
Wanda Henderson Handy

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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The writing behaviors of five kindergarteners writing in social context: A home-school perspective

Handy, Wanda Henderson, Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993

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THE WRITING BEHAVIORS OF FIVE KINDERGARTENERS WRITING IN SOCIAL CONTEXT: A HOME-SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

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

Wanda Henderson Handy
B.A., Southern University, 1976
M.Ed., Southern University, 1978
August 1993
Dedication

To My Parents, Caleb and Dolores Henderson
and
My Son, Charley Handy, IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to the many persons who provided support for me while I continued my studies. A special thank you is extended to my dissertation committee under the direction of Dr. David England, my major professor. He offered advice, knowledge, and time that were invaluable and critical to my completion of this goal. I would like to thank the other members of the committee who shared their expertise and helped me to grow as a scholar. Those members of my committee were Dr. Jill Brody, Dr. Rosalind Charlesworth, Dr. Ann Trousdale, Dr. George Yule and Dr. Pierre Hart. A special thanks is extended to Dr. Patricia Edwards a former, but valuable member of my committee.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between written language and spoken language and the function of that relationship during the beginning writing development of five kindergarteners from diverse literacy environments. In addition, observable writing behaviors of these five kindergarteners from more literate and less literate home environments were studied at home and in school.

Ethnographic methodology was employed. Data collection included interviews, participant observation, field notes, checklists, photographs, audio recordings, video recordings, and writing samples. For 4 months, the case study participants were observed once a week while writing at home and in the school writing center. Data were analyzed for emergent patterns in the dialogue, action, and interaction.

Analyses of the data revealed four categories relevant to the participants' home and school writing experiences: (1) use of models; (2) purposes for writing; (3) relationship between writing and writing
tools; and (4) relationship between writing events and spoken language. Findings indicate that within groups the home writing behaviors were similar while the home writing experiences between groups were diverse.

School writing experiences for the children from more literate and less literate home environments were similar as the children collaborated during writing events. A majority of the spoken language during writing in the classroom was used to discuss the writing. Kindergarteners from more literate home environments functioned as role models during writing for the kindergarteners from less literate home environments. Differences between the home and school writing experiences for the two groups were in the degree of talk that focused on writing and the variety of models and purposes for writing that were provided. A significant finding was that name writing was the only home writing activity exhibited at school by both groups.

Conclusions from this study were that: (1) children from diverse literacy backgrounds have equal need to talk about writing during writing to facilitate learning; (2) beginning writers must become
actively involved in writing, engaging in encoding and decoding; and (3) school writing experiences of kindergarteners from the two groups appears to contribute to beginning writing than do home experiences.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Early research on the beginning writing development of children focused primarily on written language. Much of the research on written language emphasized the culmination of the writing event and basically disregarded the means used to produce written products. Inherent in this research was the idea that the written product was more important than the composing process.

Within the last two decades, trends became more focused on the composing process. In-depth investigations of the underlying reasons why children compose as they do were conducted following Chomsky's (1971) assertion that children learn to write before they read. As a pioneer in the study of the composing behaviors of writers, Emig (1971), studied twelfth grade writers. While Emig focused on the writing behaviors of older writers, other researchers studied younger writers. An increase in research on beginning writing development began to address the composing processes of developing writers (Bissex, 1980; Graves, 1975; Read, 1975).
Early studies of the composing processes of younger children specifically highlighted cognitive stages of development and spelling growth. Graves (1975) used a case study approach to study the writing behaviors and attitudes of young children. Studies of pre-school writers were conducted by Clay (1975) and Ferreiro (1986).

At the same time that these researchers focused on cognitive stages of writing development, other researchers observed the spelling behaviors of young writers. Read (1975) noted the invented spellings of young writers and the relationship of the spelling to the children’s phonological development in spoken language.

