree School during the six month period already described. Two Navajo teachers, as well as an Anglo teacher, collaborated with the researcher in the development of several of the instruments, including a permission slip to the parents of the students in the classes selected for the research design. Collaboration with the teachers was a critical element in ensuring the ease of data collection. Two of these teachers had lived in Small Tree for the last seven years since the time the school was built. They were respected by the community and by the students. These two teachers were working on the same middle school team to develop the whole language philosophy in their respective sixth grade classrooms. The other teacher was the Title VII Bilingual Coordinator for the district.

2. The interview protocols for the sample population were developed by the researcher and followed the method described by James Spradley. Descriptive, open ended questions were asked to the students. The researcher analyzed the responses and conducted a second interview in which the native language of the respondent was used to provide a more structured protocol. This method followed the Developmental Research Sequence Model and
provided the researcher with an effective means of determining the accuracy of information gathered. Interviews were conducted with the administrative assistant, parents, and community members to provide for "triangulation" of data (Guba, 1978).

3. Hypotheses and questions for the study emerged as the study proceeded. Although the researcher was testing the conclusions drawn from Dr. Hartle-Schutte's study, no hypotheses for testing were developed.

4. Observation was prolonged and repetitive. I established set times to observe the sample population of Navajo students. At least three observations of forty-five minutes each were conducted. Interaction on the playground, in the cafeteria, and during free time also occurred to investigate the sociocultural phenomena of the Small Tree School setting.

5. An emic (within-culture) perspective will be presented in this study. Participant observation was the primary technique used to gain access to data. In this mode the investigator lived as much as possible with and in the same manner as the individuals being investigated. The researchers took part in the daily activities of
the people, reconstructing their interactions and activities in field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984).

6. Key informants were used to provide a deeper understanding of the setting. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) call the key informant the "observer's observer." These people were invaluable because they provided the history of the setting and filled the researcher in on what happened when she was not there.

**Sampling Procedures**

The identification of successful and unsuccessful readers and writers was done according to teachers' judgements based on criteria developed by the researcher. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) claim that criteria based sampling precedes statistical sample because it affords the researcher the opportunity to explore little known phenomena.

The two 6th grade teachers selected for the study were asked to identify Navajo students in their classroom who were able to independently read self-selected and assigned reading material at or above the 6th grade level. These were to be identified as "successful readers."

This selection process took longer than I anticipated because the two teachers disagreed on the initial list of
books I had developed for the self-selection process. My rationale was to include a multi-ethnic variety of text that in my experience as a classroom teacher had proven to be favorites with middle school students. For example, Judy Blume, a popular contemporary writer was predominant in my first list. I also felt it would be best to steer away from content that would produce "anxiety-ridden" responses in the target population.

I felt this way because of the sociocultural issues previously mentioned--the hostility toward the Superintendent and the discontent of the community with the absence of Navajo leadership. The Navajo teacher disagreed with my list because it lacked "substance." She felt the students needed to be challenged regarding cultural and racial issues. The Anglo teacher, who was much less aggressive, was more concerned with the performance based questions we could develop to determine creativity in studying writing.

We decided, then, in early October to ask the students and selected teachers throughout the school to give us their input on books they wanted to read. The librarian was very helpful because she knew what Small Tree School had available out of the list we collected.

A decision was also made by the teachers and me to use text the students had not previously read. We felt this would provide us with a more accurate picture of word
recognition and comprehension skills for future assessment purposes.

No formal instrument was developed by the research team (the three teachers and myself) for surveying the students and teachers. Due to the time constraints I met with teachers in a team planning meeting and asked for their suggestions on books sixth grade students might like to read. The classroom teachers informally surveyed the target population during homeroom.

A readability check was done on each of the books. I used Dale Chall's Readability Index because the format of this book shows where key vocabulary words are introduced and reinforced from primary grades through high school. Two of the texts selected had a high frequency of words introduced in the fourth grade. Because of this I questioned the use of them for grade-level, self-selection. The two teachers felt we should keep the books on the list because of the high degree of enthusiasm the students exhibited toward reading them. The two books were Where the Buffaloes Begin and Tinker and the Medicine Man: The Story of a Navajo Boy of Monument Valley.

Selection of Reading Materials

Students were asked to chose from the five books. (See Appendix A.) One they had not previously read and one they wanted to read aloud. Two of the five books were fiction, two were folklore, while the fifth book Seven
Arrows was historical fiction. While as Trelease (1982) claims "there is no such things as a fourth grade book" any more than there is a "middle-age book" the five selected books and other books by the same authors commonly appear on lists of recommended books for upper elementary students (Graves, 1987; Trelease, 1982) and in publishers' and book distributors' catalogs for upper elementary grades.

The three teachers also had extensive experience in serving on textbook adoption committees for the state and district. They had attended conventions and Teachers Association for Whole Language (TAWL) where recommended book lists were discussed and utilized. The Bilingual Coordinator served on a state department task force investigating culturally relevant trade books, and their effectiveness in classrooms throughout the reservation schools. I, too, became involved in that effort during my tenure at Small Tree.

Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT)

The next step in the selection of student participants was to administer a graded word recognition test to the sixty-six students in the sixth grade. There are several forms of oral reading tests available to ascertain word recognition techniques. I chose the Slosson Oral Reading Test because this is the instrument I had used in my reading classroom.
The Slosson Oral Reading Test (Appendix B) is based on the ability of students to pronounce words at different levels of difficulty. The words have been taken from standardized school readers and the reading level obtained from testing median or standardized school achievement.

This oral reading test consists of ten lists of twenty words each and measures only word pronunciation in isolation. There is no attempt to determine student comprehension. The test is not timed except that hesitation on a word for more than five seconds counts as an error. The test takes from three to five minutes to administer. The student’s raw score or total number of words correct can be converted to a reading level using the tables provided.

George Spache suggests the following in a review of the SORT.

1. The SORT is primarily a measure of sight vocabulary.

2. The lack of a pronunciation key leaves the decision of correctness to the teacher. The author considers dialectical pronunciation of errors.

3. The meaningfulness of a score from a word-calling test such as SORT is questionable in determining a student’s reading ability above the primary grades.
4. The test has not been validated with any test that measures comprehension in determining reading ability.

5. No information regarding the population involved in the standardization of the test has been provided. (pp. 183-191)

Although these observations of the SORT do not reflect a reliable instrument used in isolation, the results were helpful in beginning the process of selecting successful and unsuccessful readers and writers. The three of us who made up the primary research team (the two teachers and myself) divided the sixty-six students and administered the SORT individually to each student. The results indicated that only 10 percent of seven of the target population were reading above an eight grade level. Forty percent of the students were reading between a fourth and sixth grade level. Fifty percent of the sixth grade students were reading below a fourth grade level.

Of these forty percent or twenty-four students who scored between fourth and sixth grade on the SORT, twelve of these students had selected the two reading text with a readability level in the fourth grade range to read aloud. This information was recorded n anecdotal 3 x 5 cards and placed in a collective file that would later be used as a part of the sample population's portfolio assessment records.
The Informal Reading Inventory (IRI)

Another criteria based sampling procedure that the research team had decided to use was an informal reading inventory. An IRI is a compilation of reading selections from various grade levels with comprehension questions to accompany each selection. The selections used can be passages from a graded basal reading selection, passage from miscellaneous materials, a passage written by the teacher. It is administered individually and enables the teacher to determine the students' specific word recognition and comprehension difficulties while observing both oral and silent reading habits. This instrument is extremely useful in determining the strengths and weaknesses in sight vocabulary, word attack, and comprehension skills.

It was my hope that the research team could develop their own IRI. The construction of the instrument would give us the opportunity to search for passages that would be unique to Small Tree School and would empower the Navajo staff with a sense of their own professional accomplishment.

Because of the time lines I had developed for this selection process, this did not occur. The construction of an independent situation specific IRI is lengthy and labor intensive. There are also several areas of caution that should be addressed that are sometimes overlooked (Cheek
and Cheek, 1983, p. 59). One concern, besides the lack of time, is the teachers unfamiliarity with the reading process. Failure to check passage readability levels and failure to develop questions in all levels of comprehension skills are the other mistakes that are often made when an IRI is developed in haste.

These constraints led me to the decision to use an IRI that had recently been developed by teachers in a graduate level reading class at Louisiana State University. A sample of this IRI is included in Appendix C.

The research team administered the IRI during reading and language arts classes to the sixty-six sixth graders. The information we were looking for was a reading level at which each child could read independently, instructionally and the one that caused the children frustration.

Specific criteria for each of these levels have been debated for years, but the question of which criteria are most accurate remains unresolved. The most commonly used criteria are those provided by Emmett Betts in 1957 (Cheek and Cheek, 1983, p. 64). Below is a table depicting the Betts criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Word Pronunciation</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>99% or more</td>
<td>90% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>95% or more</td>
<td>75% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>90% or more</td>
<td>50% or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In administrating the IRI we started two grade levels below the student's estimated instructional level. Scores from the SORT were used to determine this instructional level.

Many problems were encountered in administering the IRI. I was interrupted repeatedly during the time I had allotted for this assessment. This was due to administrative obligations such as consoling parents, disciplining students, and meeting with teachers. The other two teachers were sympathetic with my plight and took over the actual formal administration of the test to my twenty-two students when they could.

The results of the IRI indicated that thirty-five of the sixty-six students were reading on the fourth and fifth grade levels instructionally. Twenty students were reading at the fourth and fifth grade levels independently. Eleven students could not read at the third grade level independently.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

My views about reliance on standardized test results have already been previously stated in this paper. However, I believed that a review of the past spring's test results would confirm the information that was emerging from the data we had collected from the sixth grade target population. Therefore, I researched the scores in grade equivalents, stanines, and percentiles.
Historically, Small Tree Public School District has the lowest scores on standardized achievement tests in the entire nation. I found this to be true with the data from the spring 1991 ITBS test. In language, math, reading, and science our students scored in the 1% percentile with grade equivalents well below the national average. Many of the present sixth graders had not been tested. This was due to the high rate of absenteeism, lack of interest and understanding of testing in general, inconsistency in building level administration, and apathy on the part of the staff to encourage proper test-taking procedures.

These factors coupled with the extensive research I had investigated caused me to question the validity of these standardized test scores. I did however utilize the results to triangulate the data I had previously collected to select the students for my research group.

**Final Selection of Sample Population**

Forty names of current sixth grade students were placed on a list. One category of twenty names were those that had been identified as successful readers and writers from scores collected from the IRI, the SORT and the informal selection of reading text, and teacher judgement. The other category of twenty names were identified unsuccessful readers and writers from the same battery of collected data.
I, then, selected every other name from the two lists to determine my sample population for my research group. These twenty students were selected on the basis of attributes they possessed during the sampling procedures.

Ethnographers use a sequence of selection strategies throughout the research process because their studies customarily are explanatory and open-ended. Criteria based selection is used to identify the population; as the research study unfolds, it also is used to establish new sets of phenomena to examine. Thus, a variety of selection processes are used fruitfully throughout the stages of problem identification, data collection, and analysis (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984, p. 74).

Writing proficiency was determined by authentic assessment procedures. Ken and Yetta Goodman (1986) pioneered this concept as an alternative method of looking at writing and reading success. These alternative methods find the teacher looking more carefully at the authenticity of the assessment tasks and their alignment with current research, theory and instructional tasks. This process involves conferencing with the student, peer-response and peer editing groups, kid-watching, and the compilation of writing samples in individual student portfolios.

The researcher collaborated with the two selected teachers to develop a holistic writing checklist that was included in the authentic assessment process. Because of
the historical resentment to research the Navajos have developed, I felt that much of the success and validity of the data collected would be determined by the personal involvement of the two classroom teachers at Small Tree School with the project outcomes.

Researcher Designed Instruments

Needs Assessment Survey

At the beginning of October, 1991, I constructed an open-ended survey to distribute to the middle school teachers at Small Tree School. (See Appendix D.) My goal was twofold: I wanted to assess the curriculum needs of the school from the teacher’s perspective and I wanted to determine if there would be any support for initiating a portfolio assessment alternative to standardized testing at the school level. An example of this needs assessment survey is included in the appendix.

Eighteen teachers were surveyed and eighteen surveys were returned. Several teachers commented that they were grateful for the opportunity to have a voice in deciding the direction of the middle school program. Most of the staff indicated that they had never been involved in developing an action plan and that they were eager to know more about site-based management. Only one teacher, an Anglo, indicated that he felt portfolio assessments would be too time consuming.
The survey I used was modeled after the eight principles developed by Ben M. Harris in his text, Developmental Teacher Evaluation (1986, Allyn and Bacon). Those eight principles are defined as a developmental system that, if used systematically, will guide the improvement of teaching and learning (Harris, p. 40). Those eight principles are preconditions for Teacher Evaluation, General Principles, Sources and Uses of Data, Instrumentation, Collaboration, Learning in Evaluation, Due Process, and Improvement Activities.

I sought to combine formative evaluation procedures with summative evaluation procedures. Harris describes this process in Chapter III of his text.

As an outgrowth of legislation requiring new teachers to "demonstrate classroom skills", one largely, rapidly growing urban/suburban school system launched a "supportive supervision" program of competency assessment and related competency development. A set of twenty performance statements was adopted. A staff of instructional and evaluation specialists developed a diagnostic analysis system calling for observations, interviews, and self-report inventories to be used with all new teachers in the fall semester of their first year on the job.

The plan called for a "support team" to review the analyses and raw data. The support team consisted of the principal, a supervisor, a peer teacher, and the evaluatee. Together they identified growth targets, planned improvement activities, and implemented them, with each member carrying out specific responsibilities (pp. 41-42).
This operational model was an effective vehicle for involving the teachers in becoming active participants in restructuring the curriculum at the school and district level.

Writing Skills Checklist

Small Tree School District #4 was in the process of developing a District Assessment Plan (DAP) to comply with the Arizona State Department Student Assessment Program when I was hired as Assistant Principal. The Arizona Student Assessment Program (ASAP) is much like the Louisiana Minimum Skills Program. Both plans were developed to test students on skills that were considered to be necessary for survival in our growing technological society. These minimum competencies were based on several years of pilot testing and a series of reliability/validity studies. Targeted grade levels were 3, 8, 10 and 12. The exit exams at the twelfth grade was a requirement for graduation from high school.

The District Assessment Plan (DAP) is a plan developed by each individual district in Arizona to address the minimum competencies and to utilize the ASAP test results at the school level in a meaningful way. The DAP has to state the type of assessment the district is using, how test results will be utilized in every grade and discipline, and the ongoing procedure the District will adopt to monitor the plan. When I was hired, Small Tree
had begun the process of identifying these critical skills and teachers were writing curriculum guides that included these skills in the text.

With the help of Daisy Kiyaani, the Bilingual Director, and Dr. Terri McCarty who is a professor the University of Arizona, a writing skills checklist was constructed. (See Appendix E.) The checklist mirrored a combination of skills taken from Arizona's minimum skills competencies and from teacher input. The teachers at Small Tree School were given an opportunity to brainstorm areas they felt needed to be reinforced through interdisciplinary teaching. The areas that emerged were parallel to those the ITBS test data had indicated our students were the weakest in.

For example, in Grades 4-9 our students scored the lowest in the nation in comprehension on the ITBS. As a result of our brainstorming sessions the teachers felt that it was critical for the faculty to target this skill in every domain. If a child writes a personal experience narrative the child must show evidence that he can incorporate descriptive words and phrases into the experience. All teachers targeted higher order thinking skills as the elements they wanted to see reflected in student's work. Children should not only know what a metaphor is, they should be able to develop a metaphor and extend it throughout their writing.
This commitment took extra time and work on the part of both faculty and students. It was a giant step, however, toward initiating our portfolio assessment system. One teacher brought the following quote to a staff development meeting. It embodies the philosophy Small Tree School was moving toward:

To solely use standardized achievement tests is like casting a net into the sea—a net that is intentionally designed to let the most interesting fish get away. Then, to describe the ones that are caught strictly in terms of their weight and length is to radically reduce what we know about them. To further conclude that all the contents of the sea consist of fish like those in the net compounds the error further. We need more kinds of fish. We need to know more about those we catch. We need new nets (p. 10).

Sample Portfolio Analysis

"Reading assessment has become a genuine puzzle. Confusion and debate continue about what the goals of school assessment of reading should be and about what types of tests and other assessments are needed to achieve those goals" (Farr, 1992, p. 26).

In our attempts to "put the assessment pieces together" the Small Tree staff again turned to Dr. Terri McCarty for guidance. In January I called her to assist me in an inservice that would link our assessment efforts together. I needed help with the puzzle.

Dr. McCarty brought to that meeting a sample portfolio analysis sheet that she had developed. (See Appendices F and G.) It was a thorough compilation of authentic
products that should be included in show portfolios. Students were to have a voice in the selection of pieces from their working portfolios that would be used for grading purposes. Self-evaluation was a critical component to a successful portfolio system (Farr, 1992).

Dr. McCarty stressed that we should encourage students to include pieces of their work in both Navajo and English. This idea excited the Navajo staff, especially in the middle school. They felt it would support their efforts to get the children to reclaim their heritage through language.

Dr. McCarty and other researchers (Stanley and Amado, 1986, Tiedt, 1990) have investigated the effects a non-supportive literacy environment has on NES (Non-English Speaking Students) as opposed to ES (English Speaking) children. The following is a list of ways cultural background impacts student self-esteem and achievement. I think it validates the language beliefs of the Small Tree staff.

The portfolio analysis worksheet was used along with the needs assessment data and the writing checklist to guide our assessment efforts the rest of the year. Chapter VI will describe the results of those efforts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Speaking Child</th>
<th>Non-English Speaking Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language used is familiar.</td>
<td>Language used is strange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching materials are presented in English, and the child learns to read English.</td>
<td>Child is expected to use the materials presented in English; the child may be illiterate in his or her native language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s self-esteem is supported by successful experiences in school.</td>
<td>Child feels unhappy, is unsuccessful in school, and cannot wait to get home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He or she graduates from high school and may enter college.</td>
<td>He or she drops out of school as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Setting: Small Tree Community and Small Tree Unified School District #4

Small Tree is a community of slightly over 2,000 residents, 90% of whom are Navajo. This community is located on the Navajo reservation at the eastern edge of the state of Arizona, fifty miles west of Chinle which is a tourist area in the summer months. Small Tree is the location of the Small Tree Chapter House, a community boarding school, a parttime health care facility and the local public school’s administrative offices. Also within the community is the headquarters of the state Navajo rodeo agency.

The few private businesses include two small convenience stores, a trading post, two gas station, an auto parts store and a video store. There are also six churches and a United States post office in Small Tree.
Local residents do most of their shopping in Chinle or Gallup, New Mexico which is about one hundred and twenty miles away.

Housing consists primarily of HUD rental homes, cinder block homes, hogans, and rental housing provided to school employees by the district. Housing is in extremely short supply, and often extended families share very cramped quarters.

Due to the location and type of employment opportunities, Small Tree is one of the most traditional areas on the reservation. The closest town with modern conveniences is Chinle which has a Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Parlor, and resort area called Canyon de Chelly. Because of the isolation of the community, traditional healing ceremonies and social customs are still widely practiced. There is little evidence of acculturation except in the dress of the middle school students. Satellite dishes are located at the teacher housing and the HUD housing where children are more likely to be exposed to the latest styles in clothes, music, and coming events.

Within Small Tree are two schools serving 1,020 students: Small Tree Boarding School and Small Tree Unified School District #4. Small Tree Boarding School is controlled by the BIA. Small Tree Unified School District is a public school controlled by a locally elected, all
Navajo school board. Though there is local control, there are state laws and federal regulations that must also be met. The organization of the two schools, the teaching methods, the materials and the equipment found in them do not differ in any dramatic way from what is found in schools off the reservation. Even for the Navajo teachers who comprise more than 50% of the elementary school staff, the teaching methods, the classroom organization, and the interaction patterns between teachers and students do not differ greatly from those of Anglo teachers on and off the reservation. This is similar to an observation made at Rough Rock Demonstration School:

While most of the teachers are Navajo and many were raised in the Rock Community, they have tended to deliver instruction, organize their classrooms, and interact with students in ways not much different from majority-culture teachers running traditional mainstream classrooms. In fact, many teachers reported to us that even though they had memories of discomfort and unhappiness with their school experience, they tended to behave as their teachers had (Vogt, Jordan and Sharp, 1987, p. 285).

Small Tree School has an enrollment of approximately 820 students, kindergarten through ninth grade. More than 95% of the students are Navajo, and approximately 80% of the students qualify for free or reduced meals at the school. There are three to four classrooms for each grade level, with an average of about 25 students in each class. Kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms are totally self-contained except for physical education instruction,
with a teacher and a teacher assistant in each classroom. All the other grade levels are departmentalized with students changing classes each hour and one block of fifty minutes weekly devoted to the Beauty Way Curriculum. This course incorporates traditional Navajo values with self-esteem and alcohol and drug prevention strategies. Instruction in all curriculum areas is based primarily upon the whole language philosophy with little reliance on textbooks and commercially prepared materials.

Small Tree School has a number of special services available to various students. Chapter I and ESL services are provided to small groups of identified students in resource rooms during 30 to 60 minute time blocks. A computer lab with 25 computer stations is used by entire classrooms primarily for computer assisted instruction (CAI) of a drill and practice nature. A gifted and talented program serves approximately 25 students. Special education classes are conducted for identified students. These students are mainstreamed into regular classes for science and social studies. Unique to Small Tree School is a transitional first grade class. These eighteen students are given instruction in their primary language, Navajo, throughout the entire year. At the end of this time a bilingual language syntax inventory is administered to determine oral proficiency readiness skills that will ensure those children a more successful entry into first
grade. No other reservation school has a program like this in place.

A Navajo Language Class is offered after school for all teachers and teacher assistants. Frank Yellowhair, a teacher's aide at Small Tree, wrote the curriculum for this class and taught the course. Approximately twenty-five adults, including myself, attended this class which was held on Monday afternoons from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. This course was also one that was not found at any other school on the reservation.

Several reading motivation programs are also in existence at Small Tree School. There was a Reading is Fundamental book distribution project for three years. During this time, more than 16,000 books were given free of charge to the students attending Small Tree. Other local parent involvement programs have given certificates and awards to students reading specified numbers of books. However, the school library is small, and the selections are limited. An increased effort was made last year to upgrade the young adult selection. A Reading teacher with a Master's degree in Library Science developed and taught a course on Library/Study Skills that exposed all students to what was available for research and for leisure reading. This effort paid off as library books were checked out more frequently and students developed a keener understanding of the reference sections.
The student population of Small Tree School changed dramatically over the past eight years. Eight years ago, most students entered kindergarten speaking primarily Navajo. By 1990, fewer than 5% of the students entering kindergarten were considered dominant Navajo speakers, and even the Navajo language influences on spoken English have greatly diminished. These figures are based on the state mandated language dominance testing administered by elementary school personnel to each entering kindergarten student.

Ironically, as the apparent need for bilingual teachers has decreased because of the student’s increasing proficiency in English, the number of Navajo teachers has greatly increased. In 1984 less than 10% of the teachers were Navajo. Eight years later, more than 50% of the staff are Navajo. During this period, the teacher turnover rate has also greatly increased. Previously nearly one-fourth of the teaching positions were vacated every two years. Now, more than one-half of the teachers leave each year.

There have been fifteen principals at the school over the last eight years. This past year I was hired as assistant principal, but was placed in the Principal’s position from October 10, 1991 until June 30, 1992. In November a classroom teacher who is a Creek Indian was placed in the Acting Assistant Principal’s position. A review of school files revealed that I was the only Anglo
woman to ever have the Principal's job. Twelve of the administrators were Anglo males, one who had the position briefly was a Navajo male, and one was a Hopi male.

While some parents are involved in the school and school activities, the school generally has a difficult time sustaining parental involvement. There is usually good attendance at the annual open house and at student performances and social events, but poor attendance at parent-teacher organization meetings.

In 1991 a parent group was formed in response to the community's dissatisfaction with the hiring of the Hispanic superintendent. This group called Coalition of Parents for Education (COPE) attended all school board meetings and hired legal counsel to investigate the background of the superintendent, Speedy Gonzales. Eventually all of the administrator's professional qualifications were investigated by COPE. This organization did not become actively involved in school building level activities or meetings.

Research Questions

This study began with the question of what characteristics influenced the literacy development of successful Navajo readers and writers. The direction of inquiry was toward the home, school, and community partnership. This direction was influenced by the research findings of Dr. David Hartle-Schutte which demonstrated
that young children enter school with knowledge about oral and written language, and other research that focused on the importance of the sociocultural issues that influence literacy development in the school and community.

The direction of this study was also influenced by my belief that individuals develop literacy and oral language through transactions with other language users in their environment in response to the demands, the needs and the uses for language in each particular environment. This belief led me to study factors in the sociocultural environment of the home, school and community that may have an impact upon literacy development. These include the physical, cultural, social, personal, attitudinal and belief factors surrounding the child. My expectations were that I would discover some cross-cultural commonalities, some local intracultural similarities that differed from published studies of middle class Anglo populations and lower class African-American populations, and some differences between individual Navajo families.

Thus, this study proceeded from a knowledge base of literacy development in other sociocultural settings; experiences of working with minority children and their parents for the last twenty years, and a life-long personal interest in Native American customs and cultures, and a specific theoretical orientation.
A brief description of the proposed study was submitted to the school district governing board through the superintendent and to the former school principal. Administrative approval was received in the summer of 1991.

Student Interviews

In November, immediately following the reading assessment, the students were questioned about their memories of their literacy development. (See Appendix H.) This interview was constructed to be open-ended, starting with general questions, and then proceeding to more specific questions. Many of the questions in the interview for this study are similar to those found on the Reading Interview (Y. Goodman, Watson and Burke, 1987, p. 219). Other questions focus on the literate environment at home. Durkin's (1966) interview and those based upon it, (Doake, 1981; Haussler, 1982; Romero, 1983) used very structured and detailed questions that forced the interviews in a direction predetermined by the interviewer. Durkin noted that the interviews were often boring for both parties involved, and that she got much more valuable information through casual conversations with the participants. This study intentionally used open-ended questions for those reasons.

The student interviews in this study were also designed to have some overlap with the parent interviews, providing for "triangulation" of data (Kamil, Langer and
Shanahan, 1985) as a means of verifying or questioning data from different sources. Throughout the weeks, as successful and unsuccessful students were observed, letters were sent to the students’ parents to request their participation in this study. (Appendix I.) As soon as each request form was returned, an interview with the parent(s) was scheduled. These interviews began in November and continued through January. (See data analysis section for the sequence and overlap of data gathering and data analysis.)

By beginning the parent interviews prior to completing many of the student interviews, it was possible to have different perspectives on the same child’s literacy development, to cross-verify information provided by the students and their parents, and to modify some of my questioning techniques. Initially, I had not expected that the students would have been able to provide much information about their early literacy development. Dr. Hartle-Schutte found that the students in his sample group at Fort Defiance were reluctant to answer the questions if their parents were questioned previously (Hartle-Schutte, 1988). However, by comparing information from both students and parent sources, I discovered that the students were often an excellence source of information. This led me to put more emphasis on the later student interviews.
The interviews were conducted in a conversational one, with follow up questions asked about information provided by students. All interviews were tape recorded, with student permission, and notes of the responses were written on the interview form. The length of these interviews varied from 15 to 35 minutes, depending upon how willingly the students spoke, and how much they remembered. The tape recordings were reviewed, and additional written notes were made to complete the transcripts of the interview.

While the open-ended structure of the interview was intended to avoid a narrow focus, and allow wide ranging responses, one girl was very reluctant to offer expanded responses. She became very aware, when reviewing the tape recording of her interviews, that I had digressed from my focus of literacy development to more personal questions. I did this unconsciously because of my personal concern (as Principal) with her home situation which I knew was abusive and violent. After I came to this realization, I made a conscious effort not to allow my personal feelings to sabotage my research efforts with other students.

One of the pitfalls of ethnographic studies is that the researcher must address the ethical issues of covert research. This research method involves you in people's day-to-day lives and participant observation reveals both the best and the worst of others and may often place the
researcher in unresolvable morally and ethically problematic situations (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

The field researcher is faced with the possibility that his or her presence may encourage people to engage in immoral or illegal activities. Van Maanen (1982) strongly suspected that the police officers he was researching were showing off for his benefit when they beat one suspect. J. M. Johnson (1975) observed numerous illegal acts committed by caseworkers in his study of social service agencies. In this institutional study attendants frequently teased residents or forced them to do certain things such as swallow burning cigarettes to amuse themselves and the observer.

The question for me, then, was not unlike one that other field researchers have had to face. Was I going to detach myself from the ethical and political responsibility inherent in my administrator's role and focus on my research goals and objectives? The other choice I had was to use my findings from this and other interview data to change the circumstances that lead to this kind of abuse.

As you will see in the remaining chapters, I chose to do the latter. An ethnographer is not unlike a news reporter who gathers information, edits it, and then presents an account of what he or she witnessed to the public. I did not divulge the details of my subject's
family dynamics in this paper, but I did report the nature of my findings to the proper medical authorities.

As Van Maanen (1983) notes, there are no easy stances to be taken by the observer in field situations. Clearly there are situations in which researchers can and should intervene on behalf of other people. As researchers we recognize the fact that to withdraw from all morally problematic situations would prevent us from understanding and, indeed, changing many things in the world in which we live. In Van Maannen's (1983, p. 279) words, "The hope, of course, is that in the end the truth, when it is depicted fully, will help us all out." I told the truth and do not regret my decision to do so.

Key Informants

Key informants are essential in field research. The right key informants can make or break a study (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Since these people are so important to the researcher, they can almost take on heroic or unrealistic characteristics (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). I found this to be true with Sherry and Allison, the two Navajo women who became my "heroes."

As I have previously stated, Sherry has been a school secretary at Small Tree for the last four years. She has seen eight administrators come and go. Sherry was twenty-eight years old, married with one child, and another on the way. Her husband, Gerald, was an alcoholic who was rarely
around to help her with the maintenance of the household duties. Sherry worked and Gerald didn’t.

I first met Sherry in the summer of 1991 when I came to Small Tree to interview for Assistant Principal. She was part of a six-person team that interviewed me late on an August afternoon. I was impressed by the kinds of questions she asked me.

Key Informant: What would you do if you had to discipline a Navajo child?

Researcher: I would confront the child with the problem and try to work out a reward incentive strategy.

Key Informant: This would never work here!

Researcher: Why not?

Key Informant: Because the teachers want the children removed from their classrooms. They’re not interested in behavior modification.

Researcher: Then what would you suggest?

Key Informant: I would send Eugene Hasgood to the parent’s home, pick them up in the school vehicle, bring them to school and meet with the teacher, parents, and students at the same time.

Researcher: You have to go pick the parents up first?

Key Informant: Oh yes. Most of our parents have no form of transportation. They will expect you to come get them if there’s a problem.

Throughout the interview, it was apparent that Sherry knew the community school, and home dynamics better than
anyone at the table. I hoped that I could trust her with my field efforts, as well as use her as a kind of "reality check" to verify emerging themes and hunches that I would discover.

Sherry proved to be the ideal key informant. She was loyal, perceptive, and intent upon giving me realistic feedback. Because Sherry was so revered by the parents, she also served as a translator during parent/teacher conferences. Zelditch (1962) wrote that the right key informant can transform an ordinary study into a more meaningful one. In this case Sherry proved that statement to be more than true.

Allison, on the other hand, turned out to be a disappointment. She was the Chapter I secretary for Small Tree School. Allison was also the person who picked me up at Phoenix when I interviewed, shepherded me through the interview process, and returned me to the airport. I felt an affinity with her and confided in her at the beginning of my field research. Unfortunately, when the Navajo principal, Mr. Tso, was fired and I became Principal, Allison's regard for me changed drastically.

In late October several teachers approached me in my office to tell me that Allison had been observed at a Chapter House meeting telling parents that I had been hired by Speedy Gonzales to "get rid of Mr. Tso." This greatly
dismayed me because Allison was well aware of the events surrounding that action.

Instead of confronting her, I slowly began to withdraw my dependence on her for collaborating evidence in my field data. Eventually, Allison joined COPE and became active in the movement to dismiss Speedy Gonzales. We were cordial, but not confidantes, for the remainder of the school year.

Easterdy, et al., (1977) writes that women researchers are often confronted with problems in the field that men usually do not face. The conflicts can be gender-based or cultural. In the case of Allison, I believe it was a combination of both.

**Parent Interviews**

Communication between the school and the home was often difficult to establish because few homes have phones. Often the only way to contact parents was to send notes home with the child, to send letters through the mail, or to visit the home. Many of the homes were difficult to locate because of the lack of streets, street names and house numbers. For the first attempt at contacting parents in this study, a letter (Appendix I) was sent home with each identified successful and unsuccessful reader to request parent participation. The first attempt was not successful with any of the families. A second note was sent home with the children and they were asked to return the form the next day. This was more successful, with more
than half of the forms being returned. A third notice was sent through the mail to the parents who had not responded and did not have telephones. Those with phones were called. Eventually, we were contracted and fifteen out of the twenty parents said they would be willing to be interviewed.

Interviews were scheduled at the families' homes rather than at school for three reasons: (1) home interviews were thought to be more convenient to the families; (2) the families were expected to be more relaxed and comfortable in their homes; and, (3) visiting in the home would give me the opportunity to observe the literate environment of the home, and to ask to see certain materials mentioned by the parents.

Nine of the parent interviews were conducted in the families' homes. One parent interview was conducted in my home because the parent was a teacher and requested that setting. One student was dropped from the study because his father withdrew him from Small Tree. Four other interviews, although agreed to be the parents, were postponed and rescheduled numerous times. I eventually settled for shorter telephone interviews in each of these cases. Whenever feasible, I included grandmothers and other relatives living in the household in the interview process. I achieved this through the help of my key informant and the Navajo teacher who assisted with this
study. One of these two women would accompany me to the hogan and would conduct the interview in Navajo. After returning from these interviews, a literacy environment checklist developed by the researcher was used to assist in determining literacy characteristics of the home environment (Appendix J).

Although it was not a part of my study's design, several students in my research group wanted to interview their relatives. They became fascinated with the whole interview process and asked insightful questions about how one became a researcher. I decided to teach some qualitative strategies to these sixth graders as part of my own commitment to students becoming active participants in a whole language environment.

This deviation from my previous method proved quite rewarding for the students and for myself. The students developed their own descriptive protocols and determined who they wanted to interview. In most cases the subject was their grandmother who they dearly loved and respected. Most of the questions they asked centered around their grandmother's earliest recollections of the white man. These interviews were translated by the students into narratives and later used by the social studies teacher in literature circles to provide stimulus for other students to become researchers and writers. An example of the narrative developed by the students is included in Appendix
K. Samples of responses from those interviews are included in Appendix L.

As with the student interviews, the parent interviews (Appendix M), were open-ended, beginning with general questions and progressing to more specific questions. Written notes were taken of the responses, as well as audio tape recordings, and field notes of observations of the home environments. The full length interviews listed between 50 and 130 minutes, with most taking about 90 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a conversational manner by following up on responses to questions, and altering the sequence of the questions when it was logical to do so. At the conclusion of each interview, I orally summarized each parent response to each question, and asked for verifications, corrections, and clarifications from the parents. These summaries and responses were also audio taped, and the additions and changes were made to my written notes. Immediately following each home interview, I wrote notes of my observations of the home environment, the types of literacy materials observed, and the interactions between the parents and the children.

During the interviews, if specific materials were mentioned by the parents as being important to the child's literacy development, I asked to see those materials if they were still available. These artifacts were recorded on the Literacy Environment Checklist (Appendix J).
One parent mentioned a tape recording they had made of their sixth grade son when he was five years old, reading a favorite story aloud in Navajo. I was able to listen to this recording which they translated into English for me. Parents of children who were determined to be unsuccessful readers showed no interest in providing information on when their child had developed an interest in reading. In most cases these homes were devoid of any reading materials except the TV guide which came daily in the Gallup Independent newspaper. In one case there was a copy of the Book of Mormon on the living room rug.

As with student interviews, all tape recordings and field notes were later reviewed to verify and expand the written notes, and to complete the written transcripts of the interviews. The Literacy Environment Checklist was used as a secondary source of data collection procedures.

Several parents voiced concern over the contents of the taped recordings and indicated that they wanted all information kept confidential. I reassured them that I would protect their anonymity and their right to confidentiality. No one but me would hear the recordings and only I would have access to their audio files and transcripts.

Student Records

Through parent and school board permission, I was granted access to academic records of the selected
students. These records were searched to verify Navajo tribal memberships, age, standardized test scores, report card grades, home language information, attendance, and discipline referrals.

Also available through this document search was a record of the teachers that each student had at each grade level, the educational level of parents (available for only some of the students, because of the use of different enrollment forms), enrollment in preschool, address and phone numbers, if any.

The school and grade level reports for the results of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and a standardized reading test that was administered during the 1991–92 school year. A comparison was made between the scores of the identified successful and unsuccessful readers and the recommendations made by the teachers. In every case but one, teacher judgment coincided with standardized scores.

Teacher Interviews

Regular classroom teachers, language arts teachers, and special placement teachers of the sample population were interviewed, using questions adapted from Durkin's (1984) study of successful poor Black readers. As with the other interviews, these interviews were open-ended, and conducted in a conversational manner. Written notes were taken of these interviews, but no audio recordings were made. Teacher interviews were conducted after all student
and parent interviews were completed. They served as a secondary source of information in most cases. However, for the student who had the abusive home environment, the teacher interviews were an important primary source of information. The interviews lasted approximately five minutes for each student in the interviewed teacher's classes, totalling between 20 and 40 minutes for each teacher.

The interviews focused on the following three questions:

1. What do you know about _____________ that might explain his/her reading and writing behavior?

2. Is there anything in particular about the school that you think has contributed to _____________ becoming a successful or unsuccessful reader and writer?

3. What do you know about _____________'s family that might explain his/her reading and writing academic standing? . . . attitude toward reading and writing?

The questions were asked in the above sequence to allow the teacher to decide upon the most important factors in the student's success. Question number 2 specifically focused on the role of the school if the teacher did not mention the school as an answer to #1. The third question
focused on the role of the home if that was not specifically mentioned in answer to number 1.

At the end of the questioning for each student, the written notes were orally summarized for expansion, correction and verification by the teachers.

**Principal Interviews**

The principal interviews followed a format identical to the teacher interviews. The same three questions were asked in a conversational manner, and in the same sequence as in the teacher interviews.

I had previously intended to interview Mr. Leroy Tso, but he was placed on administrative leave in October. Since I became the Principal, I had to look for other administrator’s who might have pertinent information about the students. I decided to interview Mr. Alfred Goldtooth. Mr. Goldtooth had served as the Principal of Small Tree School in 1989. He left for two years and was then brought back by the Superintendent to be his administrative assistant. Mr. Goldtooth was a Hopi Indian who had grown up in the area. He was well educated, articulate and cared a great deal about the welfare of the children. He was very helpful in providing information about the students and about the community in general.

Written notes were made of his responses, but no tape recordings. These notes were read back to the administrative assistant for verification at the end of the
interview. The interviews lasted about ten minutes for each student that Mr. Goldtooth was able to provide information about.

Journal and Field Notes

A research journal was kept, beginning a year before the actual research study began, and continuing through the data gathering and analysis procedures. It was used primarily to provide a record of my thought processes and direction to the study. The first entries consisted primarily of numerous questions and tentative ideas which helped direct my literature review and provided a starting point for designing the study. These entries were also shared with colleagues for their feedback and suggestions.

Later entries were more specific, and documented the sequence of data gathering and analysis and often focused on procedural problems in the data gathering, such as the problem of getting forms returned from parents. The journal became a place to leave myself reminders to do certain tasks, or to search for more information on particular students. In this way, the journal was particularly important for the development of case studies (Chapter VII). The later entries also were used to record insights and emerging patterns during the data analysis.

Field notes were another form of data gathering, and were written immediately following each parent interview. These notes were used to record observations of the
physical environment, the interactions between the adults and the children, and any other information that was available through observations in the home. These notes were written on the backs of the interview forms and were used as a secondary source of information for each student.

Writing Assessment

In mid October I received all of the surveys from the middle school teachers that I had distributed at an earlier faculty meeting. After reviewing the responses it became apparent to me that the majority of the teachers were eager to move toward the portfolio or authentic assessment method of evaluating student work. In February I distributed a survey to parents asking for their input into the 1992-93 curriculum (Appendix N). Those surveys reflected a growing interest by the parents to pursue more writing and storytelling activities in language arts classes. This was what I had hoped to see emerge as a priority since one of my curriculum goals was to move the teachers away from a strict reliance on standardized test scores.

There are many definitions of portfolios. The following definition was the one chosen by the Small Tree staff.

A Portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas. This collection must include student participation in selecting the contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging samples, and evidence of student self reflection (Leon Paulson, Pearl Paulson and Carol Meyer, Educational Leadership, February, 1991).
A school-wide decision was made to develop two portfolios: a working portfolio and an assessment portfolio. The working portfolio would be the students to keep and they would be the editor of its contents. Writing selections would vary according to topic, audience, and purpose. Final pieces for inclusion into the assessment folder would be selected on the basis of criteria developed by the teacher and students.

In my research group the sixth grade students relished the idea of student input and ownership into how they would receive their reading language arts grades. I asked the two teachers working with me to develop the criteria for the selection of papers to be used for this study. We met twice after school to discuss the type of characteristics they felt would distinguish the successful writers from the unsuccessful writers. The two teachers decided on two criteria: fluency and supporting details. Papers were written on two topics: (1) What language do you speak at home? and (2) Do you know anyone who drinks? How do you feel about it? These criteria were presented to the students and found acceptable.

The second topic is one we considered "anxiety-ridden." That is to say that this issue was one that might cause students to react differently, therefore write differently. An analysis of these samples is included in Chapter VI.
Writing samples that followed were selected on additional criteria: vocabulary usage, theme, process (how the narrative developed), and voice. Papers were scored holistically. A score of 5 to 0 was given to each paper. The anchor paper set the standard for the scoring of the other papers. Anchor papers were placed in the evaluation folders that I kept on each target student. For those students who scored on the lowest continuum (0-2), comparisons were made to standardized test results and teacher judgment to verify their selection as an unsuccessful writer.

A writing checklist was developed by the research team and Dr. Theresa McCarty, a professor at the University of Arizona. This checklist (Appendix E) was placed in each student’s assessment folder at the end of the year.

A writing prompt was developed by the research team for every book that students selected to read from the reading list. An example of a prompt is included in Appendix O. The prompts were modeled after examples found in Transitions, (1988) a textbook written by Reggie Routman. Questions in the prompt were designed to assess student’s knowledge in the following modes: narration, personal expression, persuasion, and information.

The responses to these writing tasks were evaluated like the other writing samples. Section Two was not evaluated. The research team and students felt they were
not informed enough to assess peer collaborative efforts. The third part of the performance assessment story was the easiest to score and interpret. It also turned out to be the students' favorite part of the writing assignment.

Photography

Another data collection procedure that I used which I had not considered until I was in Small Tree for awhile was photographs and videos. The camera is becoming an increasingly popular research tool in the social sciences (Dabbs, 1982). It can capture details that might otherwise be forgotten or go unnoticed (Dabbs, 1982). I found, too, that the camera was one piece of equipment that I could carry with me wherever I went. The children and staff at the school were comfortable when I photographed them. Interestingly, the kinds of pictures I took changed as my perceptions and understanding of the setting changed.

At first I took still shots of staged occurrences. My key informant typing at her desk, my Assistant Principal conferencing with a parent or me posed by the school door. Later in the year I began to take shots of the children at recess or playing at their homes. My favorite place to situate myself for authentic pictures was in front of the Small Tree Trading Post. On Saturday afternoon I could capture the teenagers and adults in interactions that, later, proved to substantiate my growing conviction that the dynamics between the older and younger generation were
having a significant impart on the development of literacy awareness and proficiency in Small Tree. I have gone into greater detail about this phenomena in Chapter VI.

Along with the still camera, I used the camcorder to record the school setting. I was fortunate to befriend a teacher assistant that was eager to assist me in video taping the classrooms at Small Tree. Funds were readily available through Chapter I and Title VII for tapes and equipment. With Beatrice’s help, every teacher was videotaped once over the course of the year. My target students were filmed several times in both teacher’s classrooms. This video proved to be a rich source of information about student/teacher and student/student dynamics.

Student Observations

Student observations began in November and continued until the end of February. My original schedule was to complete them in January, but snow days interrupted school eight times during this month which forced me to extend my deadline.

When I went into each classroom I stayed for 60 minutes. I took copious notes recording my impressions of each child that I was observing. At first I was more concerned with how much I wrote instead of what I wrote. I felt driven to record every movement and interaction for fear that I would overlook an important detail. As a
result, I concentrated more on the task of recording rather than observing.

My second observations were much more focused. I had reviewed and studied the information that I had collected from my first round of notes. Then, I discussed my findings with the two teachers involved in the research study. They were very helpful in pointing out the information that I recorded which was nonessential to my purpose. They pointed out, for example, that instances of disruptive behavior were being noted more frequently than engagement in literacy tasks. I attributed this to my training as an evaluator for the Teacher Evaluation Instrument in Louisiana. During this time I was sensitized to noting instances of off task behavior since this was an important element of teacher effectiveness in the classroom. After their suggestions were made, I was much more relaxed and started observing literacy events.

Each student in the study was observed three times for thirty minute intervals over the four month period. The two teachers and I continued to compare notes throughout the school year to cross check what I had recorded.

Historical, Social and Contemporary Factors Related to the Small Tree Area

In order to understand the logic behind my emphasis on collaboration with the teachers at Small Tree School, you need to be informed of the historical, social and economic factors that impacted that community during my tenure
there. Suffice it to say that my experience in this setting was a typical in that I had to balance my roles as a Principal and ethnographer with the precision of a maestro. This was due to the cultural conflicts that arose in my first month in Small Tree.

Historically, Small Tree School District has had fifteen principals since the erection of the school in 1985. It is a community caught in the grips of denial. Each Navajo school board member that I interviewed was adamant about the fact that their children needed progressive leadership and competent Navajo teachers. Yet throughout my year as Principal I witnessed indecisive and inconsistent actions contrary to their testimony.

It began in early September when the school board hired a Hispanic man to be the Superintendent for the District. Subsequently, the entire teaching staff initiated a walk-out that shut down the operation of the school for three days. Community members were also furious over this selection because three Navajo men had been in the running for this post.

Then in early October the principal of the school, Mr. Tso, was put on administrative leave because of an altercation with a ninth grader at the school. Mr. Tso was not only Navajo, but a highly respected member of the Native American Church. These two events predicated my research efforts resulting in a stronger conviction on my
part to actively involve the key staff members, integral to
the completion of my study, with the data collection
procedures.

My key informants, who were my two secretaries, were
also critical to the investigative process. Sherry had
been a secretary at the school for four years and Allison
had been one for three years. Both of these Navajo women
were loyal to me and proved to be reservoirs of knowledge
who filled in what Umberto Eco calls the "ghost gaps" in
the ethnographic study.

Social Factors

The development of literacy does not take identical
paths for all individuals, nor for all groups of
individuals. Numerous research reports (Au and Kawakami,
1985; Scollon and Scollon, 1980; Clark, 1984) document a
variety of ways that literacy develops in different social
and ethnic groups. Literacy development, like oral
language development, is a social and cultural phenomenon
that cannot be explained in isolation from the
sociocultural context. As Langer (1987) points out, many
literacy researchers and practitioners tend to look at
literacy as if reading and writing need to be learned in
some pristine and decontextualized sense, detached from the
social purposes they serve; rather than investigating
literacy development within the various social contexts.
"The issues have generally been taken separately, and the
studies often focus on minority group students who are poor academic achievers in a traditional sense. . ." (Langer, 1987, p. 14).

In order to understand both the generally poor academic achievement (in a traditional sense) of Navajo students, as well as to understand the successes of individual students who have become successful readers and writers, it is necessary to look at cultural, social and economic factors impacting on literacy development.

As an alternative explanation I am suggesting that the problems experienced by minorities in acquiring literacy and in academic performance generally are a function of their adaptation to the limited opportunity open to them for jobs and other positions in adult life requiring literacy, where literacy pays off (Ogbu, 1987a, p. 151).

Ogbu suggests three different classifications for minorities that he claims accounts for differential success rates in the United States contemporary society. Autonomous minorities such as Jews and Mormons are minority groups that have not been socially, economically, or politically subordinated. Immigrant minorities are those who moved more or less voluntarily to the United States for economic well being, better opportunities and political freedom.

The third type he labels caste-like or subordinate minorities consisting of people who were originally brought into United States society involuntarily through slavery, conquest or colonization. Included in this classification
are Native Americans, Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and Native Hawaiians.

The first two groups he claims do not experience lingering or disproportionate school failure. The third group, which would include Navajos, usually experience the most difficulty in acquiring literacy. He attributes these difficulties to societal barriers, school barriers, and to the minorities' responses to these barriers.

Even if Ogbu's assertions were questionable, to understand the contemporary development of literacy in the Navajo nation requires a cultural and historical perspective, as well as an understanding of current social, educational, and economic factors. These factors gain even more significance if they are found to be there.

Contemporary Factors

Although unemployment is estimated in excess of 35% on the Navajo reservation (Costello, 1977), there is an interesting and important difference between Navajos living on the reservation and the other subordinated minorities mentioned by Ogbu (1987a). For other minorities to gain access to white collar jobs often means, in addition to getting the appropriate education, competing for work in the dominant society, Navajos, in contrast, have a number of employment opportunities on the reservation for professionals, particularly in government. Thus, there has been a shift over time in literacy not only becoming more
valued, but also with local employment and economic rewards becoming increasingly more available to those who become literate.

Navajo society is matrilineal and matrilocal, meaning that the extensive Navajo kinship system and property ownership are traced primarily through the mother's side of the family, and that the extended family often lives in maternal grandmother's camp. Cousins are considered the equivalent of brothers and sisters. Grandparents, and frequently aunts and uncles, are often highly responsible for rearing children, particularly the oldest. (The Navajo term for aunt, "shima' yazhe'," means "little mother"). Older brothers and sisters are given heavy responsibility at an early age in caring for their younger siblings, and in the rural areas, protecting the family's wealth (herding sheep).

This extended family has tremendous importance for the Navajo people. Responsibilities, car and rent payments, labor, housing, childcare, and property are all frequently shared by the extended family. In the more urban areas, there is a tendency towards more nuclear families, but these strong family ties still remain, and can be important in literacy development for many youngsters.

The Navajo population was rapidly increasing in the early 1900's, but the rate of growth now beginning to slow. A generation ago, it was not uncommon for Navajo families
to have eight or more children. It is now more common to have three or four children. In the 1970's, the median age of the Navajo reservation was sixteen, and today it stands at about nineteen. These changes have an impact upon literacy development. In previous generations, the later born children tended to be more fluent in English, and more fluent readers than their older brothers and sisters at the same age, due to more contact with English. Young children often served as translators between their elders and the Anglo bureaucracies. Older children had a great deal of responsibility for taking care of their younger siblings and the parents' attention was divided among their many children.

Today, with smaller families, parents theoretically have more time to spend with each of their children. In reality, with more employment outside of the home for both the mothers and fathers and the existence of many more distractions, the actual contact with individual children may be somewhat diminished. Older siblings tend to be much more fluent in English than their counterparts of even a decade ago. Parents of today's youngsters also have a higher level of formal education than their parents did. As recently as 1973, 80% of Navajos over 25 years of age did not have a high school diploma, and the majority of those over 50 years old had never been to school. Now, the high school completion rate approaches 70%, and is probably
somewhat higher in the more urban areas, where education is more important for employment (Platero, et al., 1986).

Literacy in Navajo language has probably not been a significant factor for many students in achieving literacy in English. With the exception of schools such as Rock Point and Rough Rock and the efforts of some missionaries, there have not been sustained efforts to teach initial literacy in the vernacular. This is undoubtedly due to a number of factors, including: the lack of written materials in Navajo; a limited number of teachers literate in Navajo; the perception of limited usefulness of Navajo literacy or forums for its use; and that literacy in Navajo did not evolve from within the Navajo culture for specific purposes, but was introduced originally by missionaries for the purpose of reading the Bible and other religious material. Interestingly, some contemporary and personal uses of Navajo literacy have been documented in a community where both the school and the church had Navajo literacy programs (McLaughlin, 1987). While the absolute number of Navajos that speak the vernacular is reported to be rising, the percentage of the population that speaks Navajo is declining (Spicer, 1962). This is certain to have an impact upon literacy in both Navajo and English.

Contact with the Anglo society has definitely increased over the past few decades, with mixed consequences. More roads are paved, more families travel
off reservation, more Navajos go away to college and the service than ever before. And, the introduction of cable television, satellite dishes, video stores and a few local movie theaters has provided Navajos with a much wider variety of language and experiences than previously available. This has had the most dramatic impact upon the younger generations, as they seek to imitate their silver screen and video tube peers. As with off reservation youth, pop music is another acculturating force that tends to make Navajo children less like their parents and more like their peers.

In short, the Navajo reservation is in the midst of great social, demographic, economic and cultural change that certainly affects literacy development. These effects are felt by different individuals in different families in many different ways. Any study of the successes or failures of literacy development must include the entire cultural ecology of the community and individuals studied.

The Emic View of the Community

Ethnographic research calls for an "emic" perspective, a view from the inside of the culture studied, rather than an "etic," or outsider's view. Strictly defined, this would require a researcher to either be a member of the culture, or to be thoroughly assimilated, which is extremely rare for non-Navajos to gain that degree of acceptance. The issue is further complicated by the
rapidly changing nature of Navajo culture and the wide range of cultural practices among Navajos themselves. Knowledge of traditional Navajo culture and the ability to speak the Navajo language are not enough to have an insider’s view of this community. Living and participating in the community are also essential.

During my residency in the Small Tree community, I took part in the social, cultural, educational and ceremonial events as much as my dual role allowed me to. As an ethnographer I spent weekends observing and exploring the geography of this primitively beautiful area. I took solitary tours of every area that my students lived in. When I could I stayed overnight in a hogan. This experience was quite revealing, especially in the mid-winter months when the snow was three feet deep.

I learned how to start a fire without chemicals, shear sheep, make fry-bread, weave a rug, and lasso wild horses. With the help of one of my key informants, Sherry, I talked to the elders of the community. This was no easy feat since I was viewed as an outsider and I was politically aligned with Speedy Gonzales, the Hispanic Superintendent.

From the elders I learned about the sacredness of the four mountains that surrounded the expansive Navajo nation. I sat with them during their prayers and listened to them call the names of spirits that would bring a bountiful harvest or a much needed rain.
Perhaps my most memorable experience occurred the night before my birthday, March 17, 1992. I had lost by beloved dog, Kody Bear on March 9 and was in a severe depression over this event. My secretary, Sherry, was worried sick about me. She had convinced Joe Benally's mother to have a hand trembling ceremony for me to help determine where Kody Bear was.

A hand trembling ceremony is done when a member of the tribe loses something precious to him. It cannot be anything like jewelry or money: it must be an animate object. The Hand Trembler is taken to the place where the person or thing is last seen. An imprint of the footprint, paw, etc. is delicately scooped up from the earth. The Hand Trembler studies this imprint for four days. During this time the participant in the ceremony fasts and prays about the lost object.

When I saw Mrs. Benally that evening of March 17, she placed me in a circle she had drawn outside her hogan. I faced east toward the San Francisco Mountains. Mrs. Benally placed ground corn around me, in my mouth and on my hands and feet. She said a chant in Navajo and then we both prayed.

When I opened my eyes she was in trance, but her right arm was lifted high above her waist and her hand was trembling. Her finger was pointing south toward an area called Blue Gap. She told me Kody Bear was alive and was
being held captive by a family in the Blue Gap area. She said I should strengthen my efforts to find her because the family was thinking of selling her in Gallup.

I had already placed flyers everywhere offering $100 for Kody's return. The next day I made another announcement at school pleading with the children to return her if one of them had her at home. That night I received a call from a family in Blue Gap saying they thought they had the dog I was looking for.

I drove the fourteen miles to their house and there she was. Needless to say this experience was one that proved to me that the mysterious, spiritual underpinnings of the Navajo rituals were not to be scoffed at. In fact, I am convinced that because I tried so hard to become accepted in this community, I formed a bond with the elders. Sadly this bonding did not occur at school.

As Principal my field experience was, however, educationally rewarding. Not only did I have ample opportunities to collect my research data; I also became actively involved in Chapter House meetings and tribal state meetings held in Window Rock.

Attending a Chapter House Meeting was an empowering event. As Dr. Daniel McLaughlin writes in his article Functions of oral reading and writing at a Chapter House Meeting epitomize the contemporary struggle between the traditional Navajos and the "westernized" Navajos. Accordingly, functions for communication do not represent static, immutable uses as much as they represent
constantly changing struggles for power and strategies of domination (p. 305).

Never was this more evident than when the Chapter House President, Billy McCabe, began his campaign to "run Speedy Gonzales off." Chapter House meetings became events, not organized by parliamentary procedures, but by fiery rhetoric designed to incite and unite the community in McCabe's efforts to remove Speedy. A parent group called COPE was formed and became the driving force behind Small Tree's dissident traditional Navajo leaders.

Through these experiences I gained much insight into the Navajo culture. The full range of my knowledge and participation was limited to my ethnic diversity, my inability to speak Navajo, and my role as Principal.

In addition to the academic search for understanding the process by which Navajo children become literate this study has a practical aspect—the potential for improving what we do in the schools to develop literacy. As a former teacher and in my role as Principal, this was an important consideration to me.

Ethnographers had long claimed that of all approaches to research, naturalistic inquiry thoroughly held the best promise of being democratic in keeping the ownership of research findings in the hands of those most directly involved in the work of making schools effective (Gilmore and Smith, 1982, p. 13).
CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

Introduction

During my field research efforts there were times when I had to deviate from my planned protocols for interviewing and observing my sample population. There is much I can say as to the reasons for this occurring. Because a lot of the "gear switching" was due to my dual role as principal and ethnographer I think it is important to discuss these changes where they reflect an impact on this study.

Therefore, throughout this Chapter I will elaborate on the research procedures in two ways: Proposed Methodology and Methodological Changes. Methodological changes will reflect changes that occurred during the actual collection procedures. If no changes occurred for the protocols, no descriptions for change will be discussed.

This is a very unique study. In the hope that others will undertake a similar research path I want to leave no area of concern to the imagination. It is critical that future ethnographers in a Native American culture are cognizant of their limitations as well as the richness of the experience they will be embarking upon. I believe this justifies my discussion of methodological changes.

Student Interviews

Proposed Methodology

My initial time line indicated that I was to begin my student interviews in October. I had planned to conduct
them in my office during the reading and language arts block. The interview protocol was to be a replication of the one Dr. David Hartle-Schutte administered at Fort Defiance Elementary School. Each child was going to be allotted forty-five minutes to answer the questions on the instruments.