In similar research, Bissex (1980) conducted an extensive study of her son’s writing development while at home. The natural development of her child’s spelling during writing was apparent to Bissex, who suggested that writing acquisition and reading acquisition progress as a result of contact with literacy in the environment. The natural progression of spelling development for young writers was addressed in a study by Gentry (1981). Although studies were conducted to ascertain the processes
children use to compose and to discover stages of development, the predominant focus of this research, much like previous research on product, was written language.

One tacit assumption in most of the previous research on process was the notion that talk is excluded from the writing. Writing was held to be a task separate from and not based on speaking (Horowitz & Samuels, 1987). Furthermore, dialogue between the writer and the reader was not considered since the writer is thought to be far removed from the reader. This distancing is sometimes referred to as "context of production" (Nystrand, 1987). The young writer, unlike the adult writer who composes in the absence of a reader, often composes in the presence of a reader and engages in discourse.

During the 1970s, researchers in the fields of anthropology and sociolinguistics reflected on the social aspect of children's beginning writing experiences in their literacy environments (Heath, 1983; Ward, 1971). Written language continued to be the emphasis of research on beginning writing processes; however, an interest in the role of oral
language emerged. Researchers employed ethnographic methodology to study literacy at home and in school.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Ward and Heath looked at literacy from a social perspective and studied the literacy experiences of children at home and in school. Consequently, the writing experiences of children in these environments were explored through the study of literacy. This marked the beginning of a trend to study communities and their purposes for writing and reading.

Children in a rural town in Louisiana displayed little need for writing in the home as opposed to a greater need to write in the classroom (Ward, 1971). Heath discovered variations in the literacy experiences of people in three Carolina communities, even though the communities were only a few miles apart. She found that despite the variations in use of writing and reading, many of the literacy experiences were supported by oral language. The children of these respective communities experienced writing presented in various forms and used for various purposes that reflected the culture of the home and the community.
Characteristics of literacy identified by Heath (1983) indicated that the writing and reading experiences in "less literate" home environments mostly transpired for functional purposes. Conversely, in "more literate" homes the writing and reading experiences were characterized by a greater mix of functional and leisure writing and reading experiences.

Typically, as shown by Heath (1983), young children experience writing in the environment in the midst of naturally occurring events that allow for interaction between children writers and others in the setting. Other studies of beginning writers by Anderson and Stokes (1984), Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), Sulzby (1985), and Teale (1986) highlighted social interaction and emergent literacy. In each of these studies, the audience and the purpose for writing were always integral parts of the writing that occurred in these settings.

As the social perspective of beginning composing processes continued to be a viable consideration, research conducted during the last decade focused on the context in which writing occurred and the talk that accompanied it (Blazer, 1984; Cannella, 1988;
Dyson, 1983; Florio & Clark, 1982; Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1981; Hudson, 1986; Lamme & Childers, 1983; Leichter, 1984). These researchers found that the purposes for talk during writing varied in different contexts. Most studies that focused on the relationship between oral language and written language in children's beginning writing development have been conducted either at home or in school. However, few studies have addressed the relationship between writing and speaking in the beginning writing processes of children from different types of literacy backgrounds while at home and in school.

In a study of writing in context, Dyson (1983) observed kindergarten children composing during writing center time to determine the role of oral language in the process. She found that young children write for various purposes and that talk is an essential part of the writing that gives meaning to the written symbols. Blazer (1984) reported that kindergarten children use oral language to scaffold writing and as a result show more writing variety including letters, numbers, words and sentences.

Dyson (1983) and Blazer (1984) both were at the forefront of research conducted to describe the link
between spoken language and written language in children's composing processes in the context of school culture. Furthermore, these qualitative studies are representative of research addressing the social aspect of children's beginning writing experiences in the context of the classroom.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and to describe the relationship between written language and spoken language and its functions during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from diverse literacy environments writing at home and in school.

Proposed Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between written language and spoken language and its functions during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds (more literate/less literate)?