Methodological Changes

I walked into Mrs. Todechine’s class on October 12, 1991. I was going to talk to the students about my study and engage them in its implementation by allowing them to make changes to my design if they felt it was needed. Although this may sound unusual, I had just been appointed Interim Principal and I felt the children need to be reassured that I was not out to exploit them in anyway.

A powerful discussion ensued about the circumstances surrounding my controversial appointment.

P. L.: Ms. K., are you a spy for Speedy Gonzales?
H.B.: Did you come here to help fire Mr. Tso?
T.G.: Why didn’t your son come with you to Small Tree?

This discussion lasted the entire hour. That night I wrote in my journal these words: Back to square one. I realized that these children knew nothing about me. Therefore, I needed to spend some time in the two sixth grade classrooms to establish a rapport with them.

For the next three weeks I came to Mrs. Todechine and Mr. Clayton’s classroom to read to the children, talk about
Louisiana and show them pictures of my home and family. As a result the two teachers had the students write a story about me. The writing samples indicated that they were feeling more comfortable with me and that I was no longer a threat to them.

After discussing the samples with Mr. Clayton and Mrs. Todechine, a decision was made to begin the interviews in November. A discussion of those interview findings will be presented in Chapter V.

Key Informants
Proposed Methodology

When I returned from my interview with the Small Tree School District in August of 1991, I had decided that my key informants would be the school principal and the school social worker. The principal was a Navajo who had lived in the community all his life. He was a Road man for the Native American Church and a Chapter House Officer. We immediately hit it off. I remember the Saturday morning that I left from my interview. Mr. Tso bid me goodbye and said, "I feel like I’ve known you all my life." This encouraged and excited me because I could gain entree to the community and work with the gatekeepers (school board) to gather my data.

Mae Martin, the social worker, was on the interview committee that recommended me to the school board for the assistant principal’s position. She was personable,
enthusiastic about the students, and extremely knowledgeable about Small Tree politics. Although she lived in Small Tree during the week, her home was in Flagstaff with her Navajo husband who was an attorney and city councilman there.

Mae was an activist who had several years before been involved in a demonstration against the Hopi invasion of the Navajo Low Mountain grazing lands. During this dispute she had struck a prominent tribal official in the face and had been arrested in Window Rock for assault and battery. The Small Tree community adored and feared her. They would tell her things they wouldn’t tell their families. I thought she would be a perfect key informant.

Methodological Changes

When Mr. Tso was placed on administrative leave in October, our relationship changed. No longer were we able to maintain the esprit de corps that we had established in August. Mr. Tso was forbidden to set foot upon the school grounds. He was not allowed to come to any school functions so communication with him was made even more difficult. The only avenue I had was through Gene Hasgood who was Mr. Tso’s adopted son and the school’s attendance clerk. Eventually, this three way system of relaying information got too convoluted and Mr. Tso and I became estranged from each other.
Mae Martin became a vocal advocate for Mr. Tso. By early September it became clear to me that this allegiance would not be beneficial to the role of a key informant. Although she was quite friendly during my interview, circumstances had caused a change in our relationship. By the end of April Mae and I were unable to communicate in a professional manner. Because of this Mae was eventually issued a letter of administrative reprimand which indicated a temporary suspension of her duties. A subsequent termination of employment followed this letter in early May.

My present key informants tell me that as of September, 1992 both Mr. Tso and Mae are active in COPE. Though they both remain unemployed they can be seen in Small Tree passing out copies of the underground newspaper COPE prints fighting to banish Speedy Gonzales from the Navajo reservation. Sherry says they are like Chindi (ghosts of the dead) who cannot find a peaceful place to rest from past lives and experiences. They are, she says, to be shunned and pitied.

**Parent Interviews**

**Proposed Methodology**

My first proposal for conducting parent interviews was developed to encourage the parents of my Navajo students to come to the school. I envisioned the three of us sitting in the conference room chatting comfortably about their
child's literacy beginnings. We would be eating fry bread and sipping lemonade made by Dorothy Begay, the cafeteria manager.

All my effective school research had pointed to parental involvement as a powerful correlate to school success. I wanted to be a change agent as well as an ethnographer. What better way than to increase parent participation in school activities?

Methodological Changes

This idea was a miserable failure. In October it began to snow and did not actually stop until May. From December to March I called off school fifteen times. This does not include Christmas and tribal holidays.

Take into account also, that none of these parents had cars. Sheldon Zah's father lived in Whippoorwill which was forty miles from Small Tree. He was so isolated that people in the community thought he had died last winter.

Because of the weather and lack of communication technology I was forced to rethink my methodology for gathering parent data. This, however, turned out to be a blessing.

Early in November I traveled to each of the parents's hogan by school bus. This familiarized me with the area and gave me further insight into how my children lived outside of school. I was struck by the sheer beauty and
primitiveness of their living accommodations. More will be told about this revelation in Chapter V and VI.

The parents of the students who had phones and lived closer were also difficult to coerce to come to school. Only one parent, Katherine, who was a teacher at the school indicated comfort at my initial school-based interviews.

These factors caused me to revamp my procedure and travel to the hogans when necessary and call parents when all else failed. As I indicated in Chapter III my return rate for parental consent forms was not high -- fifteen out of twenty. I was extremely disappointed with this return, but forged on in hopes that this would be the worst snag I would encounter in my procedures. A summary of these proceedings will be presented in Chapter V.

Principal’s Interview

Proposed Methodology

Originally, I had planned to interview Mr. Tso, the principal of Small Tree School when I was hired, several times throughout the year. I was going to conduct an oral history interview as well as principal interview. In the oral history interview my goal was to learn more about the clan system and how it influenced a Navajo child educationally and socially. I never got the opportunity to do this.
Methodological Changes

When my alternative plan to interview Mr. Goldtooth evolved, he was not as receptive to sharing his family background as Mr. Tso had been. I interviewed him only once, asking the same questions that I had asked the teachers. As I said in Chapter III, he was though very helpful in providing information about students that teachers did not know.

For instance, Terena Gee’s mother was a white woman. She was never seen in Small Tree, but would travel with her husband to Gallup or Four Corners where he sold his silver jewelry. Terena was proud of her Anglo heritage, but had once been ostracized by most of her Navajo peers because of it. Mr. Goldtooth’s first wife had been white and he too had suffered racial discrimination.

When he was Principal of Small Tree School, Mr. Goldtooth has spent a lot of time counseling the Navajo students about bias and prejudice toward Anglos. Most of my sixth grade research group had heard these talks. Two years later they were more accepting of Terena and of me. I believe Mr. Goldtooth’s guidance had much to do with this.

I did have the opportunity to talk to Mr. James Biggs, the principal of Small Tree School in 1990-91. This informal discussion took place during Mr. Tso’s trial in early February. Mr. Biggs had been called to testify
against Speedy Gonzales who had been the school's bilingual director at that time.

Mr. Biggs was brutally honest about his experience as Principal. He bitterly talked about the teacher's stone-walling his attempts at reform and the school board's efforts to fire him. He was clearly resentful and hurt by these actions.

In retrospect I should not feel too bad about not being able to become as enculturated as I would have like to have been. Being a woman may have both helped and hindered my research goals. It enhanced, however, my educational ones.

**Student Observations**

**Proposed Methodology**

I walked into Mr. Clayton's room on the afternoon of October 31st to begin my student observations. Notebook and pen in hand I began to record student/teacher behaviors. Suddenly I was aware of a death-like stillness in the otherwise noisy room. Harold Begay pointed to the window and I turned to look at the object of such silence.

What I saw terrified me. Outside the building there was a circle of men all wearing clothskin breeches and painted with bright war-like colors. They wore masks and carried whips. I could hear them chanting a familiar tune, one that I had heard on the local Navajo station. It was snowing profusely and the day was graying with a vengeance.
My first thought was to walk as quickly as I could to my office, call the police in Chinle, and alert the school that we were under emergency procedures (found in the teacher's handbook). Before I could leave the room Tilford Tsosie stood up and offered to explain what was happening outside. I agreed, realizing that the children were not half as shaken as I was with this ghostly spectacle of warriors. Tilford's explanation follows:

Ms. K__________, those are yei-bei-chei warriors. They represent Spirit Gods who are fierce and powerful. It is a secret society and only brave and smart people can become a member. Every Halloween they come to the school. We are supposed to offer money to them so they can eat and continue to thrive. If we don't, they'll come in our rooms and whip us.

But what if a child doesn't have any money, I thought. And what if someone gets hurt or bruised by a whip? Will the parents sue the school? I put these questions aside and dismissed school so the children could "feed the yei-bei-cheis."

Let me say that it is an event I will never forget. I was not allowed to take pictures, but the visual images are indelibly sketched on my mind. There was an artistic order to this ritual that both thrilled and scared me. It was the first time that I knew I was witnessing a centuries-old Native American custom. I felt very blessed.

Methodological Changes

As for my student observations, I continued to be interrupted throughout the year. When this occurred, I
would confer with my research team and reschedule. As a result I actually observed my target students more than I had anticipated. I also involved the two sixth grade teachers more actively in this process which led to more enthusiasm on their part for the study itself.

Conclusion

The Navajos believe that we are in a constant state of evolution. They are not bound by time and have little use for our westernized systems of institutional organization. I wanted to give you a sense of this belief in this chapter. Ethnographers are by nature, I think, highly adaptable beings. It is why we record so eloquently and fervently the holistic environment we are researching. It is one of the reasons I am so grateful to those individuals who believed in me and encouraged me to go forward with this study. It was the hallmark of my experience—my own ability to change and grow along with the Navajo community. The remainder of these chapters are a record of those mutual changes.
CHAPTER VI
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Procedures

The analysis of data from the previous sources began midway through the data collection process. This was done in order to begin to discover patterns in the data, as well as to improve data collection procedures. For each identified successful and unsuccessful reader and writer, information was gathered through student interviews, school records, parents interviews, teacher interviews and student observations.

Although parent interviews were begun prior to completing all student interviews, the sequence of data gathering and preliminary data analysis for each individual was the same.

(1) individual identification of students by classroom teacher (September, October, 1991)
(2) preliminary search of school records (September, 1991)
(3) individual evaluation of the students, reading (October, November, 1991)
(4) individual student interviews/observations (October, 1991 - April, 1992)
(5) review of written notes and audio recording of student interview (November, 1991 - April, 1992)
(6) thorough search of school records (January, 1992 - July, 1992)

(7) parent interviews (November, 1991 - May, 1992)

(8) review of written notes and audio recording of parent interviews (January, 1992 - May, 1992)

(9) follow-up teacher interviews (March, 1992)

(10) review of written notes of teacher interviews (May, 1992)

(11) Administrative Assistant and Chapter House President interviews (March, 1992)

(12) review of written notes of Administrative Assistant and Chapter House President interviews (June, 1992)

A research journal was kept during the entire research project (September, 1991 - June, 1992) to begin to note patterns in the data, to note questions raised by the data, to reflect on the research procedures, and to provide a record of my thought processes and decision making. If information was missing at any stage of the above sequence, I would return to an earlier stage of data gathering and analysis, or specifically search for that data through subsequent sources.

Content Analysis

After reviewing my field notes, transcripts and journal I began to sort the data I had accumulated into
categories. Using the method described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983). I assigned the major categories a number. (See Appendix P.) My goal was to look for overlapping themes so that topics could be combined or eliminated. Hammersley and Atkinson emphasized that the categories should encompass topics for which the ethnographer has the most substantiation as well as topics he or she wants to explore. My topics included: (a) cultural dissonance, (b) literacy characteristics of unsuccessful readers and writers, (c) literacy characteristics of successful readers and writers, (d) home influences on learning, (e) sociocultural issues in Small Tree, and (f) whole-language strategies and their impact on literacy behaviors in Small Tree.

These topics represented the ones that I wanted to explore and the ones that received the most substantiation when I checked the data for emerging patterns. I found this strategy to be extremely helpful because it provided the organizational structure I needed to begin looking for commonalities in the findings.

After I coded the topics I synthesized the data and developed a domain analysis. James Spradley discusses the development of a domain analysis as part of the developmental research sequence model (p. 65). (See Appendix Q.) Grand tour observations provided me with
information about the general social setting. I used the nine major dimensions of a social situation developed by Spradley (p. 57) to identify the key elements of the observations.
Key Elements of the Environment

(1) Space: Small Tree School and Small Tree Community

(2) Actors: Teachers, administrators, parents, students

(3) Activity: Staging a protest

(4) Object: Policies, TV media, protestors

(5) Act: Three day "uprising" -- underground newsletter

(6) Event: The goal is to get rid of the superintendent

(7) Time: A year-long process

(8) Goal: Navajo control of school

(9) Feeling: Anger and hostility
I used the elements on the preceding page to develop nine grand tour questions which served as benchmarks to note major events that occurred throughout the year. For example: I asked myself:

(1) "What were the events that led to the walk-out in October?"

(2) "Why do the parents hate the superintendent so much?"

(3) "Who are the "movers and shakers" within the school setting? Are they part of the militant parent group? Are they primarily Navajo?"

It became evident to me that the research findings from this study would be greatly impacted by the sociocultural events taking place in this rural community. This premise will be substantiated in this and forthcoming chapters.

**Analysis of Student and Parent Interviews**

Data from each student and parent interview were reviewed a minimum of five times.

(1) Information gathered from each parent interview was orally summarized prior to leaving the interview, and student responses were paraphrased as lead-ins to follow-up questions. This gave the participants an opportunity to correct or clarify what was written. This also gave me an opportunity to pursue further questions on
statements that differed significantly from information gathered from other sources.

(2) Written notes of the interviews and written field notes of observations within the families' homes were read twice prior to formal analysis of the data.

(3) Audio tape recordings were reviewed at least two complete times, and selected portions were reviewed more frequently, comparing the recordings to written notes. Additions and corrections were made, as necessary, to the written notes.

(4) Each type of interview was reviewed as a group, searching for commonalities and patterns. Each student interview was read and compared to the other student interviews and each parent interview was read and compared to the other parent interviews. Information was tabulated in charts and summarized.

(5) All information sources for each individual were reviewed as a whole. Data from school records and all of the interviews were reviewed to provide a more complete picture of each students' literacy development. For students selected for the case studies reported in Chapter VI, these data were reviewed numerous additional times.
As patterns began to emerge through the analysis of data, sources were checked again to confirm or disconfirm the patterns. This procedure can best be described as recursive. The analysis of the data occurred during the gathering of data. Patterns emerged that led back to further analysis of the data, and influenced gathering of data, which in turn led to observing additional patterns, and led to further analysis of the data. (This was particularly true with the case studies.) In the case of Percy he did not fit with the patterns of literacy development of any of the other students. This nonconformity led to a rereading and reanalysis of the data concerning Percy and other students. It also led to further data gathering since his case seemed to raise more questions that it answered. Additional teachers who had more contact with Percy were interviewed, and the substance abuse counselors were interviewed as well.

Validity

Qualitative researchers emphasize validity in their research (Belto, Peltier, 1980). When the researcher is immersed, as a participant observer, in the day-to-day events of the community our view becomes a humanistic one. As Breeyn (1966) notes the qualitative researcher views things as though they were happening for the first time. Nothing is taken for granted. Everything is a subject desiring of inquiry.

The coding procedures, observations, and interviews that I used served to triangulate my data findings and my
views. Cross checks were used to verify the accuracy of the information reported by my two key informants. As I have already stated, one informant was more consistent with her accounts than the other. I was not looking for truth per se, but rather for perspectives. I wanted to understand how Sherry and Allyson viewed themselves as Navajos in a changing environment. Their struggles to make sense of a cultural milieu were critical to shaping my own perceptions and finally conclusions to the literacy behaviors of my target students.

The study of human behavior is time consuming, intellectually fatiguing and depends for its success upon the ability of the investigator. . . Quantitative measurements are quantitatively accurate; qualitative evaluations are always subject to the errors of human judgment. Yet it would seem far more worthwhile to make a shrewd guess regarding that which is essential than to accurately measure that which is irrelevant (LaPiere, R. T. Attitudes and Actions: Social Forces, 13, 230-237, 1934-1935).

I would not have been as successful as I was in gaining access to information or organizations without the support of Sherry and Allyson. One of the ironies of observing organizations is that once researchers have obtained access from gatekeepers, they typically must disassociate from them (Van Maanen, 1982, pp. 108-109). This became quite obvious to me after the teacher walk-out in September. I had to distance myself from the Superintendent and the school board (gatekeepers) in order to continue my research role. Thus, again, my study is a
reflection of collaboration between myself, my key informants, and my research team.

Cultural Dissonance

This was the most prevailing theme that the data yielded. The conflicts that existed were primarily ethnic-based. As I have stated before in this study, Small Tree is a traditional bastion of Navajo culture and values. The "intrusion" of a Hispanic Superintendent and an Anglo-white woman principal accentuated the already existing struggles to maintain these values.

Throughout the year there were a great many attempts to "control uprisings" by the Superintendent. In analyzing his background I believe these maneuvers were partly a reflection of Speedy's prison mentality. Speedy had spent the majority of his job-related experiences as an assistant to a warden in a federal prison in Utah. When a prisoner "got out of line" he was punished and isolated. As Speedy once told me, "There's no excuse for insubordination" (Gonzales, October 22, 1992).

Consequently, Speedy viewed himself as someone who was going to "clean up the reservation." He demanded complete loyalty and would not tolerate "dissidents." As a result I was forced to place many teachers on what he called house arrest. This consisted of leave without pay for the person in question. Along with the absence of financial support, the staff member was confined to his house during working
hours. He or she was not to set foot near the school facilities for any reason nor were they to have any contact with students or teachers.

House arrests could last from one week to the entire year. There was nothing in the school policy that defined this kind of procedure. In my observation of the length and severity of this kind of "sentencing," punishment was extolled at the whim of the Superintendent. For the most part, staff members who were placed on house arrest contacted lawyers and initiated law suits against the District. A recent conversation with Sherry (a key informant) revealed that twenty-two lawsuits were now pending from last year's actions.

I truly believe that I was a key player in this cultural dissonance by association with the Superintendent only. While being an Anglo woman was an issue, I was working through it when Mr. Tso was placed on administrative leave. After that I had no choice but to work alongside the Superintendent. Even though I vehemently disagreed with his strong arm tactics, I could not align myself with those against him. Thus it was assumed by the community that I was a staunch supporter.

**Literacy Characteristics of Unsuccessful Readers and Writers**

Although I was investigating literacy patterns for both successful and unsuccessful readers and writers, the majority of my data reflected the characteristics of
unsuccessful readers and writers. Alcoholism, apathy, cults and ditching were themes that surfaced in interactions with students, parents, teachers and other significant others of the research group.

Out of the twenty students of my sample population only two indicated they had never gotten drunk. Most of the students were familiar with the local bootlegger, Juicy Lucy. They knew where she lived and how much she charged for a six pack of beer ($10.00). Their attitude toward drinking was noncommittal. Most of the students regarded binge drinking as "just a way of life in Small Tree." When the welfare checks came in, ones parents would travel to Chinle to buy groceries and then to Juicy Lucy's to buy booze. If anyone found this abnormal, I was hard-pressed to find them in Small Tree.

Apathy was another overriding issue in the study of my research group. Even in the case of a successful reader and writer (Elana), parents seemed unconcerned about the source of their child's positive academic accomplishments. Most of the Navajo Community felt that a traditional Anglo education would not be enough to carry their child through life. The closer the school aligned itself with Navajo culture, the more supportive the parents became.

I was unaware of the effect Satanic cults had on children in Small Tree. I had read about Devil worship in large metropolitan cities. In my teaching experiences at
an inner city school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, I had encountered gangs and Devil worship. Nothing prepared me, however, for the extent to which these Navajo children took this phenomena.

It was quite noticeable in relation to the amount of ditching that occurred in the upper grades. Ditching is a native term for cutting class. During the early fall and late spring, ditching was rampant among the middle school students. It was not until the middle of the year that I realized the relationship between high absenteeism and cults.

It was brought to my attention by a boy I'll call one-eyed Joe Thompson. One-eyed Joe had been a student at Small Tree until 1989. Around the middle of that year he vanished from sight. As it was told to me, no one much cared because Joe was such a trouble-maker.

He surfaced again in November, 1991, and threw the teachers who had taught him into a panic. They insisted that I contact the Chinle police because Joe was definitely going to cause trouble. I checked his school records and agreed with my staff. It took two months, but the Navajo police came to the school and took our statements. A restraining order was issued against Joe to keep him away from campus. This, however, did little good.

Toward the end of January a hysterical teacher called my house around 1:00 a.m. to tell me that Joe had stolen
her finest stallion from the compound. She knew it was Joe because he had left his autograph, a bloody tomahawk.

The next morning the Navajo police found Joe and the horse in a sandy gulch in the Low Mountain area. Joe had plans to sacrifice the horse in a Satanic ritual that would be held in a few days.

I learned through Joe that the teenagers in Small Tree partook in cult worship to establish a sense of identity. Joe had gotten the nickname of One-eyed Joe because he had shot himself through the left eye to show his commitment to the cause. He fit the typical profile of an at-risk student—low self-esteem, low socio-economic status, abusive parents and severe emotional disorders.

I could not help but ache for One-eyed Joe. He was the cruel victim of the system—one of the many lost children that become entangled in the red tape of educational bureaucracy. I regret that it was too late for me to save One-eyed Joe. Through him I gleaned a greater insight into the seriousness of the social-cultural problems that pervade Small Tree.

**Literacy Characteristics of Successful Readers and Writers**

Successful readers and writers were those students who had mastered both English and Navajo. They had grown up in a literate household surrounded by reading materials. Their parents valued learning and encouraged their children to go to school.
Another characteristic of these students was their willingness to continue to practice the traditional Navajo ceremonies. They were devoted to their elders, especially their grandmothers. They had a healthy sense of balance in what they believed would be important in their adulthood as far as acculturation in a westernized society. They were reverent and reflective in their conversations about spiritual beliefs.

Home Influences on Learning

The most prominent home influence on the Navajo students from my study was the scaffolding that occurred between the parent and the young child. The students with the most positive and vivid memories of each literacy beginnings remember being read to and hearing stories told to them.

This supports the findings of Dr. David Hartle-Schutte who reported that fifteen of his sample group were children of parents that read to them in their homes (Schutte, p. 212). Like Hartle-Schutte my students remember reading the Bible and newspapers as small children. They were also quick to report positive experiences with younger and older siblings in the family. In the case of the successful readers and writers, students wrote letters and journals at an early age. They also reported writing grocery menus for their grandparents who couldn't speak or write in English.
Sociocultural Issues

This goes hand in hand with the major area that emerged from my research—cultural dissonance. Fear and isolation were two characteristics that exemplified the state of affairs in Small Tree last year.

Fear is a prevalent emotion when someone's value system is being assaulted. It is natural to want to protect what is comfortable and familiar. Small Tree is on the cusp of a sociocultural revolution. In five years a shopping center will be built in this community. It will consist of a Basha's grocery store, a discount clothing outlet, and possibly a Burger King. While one would think this boost to a poor economy would be welcomed with open arms, the reverse is the case. The traditional elders see this encroachment as another vehicle to erode the Navajo culture. More businesses mean more Anglos. More Anglos mean less control by the Dine'(Navajo people). Less control spells surrender.

Because Small Tree is so isolated the educational trends that one might take for granted are not known here. As an administrator I spent a great deal of time trying to update my staff on such things as lesson plan designs and alternative discipline strategies. Consultants from the universities and the State Department of Education are frank in their admittance to "doing everything they can to stay away from Small Tree." War stories about their ill
treatment by the staff have circulated throughout the state and have now taken on legendary proportions. Thus a future principal must wear many hats to combat the academic and social isolation that this job entails.

Whole Language Strategies

The strongest indication of success in the whole language program is the dedication and vision of the bilingual director. Daisy Kiyanni is a member of the community. She has been a teacher for seventeen years and Bilingual Director for two years. Although she is soft-spoken, Daisy can be strong-willed when it comes to her beliefs about what is best for Navajo children.

It is because of Daisy that our school was recognized for its state bilingual reports and performance outcomes. Last year we successfully tested every K-3 child with the Window Rock Oral Language Exams and the Bilingual Language Syntax Inventory. With the assistance of a Northern Arizona University graduate study a bilingual test was developed to determine the phonetic strengths of students who were having difficulty speaking English.

Data indicate that the success of the whole language program at Small Tree will greatly depend on the continuance of its strong bilingual thrust. More teachers need to be trained in the Navajo language and culture. All teachers should understand the linguistic differences that Navajo children must overcome to be successful English-
speaking communicators. With the help of people like Daisy a significant difference can be made in the lives of children now labeled as "doomed to fail" by conventional standards.

**Student Reading Evaluations and Interviews**

I had not anticipated that the students would have been able to provide much information about their own literacy development. However, most of the students proved to be excellent sources of information when the information from the parent interviews was compared to that of the student interviews. They were able to recall their early reading experiences, report on their families' current reading and writing practices, the types and quantities of reading materials in their homes, and to make judgments about what they thought was important in their becoming good readers.

Nineteen students were interviewed using an open-ended interview format. Each interview lasted between thirty to forty-five minutes. As I indicated in Chapter III my initial time frame was modified to establish a much needed level of comfort in the classroom.

Prior to each interview, I briefly told the individuals that we were trying to find out how students become good readers, and that I would have them read for me and then ask them some questions about what they remembered about learning to read.
As previously stated students were administered an informal reading inventory to determine a reading comprehension level. Students scored from 50% to 90% on the inventory. Because of the wide range of scores no cut-off rate was established that would have eliminated anyone from the study. The research team felt that we had done a thorough job in narrowing our population in the beginning. Also, the stories the students had self-selected covered a wide readability range. Therefore, no further changes were made in the student sample group.

In the following discussion only information from the nineteen selected students is reported unless specifically identified otherwise.

**Student Memories of Learning to Read**

When asked what they remembered about learning how to read nine of the students said they had learned how to read at home. They stated that their mother or grandmother had read to them at an early age. They remember learning stories from the newspaper and the Bible. One student, Matilda, remembers comic book stories being told to her. She said she could not remember the names of the books. The characters, however, were monsters.

Six of the students indicated that they had learned to read at school. Their most favorable memory was with a teacher that had taken the time to help them learn difficult words. When asked if it was hard to learn new
words, the students indicated that it was when they were taught strictly in English. The child that had the most difficulty said that, "I was not used to having to read out loud to someone. It made me stumble over words I really knew" (student 08, November 5, 1991).

Several of the students who learned to read at home commented on how they learned, and what is was like when they were doing reading at school. (Researcher’s questions and comments are preceded by "R:" and enclosed in brackets.)

It was really easy to me at first, in first grade. My mom read to me a lot before and during first grade. I would try to read to her. I read signs a lot when we traveled. Someone told me what the signs said, and usually I’d see them ahead and then I’d read them (student 06, October 28, 1991).

My older brother taught me how to read. He read to me. I probably learned after starting school in kindergarten. [R: Did you learn how to read in kindergarten?] No, all she told us was to write the ABC’s, she didn’t teach us anything about reading (student 18, November 2, 1991).

It wasn’t easy at first. In kindergarten I tried to learn the English alphabet. In the first grade the teachers wrote sentences on the board and we copied them and read them. My grandmother taught me to read. She gave me easy books to read (student 19, October 8, 1991).

When I was in first grade, my mom tried to teach me how to read by reading books to me and asking a lot of questions. The teachers didn’t teach me in first grade, we just did spelling, (referring to a strictly phonetic approach to first grade). . .not in school, but at home. In second grade it was sort of easy to read because I already knew a lot of words (student 02, November 20, 1992).
Even one child who claimed she learned to read at school later gave credit to her family.

In second grade we used to read for 10 minutes. First we used to have to do workbooks and then she'd call on us to do sounding out. The teacher got mad at us, sometimes we'd be talking because we didn't know what to do. I didn't like to read then. I had trouble then. Whenever I tried to read, I had trouble sounding out so I'd just stop. [R: What changed things?] My family helped me (student 12, November 4, 1991).

Some of the children associated reading strictly with book reading. Four of those that said they did not read until after attending school later responded that they were reading some signs and packages on words on TV prior to attending school. It is not surprising that some children have the attitude that "real reading" is reading only stories or books because it is shared by many teachers. Children are often not given credit for what they already know about the print in their environment, and are put through a "readiness" program in kindergarten or first grade to get them "ready to read" (Harste, Woodward, E. Burke, 1984).

Students remembered reading magazines and comic books more than any other type of materials. The following comments were made when I asked them the question, "Do you have things in your home to read?"

I like to read books about teenagers. My sister reads them, too (student 03, November 2, 1992).
I like to read magazines about other places. Sometimes I dream I'm there (student 01, November 15, 1992).

My brother and sister bring me comic books from Phoenix. My parents can't read though (student 11, October 31, 1992).

I like to read Tony Hillerman books. I like to read nonfiction books, too. My favorite author is Beverly Cleary. Her books are interesting (student 13, November 1, 1992).

Student Memories of Learning to Write

Students wrote at an early age for different reasons and for a wide variety of audiences. Five of the students interviewed wrote letters to their family members who lived in Phoenix, Flagstaff or another part of the reservation. Two of the students wrote poems. One student said she wrote "stories her grandmother told her so she wouldn't forget them when she grew up (student 10, October 5, 1992).

When asked about their writing experiences at school, the students had this to say:

In first grade I learned how to write my name. We wrote our numbers and colors. I like writing in my school notebook (student 06, October 1, 1991).

Our teacher wrote a sentence on the board. We copied it down and read it back to her. I wrote a story about my horse (student 03, November 3, 1991).

The writing experiences of the students at home reflected positively on their family dynamics.

I read books and write about them. I draw pictures too. I make books and give them to my little sister (student 08, November 25, 1991).
I write letters to my cousins (student 02, November 5, 1991).

My nephew. He is five years old. He asks me to help him with writing (student 10, November 12, 1992).

The students who were considered to be unsuccessful writers did no writing at home except what was needed to complete their homework. When I asked them how they felt about writing the majority of the students equated it with schoolwork or something they were forced to do. One student said, "I used to like to write stories but no one liked them so I quit."

The role of social interaction played a major part in the development of successful readers and writers. The cognitive psychologists stress the importance of the learner who acts on the environment to construct meaning. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning by creating situations in which individuals could construct concepts and build schemata.

In the case of the student who were reading and writing before they entered school, support and encouragement from older or younger brothers and sisters was apparent in the interviews. Vygotsky stressed the importance of this instructional scaffolding in his theory of the "zone of proximal development." He defined this zone as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem
solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Children first develop concepts by talking to adults or more capable peers as they solve a problem. Later, they can solve the same problem by themselves because they are able to internalize the concepts needed for the solution. What they could at first only do with the help of others, they can now do alone, but they needed that earlier social interaction to build the inner resources.

Second language educators also believe that social interaction is critical for effective language learning. In two of their four principles of language development, Hudelson and Rigg (1986) refer to the importance of the social aspects of learning:

1. People develop their second language when they feel good about themselves and about their relationships with those around them in the second language setting.

2. Language develops when the language learner focuses on accomplishing something together with others rather than focusing on the language. So group activities...are ideal (p. 117).

In a similar way, Rigg and Allen (1988) comment, "Learning a language means learning to do the things you want to do with the people who speak that language" (p. viii). They strongly emphasize the importance of working
with others to learn language. These educators believe that other people form a crucial element of the context necessary for language development.

School Records

Information on many of the fathers that have frequently been associated with school success and school failure is available through the school records. Standardized test scores, report card grades, promotion and retention, attendance records, home language information, and some socioeconomic data are recorded on various forms. Also available are the students' ages, addresses, number of siblings, tribal membership, whether or not the child attended preschool, and (for some) the parents' education level.

Some of this information was used to select students for inclusion in this study, and therefore is the same for all students. For instance, all of the students are at least three-quarters Navajo and four quarters Native American. All have attended Small Tree Public School at least four years. Two of the students were thirteen years old at the time of their interviews, one turned fourteen during the following summer, and the remaining sixteen students were twelve years old at the time of their interviews.

Some information was out of date, such as family size and number of siblings. Based upon the parent and student
interviews, the number of children in the students' families (including the students) ranged from 2 to 7, with an average of 3. Only child successful readers were eliminated by selecting successful readers with at least one preschool age sibling. Seven of the identified students were the oldest child, and, of course, none was the youngest.

Seven of the children live in homes with both natural parents, three live with their mother and stepfather, four live in single parent homes, and five live with a maternal grandmother. One child's mother died within the previous year, and another child's father left the family the previous year.

Only two families could be considered exclusively English speaking, where all conversation takes place in English, and no one in the home speaks any Navajo. In six other homes, English is the dominant language, but there is some Navajo used in the home (particularly when grandparents visit). Four homes could be considered essentially bilingual with the older family members tending to use more Navajo, and the younger ones, English. Two families are Navajo dominant, but with a fair amount of English also used. Only one home could be considered as predominantly Navajo speaking with little English spoken. This child is now living with an older sister where much more English is spoken.
Seven of the ten successful readers are girls, only four are boys. Does this mean that Navajo girls are more successful than Navajo boys? Probably not. In the initial identification process, 65% of the successful readers identified by teachers were girls. Yet, 91% of the students scoring above the 55th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) who were not identified by teachers were boys. Is there something about successful male readers that make them more difficult for teachers to identify, or do boys generally perform better on standardized tests than equivalent girl readers? If one assumes the former and adds on those students scoring above the 55th percentile, then the success rate for the girls decrease to 57% compared to 43% for boys. Similarly, using only standardized test scores to identify successful readers, boys account for 42% of the sixth graders scoring alone the 40th percentile. The final sample was also showed to favor girls because fewer identified both have preschool age siblings.

If, however, Navajo girls are significantly more often successful in reading than Navajo boys, then is the difference due merely to gender, or gender and sociocultural influences? Just in terms of schooling and role models, Small Tree has ten male Navajo teachers while there are twenty-five female Navajo teachers, twenty female Navajo teacher assistants, two female Navajo building
administrators and for female Navajo secretaries. Formal school education, at least in Small Tree, is a female domain for Navajos. This relationship of gender and sociocultural influences will be discussed further in the parent interview section.

The location of the students' homes may at first seem to be a strange variable to consider. However, many factors are interrelated here. More traditional families tend to live in the more rural areas, relying heavily on sheepherding for their livelihood, while town dwellers are generally less traditional and rely upon a wage economy. Workers in a wage economy, particularly in white collar jobs on the Navajo reservation generally have a higher level of formal education. Navajo language is much more predominant in the rural areas than in the towns where English predominates. In general then, the town dwellers are more acculturated than the rural residence.

It is not surprising that the identified successful readers are (with the exception of one somewhat traditional student) town residents. This correlates with data compiled by Robert Rhodes of Northern Arizona University (Rhodes, 1988). The reservation school districts that are essentially all rural have a much lower percentile rank on the ITBS than the reservation districts that have a major town. ("Major town" is a relative term--All of the major towns have populations less than 10,000.) His other study
deals with the success rate of Native Americans taking the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST). Passing this test is a prerequisite to being accepted for enrollment in teacher education programs in Arizona. According to Rhode's figures, Native Americans who live in town or cities off the reservation are passing this exam at rates two to three times more frequently than Native Americans living on the reservation. These significant differences do not show up for the other racial groups.

However, just living in the town of Small Tree certainly does not guarantee uniformly high ITBS reading scores, even for the identified successful readers. These student's percentile ranks ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 91. The range for the entire school was from 1 to 91, and the highest percentile rank for a student who was not identified as a successful reader was 74. Most of the identified successful students did score above the national mean, but this should not be a sole determinant in selecting successful readers in this school.

Analysis of Parent Interviews

For a more complete understanding of the process of these successful readers becoming literate, it is necessary to either conduct a longitudinal study within different families or to gather information from people involved in this development. A great deal of the information thus far points to the home environment as the key to understanding
how these children developed into readers. The focus of this study now shifts to the important people in this home environment.

**Ethical Considerations in Research Design**

Longitudinal studies within the home are extremely invasive, particularly if done by an outsider. A frequently told joke illustrates the fact that Navajos are one of the most frequently studied ethnic groups in the United States. What is the definition of the Navajos extended family? The nuclear family plus grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and an anthropologist. The desire to know and discover must be balanced by a respect for the rights of privacy of the individuals involved in the study. It is also likely that a participant observer in the home could certainly change the environment being studied, just through the questions asked and the interest shown in some activities in preference to others. It would be extremely difficult and arguably unethical to withhold information on literacy development from participating families. Sharing that knowledge would also have the potential to influence the literacy behaviors of the families being studied. For these reasons, I decided to gather information from the students and their families primarily through interviews.

The student and parent interviews were constructed to have some overlap, to enable confirmation of data from
different sources. The parent interviews were also designed to go beyond the student interview that focused primarily on who and what were involved in the students' literacy development, and to include the how and why of their literacy development. With the inclusion of younger siblings in the study parents were able to look at both past and present literacy practices within their families. Denny Taylor (1983) found that there were many implicit linkages within the families she studied between the past and the present either through a conservation of past practices or a reaction to past experiences. In order to understand the literacy development of these successful sixth grade readers, I felt that it was necessary not only to find out about their early literacy experiences, but to ask the parents to reflect upon their own experiences with literacy and school.

Parent Interview Procedures

As with the teacher, administrative assistant and student interviews, the parent interviews were open ended. Nine of the interviews were in the student's homes, one in my home, and four shortened interviews were done by phone. For five students I was able to interview both parents, but the other nine interviews were with the mothers only. The findings reported here are based primarily on the ten complete interviews. The full length interviews lasted between 50 and 130 minutes with most taking about 90
minutes. All interviews were audio tape recorded as a supplement to my written notes. At the end of each interview, I orally summarized each parent response, and asked for corrections and clarifications from the parents. These summaries and responses were also tape recorded. These recordings were later reviewed to verify and expand my written notes. Immediately following each home interview, I also wrote notes of my observations of the home environment, and noted the types of literacy materials available.

One interview was conducted in Navajo, through a bilingual teacher who served as interpreter. This interview was with the great aunt of a student whose mother had died the previous year. In Navajo tradition aunts are nearly equivalent to natural mothers and great aunts are considered grandmothers. In any references to parent interviews, this "grandmother" and two aunts were the persons interviewed for this child. At least one natural parent of all of the other students was interviewed.

All the other interviews were conducted in English. Nearly all these parents were very fluent in English, although one mother who was bilingual had a very strong Navajo influence on her English. Her English was adequate, but she would have been more comfortable speaking in Navajo, and would have probably given more complete answers. All of the parents were very cordial and
cooperative during the interviews, and appeared to be interested in their child and the questions I was asking.

The parents seemed to be aware of their children's reading abilities. When asked how they thought their child was doing in reading, two parents said they thought that their sons were just doing "ok." But once they got my note identifying their child as a successful reader and requesting their participation in the study, they began paying more attention to their children's reading and were surprised at how well they were doing. All the others indicated that their child was doing either "very good" or "pretty good."

Parents Reading to Their Children

Verifying what their children had said, nine of the parents stated that they had read to their child, and that this was the most important thing in their learning to read. Two mothers said they never really read to their children. The grandmother of Percy stated that his mother had not read to him much when he was young. There was great variability in the quantity and frequency of reading to children, however, one mother read to her daughter prenatally and continued to age seven, often up to three times per day, while other parents read infrequently and only after their child had started school.

When she was small, I read lots of stories to her. That's how she became a good reader (parent 12, January 3, 1992).
Before she started going to school, I did a lot of reading to her. I read to her. I showed her pictures, and I pointed out things to her. She could pick out words in familiar books before kindergarten (parent 05, December 15, 1991).

Her father usually read to her. He started more in third grade (parent 13, January 8, 1992).

We never really read to ______. I kind of went over what they were doing at school (parent 03, February 12, 1992).

When asked why they decided to read to their children, there were a variety of answers. Most had not been told to read to their children, but they thought it just made sense, and would make reading easier for their children. One mother said that her church group really stressed reading to their children and teaching them when they're young. Still others read to their own children because they remember their mothers or fathers reading to them when they were young.

While none stressed a particular technique, four mothers said that they tried to make the reading interesting by adding drama and different voices to the characters. They believed that this got their children more interested in reading.

Sometimes, if it's bedtime, I read really fast to get it over with, but I usually try to read with a lot of expression. It attracts them to reading. I can't really do it with other people watching, though (parent 05, February 9, 1992).
Eleven parents believed that two other factors were also very important in their children learning to read: praise and encouragement.

His aunt that he had been staying with for the past year really talked with him and told him how important school is (parent 02, January 10, 1992).

Give them lots of encouragement and love, check on how they're doing. Help them along with the positive approach, not negative (parent 11, January 8, 1992).

The child's initiative was also identified as being important in his learning how to read. Two of the parents gave the children credit for starting the whole process. The children showed interest in figuring out printed language, and the parents followed up by answering questions and pointing out signs or words on TV before the children asked. When they read to their children, the children would point to pictures and name them. They also began turning the pages and selecting books on their own.

Most of the parents also let the children choose what book they wanted to hear, and often let them choose books for purchase. Parents shared different strategies when they were faced with the same selection over and over again.

Sometimes I sent her around to her dad or the others (older brothers) to read to them, but a lot of times, they'd send them on and they'd end up back with us (parent 16, December 3, 1991).
If I had an appointment at the hospital, I would just take books with us that we hadn't read in a long time. I'd leave those other ones at home (parent 01, January 25, 1992).

He would already have it like memorized, and he would tell me when I made a mistake. I finally just made him read it (parent 02, January 4, 1992).

The Role of the School in Learning to Read

Three parents mentioned that their children went to preschool or day care and felt that these experiences helped them become good readers. However, only two parents specifically mentioned something about the elementary school that helped their child become a successful reader and writer. There were major complaints about the school and some very negative comments. One of the two mentioned "a really strict teacher in fourth grade," and the other two mentioned the Literacy 2000 Program that distributed books to all students. Playing school was actually mentioned twice as often as the elementary school in helping children to improve.

The Role of the Community in Learning How to Read

Eight parents mentioned that they believed the best education their child could receive was the one they would learn from customs in the community clan system. Since these children were entering their teens, many parents indicated that they young men, especially, would be involved in puberty ceremonies. These ceremonies marked the passing of youth into manhood. During the ritual young
men fasted, ate peyote and prayed inside a sweat lodge. After four days they were lead to a secret place and invited into the society of adulthood by medicine men.

I was not told what this initiation entailed, but my previous research review had lead me to believe that it was much like the Sun Dance Ceremony performed by the Kiowa Indians. The Sun Dance Ceremony involved skin piercing, blood letting, and tattooing.

Of these eight parents, three felt that their sons should drop out of school in the ninth grade so that they could concentrate on a craft that would being honor to their clan and community. The crafts most mentioned were silversmithing, farming, and sheepherding and dyeing.

**Television Viewing**

Television was viewed both positively for educational programming and negatively for taking away from homework and reading time. Many of the parents spoke of limiting TV viewing time to a setting specific time to shut off the TV and read or do homework.

On TV there’s some nice stuff. It’s not completely useless. Sometimes they get an idea from a show and follow it up at the library or something (parent 08, February 1, 1992).

The best thing to do is just to turn the TV off and have them sit down and read. They read a lot more when we don’t pay the cable bill and they disconnect it (parent 03, February 4, 1992).
Other Factors in Literacy Development

There were a variety of other factors that parents believed contributed to their children becoming good readers and writers. Educational games, children’s books, word puzzles, the Bible, magazines and personal writing were all mentioned by several parents as important.

Only two of the parents still read to their children, and do it very infrequently. Rather than stories, they read something out of the Gallup Independent or a magazine that they think their child is interested in. The parents stopped reading to their child when they felt they were old enough to read on their own or when domestic responsibilities took precedence.

Each parent reported that their child currently reads a lot either for school, for themselves, or to a younger brother or sister. They also indicated that they had noticed an increase in personal writing since the school had become more involved in the whole language program.

Parent’s Memories of School and Learning to Read

To more fully understand the literate environment in each home, one needs to also look at the parent’s educational experiences, how they reacted to them, and what becoming literate has meant to them. All of the students in this study have attended public schools for at least five years. Their parents experienced all of the different types of school that were available to them at that time.
Ten of the parents attended public schools or a combination of public schools and mission or boarding schools. One mother lived in Washington throughout her childhood and graduated near the top of her public high school class. Three parents spent at least some time in BIA boarding schools, and three spent most of their school years in mission schools. One of the mothers was in the Mormon placement program in Utah for five years.

All but four of these parents in the study were high school graduates. The graduation rate of nearly 90% is substantially higher than the 69% average figures reported by Platero (1986) for Navajo students across the reservation. Three parents have attended one or more years of college of junior college, but none have graduated. Again this level of education is much higher than the reservation average. The women reported much more positive experiences than the men. Only one father admitted to enjoying school and doing quite well. Most of the men indicated negative experiences and in the words of one "just went through the motions" to get through school. Two did report being punished for speaking Navajo and wearing their hair in braids in school.

The Direction for the Child from the Parent's Experiences

Taylor (1983) suggests within the family unit there is either a conservation of the past literacy approach and values, or if there were negative experiences for the
parents, there is often a conscious effort to change. Each of these fathers are bitter about their public school experiences and do not express any desire for their son to complete a high school education as one father put it:

I had an interest in school when I first began, but I wasn’t encouraged so I quit caring. Things haven’t changed in Small Tree. I have told my son to do what he has to do to get by. When he’s fifteen, he can quit (parent 03, February 1, 1992).

Those parents that are concerned have a tendency to push their children too hard. As one mother said:

My daughter wants to become a teacher. I am afraid we can’t afford to send her to college. She’s got to get a scholarship, otherwise, she’ll never get off this reservation (parent 13, February 7, 1992).

Those choices suggested by Taylor (1983) that are faced by parents are also apparent in the literacy choices they are making with their young children. The practices that they see as having been successful with older children, they have continued with the younger children, sometimes beginning earlier. Some successful practices have been abandoned or postponed because of lack of time. Other practices such as reading to their children may have been changed to have the older sibling rather than the parents do the reading.

Common Characteristics of Successful Readers and Writers

Through the parent interviews common characteristics of successful readers and writers became apparent. These are literate homes. Reading and writing are valued and
used within the homes for different purposes. In nearly all of the homes the children were read to, but the frequency and the duration of this reading varied widely. The majority of the parents reported giving encouragement, praise and love to their children. And, finally, much of the child's exposure to literacy came through the child's initiation and the parent's positive responses to questions and requests. Each of these children became literate in different ways because each had a different environment and a different set of experiences. A few of these will be explored in more detail in the case studies in the next chapter.

The issue of whether or not Navajo girls are generally more successful in reading and writing than boys was not resolved through these parent interviews. However, I believe that this issue extends well beyond the family unit and must be discussed in relation to the culture as a whole.

**Student Observations: Findings**

Student observations were contextualized and repetitive. Each student was observed for ninety minutes over a period of six months. As I indicated in Chapter IV, the help of the two sixth grade teachers was solicited after it became obvious to me that I could be interrupted to attend to administrative matters during my formal
observation period. The two teachers provided a different perspective to the data I collected.

During the scheduled times I observed the classrooms of the sample student population. I took notes on the behavior that the students exhibited and on the interactions that occurred between the student and the teacher. Although I disciplined myself not to become too focused, I found it difficult not to concentrate on the amount of off-task behavior that occurred in the two classrooms. I am very comfortable using the Virgilio Behavior Classroom Inventory or any other Interaction Analysis Protocol, but I did not want to predetermine any interactions that might occur in these classrooms by imposing operationally defined categories upon this sensitive situation. Neither the teachers nor the students supported this method of recording either. Therefore, I felt my notes were disjointed and rambling. Besides the off-task behavior, I recorded students engaging in meaningful and purposeful dialogue about the subject they were studying. In Ms. Todechine's classroom peer grouping was used quite frequently. The students we had selected to be unsuccessful readers and writers were the most gregarious. I noticed, too, that they were less inhibited about their oral reading than the more "successful" students were.
On one occasion students were working in literate circles on the themes found in the novel *Julie of the Wolves*. Arnold Begay, an unsuccessful reader and writer, volunteered to read his response to the question, "Why was the choice Julie had to make an extremely difficult one for her?" Arnold responded in the following manner.

Julie accepted the wolves as her family. They were all she had ever known. I think a family can be any group of people or animals as long as we love and get love from them. When you find love, it's hard to give it up (student 05, March 2, 1992).

In my opinion this response to literature shows depth and sensitivity. I was shocked and pleased to discover the depth of Arnold's reflections. Here was a child who scored in the lowest percentile in the nation on reading reacting to an on-level text with maturity and understanding. It was just another example of the false picture that standardized test scores can give of a student's actual growth process.

I also observed the more successful students isolating, instead of collaborating, with their peers during free time. Although students like Elana displayed more on task behavior they seemed less enthusiastic about their reading and writing. On two occasions I watched Elana stare blankly out the window while instructions for peer revision strategies were given and time designated for working with a partner was allotted. When I asked her later if she understood the instructions. She replied,
"Yeah, but I get bored working with Matilda. She has a hard time reading the sentences."

Interactions between the teacher and students varied from class to class. In Mr. Clayton's room students kept a polite distance when talking to him. They talked less in their native language and seemed to measure each word before they spoke out loud. In his study of their kinesic analysis of the differing behavior styles of Native American children and white children, Guilmet (1978) concluded that the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of Navajo children were more restrained and less open toward Anglo teachers than Navajo teachers. The Navajo children though cordial never looked the teacher in the eye (Guilmet, p. 197). Instead they pretended to read or write, their faces obscured by the book or tablet they were holding (Guilmet, p. 200). My observations confirmed the information found in Guilmet's two studies.

Basal Reader Grade Level Placement

Grade level placement in the basal reading series at the end of the sixth grade also showed a range from a middle 4th grade level to a high 6th grade level. One of the most voracious readers of independent material had only completed a high fourth grade basal reader by the end of the sixth grade. Unfortunately in the basal reader program, the major portion of assessment is through, end-of-unit tests and workbook paper. Students doing poorly in
these may be required to repeat entire levels or units. Students are also generally required to go through the publisher's sequence of levels, and are only very infrequently allowed to skip levels by taking additional end-of-level tests. Thus, a student making rapid progress is still often locked into the level dictated by the basal reader program.

One possible impact on the student's success in reading is the "ability grouping for reading that is used from 2nd through 5th grades." For instructional purposes, better readers are grouped together, average readers are grouped together, and poor readers are grouped together. Teachers in Durkin's (1984) study attributed some of the successful reader's success to being grouped with other motivated and successful readers. For this study, only four the 19 readers were placed in the highest reading group, five of the readers were in average groups, and ten were in the lowest group. So, not all of the students in this study received the possible benefits of placement in high reading groups.

Administrative Assistant Interview: Findings

The principal, who had earlier been involved in approving this study was not available to me after October. I have already described the events that led to his dismissal. Therefore, I decided to replace him with Mr.
Goldtooth, the administrative assistant who had previously been principal at Small Tree School.

Mr. Goldtooth was a Hopi Indian who had been raised on the reservation in Leupp, Arizona. Leupp is about seventy-five miles east of Small Tree. Mr. Goldtooth had attended BIA schools and public schools in Arizona on the reservation. He had received a master’s degree in Administration from Arizona State University in the early 1980’s. When I met him, Mr. Goldtooth had already been a principal and a supervisor. The community respected him and listened to his advice. For these reasons I felt he could provide information that would at least confirm what I found out from other sources. This did provide to be the case with several students, and with the community in general.

The interview with the administrative assistant were open-ended and focused upon the following three questions:

1. What do you know about ________ that might explain his/her success in reading?
2. Is there anything in particular about the school that you think has helped ______ become a good reader as compared to his/her classmates?
3. What do you know about ________’s family that might help explain his/her reading behavior?

These three questions are modeled after the questions Durkin (1984) posed to the principals and teachers of the
selected students in her study, and are the same questions used with teachers in this study. The first question allows the respondent to decide the most important factor in the student's success. The other two questions ask for a specific focus on the school or the family.

Some of the students the administrative assistant knew little about and he could offer little insight into factors affecting their literacy development. His other comments focused primarily on family involvement, and in one case, the intervention of the school. The fathers in the traditional families were singled out in particular as very influential.

He has a father who practices traditional Navajo traditions, yet still believes that his children should have the best possible education. He is active in school events and even participates as a singer in the school's Native American week activities. The father is very protective and caring of his children (administrative assistant interview, March 2, 1992).

He spends a lot of time at the Chapter House. There are many people in Small Tree who are not able to read and write English. He helps these people to pay their bills or read the news. I believe this spirit of altruism has carried over to Jerrod (administrative assistant interview, March 2, 1992).

For four other families the parents were identified as being very involved with their children. They frequently came to school and were very concerned with how their child was doing.
For the students in general, the administrative assistant focused on the affect the community had on literacy development:

When I was principal here the same thing happened to me that is happening to you. At first I was treated with respect and in some cases, in difference. After a year the parents wanted to run me out of town. The politics here are killing the school and the kids. Nothing can get accomplished at the building level until the community gets the politics out of education. Children know this. How can we expect them to learn when things are always in a turmoil?

Parental involvement and community involvement were given primary credit for imparting the literacy development of students at Small Tree. The school was viewed by the administrative assistant as a vehicle for these two groups to vent their frustrations. He felt that the large turnover in staff and administrators hindered the school’s effectiveness. He was adamant about the idea that the leadership of the school must be returned to the staff before the students could experience successful literacy growth.

Teacher Interviews: Findings

The classroom teachers, the reading teachers, and any other teacher that had substantial contact with the successful readers or their families were interviewed, using the same interview questions as in the principal interviews. The teachers, most of whom were earlier involved in staff development opportunities at the beginning of the school year, were already aware of the
purpose of this study. They were reminded that I was trying to find out why some students experience success in reading and writing and others do not.

The interviews based upon the same three questions that were given to the principal were open-ended and encouraged expanded responses. In contrast to the teachers in Durkin’s study (1984), these teachers appeared to know their students and their families well. They were able to make specific statements about each student and family. In each case the response to the first question indicated that the teachers believed that the attention, attitudes and interest of the parents (or other significant family member) was the key to the student’s success. None of the teachers mentioned anything about the school in answer to the first question. Representative of the teachers comments are as follows:

All of them had a lot of attention at home. They were read to and asked questions (teacher 03, March 1, 1992).

Their parents support the school. The mothers are always here, finding out what’s going on with their kids (teacher 04, February 2, 1992).

They make sure their kids do their homework (teacher 01, January 30, 1992).

Success comes from high expectations from the parents (teacher 07, March 18, 1992).

The grandmother stressed the importance of going to school. She encouraged him to embrace the Anglo ways, but not to lose touch with his roots (teacher 07, March 18, 1992).
When asked specifically with the second question whether there was anything about the school that helped the students become successful, the teachers gave the school little credit. Most of the Navajo teachers voiced their concern about the lack of support from past administrations for innovative strategies that would help a bilingual population. The Anglo teachers were more hesitant, but felt that the continual upheaval with the current superintendent hindered their teaching effectiveness.

The teachers also gave the students themselves a lot of credit for their efforts at becoming literate.

He comes to school and is excited about learning, despite his deplorable living conditions (teacher 07, February 15, 1992).

She writes poetry and paints beautiful pictures. She has expressed to me that she wants to be a teacher (teacher 05, February 16, 1992).

She likes to read. She checks out more books than anyone else from the library (teacher 08, February 17, 1992).

He writes stories about his grandfather who’s a medicine man. He wants to study medicine and return to the reservation to help the People (teacher 11, February 25, 1992).

Responsibility that was either given by the parents or initiated by the child was also seen by the teachers as a very positive factor in developing the student’s literacy.

She is very responsible. She has lots of extra duties at home, like taking care of her younger brothers and sisters. I’m sure she reads to them (teacher 03, February 12, 1992).
Both of her parents are alcoholics. There is never anyone at home but her to take care of her younger brothers and sisters. She does all the chores, as well (teacher 01, February 6, 1992).

In the view of these teachers, then, the families and the students themselves are the most important factors in the student's success. It is both surprising and disheartening that the very people who are expected to teach students to read and write do not give the schools much credit for promoting literacy.

Even when specifically asked about how the schools might have been important in helping the students become successful, the teachers still gave primary credit to the families rather than the school. In the eyes of these teachers school becomes important in a kind of caretaker role. School should support what has been started at home. It should take the place of a parent who is absent or a mother who is an alcoholic.

While the preceding information is extremely valuable in assigning credit to parent and students for their successful literacy experiences, not much insight is given into the process of becoming literate. To gain insight into this process, one must look to the participants in the process, the children themselves and their parents.

Analysis of Teacher and Administrative Assistant Interviews

Teacher and principal interviews provided additional perspectives on the students' literacy development. In the
case of Percy, they were important primary sources of data. For the other students, these interviews provided an opportunity to support or dispute information from other sources. Information from these sources was reviewed a minimum of four times.

1. Data from the interviews was summarized orally to the interviewers at the end of each interview for verification or modification.

2. Interview notes were read a minimum of two times prior to data analysis.

3. As patterns emerged, each interview was reviewed again to determine whether the data from each interview supported the suggested pattern.

4. Tabulations and summaries were made for each type of interview.

5. Comparisons of the data were made with other sources of data for the same student. Interviews with different teachers concerning the same student were compared to each other, as well as with each of the other sources of data.

6. As case studies were developed, all sources of data for each student were reviewed and compared.

Once the major portion of the data analysis was complete, initial drafts of summaries and case studies were shared with four school colleagues, three of whom are Navajo. Summaries were also shared with other
knowledgeable people who have lived in the community more than five years: the Chapter I Director, an elementary teacher at the BIA school and a medical doctor who came to the school to assist the social worker with cases of neglect and abuse. Their comments, questions and suggestions led to further analysis of data, as well as suggesting additional sources of information for demographic data on the community.

Likewise, comments and suggestions from members of my dissertation committee also led to further data analysis, review of other related research studies, and raised questions that probably would not have occurred to "insiders" of this community. This review from both within and outside the community are important to achieve the "ecological validity" (Kamil, Langer and Shanahan, 1985) of the inside view, as well as a more detailed description needed by non-members of the community.

Ethnographic research is not hypothesis testing research, but rather hypothesis generating. Throughout the data analysis, the emerging patterns suggested questions that can be developed into hypothesis that need further study. These will be explored in Chapter VII. The following two chapters present the findings of this study. Chapter VI, will describe four case studies of successful and unsuccessful Navajo readers and writers, and Chapter VII, will summarize the overall findings.
Writing Assessment: Findings

The portfolio assessment process was initiated at the end of October at Small Tree School. Teacher met and discussed the criteria for the development of two kinds of portfolios: a working portfolio and an assessment or show portfolio. The working portfolio was to be used exclusively by the student to file rough drafts of writing samples that were either class assignments or student-initiated. The assessment portfolio was to be turned in to the language arts teacher at the end of the year. This folder would contain at least three final drafts of writing tasks that the student had revised throughout the year. These writing samples would be graded holistically and that grade would help determine a students' final language arts grade.

During the preliminary meetings with the two sixth grade teachers a decision was made to score the final writing products on fluency and supporting details. As the year progressed we met again and decided this was an ambitious task.