2. What observable behaviors will five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds exhibit while composing at home and in school?
Rationale

Young writers at home learn to compose, despite lack of direct instruction. Interaction is an integral part of children’s beginning writing experiences at home (Bissex, 1980; Ferreiro, 1986; Sulzby & Teale, 1986). According to Vygotsky (1978), children in the "zone of proximal development" interact with others to complete a task that they cannot accomplish independently. Interaction during writing occurs at home, a social setting with an available audience. Sometimes, beginning writers who engage in writing situations with an audience present have limited ability to convey the meaning of their writing solely through symbols because the written language is sometimes indecipherable to others. However, communicative writing is possible for even very young writers; it is achieved through the use of talk that accompanies the writing. The writer, the reader, and the text function as a discourse community during this communicative writing experience (Rafoth, 1988).

Nystrand (1987) describes communicative writing as the process of the writer’s text speaking and conveying meaning to the reader. Since children are
more competent in using spoken language than they are in using written language when they enter kindergarten, talk during writing is essential for giving meaning to the graphic symbols (Dyson, 1983).

Purposes for writing or the functions of writing for young children vary at home and at school, but regardless of the purpose for writing in these social settings, interaction is possible. In beginning composing interactions, spoken language combined with written language enacts the functions of language as elucidated by Jakobson (1980) and Britton (1982). Children who compose at home generate written language for different purposes in the form of lists, labels, notes and narratives that demonstrate authority and ownership of their writing (Cook-Gumperz, 1981; Gundlach, 1982).

Diverse purposes and more opportunities for self-directed authority and control of writing with talk need to be provided for young children in the classroom (Moffett, 1983). Hudson (1988) states that children view writing that transpires at school as "real writing;" therefore, many functions of writing need to be included in the classroom writing experiences. Hence, it is true that recent research
on children's composing processes has addressed the relationship between written language and oral language and its functions for beginning writers in one particular context. However, research remains to be conducted to address the functions of oral language and written language for beginning writers from different literacy environments in various contexts.

This research was designed to explore and to describe the relationship between oral language and written language for beginning writers at home and in school. The goal is to contribute to the literature that supports the theory of the influence of social interaction on oral and written language development. This study will contribute to the body of information that describes different learning environments and the social interactions which promote the writing growth of developing writers. Educators and parents can use this information to assist them in provision of appropriate writing experiences and settings for beginning writers. With this knowledge, schools can provide consistent writing experiences between home and school which foster a continuum of writing development.
Method

Ethnographic methodology was used to explore and to describe the behaviors of five beginning writers in a kindergarten classroom and in their homes. Initially, volunteer families were recruited to participate in the study. These families were contacted and identified the first day of the 1991-92 school year. The initial phase of data collection involved observing the nature of the ecology of writing in the home to determine which home environments were "more literate" or "less literate." The quality and the quantity of writing was considered along with interaction. Environmental descriptions or profiles of these homes are based on a compilation of literacy characteristics cited by Leichter (1984) (See Appendix A).

Five case study participants and their families, three from more literate and two from less literate environments were selected to participate in four months of home observations. Audio recordings, field notes, writing samples, and photographs were obtained for home data collection.

Concurrent school observations of all of the volunteer children were conducted in the kindergarten
An initial evaluation of the classroom was conducted using Teale's Environmental Checklist (cited in Cogdell, 1988) (See Appendix B). Four months were spent in that kindergarten classroom to document the setting, the behaviors and the images that were present. Video recordings, notes, photographs, and children's writing samples were used to substantiate the discoveries. Writing criteria by Dyson (1983) were used to analyze the writing samples and develop discussions of the writing for this ethnography (See Appendix C).

I functioned as a moderate participant observer throughout each phase of the data collection. A definition of my role as participant observer is found in the following section.