In order to be true to the authentic assessment model, a holistic scoring guide would include only our over-all impression of the sample. A decision was made in early January to begin with this informal impression and later more toward a more analytical scoring procedure.
The following examples of student work are representative of both the successful and unsuccessful writer's assessment portfolio evaluated by the research team at the end of May, 1992. Four samples are provided which illustrate the topics selected by the students and the teachers. A brief analysis of the writing sample follows each piece. The analysis was a collaborative effort of the researcher and the two sixth grade teachers involved in the study.
Venson: A Closet Poet

Venson was selected by the research team as an unsuccessful writer. He rarely turned in any completed samples and he openly detested literature circles. As Principal of Small Tree, I saw Venson quite frequently. Most of our encounters were stilted and uncomfortable. When I tried to communicate with him, Venson lapsed into Navajo or just withdrew completely.

Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised when Mr. Clayton produced the poem Venson had written about Mother Earth. The students were asked to select a topic they wanted to write about that was important to their daily lives. The audience for their writing was to be a younger brother or sister. The purpose of the writing sample was to describe the subject using as many adjectives as possible. Students could write in one of the following modes: story, advertisement, or poem.

As you can see Venson wrote an acrostic poem describing his feelings about Mother Earth. The students were first introduced to this poetic style in early November. During this mini-writing session Mr. Clayton recalls Venson's unusually rapt attention to the discussion.

He didn't fidget or get out of his seat once. We wrote an acrostic poem about sports and Venson read his aloud. I knew I was on to something when he asked if he could take his folder home to write another one (teacher 01, April 10, 1992).
Venson's student folder contained ten examples of acrostic poetry. Three were about horses, two about sports, four were about his family and one about Mother Earth. In the poem selected for inclusion in this study, examples of the criteria for selection were evidenced throughout the sample. At least sixteen adjectives were used to describe Mother Earth. Venson shows the ability to integrate information from other disciplines into his writing. This reflects higher order thinking skills and a personal acquaintance with the topic he chose (Tsujimoto, 1988).

Elephants are big and gray.

Treaty can be helpful.

These two sentences were written after Venson had studied a science unit on endangered species and a social studies unit on Chief Nez Pierce. Mr. Clayton indicated that Venson asked quite a few questions during these sessions. He was surprised to see the information emerge in Venson's writing.
Mother Earth

Mountains are high and big
Ocean are blue and deep
Trees are green and tall
Hills are brown and small
Elephants are big and gray
Rocks are long and wide

Education can help you know about Earth.
Air is around you
Rainbows are beauty
Trees can be helpful
Harold is tall and strong
Conclusion

All standardized test scores pointed to Venson as a doomed student—at-risk and destined to fail. At the end of the school year he was writing stories and keeping a journal. Poetry was the key to getting Venson out of the closet of academic catastrophe. He blossomed and grew as a writer throughout his sixth grade year. Venson and others in this study at Small Tree School will continue to experience success if portfolio assessment becomes the norm instead of the experiment.
Thomalisa: A Caretaker

Thomalisa scored at the top of the sixth grade class on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The results of the Slosson Oral Reading Test showed her word recognition skills as 8.5—eighth grade, fifth month. In class she was the first to volunteer for extra credit and the first to organize a peer study group.

It was not surprising, then, that Thomalisa chose to read and evaluate *Tinker and the Medicine Man*. This fictional story was set in the Monument Valley area of southern Utah. Ute, Hopi and Navajo tribes reside there in peace. In this book Tinker experiences a spiritual vision quest that begins his journey toward becoming a medicine man and great leader of the Navajo people. It is a book that resonates with traditional values and customs.

Thomalisa’s family live in the Burnt Corn area of the reservation. Her uncle was a medicine man and Road man with the Native American Church. Because she is a female, Thomalisa will not be privy to some of the male-dominated spiritual ceremonies. She must be content to pass the clan lineage through marriage and childbirth. It has been that way with the Navajos for five centuries and for traditional tribe members it will stay that way forever.
My Country

I think the movie we watched was fun and interesting because, it is made in a traditional way to us students. I would kind of like living in a place like where the boy lived in Monument Valley. To me, I think it would be nice if we just go for a visit and see how it looks. All Navajo ladies like to weave. I liked the ladies' weaving. I liked the view in the movie because, it shows pictures and songs. I kind of liked the movie. In the movie the family should had running water so they would haul for water far away from their home.
Thomalisa chose this response to *Tinker and the Medicine Man* for inclusion in her assessment folder. Her sample reflects her traditional upbringing. One strength to note here, also, is her attempt at expressing the writer's point of view in her critique. The students had read the book and then saw a video version of the story. In a mini-writing session Mrs. Todechine had taught the children a lesson on the author's point of view.

Three-fourths of the students were not comprehending what I said, much less how to determine what an author wanted to express in his story. Thomalisa is bright so I asked her to tell us what she thought the author was trying to say. She said she thought the writer (a Navajo woman) was expressing herself through her pictures and songs. I encouraged Thomalisa to continue this topic in her response to the story. As you can see, she did just that (teacher 02, April 5, 1992).

**Conclusion**

At the end of the year, Thomalisa's uncle who was the Medicine Man passed away. She was quite distressed and saddened by this event. My key informant tells me that Thomalisa's parents have divorced and she spent the summer taking care of her three younger brothers and sisters. For Thomalisa the path to literacy will be a turbulent one, but I am confident that her hozho' (spiritual harmony) with the beliefs of her uncle will illuminate her way. Evidence indicates that she will continue to be a success, both socially and academically.
Tarwanna: A Free Spirit

Tarwanna was by far the most fluent writer in the sixth grade. She never lacked for an opinion on a subject or for words to express her feelings and emotions. I saw in this budding writer a slice of myself when I was eleven years old and dreaming of becoming the next Emily Dickinson.

Tarwanna’s family was one of the most liberal and acculturated in the Small Tree area. She lived in the white mountains close to a small Apache settlement. Her father worked at the tribal government agency in Window Rock. Her mother was an artist and a writer herself. The family traveled to Santa Fe twice a year to exhibit her mother’s paintings. It was there that Tarwanna began to write and "commune with nature."

One of the free writing prompts Mr. Clayton’s class decided to write about was: What would I do if I became rich and famous? The following response of Tarwanna’s is indicative of the free-spirited voice that echoed throughout most of her writing. It is uninhibited, winsome and witty. Enjoy!
If I became rich and famous overnight, I would get excited. The first thing I would do is get the money. Get some tickets to go to L.A. And get some expensive big dinner than go buy a mansion find someone. Then the next day go to the biggest mall and shop in every store. And maybe start a coffee shop. I would buy 20 sports car. I would get some maids a limo. And make more books and get richer. I would have a big party with all my best friends. I would have 10 limos and 20 maids. And I won't do anything. And I would meet all the celebrities. I would travel a lot. Make autographs for my fans. I would help the poor. I would live in a big house with 30 rooms a luxury mansion all to my self.
Conclusion

In her text entitled *Wild Mind* (Bantam, 1990) Natalie Goldberg writes that a true artist is in a constant struggle with what Zen Buddhists call our monkey mind and our wild mind (Goldberg, Natalie, p. 90). Our monkey mind is the critic, the editor, the cynic who says, "Don't write that, people will think you're crazy." Our wild mind is our confidante, our friend, our loving parent who says, "Go ahead, you must write what is in the heart, from the heart" (Goldberg, Natalie, 1990).

Surely our task as educators and writing teachers should be to allow students a safe, nurturing environment where wild mind can create. In the Native American psyche this belief is fundamental. We owe it to these children to structure their schools so that opportunities for growth, creativity, and individual success stories like Tarwanna's can continue to occur.
Arnold: An Enigma

Arnold was as elusive as the wind and virtually as unpredictable. During one observation he dominated the class discussion. Two months later he dropped out of school.

Countless attempts to contact his father proved fruitless. Since Arnold lived in an area unaccessible by car, I finally gave up my efforts to get him back into school.

Then in early March, Arnold reappeared quietly and unobtrusively. All we could extract from his was that his father needed him at home. It wasn't until he turned in his assessment folder at the end of May that Mrs. Todechine and I gained some insight into where Arnold might have been during the month of February. The following story chronicles an adventure that Arnold swears is fictional. But to me it smacks of authenticity!
Arnold and Dewayne Snowbound Adventure

This snowbound adventure take places in a place now call Forest Lake. One day when it was snowing very hard Arnold ask his father to borrowed his dad's station wagon. Then his father said, "ok, son but do not pick up any girls". Arnold was happy and went cruising down the old highway to Dewayne's grandmother's house.

Arnold pick up his friend. Just when Dewayne was going to the restroom when he came. Then Arnold said, "Let's go to Pinon and fill the gas up. First Arnold had to pawn his old great grandmother's neckles at Wille White's house.

So they went down to Pinon and fill the gas up. And they bought some goodies to munch on. They decided to go to Forest Lake and cruise up and down the hill. The road was rough but they were having a good time being alone. They tried to go up a steep hill but they could not make it up the hill. Arnold back up and car slipped off the road. They got off so fast and the car started to roll down the steep hill. Arnold said, "Damn, my fathers' old station wagon." He almost cried. They looked around to see if someone lived closed by who could help but they did not see houses. So they went back up the road and waited for a vehicle to come. No one came by.

Arnold said, "Let's go back to the car." When they got back to the car they were tired. They ate some goodies and save some for later.

It got real dark and snowing hard. They stayed there for 3 weeks. They had plenty of food. One morning they heard a sound of a bell. They knew it was someone herding sheep and they got excited. The shepherder saw them and told him what happen. He told them which way to go home. When they finally made it to Arnold's house his father was waiting for them. He said, "Where were you guys?"
The fact that Arnold was so inconsistent with his writing became a personal quest for me. I had to solve the mystery—the enigma of Arnold. I tried everything from cajoling to bribes, but Arnold wouldn't share a thing.

As I was leaving Small Tree on the last day of my Principalship, Mr. Begay strode into my office with a folder full of papers and drawings. It seemed Arnold wrote profusely, but privately. He wanted me to have these transcripts into his soul to remember him by in the years to come.

Conclusion

There are many "Arnolds" who are held captive in our traditional school systems. Inside they are full of poetry and songs. In the dead of night or on long, lonely weekends these children pen their thoughts to an invisible friend or mentor.

The fact that Arnold allowed me to see into his soul will always be a highlight of my stay in Small Tree. His inner beauty and adolescent conflicts were captured eloquently in drawings and in words. They will remain forever in my private treasure trove as a symbol of the richness of my experience with the Navajos, their land, their struggles, and their mysteries.
The Achievement of Literacy for Navajo Children

This chapter documents the existence of successful and unsuccessful Navajo readers and writers, and suggests that the success rate is probably much higher than is normally reported using traditional standard methods of success. By using more appropriate means of evaluating reading and writing, larger numbers of successful readers and writers are identified. This chapter also provides insights into the process of literacy development for some of these successful students. Both of these points are important in beginning to dispel prevailing myths about literacy development among Navajo youth. Some of the presumed roadblocks to literacy development such as home language differences, low family income, and the lack of shared reading experiences have not prevented the development of literacy for these children.

Through the various sources of data, we have gained insight into the process of becoming literate in the Small Tree community on the Navajo reservation. Literacy is a very personal achievement that is accomplished in the sociocultural environment surrounding the child through transactions with literate others. The environments of each of these successful readers have much in common with other literate environments both on and off the reservation. Reading and writing in these literate environments are used for personal and social purposes by
adults and youngsters alike; literate adults and older siblings provide young learners with answers to questions about written language and the process of becoming literate follows many paths.

The importance of the home, school and community partnership was stressed by teachers, the administrative assistant, parents, and the student themselves; the school, however, was mentioned the least. Direct, traditional instruction was given little credit for these children becoming successful readers and writers. Learning to read was portrayed as a relatively easy and natural accomplishment for these children. Learning to write happened in different ways for each successful and unsuccessful student. These general findings have significant implications for school which will be discussed in Chapter VII.

The following chapter presents four case studies of the literacy development of two unsuccessful readers and writers and two successful readers and writers. These case studies provide a closer look at various ways in which children can become literate.
CHAPTER VII
FOUR CASE STUDIES

The challenge is to explore more completely how economic, cultural, social structural, ethnic, and other factors blend to create the orientation to literacy which exists in a home (Teale, 1986a, p. 200).

Chapter VI gives us fleeting glimpses into the process of becoming literate on the Navajo reservation. We see that most of the successful readers were read to as young children. Some were not. Most of the children had quantities of books in the home. Some did not. Most of the parents are high school graduates. Some are not. The six successful readers became literate in six different ways because they came from six different home environments. They each had different first exposures to print and different responses from the literate adults around them. By combining individual data, as in the previous chapter, we can see some of the common characteristics of these successful readers and their home environments, but we lose sight of the truly individual ways in which they became literate.

The case studies presented in this chapter will help to demonstrate the variety of ways that children in the Small Tree area have become successful readers. The information presented in each case study comes from all of the sources in this study: parents, teachers, administrative assistant, school records, observations, and the students themselves. None of these sources
contradicted the other sources in any major way, and each provided some information that was not available from the other sources. In order to protect the privacy of the individuals involved, the names used here are fictitious, and some personal events or details not related to issues of becoming literate have been modified to disguise the identities of a few individuals.

The four case studies presented here are representative of the range and variation present in the larger sample of twenty successful and unsuccessful readers. Any of the twenty students could have been selected for these case studies, but the four presented here show a wide range of family demographics, as well as literacy environments. Percy was selected because, by traditional indicators, he was the least likely to succeed. He comes from a home with severe social problems, extreme poverty, and virtually no books to read. He came to school speaking very little English. He was the only Hopi student in the study.

Venson is nearly the polar opposite of Percy. His family is the most acculturated and affluent of the group (but earning less than $32,000 per year). His parents have the highest level of formal education, and English is spoken exclusively in his home.

Between these extremes are Camilla and Elana. Camilla comes from the largest family, and was read to for the
longest period of time. She has nearly the lowest standardized scores and grade level placement in the basal reading series, but is one of the most voracious readers. Elana was chosen because of the strong bilingual and traditional influences in her home, and because her mother was a single parent and a high school drop-out. Her mother eventually graduated from high school, while caring for Elana as an infant. She later became a teacher and worked at Small Tree School.

What emerges from these case studies is that language and literacy are not only developed within social and cultural contexts, but that those contexts are individually different, even for members of the same culture.

Case Study #1: Camilla

Camilla’s first contact with literacy came more than twelve months before her first birthday. Her mother, Sara Hosteen, had heard during a prenatal visit to the hospital that reading to the developing fetus was a good thing to do. She later heard the same thing on the news and decided to try it with Camilla. Sara continued to read aloud until Camilla was born, but then stopped until Camilla was about one and a half years old. She began again when Camilla was three, reading two or three times per week, and increasing to as often as three times each day as Camilla showed more and more interest. Sara Hosteen read to Camilla until
sometime in the second grade, when Camilla was reading well enough by herself to begin reading to her younger brother.

When she was young, I got some picture story books. She would flip through them and name characters in the book. She was, oh, about two years old, just barely walking. She liked colorful pictures and animal books. I knew she liked animals, so I took her to the zoo and she became very excited seeing animals from her book. I initiated it (reading to Camilla) from the beginning. She was reading prior to school. She wasn't very good at it, but she knew what it was about. About second grade she really started reading (parent interview, May 15, 1992).

Sara Hosteen believes that Camilla has always been very mature for her age, self-motivated, curious and observant. She believes that all of those characteristics came from being read to, and talking about the things in her books.

Camilla remembers learning to read as "a little easy and a little hard." For the first two years of school, she was enrolled in a bilingual classroom, where the initial literacy instruction was in Navajo, through a phonetic approach. Her mother had chosen to enroll her in this program to help her to continue to improve her oral Navajo language. Camilla grew up hearing more English than Navajo, but was also fluent enough in Navajo to able to understand her grandmother, who spoke no English. Both her parents grew up speaking only Navajo until they attended school, but they spoke mostly English in the home when she was young. During first grade, her only contact with written English at school was through an artificial
phonetic program teaching letter and sound combinations in isolation from words and meaning.

Camilla does not view this as reading instruction, nor as being helpful to her in learning how to read:

When I was in first grade, my mom tried to teach me how to read by reading me books and asking me a lot of questions about the stories. The teachers didn’t teach me reading in first grade, we just did spelling. I learned how to read in first grade—not in school, but at home. In second grade, it was sort of easy to read, because I already knew a lot of words (student interview, March 12, 1992).

Camilla remembers having lots of books with accompanying records or listening tapes that she used when she was younger. Now her youngest brother is using those books and tapes at home. He is in a bilingual program in kindergarten, as she was, and is being exposed to only Navajo literacy at school, while Camilla and her parents read to him, helping him to develop English literacy at home. She says that he isn’t really reading in English yet, but he is really interested.

If he doesn’t have anything to do, he gets some of my books and makes up stories, looking at the pictures (student interview, March 12, 1992).

Not only did her parents read to her alot, but she also saw them reading frequently. Both parents read the newspaper, and, according to Camilla, her mother reads "any kind of books that she can find that she’s interested in." There is a large quantity and a wide variety of reading materials in this home. Besides the daily newspaper, they
have magazines for her parents, and teenage, rock and roll, and astrology magazines that Camilla reads. She frequently orders books through the monthly book clubs offered through her classroom. Although they have no encyclopedias, they have several dictionaries that parents and children use. Both the parents and Camilla say that they all do a lot of reading. The Hosteens have an hour each day that the television is turned off when everyone either reads or does homework.

Her father reads the paper and she sees it. We give one hour each day to do homework or read, when we turn the television off (parent interview, May 10, 1992).

Camilla says, "I have so many books I don't keep track of how many I have" (Camilla, March 12, 1992). Those books are generally self selected, but many have been gifts from relatives. She enjoys both fiction and non-fiction, reading for enjoyment and to learn about subjects that she is interested in. Many of the books she had when she was younger have been passed on to her two younger brothers. As two litters of kittens race around her living room, and a puppy plays in the yard, it is not surprising that the books she has recently read are about dogs, cats and other animals.

Both parents are high school graduates. Sara Hosteen from the local public schools, and Leon Hosteen from BIA boarding schools. Both began school speaking only Navajo, and Sara remembers that "one of hardest things to learn was
English" (parent interview, April 10, 1992). Once she had switched over to English, school was easy for her because she had a lot of interest, and was curious. For her husband, school was a different experience. Leon reported that the boarding school

I had lots of discipline, it was strict. When I went in the army, it was not a hard transition. I had to learn to be independent, and have to make decisions for myself (parent interview, April 10, 1992).

Students, including himself, were punished when they spoke Navajo. They were lined up and marched everywhere on the school grounds.

School was not easy and it was not hard. I don't really remember learning to read. . .I had already lived in dormitories most of my life, was ordered around, learned to march. Some of the kids from public schools had a lot harder time adjusting (parent interview, April 10, 1992).

Both Sara and Leon believe that they gained a lot of independence and responsibility early in their childhood. Sara was responsible for sewing, babysitting, cooking, and cleaning at home. Leon feels that by being separated from his family at an early age, he learned to be independent and to make decisions for himself, because there was no one else from his family to decide for him.

This pattern of responsibility has been carried over to all of their children, also. Both parents have numerous responsibilities outside of the home, and arrive home several hours after the children come home from school. The children are expected to do their homework and chores
before the parents come home. The older children also help with meals and other family responsibilities once the parents come home. Camilla is the oldest child in the home now, with two younger brothers. She has three older brothers and three older sisters who have graduated from high school and no longer live at home.

Sara has a managerial job with a tribal department, and often does not return home until 6 p.m. Leon is attending a branch campus of a university thirty miles away, and is also away during the day until early evening. He is also a "road man" for the Native American Church (NAC), and is frequently called upon to conduct prayer meetings. These meetings are not regularly scheduled services, but are set up specifically to help someone with a problem, or as spiritual blessing prior to a difficult undertaking.

Leon believes that the NAC has been very important in his children's success in school. Camilla asked that he conduct an educational prayer meeting for her at the beginning of the school year, which he did for both her and her younger brother.

You really want to know what made them do good? Here it is in a nutshell. This is it. We have prayer services for both of them at the beginning of the year, before school start. That's what did it. I paved the way spiritually for them. Camilla wanted one. So we had one for both of them. It motivates them (parent interview, April 10, 1992).
These NAC meetings usually focus on one or two people, and are an outpouring of kind words, advice and support given by all who attend.

Leon believes that this prayer meeting was especially important for his son, who had been reluctant about reading in previous years. Now, he is showing a great deal of interest in reading and has enthusiastically participated in a reading motivation program sponsored by his remedial reading teacher. Through this program, he borrowed books daily, brought them home and read them to his parents. The parents verified to the teacher that he had read the books. During the school year, he read in excess of 120 books, and received several free books for his efforts. He now frequently orders books from the book clubs, and is excited about his reading ability and the improvement he has made during the past year. Camilla also participated in a similar program in her classroom, Literacy 2000 sponsored by Southwest Bell and read more books than anyone else in her class.

When I inherited her...she was pretty much...well, she matured some, but she was doing very well when she entered fifth grade...She likes to read. In that Literacy 2000 program, she read more than any one else in the entire class. And she bought more books through the class book orders than anyone else (teacher interview, October 31, 1991).

Camilla’s sixth grade teacher attributes her success to the family support. Both parents stopped by the
classroom several times. The teacher was particularly impressed by the father's concern and involvement.

The family plays a major role, they are concerned. Both came by more than once, especially her father. He stopped by very early in the school year, asked if he could do anything, stopped by a couple of more times, and then came by at the end of the year to say 'thanks'. Now, you don't see that very often (teacher interview, November 30, 1991).

While she has received good report card grades in all subjects including reading, her standardized reading test percentile ranks are only in the 40's (41% in sixth grade, mid 30's in previous years). She had also only completed the highest level in the fifth grade basal reader by the end of sixth grade. This may account for why this voracious reader replied, "I don't know," when asked if she was a good reader.

Writing has played some part in her literacy development:

Uh-huh, I write to my sisters and brothers and sometimes I write book reports. [R: for school?] No, I just keep them. My father has a file for me. He keeps records, my book reports, report cards, school pictures and things like that. [R: How long has he done that?] Ever since I got my first report card (student interview, March 12, 1992).

While their mobile home has very modest physical furnishings, it is very evident that it is a home filled with warmth, caring and support. It is not at all surprising that, with such an early start and such a
supportive environment, Camilla and her brothers are experiencing success in becoming literate.

Case Study #2: Percy

Percy is an enigma. Percy defied the odds. On all typical predictors for success in school Percy struck out: poverty, a single parent family, an alcoholic mother, a language other than English, male, a minority member (Hopi), absences totaling more than 200 days in five years, few books in the home. Yet, Percy has become literate—against all odds.

The story of Percy was difficult to piece together, and much is probably missing still, because his mother, the one person who could have provided much insight into his early experiences with written language, died over a year ago. This case study is based on interviews with Percy, his grandmother, two aunts, several teachers, and the administrative assistant. The interview with the grandmother was conducted through an interpreter, and thus her responses are paraphrases of what she said in Navajo.

My first contact with Percy was when I was evaluating his reading to decide whether or not to include him in the study. He chose to read *The Moonlight Man* by Paula Fox because "he liked the title." His grandmother had told him stories about the thirteen moons in the year. Percy wanted to learn more about the seasons and their moons. He
thought this book would describe the changes in nature his grandmother had talked about.

As he began to read, I noticed immediately that he had dialect influences on pronunciation and inflectional endings. He dropped past tense (-ed) endings and replaced final consonants with glottals occasionally. Many of the English terms and proper names gave him problems. But, his intonation indicated that he was understanding as he read. He did not hesitate when he came to the words "derelict," "antique," or "ammunition." When he had finished reading, he gave a good, detailed retelling without hesitation. As a short example:

It's about a girl whose father was an alcoholic. My mom was sick like that too. . .I thought it was about the moon. That's okay. I'm not sad about the story (Percy retelling, February 22, 1992).

When I asked him if he thought he was a good reader, he replied, "No, because sometimes I make mistakes." His view of mistakes covers both meaning and pronunciation:

When I don't know the word or I don't know what it really means. Or if I ask someone for help and when they say it in a different way, then I know I made a mistake (student interview, February 22, 1992).

Although Percy now chooses to speak only English at school, when he entered kindergarten he spoke little English, and mostly Navajo and Hopi. He has so consistently used English at school that one of his Navajo teachers in sixth grade did not even know that he could
speak Navajo. Though his English is certainly adequate on most occasions, Percy’s English ability caused him some difficulty at the beginning of the interview. When I asked him to tell me what he remembered about learning to read, he began describing the lessons that were being presently taught in his sixth grade class.

I learned about commas, when to stop at periods. That was in January, but now we’re studying about. . .um. . .like recessive (reference? resource?) books (interview, February 22, 1992).

When we focused on his early experiences, he said that he learned to read in first grade, but that it was sometimes hard and scary.

I thought it was going to be hard, and I was scared that people might laugh at you. It was harder because my mom used to talk to me in Hopi, so I didn’t know the words in English (interview, February 22, 1992).

But, he also claimed that he could read "some stuff on tv" before he started school. Nobody had taught him, he just saw the words, and heard them, and made the connection.

When I get home and watch tv, sometimes the commercials have words and I read them. That helped me. Now, sometimes I read the credits at the end of movies (Percy, February 22, 1992).

It was surprising to me that he even knew what movie credits were, much less read them. Perhaps he just looked for names that he recognized; or, since the amount of print at home is very limited, he chooses to use whatever is available.
Percy also recalled that his mother read to him "a little bit" when he was about four years old. They had gotten a set of children's Bible stories and a few Walt Disney books like "Cinderella and that stuff." His mother also "used to write words down, or a story, then she read it to me and then she says, 'What does this say?'" His grandmother, however, says that there was almost nothing to read in his home, and doesn't remember his mother reading to him at all.

The grandmother was, and is, a very important figure in Percy's life. She was the one to rescue him and his younger brother on the frequent occasions when his mother was on an alcoholic binge and had left them alone for days at a time. His grandmother talked with him and stressed the importance of going to school, of doing his best and learning all he could, but she did not read to him or look at books with him. An uncle also frequently spoke with him about how he should live his life according to the traditional ways. During his early years, he was often shifted between his mother's home, his grandmother's home and two different aunt's homes.

This instability at home had great consequences on his school attendance, on his attitudes towards school, and his success in school. In kindergarten, he missed 26 days; first grade, 49 days; repeated first grade; in second grade, missed 52 days; third grade, 59 days. By the time
his mother died in the middle of his fourth grade year, he had missed more than 200 days of school. One would expect his grades to be abysmal, but they were only in the low average range.

During a particularly bad time in fourth grade, Percy and a female cousin of the same age went to a nearby BIA boarding school to enroll themselves:

I transferred to Chinle and I was in fourth grade over here and my sister (cousin) was in 4th grade, too, with me, together. I thought like I didn’t know much, like the school’s going to be harder or something. And they told me, ‘What grade are you in?’ I said, ‘4th grade’ (Percy, February 22, 1992).

After spending a short time at that school, he returned to fourth grade at the public school in Small Tree.

Before New Year’s, he was orphaned and living with an aunt. This was a critical turning point for Percy, according to relatives and school personnel. Before that time, he was not doing well in school, and he was not getting much help at home. Once he moved in with his aunt, she stressed the importance of school, made sure that he attended and did his homework, and gave him responsibilities at home (interview with grandmother, May 5, 1992).

This home gave him much more stability, and more positive role models. He says that everyone in the home reads: his uncle, his aunt, his cousins, and himself.
Sometimes they "turn on the light, shut off the tv, and everybody reads." There was also much more reading material in this home. They had a few children's books that his cousin brought home from school, some magazines, the newspaper on occasion, and sometimes books from the school library. The home has very few material comforts, however. His aunt is unemployed, and the little money they get is from sales of his uncle's carvings and government assistance.

The administrative assistant was able to describe how the school also helped during this period of time:

After his mom's death, the school brought the guardians in many times for conferences. We tried to protect him as much as we could. We had an open door policy to the principal's office and he took advantage of it many, many times to voluntarily come in and share his feelings...He's always been in the world of adults and learned that if he stated his position and his reasons, that he would be given opportunities. His grandma talked with him and philosophized--in the Navajo way. He was always at the bottom rung of the ladder and learned to please in order to get attention and recognition (administrative assistant interview, April 5, 1992).

Percy also got much recognition from the school for his artistic ability. He has won several contests. I displayed one of his large pencil drawings in my office, and countless classmates give him compliments and praise for his drawings.

One of his teachers believes that school, for him has provided for much of what has been missing at home:
His success has to do with school. He wants to be here, knowing he doesn’t have a good home life. School was important to him when he started getting awards and recognition for different things. He performs well for praise and compliments (teacher 06 interview, May 10, 1992).

Towards the end of sixth grade, his aunt’s family was having extreme financial difficulty, and he moved in with another aunt and her family. In this new home, he has shown great self-reliance and responsibility. He does household chores without being asked, and often will cook for himself and other members of his family.

He’s really good, he does his chores without us even asking. Sometimes he even cooks dinner when he gets hungry. He reads the package by himself, like Hamburger Helper, he reads the directions and fixes it just right (interview with aunt, May 10, 1992).

Percy also plays school with his younger girl cousin and his little brother, but primarily since moving into the second aunt’s home.

Me and my sister (cousin), she’s in the fifth grade, we play school sometimes. We have a bunk bed and we make my top bunk my classroom and we trade with my little brother, he’s on the bottom bunk. We just play school with him. We (he and his cousin) take turns being the teacher (student interview, February 22, 1992).

Percy thinks that his brother will become a good reader because they have been teaching him and reading to him sometimes. At three years old, he is already reading “easy words like ‘is’ and ‘and’ stuff like that.” He is also repeating things that he hears on tv, and recognizes words on the screen, just like his older brother did.
Amazingly, in spite of all of his problems, Percy has been scoring at national norms on standardized reading tests since second grade (his fifth grade percentile rank on the ITBS is 56). Yet, probably partly because of his excessive absences, he had completed only a middle fourth grade level basal reader by the end of sixth grade. On his own, Percy likes to read "thick books, mystery stories, like the Hardy Boys."

What has made the difference for Percy? He has had an extremely concerned grandmother who has taught him Navajo traditional values, and frequently shielded him from physical and emotional neglect. He has had other extended family members who have helped out on many occasions, and are currently providing him with a warm, supporting home. He has developed self-reliance and a sense of responsibility for himself and younger children in his family. And, he suffered a great family crisis which brought him to the attention of the school. The school and the principal performed admirably, becoming in many ways a surrogate family for Percy, providing him with the recognition, the caring, sharing, and concern that was frequently lacking in his home environment.

Case Study #3: Venson

Doug and Vicky Dawson’s home is certainly not the average Navajo home. Walking into the living room, one is immediately impressed by the entire wall of home
entertainment electronic equipment. The enormous tv is connected to a satellite dish in the front yard, even though twelve channels of cable television are available in Small Tree. The video game, VCR, compact disc player, cassette player, turntable, amplifier, and stereo speakers crowd each other on the floor to ceiling shelves. Doug is a self-confessed tv addict and electronics buff. On further inspection, one also notices dozens and dozens of books sandwiched between the equipment.

The Dawson's are purchasing their comfortable three bedroom tract home, which is very unusual on the reservation. Housing is very limited, and is usually subsidized rental housing, mobile homes, or small self-constructed frame homes. In addition to the electronics equipment, their home is comfortably furnished. They have two vehicles, a late model compact car, and a relatively new pickup truck. Both are employed in white collar positions in a tribal enterprise. Vicky "loves" her job, but Doug "can't stand" his accounting job, and would prefer to set up an electronics shop, but does not have the money to buy the necessary equipment.

They have three children, all boys. Venson, the sixth grader, is the middle child. His older brother is in the eighth grade, and his younger brother is four, and does not attend school yet.
During the interview, Doug and Vicky were very open and talkative. In fact, the interview proceeded very much like an animated conversation, with no need to continuously ask questions. They are very articulate, and their English dialect reflects that both have spent a good deal of time living off the reservation. Vicky’s family left the reservation when she was three years old, to move to southern California.

When I was three, my dad moved us to southern California. He is a very talented man. He didn’t have a job waiting for him there, but he worked days and put himself through night school. And he became sort of like a draftsman, I guess. I don’t remember my mom reading to me, but peers were very important to me, and I read a lot with some of my friends (parent interview, March 10, 1992).

Vicky’s mother is described by both Vicky and Doug as very articulate in both English and Navajo and a very smart lady, who is mostly self-educated. She is constantly doing crossword puzzles and playing Scrabble. Doug strongly recommends against playing Scrabble with her, because of her skill:

Forget it if you want to play Scrabble with her! Man, she’s really good. She comes up with these long words that nobody has ever heard of, and she’s always right (parent interview, March 10, 1992).

Vicky attended public schools in California and graduated in the top 40 in a class of 500. She remembers it as being very crowded and competitive. Although her parents never read to her, she feels that her peers and the
varied interests that they had were very important in her getting interested in reading and becoming an avid reader. After graduating, she attended a California State College branch, took classes at two different colleges in Arizona, and met Doug at Northern Arizona University.

Doug grew up on the reservation and attended a mission boarding school from kindergarten through eleventh grade, and graduated from the local public high school. He had excelled in mathematics during school, was in advanced classes, and was always one of the top students even though he was usually the only Navajo in those math classes. As for reading,

I was OK, I wasn’t ever excellent in reading, but did good. In seventh, eighth and ninth grade, all the spare time I had I spent time in the library reading western novels, instead of chasing girls (laughs). I still love to read (interview, March 11, 1992).

He also recalls always having encyclopedias and other reference books around, and having tv viewing very restricted. After graduating from high school, he attended college for three years, and then

...just packed up, I didn’t ever leave ‘properly.’ I left for a job with a local newspaper because at that time, money meant a lot more to me than school (interview, March 11, 1992).

Both parents continue to be avid readers, reading informational material related to their work or hobby interests and also various novels and biographies. They frequently visit book stores when they go to the nearest
city, taking their children with them, and usually purchase several books each time. Doug recalls that they

...used to have a large collection of paperbacks, smelly old paperbacks. But we move a lot. Probably the reason we decided to get rid of them was because they smelled so bad. We had them for years before we finally got rid of them (Doug, March 11, 1992).

He also recalled taking boxes and boxes of magazines to the dump when they moved. Venson says that he remembers both of his parents and his older brother reading a lot when he was growing up. Interestingly, he spoke in the past tense, as if at the age of eleven he is now grown up.

The reading material in the Dawson home has not been limited to adult interests. Over the years, they have always had lots of children’s books starting from very easy ones to more difficult, and different children’s magazine subscriptions related to their kids’ interests.

We’ve always had lots of children’s books. Just an understanding by myself to have lots of books around, starting with very easy to more difficult. We keep a lot of reference books around, encyclopedias, business books, electronics books. They’re always around. Not that we’re always looking at them, but they’re there. We have a whole bunch of children’s books, and sometimes my sister and I swap books (Vicky, March 11, 1992).

Some of the magazines mentioned included: Boy’s Life, Natural History, G.I. Joe, Turtle, and Astronomy. They do not visit the public library in Chinle, 50 miles away, because it is open only on weekdays during their working hours.
Neither parent recalls being read to as a child, but they just thought it would be a good idea to read to their own children.

I started reading to them (the older two boys) a lot. I just thought it would be good for them and would help them later on, and it was a time to share with them (Vicky, March 11, 1992).

Vicky read frequently to both of the older boys from an early age, but because of increasing responsibilities and longer hours at work, she has not been reading to their youngest son, which she regrets. She fondly recalls the time she spent reading with Venson and how much he enjoyed the experience. Because of his excellent memory, Venson was often joining in while his mother read, even after only hearing a story once or twice. At age three, his parents tape recorded him "reading" The Bear Detectives, and they shared the recording with me. Venson also frequently listens to it:

They recorded me when I first tried. They always play it back. . .I think it's fun to listen to me (Venson, March 12, 1992).

This retelling closely resembled the actual text and included different voices for different characters and a variety of sound effects. Vicky said that whenever she read to them, she tried to make sure she picked a good story and always tried to make it enjoyable by reading it dramatically. Venson's good memory also extended to movies that he had seen, and they were often able to hear reruns of the dialogues when they took long car trips.
Reading to the children in the beginning was parent initiated, but as the boys became more interested and "figured out what it was all about," they began to get more and more books and it became more of a child initiated activity. Although he was never "really reading" prior to attending school (according to his parents), he was "always looking at books." Venson, on the other hand, believes that he was reading before he began kindergarten, that his parents' reading to him "a lot," helped him become a good reader. He remembers the picture dictionary that his parents got for him as also very helpful in learning how to read. Neither Venson nor his parents make any mention of the school in helping him to learn to read.

All of the kids have grown up watching a lot of tv and playing video games. But, television, in the words of the tv addicted father, is not all bad:

There is some nice stuff on tv. There's a real variety, especially with the satellite receiver. You know, artists and educational programs on nature and things like that. Of course, there's a lot of junk, too. But it's not totally useless. Sometimes the older boys will get an interest from a program they watch and follow it up at the library or something (Doug, August 12, 1992).

This is similar to the pattern of Vicky, who got into the habit of reading a book either before or after seeing the movie. Once Venson gets an interest, he really stays with it for a long time.
He has interests in lots of things, especially wars and military stuff. ...we don't force him to, he just reads a lot on his own. We don't have to persuade him (Vicky, March 12, 1992).

His current interest is with wars and military, which began after seeing Platoon. He liked it so much that he got the book to read. He also mentioned that he had read Guns Up, an autobiographical novel by John M. Clark about Viet Nam, and, he reads parts of the newspaper daily--the letters to the editor, the front page, and the comics. According to Vicky, Venson also decided on his own to teach himself German or Spanish, so he bought language books at the book store.

With all of this fairly adult reading that Venson does, it is amazing that his parents "just assumed that he's just OK in reading" (Vicky, May 12, 1992).

Venson's interests have also lead him to do large amounts of creative writing. His mother claims that his handwriting is terrible, but that he often types his stories on his grandmother's typewriter. Doug would like to get a computer with a word processor for Venson to use for his writing.

While Vicky is concerned about not reading with their youngest son much to this point, and that he has grown up with videos rather than books, Doug hopes that the children's classic stories that he frequently watches on
videos will carry over into reading, and suspends judgement whether it is good or bad. Vicky is quick to answer:

It's bad, that's where we're falling, because he won't associate the written words with the story. We are changing our priorities. I am really cutting down my time at work, and we are having less tv time. I will really try to read to him a lot this summer, before he starts kindergarten (Vicky, March 12, 1992).

Venson, however, has no doubts that his younger brother will also become a good reader:

He can already read just a little. Me and my big brother teach him. We read a sentence and then let him try to read what we just read. He does pretty good (student interview, March 11, 1992)

Venson's performance at school has gotten mixed reviews. His fourth grade teacher wrote: "A top student--quick learner, full of questions. . .works at the highest level." On the other hand, one of his current teachers said: "There have been some problems in terms of homework. His parents stress the importance of school, but no real pressure is put on him--as long as there's no F's, it's OK" (Teacher interview, January 10, 1992). From his report card grades, though, he has done well, earning 4's and 3's (equivalent to A's and B's); he is in a 6th grade level basal reader (although earning a 3 minus); and his achievement test percentile ranks are in the 70's (72 on the ITBS in the fifth grade).

Vicky and Doug have good things to say about the school, even though they did not give it specific credit
for helping Venson learn to read. They are particularly pleased with the gifted and talented program, which they think has been really beneficial for him. Venson is not classified gifted, but he did score above the 85th percentile on the School and College Ability Testing (SCAT) measurement, and qualified to attend special classes for gifted and talented.

One is left with the impression that, although Doug and Vicky are certainly proud of their son's achievements and ability, learning to read and enjoying reading are just assumed in their family. It is just a natural development, and nothing particularly amazing. After all, doesn't every sixth grader read novels about Viet Nam?

Case Study #4: Elana

Elana's mother, Regina Fisher, dropped out of high school in her sophomore year when she was pregnant with Elana. Eventually, after attending four different high schools, she was able to graduate from the local high school, juggling classes, homework, and being a single parent. Elana's father left them when she was about five months old, and she has had very little contact with him since. She continued to pursue her studies and graduated from college with an education degree in 1980.

Regina began reading to Elana occasionally when she was only a year old, and more frequently by the time she
was two. At age three, Elana and her mom were taking turns pointing to pictures in the books, and asking questions.

Before she started going to school, I did a lot of reading to her. I read to her, showed her pictures, pointed out things and asked her what they were. I guess I started from about one year on up, real simple books, just now and then. When she was two, I did more reading, and by the time she was three years old, she picked it up on her own, but I kept up til she was about five, then I didn't read as much to her (parent interview, March 15, 1992).

By the time she was six, Elana was well on her way to becoming a good reader. Since Elana was an infant, they have always had a lot of children’s books in their home, ranging from the very simple picture books to the horror, mystery, and joke books that Elana now loves.

She's always been a good reader, shown a lot of interest in books. She carried books with her everywhere. I read to her when she went to bed, when she took naps. When we went to Gallup, she would always bring books along and look at them. I started off picking the books, but after a while, she would be the one to get them...I get a lot of books from my sister (parent interview, March 15, 1992).

Initially, Regina would just read the simple books and show the pictures to her daughter, who would sit on her lap or next to her. As she got a little older, they would point out things in the pictures and talk about what the things were, and what they were used for. As they began reading books with more of a story, Regina would run her finger under the words as she read them aloud. Her mom read to her several times daily—at nap time, bed time, and other times during the day that Elana requested. By this
time, Elana was hooked on books, and would carry one with her wherever she went. On trips to the nearest town, she would read several books. Regina also told the babysitter that Elana loved to be read to, and asked her to read to Elana.

Regina doesn’t recall anyone telling her that she should read to her children, or how to do it. She just thought it was a good idea. Once Elana started showing her intense interest, there was no turning back.

Regina remembers that her own mother "did some reading to me," but that she (Regina) had "kind of a hard time" in reading.

When I first started school, at a public school on the reservation, I spoke no English, but there was a Navajo teacher...a teacher aide, I guess who helped me. The next year, when I was about 7, I went on placement in Pima. Well, I did pretty good at Pima. I was there for two years, for first and second grade. I had enough English so it wasn’t too hard. Once I got back to the reservation schools, I didn’t do as well (C’s mostly) (parent interview, March 15, 1992).

Elana, in contrast, has done very well in school. When she was enrolled in kindergarten at a neighboring school, she was placed in a pre-kindergarten classroom, based on a "developmental screening." This evaluation was given to all kindergarten students, and 75% of them were classified as "developmentally delayed," and placed in the pre-kindergarten program. The following year, she went into a pre-first classroom, and then into first grade. Her
classroom evaluations for each of these grade levels were always high, yet the net effect of this screening policy was for Elana and most of her peers to be held back a year. The pre-kindergarten program was viewed as a time for the children to mature, and did not focus on literacy development at all because the children were "not ready." Though Elana seems to have survived the experience, a combination of performance assessment measurements coupled with readiness screening evaluations would have pointed to Elana as an emergent reader. Relying just on the screening program determined that she was not yet ready for kindergarten, much less ready to read.

Elana's academic record has been good, and her standardized reading test percentile rankings have consistently been above the national norms, usually in the 60's (her fifth grade scores for the ITBS are at the 66th percentile). Her sixth grade teacher was initially surprised by her reading ability, but later attributed it to Elana's wanting to do well in everything and not being afraid to ask questions when she did not understand. Her excellence carries over to the playground, too, where:

She could really knock homeruns. She could knock the boys around, too if they got in her way. She's very much an outdoors girl (teacher 03 interview, December 10, 1992).

Regina believes that Elana is a quick learner and is curious about a lot of things. She feels that those traits are from being read to a lot, and being exposed to a wide
variety of things through books that she never would have otherwise experienced. She continues to show a lot of interest in books, and does a lot of reading at home. And, at least through Elana’s eyes, her mom continues to show a lot of interest in Elana’s reading:

Yeah, I like to read. Like horror books and mystery books and joke books. I’ve got a whole bunch of them at home--some from RIF, and a lot we’ve bought. My mom makes me read a whole hour, sometimes two, every night. She brings books and magazines home from work and makes me read them. It’s mostly books about animals; and car and motorcycle magazines. I’m not interested too much in those, but I read them ‘cause I want to be a mechanic when I grow up. If I have homework, I only have to read thirty minutes (student interview, April 5, 1992).

Elana now has three younger sisters. One is in first grade, and the others are three and two years old. Elana recognizes that the first grader is having trouble in reading because "she’s a slow learner." When asked what might help her become a good reader, Elana replied,

Probably if I helped her and if she concentrated more on her book instead of tv. She watches it about five hours every day. I’d make her sit in her own room and read. She doesn’t bring her book home when she’s supposed to, and she has a low attention span. . .(Elana, April 5, 1992).

She has more hope for her younger sisters. Sometimes she reads to them, they hear words on tv, and their day care teachers probably read to them. Already they are picking out small words like "a," "in," "the," "dog," "cat," and "mostly things that move." She thinks they know much more than she did at their age.
When asked if reading was ever hard for her, she replied:

Yeah, in first, second and third grade. Mostly the words, and I couldn't really understand them. [R: What changed things?] My mom reading to me and I got better in reading. Sometimes I heard some words I needed to learn from movies (Elana, April 5, 1992).

In addition to being a good reader, Elana seems to have developed a good vocabulary, because she used words such as "instinct" and "rejected" in her retelling (for example, "Tinker and the Medicine Man feels sad, rejected, and lonely" from Elana's retelling of Tinker), even though those words did not appear within the story that she read. She also had a number of dialect influences on her reading. She dropped a number of inflected endings, and many of the final consonants were pronounced as glottals, the most frequent sound in Navajo.

Although Elana claimed at first that she did not speak Navajo, she later said that she spoke "only some." She said that her grandmother, grandfather, aunts and uncles and her mom all speak Navajo and that she only understands them a little. Her mother, on the other hand thinks that Elana speaks and understands quite a bit of Navajo. Elana's great grandparents are involved in a lot of ceremonies, and the whole family attends them nearly every other weekend. These ceremonies are conducted entirely in Navajo.
When asked to give advice to other parents to help their children become better readers, Regina said:

Just read to their kids and have them do a lot of reading. Act it out when you read it, and make it enjoyable. Tell their kids to try hard, and to ask questions if they don’t know. If the kids are slacking off, cut down on tv (parent interview, March 15, 1992).

She also saw the need for more contact between the schools and the parents, so that the parents know how their children are doing at school. Parent teacher conferences once or twice a year are just not enough. She also sees a need to open up a local library, or have the school library open on weekends so that there will be reading materials available for families that can not afford to buy books.

The Other Cases

The preceding case studies give a retrospective view into the process of four different Navajo children becoming literate. While each is unique, they are representative of the larger sample of twenty successful and unsuccessful readers. As should be apparent from the range of examples presented here, there are no absolute impediments to becoming literate and there are a variety of ways to accomplish it. The other cases are just as varied and every bit as interesting as the stories of Camilla, Percy, Elana and Venson.

It is not only possible for children on the Navajo reservation to become literate, but it is something that is happening frequently, in a variety of ways, in a variety of
homes. I was struck by the common sense ways in which parents introduced their children to literacy. Few of them had been told what to do, or how to do it. They just did what made sense to them, and the children became successful.

Another thing that became apparent through the interviews with parents, children, teachers, and the administrative assistant: the sharing of reading and the caring of a parent or other significant people is what helped these children become literate. While the schools never were maligned, and were frequently complimented, they were not specifically mentioned as a major reason for these children becoming successful readers. No set of skills, no reading program, no diagnostic test, workbook, or teachers' manual was ever given credit for these children learning to read. Parents were most frequently named by parents, children and teachers as the key to these children's success.

This is both exciting and disturbing. Exciting, because parents, with little or no training can do much to ensure that their children become literate. Disturbing, because schools, which are entrusted with the responsibility to teach children how to read, are not often mentioned as an important factor in these children learning to read. Clearly, schools can, and should, be doing more.
Summary

In any case, unless the boundaries between classrooms and communities can be broken, and the flow of cultural patterns between them encouraged, the schools will continue to be legitimate and reproduce communities of townspeople who control and limit the potential progress of other communities and who themselves remain untouched by other values and ways of life (Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms, Heath, 1983, p. 369).

This was an ethnographic study of the ways that Navajo children in Small Tree, Arizona on the Navajo reservation achieve literacy. The needs and uses for literacy for the Navajo people have greatly increased during the past half century. This increased exposure to literacy has resulted from increasing contact with the outside culture, as well as from literacy changes on the reservation itself.

With change comes conflict and the community of Small Tree symbolizes this cultural battle. In this study information about the kinds of internal struggles was presented in detail. With the amount of strife that exists daily in this small community it is a wonder that these Navajo children become successful readers and writers at all. However, they do.

How these children acquire oral language was one of the questions investigated. From this study and others before it, (Hartse, Woodward, and Burke, 1984; K. Goodman and Y. Goodman, 1976; Heath, 1983; Teale, 1986) it is clear
that minority children do have differing paths they take to become literate. Children of single parents become literate. Limited income, severe social problems, and geographical isolation do not prevent the development of literacy for these children. A first language other than English or a lower status dialect of English does not sentence a child to illiteracy. As the Goodmans (1978) stated in their miscue of study of linguistic minority students:

Still our evidence is overwhelming that all our subjects are linguistically competent in at least one language and in their competence in making sense from printed English. They are all acquiring the same process. In doing so they make miscues which while influenced by their language backgrounds basically reflect, as with all readers, their efficiency and effectiveness in making sense from printed English (p. 82).

Part of the discrepancy in minority and majority success rates can be attributed to how success is measured. I have argued that standardized tests do not accurately report the growth of Native American students. Part of the discrepancy lies in the participant structures and the uses and functions of literacy in the home and community compared with those found in the school setting. Those children coming from homes that are most similar to the school environment experience more success (Snow, 1983; Heath, 1983). Some of the discrepancy may be explained by the minorities' and individuals' responses to treatment by the dominant society as Ogbu (1987b) suggests. Some of the
differences in success rate might be explained by different "payoffs" for different groups for achieving literacy and some of the views may be due to different cultural views and valuing of oral and literate traditions. In other words the difference in literacy may be explained by the sociocultural factors that are unique to a particular culture or environment.

While the preceding discussion may explain many of the reasons for minority failure or the perception of minority failure, it does not adequately account for minority success. Not only is oral and written language development a sociocultural phenomenon, it is also an individual achievement. The study reported here is important because it dispels some of the preliminary myths about minority failure by identifying minority success. It also provides insight into the process of various ways that literacy is achieved by individuals living in the Small Tree community and how those ways differ from literacy development in the dominant Anglo society. The following section briefly summarizes these findings to provide a basis for a later discussion of the implications for the home, school, community and for further research.

Discussion
Literacy Development of Navajos in Small Tree

Literacy is a unique, individual achievement in a homogenous group. None of the Navajo students in this
study achieved literacy in the same way. None of the paths
to literacy in this study are identical to the paths
reported for other students in other studies.

Oral storytelling was an important avenue to achieving
literacy to many of these families. Children revered their
grandparents and listened intently to the stories they
would relate over ceremonies or winter fires. This
supports Shirley Brice Heath's theory that some children
learn better through auditory modes (Heath, 1983). The
Navajos value oral traditions and see this as a way to
convince the younger generation to embrace traditional
values and customs. Oral storytelling, then, is a primary
path to Navajo literacy.

Book reading was another important factor in literacy
development. All of the identified successful readers have
parents who are literate, though not all parents are high
school graduates and not all of the parents consider
themselves successful in school. Book reading was used in
these homes for different reasons—social, personal, for
entertainment, communication, school—and employment
related reasons and daily routines. Some children reported
that their parents read extensively, while others rarely
saw their parents read.

All of the successful readers had a significant person
in their lives who stressed the importance of success in
school. For some parents this was the result of their
unsuccessful school experiences and a desire to prevent this from happening to their children. For other parents it was like a personal quest—an overreaction to the fear of further acculturation of Navajo ways into a more aggressive westernized society.

In the homes of both unsuccessful and successful readers there was evidence of literacy materials. In the more traditional families' hogans, there were less magazines, newspapers, and trade books. However, the stories that were written by the children were reread over and over again by every family member. These stories were a great source of pride for these families. In the more urban areas commercial literacy materials and, of course, televisions and radios were standard domestic items. The Mormon Bible and Little Golden Books were two of the most commonly found text in the urban homes.

The success rate for Navajo girls in the area of reading appears to be higher than that for Navajo boys. There is also evidence, however, that this discrepancy may be due to teacher bias. In this study successful Navajo boys were not as readily identified through teacher judgments and observations. In the area of writing, though, Navajo boys performed as well as the girls. In the final portfolio products the research team ranked the writing samples of the males as high as the females. In this assessment procedure the Navajo boys also evidenced
more growth in fluency, content, and supporting details than did the Navajo girls. This growth was not reflected in the standardized test scores of the Navajo boys.

Social conditions such as poverty, alcoholism, single parent families and unemployment did impede literary for these children. Students considered successful tended to become the caretakers of the family. They repressed their own needs to take care of younger brothers and sisters. In families where Navajo was the primary language, students also experienced some difficulties in school. The struggle for social control at Small Tree was partly a struggle to reclaim the Navajo language. For students and teachers alike this resulted in high levels of frustration and anxiety. The unsuccessful readers came from the more traditional families where Navajo was the primary language, therefore, they experienced more behavior problems due to this cultural dilemma.

In short each of these identified readers and writers became literate in unique ways. Each reader had a unique home environment and a unique set of experiences that shaped not only the child's skills in language, but also his understanding of the benefits uses, and functions of literacy. This knowledge was developed by the child through transactions with literacy materials and literate people in the child's environment. The fact that not all Navajo children were not as equally successful in becoming
literate raises questions and implications for parents, the school, the community and the larger society.

Implications

Cultural Implications for Literacy

Literacy is a sensitive issue for the families involved in this study. Those families who were living in the more urban areas, had skills-related jobs, and considered themselves literate valued literacy for their children. The more traditional Navajo families were less vocal and more hesitant to give their approval to what they viewed as a westernized school system.

This view is congruent with Texas educator Lee Little Solider who wrote:

Cultures change through the years, so the degree of cultural orientation that children bring with them into the classroom will vary contingent on the strength of their ethnic identification and how acculturated their parents are (1992, p. 17).

Havinghurst (1970) found broad consensus among parents, students, teachers and community leaders in American Indian communities that the "most important function of the school is to prepare Indian students for employment in the dominant economy" (p. 33). In most cases this preparation would certainly include literacy development. It is not known whether Havinghurst gathered his information primarily from individuals that had substantial contact with the Anglo culture or whether more traditional Navajos were included. It is also not clear if
the people interviewed in his study actually valued the role of the school.

It is clear, however, that the Navajo tribal government is supportive of formal education. Each year they sponsor several scholarships that are available to Native American students who are financially able to attend a university. The scholarship requirements include a high school grade point average of a B or above. The council also drafted a resolution that requires children between the ages of five and eighteen to attend school.

The value of literacy to the local society is an important issue since the development of literacy has strong cultural implications. Changes in Navajo culture have been accelerating in the past three decades. It is impossible to determine how much of these changes have been the result of the Anglo education system and conversely how much the cultural changes have influenced the valuing of literacy and other artifacts of the educational system and the larger Anglo society. The achievement of literacy for a large number of Navajos has both positive and negative potential for the preservation of Navajo culture. On the one hand, literacy brings more contact with the Anglo culture which can in turn bring change to the Navajo culture. On the other hand literacy may give more Navajos access to written materials about their culture. This issue is not unique to Navajos. What we need to guard
against is a paternalistic attitude of outsiders
determining what is best for the minority culture either in
terms of preservation of the culture, or forced acculturation.

The following discussion on the improvement of literacy for Navajos is based on the premise that the majority of Navajos do value literacy. While it is true that literacy is not highly valued by every individual, job opportunities, compulsory school attendance policies and growing potential awareness to social and educational issues indicate parental valuing and concern about their children's education.

Parental Power

The data collected from parental interviews for this study indicate that these children's first contact with written language was initiated primarily through the family. It was in the home that children began to use language for authentic and meaningful purposes. It is here that the child is initiated into the "literacy club" (Smith, 1988). This learning took place without direct instruction and often without anyone being aware that it was happening. This literate environment as described by Smith (1988) is one where written language is meaningful and useful, where learning is collaborative, easy and incidental to daily living, and carries no risk of failure to the learner.
Parents in this study created different environments for their children. Some of the parents created opportunities for their children to read and write. They purposefully engaged the child in letter writing, writing grocery lists, taking notes at a ceremony, and reading for personal pleasure. Other parents did not intentionally create an environment to teach their child about oral and written language, however, their children saw them using and valuing reading and writing for pleasure, for information, and for communication purposes.

What does this mean for the families of children who were not identified as successful readers and writers? First, there is a real difference between home language literacy and school-language literacy. Most Native American children come to school with the ability to extract information from their environment. They have learned to categorize, predict and draw conclusions from stories they have heard about Mother Earth, Father Sky, the Coyote Trickster, and other Navajo legends. However, some teachers and educational institutions still have a narrow definition of literacy—that is the ability to read or write. Because of this Native American children that have not had a high exposure to print are often seen as illiterate, semi-literate or learning disabled (Manuel-Dupont, Sonia, 1990). Parents who want their children to succeed in school should at least become informed about
their schools' curriculum so the discontinuities between home and school can be diminished.

For the parents of students at Small Tree School it will not be enough to assume that mere reading aloud will ensure sufficient literacy development. It is true that in this study those students who engaged in shared book reading experiences with their family were more successful academically. But their success could be a reflection of the types of reading tasks we ask children to do in school. The issue then becomes whether school prepares one for the real world of literacy use. That question is one that could be pursued in a future research study.

Storybook reading can be recommended to parents without hesitation. It is an immensely rewarding activity, it does help literacy development, and it does appear to be at least correlated to success in school. Whether or not school instruction is broad enough to ensure wide ranging success in literacy is another issue yet discussed in a following section.

One problem, however, with the recommendation of storybook reading is the limited availability of books for families with limited incomes. There is no public literacy in Small Tree or Chinle. The nearest facility is in Window Rock which is 120 miles away. The Literacy 2000 Program was successful in supplying books to every child at the school last year. This program should be continued and
should include a partnership between a local community business, such as the County Mart, to offset the increased book handling costs. The school sponsored a Book Fair in the spring. This proved to be a very successful venture. The students purchased over $500.00 worth of books and posters. The proceeds went to the school library for much needed equipment and materials. A school and community partnership should be investigated so that students could be given books as a part of an incentive plan that might have the effects of increasing school attendance and decreasing behavioral problems. Parents need help in acquiring materials for literacy and the community could be a great resource, if they were willing.

What further can be recommended to parents? The following are a list of suggestions that I found were successful in increasing the parent power of my students when I was teaching in a minority setting in Louisiana. I believe they could be applied in Small Tree to increase the literacy development of the children there.