Definition of Terms

1. Audience - reader present during the act of composing
2. Composing - writing that is not exact copying
3. Context - setting in which the writing occurs
4. More Literate/Less literate - home environments will be placed in these categories using characteristics identified by Leichter (1984)
5. Discourse community - interaction of the writer, the reader and the text (Rafoth, 1988)

6. Functions of language - six functions of verbal communication: emotive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalingual (Jakobson, 1980)

7. Oral language - talk

8. Participant observer (moderate) - a balance between being an insider and an outsider (Spradley, 1980)

9. Written language - graphic symbols or print

10. Zone of Proximal Development - the distance between the actual developmental level of the learner and the potential developmental level with assistance from the more competent (Vygotsky, 1978)

Limitations

This research was designed to focus on the composing behaviors exhibited by five kindergarten children at home and in school. Limitations exist in the number of case studies dictated by the type of methodology for quality research. Additional limitations exist in the pre-set home and classroom visits. The possibility of staged writing events existed despite the researchers request for naturally
occurring writing events. Although the visits were pre-determined, times and days of home visits fluctuated in order to achieve an extensive sampling of home activities. A final limitation exists in the projection of personal biases into the research. A personal diary was maintained by the researcher to separate emotional aspects of the observations from the relevant aspects of this ethnographic study.

Despite limitations, this study will add to knowledge of children’s use of talk during writing at home and in school. This contribution was expanded by studying the participants in their natural environments and discovering behaviors which are diverse and unique to them.

This overview of research in the area of beginning writing processes is a synopsis of the contents of the second chapter, a review of the literature. A more in-depth discussion of methodology and setting will be offered in Chapter III.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the early 1970s, an abundance of research on writing process overshadowed initial studies on writing which emphasized written product. Inherent in this research on writing process was an interest in the behaviors writers exhibit while composing. Emig (1971), for example, who was at the forefront of research on the composing process, studied the writing behaviors of twelfth graders. Data collection in this research case study entailed obtaining recounts of previous writing experiences and three themes composed orally by participants. The themes were vocalized to access thoughts generated by the writer that typically would not be apparent during the composing process.

In her research, Emig identified two major modes of composing, reflexive and extensive. Reflexive composition was personal and expressive with the author as the target audience. In contrast, extensive composition was detached and technical with an external audience as focus. Emig’s study of high school writers set a precedent for other research that
explored the composing processes of writers of different age levels.

Studies of children writers and their composing processes ensued with Chomsky's (1971) proposition that children write before they read. According to Chomsky (1971), young children who manipulate symbols during writing actively reflect on the phonological system to spell words, which can in turn help children learn to read. This proposed reversal of reading-writing sequence was the initiation of a trend to study the beginning writing development of young writers.

Early studies on beginning writing development addressed cognitive development (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky), 1982; Graves, 1975) and spelling growth (Bissex, 1980; Gentry, 1981; Read, 1971). At the same time that studies on cognitive development and spelling were conducted, researchers studied literacy at home and in school and found the influence of the environment on children's writing to be noteworthy. More recent research on the writing behaviors of children addressed the relationship between written language and spoken language.
To extend our knowledge of the influence of the literacy environment and social interaction on beginning writing development of children, we must continue to study the spoken language which accompanies this writing. The purpose of this research is to explore and to describe the relationship between written language and spoken language and its functions during beginning writing development at home and in school. Five kindergarten children from diverse literacy environments will be the participants for this study. The review that follows is a synthesis of literature highlighting initial studies on the beginning writing development of young children; of literature related to the writing experiences of children in their literacy environments; and of literature illustrating the relationship between written language and spoken language for children.

**Early Studies on Beginning Writing Development**

A growing interest in the strategies children employ when learning to write led to the initiation of studies of young writers. Several major studies on beginning writing development conducted during the late 1970s and the early 1980s cited cognitive phases
of development exhibited by developing writers. Researchers studied the processes children use to approach conventional spelling during writing and found that writers progress through various stages of development. This section of the review addresses the legacy of research that served as the foundation for future studies of beginning writers.