1. Read aloud any written material in the home, including junk mail, cereal boxes, newspapers, notes from schools or bills.

2. Writing materials such as pencils, chalk, paper or crayons should be made available to children. There are stores in Chinle and Window Rock who periodically distribute these items to families.
on the reservation. Also, book companies are more than willing to donate materials to prospective buyers. Churches, too, provide reading and writing materials to communities in need.

3. **Encourage siblings to work together on collaborative projects at home.** For example, one child might read a story to another who in turn would illustrate the book for a gift to grandmother. Children learn from each other in supportive language transactions such as these.

4. **Parents of Native American children should be encouraged to visit the school and to take part in literacy events.** Native American week in October is an opportune time for parents to demonstrate their skills in crafting, weaving, silversmithing, or painting. They should attend PTO meetings and volunteer for special events such as the annual Christmas Program held at Small Tree School.

5. **When it is possible, parents and children should visit the library together and check out books together.**

6. **Bookbags should be provided to younger students to encourage of the use of functional print reading** (Murphy, B., 1987).
7. Video tapes in both Navajo and English should be provided by the school district which offer suggestions on how parents can help their children with school work at home.

8. Simple pamphlets with parent pointers could be developed by the teachers at Small Tree and distributed at the local grocery stores, community events and the hospitals in Chinle and Ganado.

9. Parent involvement workshops could be started at the District office. Title V funds for parental activities are readily available at Small Tree. Refreshments could be provided as well as transportation and child care. Parents indicated that they would be willing to attend these meetings if they could find a way and if someone could take care of the children during that time.

10. Perhaps the most important suggestion is to model the reading and writing process at home. Praise and hug your child whenever he/she reads or writes. This will do wonders for their self-esteem and will motivate them to continue these activities both in and out of school.

Bridging the Gap: Implications for Schools

All children in our society, even in isolated rural areas such as the Navajo reservation, have literate
experiences prior to school. None of these experiences are identical for all children because each literate environment is unique. In order to better understand how to bridge the gap between home and school literacy, it is important to recognize the different communication and participant structures that Navajo children begin to learn at an early age. The following information was collected from interviews and observations carried out during my tenure at Small Tree School. I believe the information will be meaningful for schools because of the impact it could have on restructuring existing curriculum.

1. Direct personal criticism and harsh discipline that might negatively influence a child are avoided in the home. Schools that use corporal punishment within the discipline codes violate those child-rearing practices which attempt to build an inner locus of control. The classroom management strategies recommended by early childhood educators fit with traditional Native American ways of disciplining children in the home. Utilizing these strategies will reduce conflict and stress for children in school.

2. Native Americans may feel indifference to the acquiring of "things" for the sake of ownership. Likewise, status was not viewed as important as was being a good person. This concept is still
true today and is evidenced in such ways as the "give away" ceremonies. Native American children bring these values with them into the classroom, often on an unconscious level. If the teacher has some understanding of the child's traditional values set and world view, she is better able to help children translate these values into behavior that will facilitate achievement in school as well as success later in the world of work. For example, the Native American values of bravery and patience can no longer be expressed by fearlessly and patiently stalking and hunting buffalo, however for some children it takes bravery and patience just to get to school on certain days, to complete assignments on time, or to make decisions that may invite censure by one's peers. The first step in the process of self-examination for Native American children is to bring the value system into the conscious level and to examine these values in view of today's world.

3. Many Native Americans, Navajos included, tend to view time as flowing and relative. Things are done as the need arises and are not "clock-driven." In Small Tree this value caused a major conflict as the school was expected to function
by bells and schedules. Since traditionally Native Americans relied on the sun, moon, and seasons to mark the passage of time, educators must inform themselves of this belief and avoid making assumptions about parents and children who arrive late for appointments.

The most effective method to combat this issue is to provide early orientation meetings for the school community where the expectations of the school staff are greatly, but firmly, stated. Parents need to know that they will be expected to modify their behavior to meet the needs of the school in a non-intimidating manner. To reduce conflicts for the children, educators should look to providing more short-term goals rather than long-term goals. Rewards should be attainable within a short-term frame. Long-term goals can be postponed until children are more mature.

4. Not all children, certainly not all Native American children learn best in the logical, linear, and sequential teaching that is still found in some of today's elementary schools. Things are certainly better today than they were a decade ago. Much of the improvement of the
present school system can be attributed to the effective school research that shed light on correlates of school development that involved all school personnel in decision making and implementation. Native American children excel in an environment that values the aesthetic as well as the analytical learner. These children see the forests, not the trees. They are expressive, intuitive, spontaneous and creative.

In planning lessons teachers should make a concerted effort to integrate activities that accommodate these differences in learning so that all children can succeed and feel good about themselves. The holistic philosophy embraced by the whole language movement should continue in our schools. It is in this philosophy that strategies such as collaborative planning and peer mentoring are at their most operative levels. Native American children can maximize their potential without fear of penalty in a whole language environment that supports authenticity and applauds diversity.

5. Bilingual and bicultural education must be strengthened in today's schools. There is much
evidence in contemporary literature that points to the "melting pot" theory espoused in the 60's and 70's as being a myth. In their text entitled *Stop Being Culturally Assertive Ourselves* (1992) Clark and DeWolf write that:

I used to teach the "melting pot" idea—we have all melted into one, we are all alike; that’s what I was taught by a well intentioned family, a well-intentioned church, and well-intentioned teachers. Gradually, with all the emphasis on multiculturalism these days. I realized that the road to you-know-where-is paved with good intentions and while some individuals who are of racial or ethnic minority groups want to melt and be just another person in the white perspective; middle-class mainstream, other individuals want to maintain their own distinct cultural heritage, histories, and habits (p. 102).

Native Americans definitely fall in the latter category. The conflicts I experienced at Small Tree were a direct result of the Navajos struggle to maintain their unique identity.

Bilingual education supports primary language development and cultural uniqueness. Through the active pursuit of federal funds Native American children anywhere in our country can enroll in courses that support their language and teach their cultural beliefs. Transitional literacy classes, ESL (Second Language
learners), and Navajo culture and language classes should be woven into the existing school curriculum. Native American youth should be encouraged to enroll in college courses to acquire teaching and teacher assistant certification. The strongest support for bilingual education will come for the minority communities of color that are rapidly peopling our once-predominant Anglo towns and cities. I propose that we not resist this global and geographical change, but rather welcome every ethnic culture as a chance to learn more ways for peacefully co-existing in the 21st century.

6. Physical modesty should be considered: the need for privacy in toileting, dressing/undressing and showering in physical education classes must be taken into account and arrangements must be made that will not cause children embarrassment. Native American children are taught from birth to be modest and humble. The more enculturated youth will resist school physical education rules that force children to shower communally in open stalls.
No where is this more evident than in a high school sports events. One ninth grader in Small Tree who was a state long distance runner refused to take a shower after physical education everyday. The track coach was a Mormon who did not understand the boy's resistance. He insisted that I suspend Kyle for disobeying him. After I explained to the teacher the root of Kyle's civil disobedience, arrangements were made to stagger shower times. I also convinced the school board to give us money so that doors could be put on every shower stall. We did not experience this particular problem the remainder of the year.

7. Re-examine the term "At-Risk." There is a tendency among educators to use labels to communicate thoughts and ideas. The continued use of the term "at-risk" to label children who come from homes that do not reflect Anglo American middle-class values and behavior patterns and whose life experiences outside of school have set prepared them for success in conventional schools is unfortunate. Schools should abandon this term and increase their focus on programs that reduce the risk of failure and dropping out.
8. Actualize the phrase "Self-Esteem." Although teachers give lip service to this buzz phrase many still do not know concrete ways to increase their students' self-esteem. More staff development on this topic should be initiated in our schools. School administrators should consider forming a wellness team that would consist of a psychiatrist, social worker, substance abuse counselor, nurse, policeman and a guidance counselor to provide suggestions and inservice for their staff.

I once heard a university professor refer to a teacher's role as that of a parent because they are now required to provide their students with developmental building blocks that families once were expected to provide affirmation, nurturing environment, healthy ways to vent frustrations, to name a few. It is a fallacy to assume that teachers can be parents to every student. It is only through a community commitment and partnership with schools that our society can even begin to resemble what a psychologist would call a functional family unit. Even so, nothing can take the place
of a loving birth parent during a child's formative years.

9. Restructure the teacher education programs at our universities. Very often novice teachers will pursue a teaching position in a minority setting because they are filled with grandiose plans to "change or save the world." I know because I operated under this same disillusionment until I became a participant observer at Small Tree. I had never received any specialized training for being an educator on the Navajo reservation. Rather I was fueled with passion and an intense desire to rescue the Native American children from their seemingly self-destructive social plight.

I am not sorry for pursuing my life-long dream. It was the most rewarding and challenging professional endeavor of my educational career. However, in retrospect, courses that focused on multiculturalism would have been a great help in predicting the cultural dissonance I experienced. Some universities, such as Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, already have a separate course of studies for teachers who indicate desire to teach Native Americans. Although this
may not be necessary at every university, a greater emphasis on multiculturalism should be.

10. Aggressively screen teacher candidates who want to live and reside on an Indiana reservation. These candidates should have bilingual endorsements in the primary language of the community they will be working in. They should not be hired until they spend some time, even a week-end, in the area. Background checks should be done on all these teacher candidates. In the middle of the year it was brought to my attention that three of my teachers had warrants out for their arrests. They felt they could "hide out in Small Tree" and not get caught.

While these may seem like stringent requirements for teachers, my rationale is that we do not need to recruit teacher drop-outs to efficate change in a society that already holds the lead on student drop-outs (80%) nationwide. We need the brightest and the best, preferably, Native American educators to stop the cycle of poverty in the Indian Nations. Harsh weather conditions, poor health services, geographical and cultural isolation, stress, grim living conditions and insecurity await Anglo teachers
who come to the reservation uninformed and uncaring.

Working with Native Americans is challenging and frustrating at times, but with proper preparation it can change your life. As you enrich the lives of others, you cannot help but enrich your own. This spirit of interconnectedness is at the heart of the lessons one will learn as an educator on the Navajo reservation.

The Responsibility Gap: Implications for Community Change

I have described the steps that the home and school can take to illuminate a brighter path to literacy for Native American students. But what can a community do?

I believe that before we can answer that question an operational definition of what is meant by a community should be decided upon.

When I was growing up in a rural town in northern Louisiana the word "community" implied segregated areas on either side of the railroad track where white families and black families co-existed. White children were forbidden to cross the Kansas city freight tracks after 5:00 p.m. Black children who were arrogant enough to try were severely punished by whoever caught them. Racial lines were distinctively delineated and enforced.
Today these delineations are, thankfully, gone. Although pockets of areas still exist where racism is clearly tolerated, there is less evidence of it today than there has ever been in the history of America. For a definition of community that supports the findings of this study, I turned to a book by Dr. M. Scott Peck titled *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (1988). In it Dr. Peck writes:

Anyone who believes that world peace won't be established until religious and cultural differences are obliterated—until all Jews become Christians or all Christians Muslims or all Muslims Hindus—is thereby contributing to a problem not a solution. There simply isn't time for that. Even if there were—even if "one world" meant a melting pot in which everything comes out a bland mush instead of a salad of varied ingredients and textures—I'm not sure that outcome would be palatable. The solution to establishing a sense of community lies in the opposite direction: in learning how to appreciate—yea, CELEBRATE—individual culture and religious differences and how to live with reconciliation in a pluralistic world (pp. 17-18).

How can we do this in our respective communities? Are there realistic and practical ways that we can celebrate diversity and live in harmony? I propose that there are. The key is to start small—to begin with oneself and then to embrace a larger unit such as a classroom.

The following suggestions for community building are adapted from Dr. Peck's above-mentioned text. They are small steps that each of us can take to change pre-existing
myths about Native American children both in and out of a formal classroom or a home.

1. We can listen to and question the music we listen to. Remember the children's song "Ten Little Indians"?

2. We can question stereotypes that are embedded in our language--such as sitting Indian style, Indian giver, filthy savage, or wise old chief.

3. We can look conscientiously at the books we read that depict Native Americans stereotypically. For instance, "Indians live in tepees," "Indians scalp white men," "Indians are drunken thieves."

4. We can think critically about what we do. Do you dress your child in feathered headbands and make toy tomahawks for Halloween? Do you celebrate Columbus Day without any reference to the first Americans, the Indians? On Thanksgiving do we find ourselves thinking of Indian children wearing fringed outfits carrying plates of corn and turkey to the early settlers?

5. We can become more culturally sensitive to remarks or actions our peers might engage in that might be thoughtlessly conventional. For example: If you are at a ballgame where the Tommyhawk Chop is being used, it would be appropriate to refrain from that behavior since
American Indians view this as degrading and defamatory.

6. We can, with our children, speak out about the perpetuation of stereotypes and violations of special group’s perspectives wherever we run into them in the communities we live in. In Texas recently an Apache boy in San Antonio refused to cut his braids. The youth believed that his long hair was a symbol of strength and grace. The principal suspended the boy, but the community wrote so many letters in his behalf that he was quietly reinstated in his eighth grade classroom. In this case community building restored one child’s cultural identity.

7. We can write our congressman, school board, teachers and mayor to help us acquire more materials that will inform the community about antibias and multicultural education. In public libraries, churches, doctor’s offices and schools, literature by Native Americans could be requested. The sad lack of authentic materials by Native Americans in our communities today mirrors the major publishing firms’ economic plight. No demand equates into no buyers. If we begin to flood the book market with these requests, maybe book companies will publish
authentic literature and support the efforts of Native American writers and storytellers.

There is no easy roadmap to chart a way for communities to follow that will support Native American literacy. However, a heightened awareness of the issues by people such as Robert Redford, Kevin Costner, John Trudell, Tony Hillerman, Dan Fogelberg, and President-Elect Bill Clinton will bring a better chance for its survival and growth in the 21st century. By taking control of our future each of us can contribute in our own way to closing the "responsibility gap." In the words of President-Elect Bill Clinton:

"...things can happen. We can change the future and the opportunities for all the people in America if we work together, if we have high standards, if we close the opportunity gap, if we close the responsibility gap (p. 138)."

Conclusions

The Future Literacy of Navajos

Literacy in Navajo has been attempted at Small Tree School and at other schools on the reservation at different times. This can be viewed as a very serious attempt by the schools to adapt to the local culture. However, Rock Point Community School is the only program to have reported much long term success in developing Navajo literacy in addition to literacy in English. Perhaps one of the reasons for this general lack of success is that literacy in Navajo does not fill a particular need in most communities. An
exception to this also happens to be at Rock Point
(McLaughlin, 1987) where members of the community use
written Navajo for personal purposes. Whether the success
of the literacy programs in the school and mission church
led to these personal uses of Navajo literacy or whether
seeing legitimate uses for written Navajo led to the
success of the literacy programs is not clear.

Before instituting future literacy programs, schools
need to be clear about their goals and rationale for the
programs. Clearly, literacy in Navajo can be justified on
a political and cultural basis. The more educated Navajos
become the greater influence they will have on a national
level. That widespread development of literacy in Navajo
could do much in preserving the language and the culture of
the Navajo is more difficult to justify on educational
grounds. Written Navajo is seldom seen or used outside of
a few schools and a few churches. Even monolingual Navajo
speakers have much more contact with written English prior
to school than they do with written Navajo. Few materials
are available in Navajo and most initial instruction is
heavily dominated by a phonetic approach that does not
focus on bringing meaning to print.

Initial literacy in Navajo is not problematic for
Small Tree. Most of the students come to school fluent in
Navajo. A strong bilingual program currently exists that
provides tremendous support for these students. The
transitional first grade class is a critical component of the curriculum. Children in this class are given extensive instruction in Navajo so that they can have a successful year in first grade. Materials that are used in this program are developed by Navajo educators and are taught by Navajo teachers. I believe this makes the program stronger and more meaningful for the students.

Until 1989 the reading and language series used by the school was linguistically based. It was a commercial series that had a traditional format: lesson, skill exercises, workbook pages, and a formal test for the end of each section. In 1989 the school decided to adopt the whole language approach to teaching. Unfortunately, the plan was not carefully thought out and many teachers rebelled against the idea.

Last year when I began my stint as Principal every effort was made to include the teachers in the decision-making process at the building level. We were able to implement portfolio assessment, writing centers, publishing centers, journal writing, and sustained silent reading in every classroom. This was quite an accomplishment and the credit should be given to the staff at Small Tree for their initiative and courage in this risky endeavor.

The future literacy for Navajos in Small Tree lies in the hands of the community. Young people should be encouraged to pursue a vocation. Children should be
encouraged to come to school, complete assignments, and practice self-control. The School Board should make a concerted, united effort to hire qualified Navajo teachers and administrators. And, finally, more materials written by and about Native Americans should be integrated into every part of the existing curriculum at Small Tree Public School.

**Intervention Strategies for Children in Crisis**

The case of Percy (Chapter VII) emphasized the importance of the school in responding to a child during a time of crisis. In this particular situation, the school, the teachers, and the principal are certainly to be commended for their concern and efforts in helping Percy. There are many other children, however, who fall through the cracks in the system and are not brought to the attention of the school until a crisis becomes a tragedy. Besides the two substance abuse counselors, two fulltime guidance counselors and a registered nurse, should be hired by the district. Intensive staff development should be provided to the school personnel on the social problems that plague the school. A wellness team consisting of a doctor, nurse, psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor and substance abuse counselor should be on call to assist parents and teachers when intervention for substance and drug abuse and suicide issues arise. Parenting classes should be provided for the community at
large. Sex education should be integrated into health classes to lower the percentages of unwanted pregnancies that are rampant in Small Tree.

**Gender Success Differences**

The apparent differential success rate in reading of boys and girls and the process by which successful readers are identified by teachers needs to be investigated further. Perhaps by having the teachers involved in more appropriate evaluation methods, some of the differences may disappear. Quantitative studies that investigate gender learning styles and aptitude could be quite beneficial. These studies would provide empirical data that might further substantiate the findings of studies such as this one and the one undertaken by Dr. David Hartle-Schutte at Fort Defiance.

A further conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that the school needs to make an effort to provide more role models of successful adult male Navajo readers. This can be accomplished through hiring practices, involving more adult community members in reading activities in the school and by continuing to place as much authentic Navajo literature that can be found in the hands of the students.

It may well be that the percentages suggested by this study reflect a larger community problem as well. If so,
these changes may involve fundamental changes within the Navajo society itself.

Most of the changes suggested here can not be accomplished immediately. They should involve many people and much long range planning. Above all, they should proceed with an awareness of and a sensitivity to the local culture. The schools should play a large part in the development of literacy for students, even though the students, parents, teachers, and administrative assistant interviewed in this study currently give little credit to the schools. Schools should build upon what the students bring to school, and bridge the gap between the local cultural patterns and the expectations of the school, rather than maintaining the existing roadblocks to literacy. Through a cooperative partnership with parents many more students will become successfully literate. Through changing the infrastructure of the schools in some fundamental ways literacy in school and success in school may become an excellent preparation for needed literacy skills beyond the schools.

*Effectuating Change: Classrooms in Transition*

One way to change the infrastructure of Small Tree School is by implementing effective school research in small increments so as not to overwhelm the students or the staff. Along with increased parental involvement, the presence of high expectations for acceptable student
performance and behaviors along with requirements and other policies that help communicate and effectuate such expectations has been cited as crucial characteristics of virtually all unusually effective schools described in case studies (Levin and Lezotte, 1990).

These research findings go hand in hand with the whole language philosophy now in place at Small Tree. However, there are several ways that student and teacher efficacy can be even further strengthened. The following are a list of these suggestions.

1. Teachers and students should become researchers. Both should be given the freedom to develop curriculum that takes into consideration the unique characteristics of their school setting.

2. Class instruction should continue to move toward a multidisciplinary reading and writing curriculum. Students should be known by direct observations of their problems-solving strategies rather than by test scores and workbook pages (Smith, 1988).

3. Children enter school with a great deal of language; therefore, their oral language should be linked to written forms of language (Snow, C., 1983).

4. Involve teachers in the decision-making process. Give them an opportunity to write or revise
school policies and procedures. The more ownership they feel for the school the more energy they will expend in their efforts to ensure its successful operation.

5. Children should be given many opportunities to focus on decontextualized uses of language. Purpose talk and book-sharing experiences will help move readers along the continuum to becoming accomplished readers (McGee, L. and Richgels, D., 1989).

6. Children learn by doing; therefore, they need opportunities to observe literacy in action, take part in literacy events and construct and test their own hypotheses related to reading and writing (Julienlo, M. F., 1985).

7. Children are influenced by the significant models in their lives; therefore, teachers should extend the modeling role of the parents by becoming active users of reading and writing.

8. Culturally different reading and writing materials should be available in every classroom so that the backgrounds and customs of all ethnic groups can be presented and appreciated (Hansen-Krening, Nancy, 1992).

9. Teachers should consider using ethnographies as pedagogical tools in the classroom (Finders,
Teachers can design opportunities for dynamic classroom interactions by knowledge that is gained through an understanding of ethnographic methodology. Where feasible the use of interviews and observations allow teachers to visit vicariously in the homes of students from diverse backgrounds. Understanding homes and neighborhoods better, teachers can make informed curricular decisions that connect new materials with student's life experiences (Brokey, L., 1987).

The Changing Face of the Navajo Nation

If you want change to happen, begin by changing yourself (Freida Jean Jacques, an Ononelaga Clan Mother).

The Navajo nation is in the midst of great social, economic, cultural and demographic changes. These changes both affect and are affected by literacy development. Chandler (1984) explores the issue of cultural change. "Anthropologists have adopted as an article of faith the paternalistic premise that changing people is wrong" (p. 1978). The real issue, I believe, is the extent of that change. Further, the Navajo people need to be more informed about contemporary issues so that they can take control of the changes in their own communities.

Much of the change, however, that is currently happening to the Navajos is beyond individual or tribal
control. It is the result of increasing contact with the Western culture. The exposure to Anglo music, clothing, hairstyles and behavior has directly affected the language and social dynamics of the young people in Small Tree. Further investigation of this phenomena at Small Tree and in a more acculturated area of the reservation needs to be undertaken to determine the extent to which this exposure has affected the development of literacy for Navajo youth.

There are steps that the Navajo tribe can take if the future vision of the tribe includes life-long literacy skills. More funding should be appropriated for a computer-based literacy system. Not only does every community need its own library, the existing ones in Chinle and Window Rock need to be connected through one central database. Students and parents should have ample opportunities to read the latest research and literature available.

At present much of the funding for the library comes through donations and fund raising activities. The three library bookmobiles which formerly served the entire reservation have not been used for several years. These services are totally inadequate to be of much assistance in literacy development for the majority of the Navajo people.

The tribe has been supportive of higher education through a scholarship program and through tuition negotiations with state universities in Arizona, New
Mexico, Colorado and Utah. Availability of opportunities for employment and higher education that are dependent upon literacy can have the effect of encouraging literacy development for primary and secondary students. However, there is not substantial follow through with the scholarship students and many do not return to the reservation. This is resulting in a "brain drain" from the reservation because of limited opportunities and lower pay than for comparable jobs off the reservation (Triplet, 1988). As a result, role models who could be effective in encouraging young children to become literate and to complete school are missing.

Although there are no firm statistics, it appears that white collar employment is higher for Navajo women than for men. Some of the discrepancy is due to a generally higher unemployment rate among men and to a higher male alcoholism rate. Some may be due to a higher success rate among girls in school. There needs to be more research done in this area to determine the extent of the discrepancy and the possible causes.

Whatever the major cause, it creates the impression that literacy is not as sociably or economically rewarding for Navajo men as for Navajo women. This may lead to Navajo boys valuing literacy less which in turn could lead to fewer males being qualified for white collar positions. Tribal leaders need to determine if this is a serious
problem for the Navajo people that requires further study. One solution might be an intervention program that is both relevant and culturally appropriate.

In the same vein health care is alarmingly inadequate for the Small Tree community. Much of the apathy toward formal medical practices is due to the commitment of the Navajos to the healing ceremonies of the medicine men. However, students come to school with snake bites, serious injuries caused by falling off horses, hepatitis, even polio. More attention should be given to immunization of children against these and other communicable diseases. A doctor from Ganado or Chinle could come to the school to assist the nurse, if only for two or three days a week. The other option would be to provide CPR and first aid training to the entire school staff so that children could be properly cared for when emergencies arise.

Employment opportunities must be expanded on the reservation if education and literacy are to be viewed as attributes that are rewarded. Finally, as the Navajo tribe begins to exert more control over the educational system on the reservation, decisions and policies must be based upon not only what is culturally appropriate and politically expedient, but also upon what is educationally sound.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study replicated the methodology and design of the ethnography undertaken at Fort Defiance Elementary
School in Fort Defiance on the Navajo reservation. The feasibility of this replication was based on the recommendation by Dr. Hartle-Schutte (1988) that a similar population of Navajo students should be studied to determine if more conclusive evidence for home literacy and school literacy could be found.

Longitudinal studies should take place on the Navajo reservation at Small Tree, Fort Defiance or Window Rock. These communities have research efforts in process and would provide a researcher easier access to data that could define the design of an empirical study.

It is important to remember that even though these studies were undertaken on the Navajo reservation the respective communities were unique. The results and the suggestions reported here should not be applied to other situations without carefully study of the characteristics of this situation.

**Research Methodology**

The research approach used in this study has limitations. The dual role that I found myself in as principal of Small Tree School and as a participant observer caused me to change the design of the study once field research began. I have already explained the changes to the research methodology in Chapter V.

Open-ended interviews with the students allowed the rapid collection of large quantities of data in a
relatively short period of time. On the other hand information is limited to what the participants choose to share and is subject to intentionally providing misleading information. Information from various sources was cross-verified through the "triangulation" procedures suggested by Guba (1978), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Spindler (1982) and Kamil, Langer and Shanahan (1986). These procedures provided a cross check to ensure that all of the interview data were reasonably accurate.

Given more time and more resources, the selection of successful readers and writers could have been improved. During the month of October when the selection procedures began, classes were still in a state of flux and change. Students and teachers were being shifted from one room to another. It is possible that teacher judgment and sampling criteria were not as accurate as it could have been because of this mobility. However, the use of the Informal Reading Inventory, the Slosson Oral Reading Test and ITBS fall reading schools were used to verify teacher judgment and observations during the month of November, 1991.

Learning Styles

More attention should be given to the differing learning styles that students are subjected to in the classroom. In this study students were more on task and were more intrinsically motivated when they were working collaboratively. Proxemics should be investigated further
to determine the dynamics between Anglo and Navajo teachers and students. The use of a behavior classroom inventory would strengthen the observation period of the researcher and would also tell us more about teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

**Authentic Assessment**

More follow-up should be devoted to authentic assessment procedures at Small Tree School. Teachers should have intensive, consistent staff development on the portfolio system. Students should also have a greater input in the selection of student work to be included in their working portfolios. As the system progresses, holistic scoring should move to analytical then primary trait scoring of writing samples. A consultant such as Dr. Terri McCarty should continue to work jointly with the principals and bilingual director to ensure the success of this assessment approach across grade levels and federal guidelines.

**Publishing Center**

A publishing center should be established at the school. The Federal Programs building has 15 computers that are presently not being utilized. There is also money through Title VC that could be used to hire a fulltime computer specialist that could maintain the center. The Navajo students are exceptionally creative in art and poetry. Other schools around the country have started
publishing centers and are even developing their own anthologies. This initiative might reduce the absenteeism rate and increase student motivation.

**Underestimation of Successful Readers**

This study documents the existence of successful Navajo readers in proportions larger than normally reported. This was a result of using instruments that allowed the teachers and researcher to observe the reading process rather than relying exclusively on norm referenced tests. The extent of this underestimation of success needs to be investigated further with Navajo readers, as well as other minority groups that are identified as less successful.

The impact of using inappropriate measures also needs further study. Are the students with poor scores convinced that they are poor readers and therefore choose to avoid reading? Does the test taking process itself create an artificial environment that causes students to perform poorly? Other norm-referenced tests should be reviewed to determine whether the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is the most appropriate one to use at Small Tree School.

**The Road Not Taken**

Though the answers to all of the preceding questions are important and relevant, it is imperative that action be taken now to increase the chances for Navajo children to become literate. We know that children achieve literacy in
unique and personal ways. We know too that every home environment has a different family structure in place and that children who grow up in literate environments will value reading and writing.

We also know that there is a difference between home literacy skills and school literacy skills and that the discontinuities between the two can cause problems for the Navajo child. This gap can be bridged through successful transactions with a literate adult or a peer.

What we don’t know is which path to take to eliminate all of the roadblocks that cause Navajo children to become unsuccessful readers and writers. Perhaps as educators we must forge a new path, one that is experimental and seemingly risky. It could be that as visionaries we can create a road not yet taken. Maybe if we accept this challenge, there will no longer be a need to investigate why Navajo children experience failure in our schools. Instead there will only be stories of success and a collective cause for celebration.
NOTE TO THE READER

The following epilogue is an exercise in reflective discourse. It is intended to be read as a metaphor of the experiences that occurred while research was being conducted at Small Tree Public School District #4. Metaphors are appropriate vehicles for expressing personal opinions and beliefs in ethnographic research (Patton, 1980).
Small Tree: School Under Siege

Epilogue

(To the Children)

Small Tree is a school under siege. It is a battleground of cultural clashes; politics, and power plays. Yet this is an insidious battle. It is not one that can be easily seen or understood, especially by outsiders. Here the warriors dress and talk, for the most part, in a "civilized" manner. The artillery is not made of steel, but of rage. The victims are the students who are not mature enough to protect themselves from the fury of those in combat. Casualties can be counted, also, in the teaching and administrative ranks.

Until this siege is over there will continue to be chaos in this school. Before I left Small Tree I drove one last time to Flagstaff, Arizona. In the museum there is a statue of a Navajo warrior tearing his chest, his face wrenched in agony. Half of the warrior is dressed in traditional clothing and the other half in a suit and tie. I believe that this statue symbolizes the root of the battle waging at Small Tree.

As I drove away from Flagstaff, I stopped to look with reverence at the San Francisco mountains which frame that rustic city. I remember the words of one of my fifth grade students, a beautiful Navajo girl with shining raven hair. She gave me a tearful hug when she found out I would not be
back next year and cried, "Ms. Kritsonis, you're the first white woman I've ever loved and trusted. What will happen to us now?"

What will happen to you now, Samantha, is in the hands of the Great Spirit. But I can't help but feel, as I feast my eyes on the majesty of this sacred land, that peace will come to Small Tree—not in my lifetime, but in yours.
REFERENCES


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Platero, P. et al. (1986). Navajo students at risk: final report for the Navajo area dropout study. Window Rock, Arizona: Navajo Division of Education.


Soldier, Little Lee (September, 1992). Working with Native Americans. Young Children, 42 (3), 16.


APPENDIX A

BOOKS READ BY STUDENTS FOR INTEREST AND WRITING ASSESSMENT


APPENDIX B

SLOSSON ORAL READING TEST (SORT)
PLEASE NOTE

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been filmed at the request of the author. They are available for consultation, however, in the author's university library.

318-319,
Appendix B

University Microfilms International
APPENDIX C

THE INFORMAL READING INVENTORY (IRI)
September 8, 1900 was Edith Goodwin's birthday! A strange light hung over the island where she lived. Her father ran through the front door. He had been out all night. He told them that a hurricane was coming. Shortly after his arrival, the water from the Gulf came roaring down the street, large breakers were dashing against everything in their path. Suddenly, with a loud roar, the Gulf covered the whole city. In Edith's yard the water was four feet deep.

The family worked frantically to pack books, pictures and other valuables and carry them upstairs. Furniture, silver and imported carpets were put upstairs. This was to protect them from the rising waters. The house was in danger of being broken apart by the force of the large breakers. Edith's family realized that their lives were in danger. Even though their house was large and sturdy enough to withstand the strong winds, they feared it would break apart from the force of the surging Gulf waters.

Comprehension Questions and Possible Answers

1. What would be a good title for this story? (interpretive)
   Any reasonable answer

2. Why was September 8 special for Edith? (literal)
   It was her birthday and the day of the hurricane.

3. How deep was the water in Edith's yard? (literal)
   4 feet deep

4. What did her father say when he came in the house? (literal)
   He told them that a hurricane was coming.

5. Why do you think the father had been out all night? (interpretive)
   To gather information about the hurricane; to help prepare; any reasonable answer

6. Do you think Edith and her family survived the hurricane? Why or why not? (interpretive)
   Any reasonable answer

7. In a hurricane, which do you think can cause more damage: wind or rain? (critical)
   The strong winds; any reasonable answer

8. If your home was in the path of a hurricane, what damage do you think would occur? (critical)
   Any reasonable answer

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Recognition Errors</th>
<th>Comprehension Errors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 Independent if</td>
<td>0-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-8 Instructional if</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more Frustrational if</td>
<td>3 or more</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY
MEMORANDUM

TO : All Middle School Staff
FROM : Diane Kritsonis, Assistant Principal
DATE : September 17, 1991
SUBJECT : Needs Assessment Survey

Please complete the following survey and return it to me by Tuesday, October 1, 1991. The answers will be used to provide direction in the development of our Middle School action plan.

Feel free to discuss the questions with your colleagues. I value and appreciate your input as we begin our planning initiative together.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask me. Thank you for your dedication, energy, and support. You are a joy to work with!

DK:cb

xc: file distribution
Margaret Etsitty, Director, Federal Programs
Miguel Qunitero, Acting Superintendent
PINON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4
MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY

NAME: ______________________________
GRADE: ___________________________

1. What are your short term goals for the 1991-92 school year?

2. Discuss your long-term goals for Pinon School? (3-5 years)

3. Identify the strengths of Pinon School.

4. What do you consider to be the areas of concern for Pinon School?

5. What initiatives would you like to see implemented in the Middle School for the 1991-92 school year? (i.e. interdisciplinary strategies, buddy system, clubs, etc.)

6. Would you be willing to sponsor or chair one of these initiatives? If so, which one would you feel most comfortable with? (consider teaming with a colleague).

Please return to Diane Kritsonis by Tuesday, October 1, 1991
APPENDIX E

WRITING SKILLS CHECKLIST
### 4-9 Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill 1 - Writes a personal experience narrative (The paper)</th>
<th>4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. offers some insight or meaning to the experience narrated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. develops the plot sufficiently for the event to be understood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. shows the reader what happens; does not just 'tell'.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. uses descriptive words and phrases to elaborate on the experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage do not impede comprehension.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill 2 - Writes a Story (The paper)</th>
<th>4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. is developing around a standard plot line (beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, denouement).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. has well-developed major characters and minor characters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. has a definite and well described setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. shows, instead of tells, the events in the story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage do not impede comprehension.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill 3 - Writes a report</th>
<th>4 5 6 7 8 9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. reports the subject accurately and clearly.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. has a beginning which states the subject to be covered, a middle that develops the subject and an end that summarizes the paper.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. contains facts, details, examples, and descriptions that clearly support the main idea on of the paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. has a topic that is narrow enough to be completely and thoroughly covered.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage do not impede comprehension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill 4 - Writes a communication (a letter, invitation, thank you note, letter to editor/public figure, message, notice, instructions). (The paper)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. has an audience and purpose clearly evident in the communication.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. meets the needs of the audience for that purpose in an efficient way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. contains no gaps, omissions, or assumptions that could impede comprehension.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. follows the conventional style for the type (i.e. memo, letter, message, . . .)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punct. and usage do not impede comprehension.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill 5 - Writes a poem (The paper)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. takes the form of a poem (in lines of poetry as opposed to run-on lines of prose).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. describes an event/person/place/object with sensory detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. lets the reader know how the poet feels about the subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. contains some kind of pattern (rhyme, rhythm, repetition of words/phrases, spacing on page, alliteration, . . .).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. contains some form of imagery (simile, metaphor, personification).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill 6 - Writes a summary (original from which summary was made needs to be available or known)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. contains the main ideas of the event/article/story plus the most significant details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. is written in the student's own words, except for the material quoted from the source.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. reflects the underlying meaning of the source, not just the superficial details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. is organized and clearly-written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punct. capitalization, and usage do not impede comprehension.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Skill 7 - Writes a specialized expository paper (The paper)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. follows an organizational pattern particular to its type (i.e. if description, is spatial; if directions, is sequential; if cause and effect, is paired, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. contains an introductory statement or paragraph stating the thesis or purpose of the paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. contains a summary or clincher statement or paragraph concluding the development of the thesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. develops the idea in the paper with proof, details, facts, examples, or description.</td>
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</table>
5. shows evidence of editing and proofreading final draft so that errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage do not impede comprehension.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signatures:</th>
<th>4th Grade Teacher</th>
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Comments:

**WORK HABITS:**

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**ATTITUDE:**

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APPENDIX F
SAMPLE PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS SHEET
Student Name: ____________________ Date: ________________

**Overall** (reading/writing projects, genres, engagement, use of resources [peers, books] self-evaluation, effort, improvement, motivation, goal-setting, etc.):

**Reading Strengths/Needs** (planning, comprehension strategies, trouble-shooting, versatility, engagement, reflection, motivation, self-evaluation, ongoing goals, etc.)

*Navajo*  

**Writing Strengths/Needs** (planning, trouble-shooting, revision, use of resources, motivation, reflection, self-evaluation, ongoing goals, etc.)

*Navajo*  

*Adapted from *Portfolio Assessment in the Reading-Writing Classroom* by R. Tierney, et al. (Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Norwood, MA, 1991); T. L. McCary, April 1992.*
APPENDIX G

SAMPLE PORTFOLIO CLASS SUMMARY CHECKLIST
## Portfolio Criteria

*Notes from conferences and portfolio analysis*

**Time Period of Observations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Self-Eval.</th>
<th>Versatility</th>
<th>Surface Features</th>
<th>Text Features</th>
<th>Trouble Shooting</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
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**Summary Notes:**

APPENDIX H

STUDENT INTERVIEWS
Student Name: ________________________________

Student Interview Questions

(Interview to be conducted in a casual, informal manner to put the students at ease as much as possible. Specific questions and wording will vary depending upon student responses.)

1. Tell me what you remember about learning to read?

2. What makes you a good reader now?

3. Is there anything at home that you think helped you learn to read?

4. Do you know anyone that has trouble reading?

5. Do you speak or understand Navajo?

6. Do other people at your home read?

7. Do you have things in your home to read?

8. Did you/do you ever do writing at home that isn’t homework?

9. Do you have a younger brother/sister? Do you read or write together at home?

10. Does your family do anything now that you think will help _________ become a good reader?
APPENDIX I

LETTER SENT TO STUDENT'S PARENTS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN STUDY
November 4, 1991

Dear:

We are trying to find out as much as we can about what helps children in the Pinon area become successful in learning how to read and write.

Your child, ________________ has been identified as a successful reader and writer. We hope that you will be willing and able to share with us your ideas about what you think was important in helping him/her become a successful reader/writer.

We do know that school is important in helping children learn to read, but some children are more successful in learning how to read than other children in same school. We also know that the parents and the home can be very important in helping children become good readers.

I would like to talk with you about your child and how he/she became a good reader/writer. Your participation is entirely voluntary, but I am very hopeful that you will choose to talk with me. This information may be very helpful in developing suggestions for other parents, as well as for improving our school program.

I would like to interview one of both parents (or guardians) once or twice during this school year, at a time convenient to the parents. Interview times can be scheduled on weekdays after 3:45 p.m., in the evenings, or on weekends. Interviews should take about 45 minutes.

Your privacy will be protected, whether you choose to participate or not, but we are very hopeful that you will choose to help us understand how children become successful readers in Pinon. Please sign and return the attached form to me in the enclosed envelope. I will be in contact with you to set up an interview time as soon as possible.

This study has been approved and is supported by the school board and the superintendent. If you have any further questions at this time, please do not hesitate to call me at Pinon School between 8:00 am - 5:00 pm., (602) 725-3381-3382. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Pinon Unified School District No. 4

Diane Kritsonis, Acting Principal
APPENDIX J

LITERACY ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST
Student Name: 

Parent(s) Name: 

Is the functional use of print observed in:

daily messages, schedules, assignments, notices (chalkboard, bulletin board, or charts) 
labels (on cabinets, containers, equipment) (to identify needed materials and storage areas) 
current child-written messages, labels, etc. 
bulletin boards, etc., related to class activities 
different charts, including:
songs 
nursery rhymes 
class or group original stories 
calendar 
class log or diary 
recipes 
project directions 
instructions for pet care, etc. 

Is use functional use of print on an individual basis observable in:

student labeling of own work (including but not limited to name) 
individual journals or log books 
student published materials 

physical and temporal access to a variety of writing materials and equipment (markers, pencils, pens, chalk, paper, chalkboard, etc.) 
letter writing or pen pals 

individual message to parents 
parent notes to child
Is a variety of printed material available/accessible?

Children's literature ____________________

references (dictionaries, encyclopedias, lists, charts, pictures, etc.) ____________________

non-fiction information books ____________________
miscellaneous print (comics, newspapers, maps, globes, student authored books, magazines) ____________________

Is the modeling of literacy behaviors by the parent observed:

Writing:
notes to child ____________________
notes to family ____________________
notes to other adults ____________________
notes to self ____________________
revises and edits ____________________

Reading:
communication from others ____________________
books to children ____________________
notices, announcements, etc. to kids ____________________
other materials to self ____________________

Attitudes:
tries new things ____________________
makes and points out own errors ____________________
refers to books or other references ____________________
models enjoyment of reading and writing ____________________
responds to message over form ____________________
encourages child to attempt reading and writing ____________________

Comments:
APPENDIX K

STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS
Prompt

Interview a family member who remembers the Navajo Livestock Reductions that occurred in the early 1900's. Use the language of the person being interviewed whenever you can. Give as much information about the person being interviewed, as possible. Tell how old they are, where they live and what clan they belong to.

Developed by the sixth grade class at Small Tree Public School.
APPENDIX L

NAVAJO LIVESTOCK REDUCTION
NAVAJO LIVESTOCK REDUCTION

In the 1930s, John Collier, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, started the livestock reduction and he gave out livestock permits.

I interviewed my grandma, Annie Jean Begay. She is 61 years old and lives in Burnt Corn. She is of the Coyote Pass Clan and born for the Towering House Clan. During the livestock reduction, my grandma was 27 years old. She told us a story that goes like this...

"It was in the afternoon, we were in the shadehouse and some men came. They told us they were going to give shots to the horses, sheep, and the cattle. We rounded up all of the them and put them in three different corrals. We didn't know what they were going to do. All we knew was they were going to give shots to them. That time we had three hundred head of sheep, two hundred horses, and one hundred-fifty-five cattle. The men took out their guns and killed over two
hundred head of sheep. We tried to stop them every way we could but it didn't work. They did the same thing to the others. It was like a living hell to us for over a year or so. It was terrible to see our livestock being slaughtered."

That's how the story goes. I think it was very terrible to see livestocks get slaughtered. I heard a lot of Navajo elderlies died when it happened.

by: Loretta
Livestock Reduction

Cecil Altisi
Salt Clan/Deersprings
Dinebito

My great grandfather told my father about livestock reduction. He said that they were going to take the horses to Whitewater (west of Pinon) to check to see if the horses were sick. Then they drove the horses down a hill near Whitewater. As they were going down the hill they heard gunshots. My great grandfather turned the horses around but one white man who was standing on the hill shot and killed one of the stallions. The white people kept shooting as my great grandfather tried to escape. Three more horses fell as they shot at the running horses. They seemed to enjoy killing the horses but, it sure was not enjoyable to the Navajo people.

People in the area did not want to go down the hill to see where the horses had been shot. After the incident, my great grandfather drove the horses home and put them in the horse corral.
Then a few days later a whiteman came over and told my great grandfather that his horses were sick. We were told to drive the horses to a place called Window Rock near Winslow. My great grandmother told her husband to take only one horse because they might kill all of them. So my grandfather rode only one horse out there.

After the horse was tested they said that one more had to die. My great grandfather butchered the horse and they put the horse meat in the truck.

Then the whitemen came over and took my great grandfather to jail in Prescott, Arizona.

Ambrose
Navajo livestock Reduction

Bertha James
Maternal clan: Manygoats
Resident: Pinon

I was 12 years old, During the livestock Reduction in 1930's. The cause of the Livestock Reduction, was that the Government said,"The Livestock are ruining the environment. The grasses are dying, they're are trails from livestock every where. This was not true, their were lots of grass for the Livestock to feed on". The environment was not like this, (today).

John Collier and his Navajo range riders said, "You're not suppose to have this kind of horses their no good, they're like this and that." So they shot them right in front our very eyes.

The sheep and goats again were taken, shot, slaughter, and burned, But ours was just taken from us. And at last the cows were taken again. The amount for every head was only $2.00.

Hearing the cries of the livestock made a lot of Navajo people sick, soon some died from that. A lot of Navajo's lives ended during the Livestock Reduction, in the 30's.

Some Navajo people that helped in the Livestock Reduction were called dirty names. So were the people that worked in the jail.

Navajos went to jail, if they refused to except the grazing Regulation and the Grazing permit. They wouldn't get out of ended they agreed to have the Grazing permit and Grazing Regulation.

Our livestocks were gone only a very few was left for us, with a grazing permit. How I thought about the Navajo Livestock Reduction, was oh no, their goes another one, wondering how we well live in the future.

By: Clara
Parent Interview Questions

1. How do you think ________ does in reading now?

2. What do you remember about ________ learning to read?

3. What do you think has been (most) important in ________ becoming a good reader?

4. Did ________ ever have trouble in reading?

5. Were there things that someone at home did or does that has helped ________ become a good reader?

6. Are there things that you had or now have in your home that you feel has helped ________ become a good reader?

7. Do/Did you (or someone else in the house) read to your children?

8. Is there anything about ________’s personality that has helped him/her become a good reader?

9. Is ________ generally a good student, or just in reading?

10. Do you consider your family traditional?

11. Did ________ grow up hearing mostly Navajo, mostly English, or both?
12. What are your *memories* as a child for learning to read?

13. What type of schools did you attend?

14. You have children that aren't old enough to go to school?

15. Do you do anything differently with your younger children than you did with ________?

16. If you had to give advice to someone about how to help their child become successful in reading, what would you suggest?

17. Do you have any comments or suggestions about what the schools are doing or should be doing to help children become good readers?

I would like to quickly summarize from my notes what you have told me to see if I have everything correct, and to see if you have anything to add or change.

If I have any other questions later, can I get in touch with you?
APPENDIX N

LETTER TO STUDENT’S PARENTS REQUESTING INPUT INTO THE 1992-93 CURRICULUM

350
February 5, 1992

Dear Parents:

Pinon Unified School District is in the process of determining program needs for the 1992-93 school year. In order to do this we are asking that you help us by answering this survey about your child's reading habits.

The results of this survey will be used to develop and redefine our language arts curriculum. We believe there is a need to integrate reading to a greater extent into our instructional program. Your input will help to bring this about.

Please respond to these questions in a timely fashion and return them to the school no later than Monday, February 24. Your child will receive a small incentive for your return of this survey.

Thank you for helping to make Pinon an effective model for teaching and learning. Though your efforts we will greater serve the students of Pinon School. If you have any questions concerning this survey, please feel free to call the office.

Respectfully,

Diane Kritsonis, Carmelita Chee, and Clayton Lucas

enclosures

DK:cb

xc: file
APPENDIX O

BUFFALO WOMAN
There was a young man who was already a great hunter. Even coyotes and the crows and magpies followed him to pick up the scraps from his hunting. He felt a wonderful harmony with the buffalo. The people knew he could find the herds when they needed meat. When they had hunted, the young man gave thanks that the buffalo had offered themselves.

One early morning the young man went to a place at the stream where the buffalo came to drink. He waited, hidden among the bushes, watching the butterflies opening and closing their wings in the warming sun.

After a while the young man saw a buffalo cow plodding through the tall weeds toward the water. He tightened an arrow against his bowstring.

The buffalo was coming very slowly.

The young man did not know whether he fell asleep, or what happened, but when he looked again the buffalo was not there. Instead, a beautiful young woman stepped from the weeds onto the pebbles at the water’s edge and took a drink. She was not one of his people; her clothes were different and her hair was not braided. She smelled of wild sage and prairie flowers. He knew at once that he loved her.

"I come from the buffalo nation," she told him. "They have sent me because you have always had good feelings for our people. They know you are a good and kind man. I will
be your wife. My people wish that the love we have for each other will be an example to both our peoples to follow." The young man and the beautiful young woman were married. They had a soon and named him calf boy. Their life together was good.

But the young man’s relatives did not like his wife. They often said unkind things among themselves: "He has married a woman without a family," they said. "Her ways are different; she’s like an animal. She will never be one of our family."

One day when the young man was away hunting, his relatives came and said to his wife: "You should never have come here; go back to wherever you came from. You are nothing but an animal, anyway." At that she immediately picked up calf boy and ran out of the tippee.

The young man was returning home when he saw his wife and child hurrying away from the camp. He was angry when he found out what had happened, and set out at once to bring them back.

Their trail led across rolling country. He followed all day, hearing the grasshoppers calling again and again from the sagebrush on every side. Evening was coming when he saw in the distance a painted tippee with smoke rising from a cooking fire.

The young man was surprised to see his son playing outside the tippee. When calf boy saw his father he ran to
meet him. "I am glad you have come, father. Mother has your meal ready." He took his father's hand they went inside. The lodge was filled with the good smell of cooking. His wife placed a bowl of soup before him. "I am going home," she said. "I cannot live with your people. Do not follow us or you will be in great danger." "I love you," the young man said, "and wherever you and our son go, I am going too."

The young man awoke next morning looking up into the sky. The tippee was gone! There was nobody anywhere. Yet, it had not just been a dream, because he could see the circle in the dew-soaked grass where the tippee had stood, and the tracks of his wife and child leading away.

The young man followed their trail until he again came to the tippee. His son ran out to meet him.

"Mother does not want you to come any farther. Tomorrow she will make the rivers dry, but when you are thirsty, look for water in my tracks."

That evening his wife told him: "My people live beyond that distant high ridge. They know I am coming home. They are angry because your relatives were unkind to me. Do not follow any farther or they will kill you." But the young man replied: "It does not matter when I die. I shall not turn back. I do this because I love you both."

When his wife was asleep he buckled his belt through hers and wrapped her long hair around his arm.
Again the young man awoke alone. The only tracks in the dew were those of a buffalo and her calf walking side by side. While he was wondering about the tracks, a flock of little birds flew around him excitedly: "They have gone home! They have gone home!" He then knew that the tracks were of his wife and child.

The tracks led toward the high ridge. Thin lines of trees marked the winding rivers. They were dry, but just as calf boy had told, he found water in his hoof-prints in the baked mud of the river-beds.

From the top of the high ridge the young man looked out in wonder over the multitude of the buffalo nation.

As he walked down toward them a calf came running out. "Father, go back! They will kill you! Go back!"

But the young man answered: "No, son, I shall always stay with you and mother."

"Then you must be brave," calf boy said. "My grandfather is chief of the buffalo nation. Do not show fear or he will surely kill you. He will ask you to find me and mother. But you think we all look alike! When he lines us up, you will know me because I shall flick my left ear. You will find mother because I shall put a cockle-burr on her back. You must pick us out and then you will be safe. Be attentive!"

The old bull bellowed and charged out from the herd. The ground trembled under his thundering hoofs. He stopped
just in front of the young man. He pawed the earth into dust clouds, hooked his horns into clumps of sagebrush and tossed them aside in anger. The young man stood still. He showed no fear.

"Ah, this straight-up-person has a strong heart," breathed the old bull. "By your courage you have saved yourself. Follow me."

The old bull led the way. The silent multitude parted and joined again behind. At the center was the painted tippee. The whole buffalo nation formed into radiating circles. The calves made the inner ring; the yearlings the next, the cows and bulls, all according to their ages.

"Straight-up-person," said the old bull in a voice which all could hear, "your relatives insulted my daughter. But you have come among us because you love your wife and child. Then find them! If you cannot, we shall trample you until not even a stain of your blood remains."

The young man passed in front of the little calves. They looked alike, but one flicked his ear as if troubled by a fly. He laid his hand on the calf's head. "My son," he said, and a sound of surprise came from the multitude. "This must be a wonderful person," they said.

He then walked around the circle formed by the cows. Again, they all looked alike, but he came to one with a cockle-burr on her back; "my wife," he said. Once more a
sound of surprise came from the buffalo nation: "Ah, he calls her 'wife'."

"This straight-up-person loves his wife and little child," the old bull announced. "He was willing to die for them. We shall make him one of us. We shall all join in with our thoughts while we do this."

The young man was led inside the tippee and they tied the door shut. His only covering was a buffalo robe with the horns and hoofs attached.

For three days and nights the buffalo surrounded the tippee, filling the air with their continuous grunts and bellowing.

On the fourth day the bulls made sudden rush and pushed the tippee over. They rolled and rolled the young man in a wallow until he was covered all over with dirt. They squeezed the breath from his body and breathed new breath into him. They licked him and rubbed against him until his man-smell was gone. He tried to stand but he could not. He felt the robe become a part of him. When the bulls heard him grunting they worked even harder, tumbling him over and over.

And at last, he stood up on his own four legs—a young buffalo bull.

That was a wonderful day! The relationship was made between the people and the buffalo nation; it will last until the end of time. It will be remembered that a brave
young man became a buffalo because he loved his wife and little child. In return the buffalo people have given their flesh so that little children, and babies still unborn, will always have meat to eat. It is the creator's wish.

Mitakuye Oyasin—we are all related.

son of the buffalo bulls, from the Osage tribe:
I rise, I rise, I, whose tread makes the earth rumble.
I rise, I rise, I, in whose legs there is strength.
I rise, I rise, I, who whips his back with his tail when in rage.
I rise, I rise, I, in whose humped shoulder there is power.
I rise, I rise, I, who shakes his mane when angered.
I rise, I rise, I, whose horns are curved and sharp.
A. After you have read the story

1. What were your feelings as you read this story?

2. Below is a drawing of the young man's head. If you could look inside his mind when his relatives made his wife and son go away, what do you think you would see?
   a. Use pictures and words to show how you think the young man felt.
   b. Tell why you choose the pictures and words that you did.

3. Read these lines from the story again:
   "This straight-up-person loves his wife and little child," the old bull announced. "He was willing to die for them. We shall make him one of us. We shall all join in with our thoughts while we do this."
   a. What do you think the young man was feeling as he heard these words?
   b. Draw a picture of this ceremony. Label the young man called "straight-up-person."

4. Think about the ending of the story. Did you like the way the story ends? If so, tell why? If not, tell why?
5. This story is titled "Buffalo Woman." Can you think of another good name for it? Why did you choose the name you did?

6. This is your page to write on. Tell us anything you want to about the story. What did you learn from the story? Who was your favorite character? Why did you choose this character?
Section Two

Working with your Group

Group Leader:

1. When the young man’s wife first appeared, she did so in the form of a buffalo cow. In your group talk about the feelings you think the young man may have had when he awoke from his dream and saw a beautiful woman. Below write what your group thinks.

   My group thinks that:

2. The story you read gives some clues about the way the buffalo woman looked as a person. By yourself, think about how this woman might have looked as a person.

   a. In the box below draw a picture of the young woman.

   b. Now write a cinquain poem under your drawing to describe the young woman and your feelings about her. Here is an example of a cinquain poem:

   Buffalo Woman
   young, mysterious
   runs, laughs, cries
   moves like an animal
   wife
   (noun) 1
   (adjectives) 2
   (action words) 3
   (phrase) 4
   (noun) synonym
3. In your group, share your drawings and poems. Ask each member to give you a synonym for one adjective in the second line of your poem. Rewrite your poem using this synonym.
Section Three

Getting Ready to Write

Certain Native American tribes in the Southwest believe that special human beings can change shapes to become animals. These people are called Shapeshifters. They change shapes to trick people and to disguise themselves to move among people and places they consider dangerous. Shapeshifters take on in animal form the qualities that the person had in human form.

For example: If you are graceful, quiet, tall, and have straight black hair, you might become a panther.

Pretend that you could become a Shapeshifter. What animal would you become? Why did you choose this animal? What would you do as a Shapeshifter? Who would you tell about your ability to change shapes? What message would you tell them? How would this change make you feel: as a person, as an animal? You may use your notes, drawing or poems from your group work. You may use the space below to add any ideas as you get ready to write.

Time to Write:

Write about becoming a Shapeshifter. When you write be sure to use words that will help your reader "see" the animal you have become. Be sure to describe your feelings about this change to your reader. Write as much as you need to so that the reader can understand your experience as a Shapeshifter.
APPENDIX P

CODES USED IN A STUDY OF THE LITERACY CHARACTERISTICS OF NAVAJO READERS AND WRITERS
1. Tradition
2. Fear
3. Anger
4. Beauty Way
5. Ceremonies
6. Alcoholism
7. Livestock
8. Silver
9. Bilingual
10. Mormons
11. Discipline
12. Weather
13. Cults
14. School Board
15. Dissidence
16. Elders
17. Sacred Mountains
18. Superintendent
19. Gallup
20. Friends
21. Language
22. Disease
23. Travel
24. Power
25. Parents
26. Clans
27. Sports
28. Apathy
29. Creative
30. Anglos
31. "Ditching"
32. Peyote
33. Stonewalling
34. "Making a run"
35. Teacher assistants
36. House arrest
37. Letters of reprimand
38. Stealing
39. COPE
40. Maggie May
41. Lloyd
42. Kody Bear
43. Policy
44. Community school politics
45. Navajo weavers
46. "Stonewalling success"
47. Battleground
48. Stray dog
49. Flagstaff
50. Loneliness
1. Semantic Relationships:  Strict Inclusion

2. Form: \[ X \text{ (is a king of ) } y \]

3. Example: An Akita (is a kind of) dog.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included Terms</th>
<th>Semantic Relationship</th>
<th>Cover Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Arrest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letters of reprimand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear</td>
<td>is a kind of</td>
<td>control strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stonewalling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The included terms are themes that emerged from coding the data. (See Appendix P.) Using the domain analysis I was able to prioritize and categorize the themes into manageable domains. Instead of trying to use multi forms of semantic relationships, I concentrated on two: strict inclusion and cause effects. I was able to use these two forms to sort out the rest of the cultural domains in my field data.
VITA
Diane Clarite Greene is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur L. Greene who reside at 9967 Patio Court in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Diane has one son, Dylan, who is a senior at Woodlawn High School.

The researcher of this study has four degrees from Louisiana State University: a Bachelor of Science degree awarded in 1971; a Master's degree in Reading awarded in 1974; a Specialist degree in Administration granted in 1983; and a Doctor of Philosophy degree which will be formally awarded in May, 1993. Currently, Diane is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi.
Candidate: DIANE GREENE

Major Field: EDUCATION

Title of Dissertation: THE LITERACY CHARACTERISTICS OF NAVAJO READERS AND WRITERS

Approved:

Earl Cheek
Major Professor and Chairman

James Boyer
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Baselinda Charlesworth
Charles Toddlein
Robert Ramoz
Tom Zava
Jana Windolf

Date of Examination:
DECEMBER 10, 1992