**Cognitive Stages**

A leading contributor to research on children's writing processes, Graves (1975), studied the writing behaviors of seven-year-old children to discover factors that affected the writing process. In this qualitative study, he incorporated various forms of data collection that ranged from observing ninety-four second graders in four classrooms to conducting individual case studies. Data collection in this study included writing samples, observations, interviews and case studies. As a result of his work, Graves identified two types of writers--reactive and reflective.

These writers displayed a variety of developmental characteristics. The reactive writer exhibited lack of awareness of audience, vocalized during writing, required immediate rehearsal to write,
rarely reviewed written product and demonstrated erratic problem-solving strategies.

The reflective writer displayed progressive awareness of audience, showed fewer signs of vocalization while writing, reread to alter writing and provided rationale for adjusting writing. In reference to these ranges of writing behaviors, Graves (1975, p. 236) states, "The characteristics exist in varying degrees in all children, and can emerge under different types of writing conditions." The variability and uniqueness of writing development in young children cited by Graves (1975) was reiterated in a more recent study of five-year-old writers.

Clay conducted a study of five year old children in New Zealand. Addressing the variability of children’s writing, Clay says, "Careful recording of children’s writing would be unlikely to reveal any set sequence of letter discovery because individual experiences vary greatly..."(Clay, 1975, p. 15). Despite the variability of writing development, she found that young writers produce combinations of real letters, mock letters and innovative letters. In her discussion of writing production, Clay refers to the phase when the writer becomes aware that symbols have
meaning and produces them as the "sign concept."
Signs are composed of three components--alphabet, punctuation and signatures.

Children who move beyond the sign concept, even though the time period varies, make the transition to the message concept. The "message concept" is the point at which children emulate the writing behaviors of adults because they realize that what is spoken can be written. During this phase of writing, children begin to wonder or ask "What did I write?." Children's first attempts to express thoughts in writing are not conveyed clearly but they eventually communicate their ideas in writing to others. In summary, young writers hope that the symbols they have written send a message that corresponds to speech (Clay, 1975).

Clay identified several principles other than the sign concept and the message concept. These principles occur in no set order but aid children in learning about letters, words and groups of words. These seven principles cited by Clay are: the recurring principle, the directional principle, the generating principle, the inventory principle, the contrastive principle, the abbreviation principle and problems of page arrangement. Clay suggested the use
of these concepts and principles to assess young children's writing.

Another study of young writers in Mexico was conducted by Ferreiro, who explored the writing development of pre-school children (Ferreiro, 1986; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). Ferreiro's primary interest was the literacy experiences of children prior to entering school. She believed that children should be active constructors of knowledge who acquire language in developmental stages which eventually lead to adult-like performance.

Pre-schoolers from middle class and lower class families were involved in the study. Ferreiro asked the children to engage in several different writing tasks: writing their own names; writing the name of a friend or family member; contrasting drawing and writing; writing words that are typically presented in school; writing less familiar words; and writing a specified sentence. The children performed each task in no predetermined order.

Ferreiro concluded that children progress through five levels of development during writing acquisition. Level 1 involves the production of symbols with less than conventional form. Form in level 2 is more
conventional with different meanings assigned to symbols at different times. Level 3, however, is the syllabic stage where the child attempts to assign sound value to each letter. In level 4 the writer makes a transition from the syllabic stage to the alphabetic stage but realizes that there is incongruence between the number of sounds and the number of written symbols. Level 5 is the stage in which the writer unlocks the written code enough to communicate and understand a message but does not have complete mastery. Based on the findings of her research, Ferreiro, in contrast to Clay’s claim of variability of developmental stages of writing, concluded that writing is comprised of progressive stages that are universal to all young children.

**Spelling Development**

Research highlighting children’s cognitive writing development was only one area of beginning writing development studied during the early 1970s that impacted the inquiry into the influence of the literacy environment on children. Studies of spelling development showed the processes and strategies children use to progress through various levels of spelling growth. Processes children use to approach
conventional spelling became the focus of studies on beginning writing (Bissex, 1980; Gentry, 1981; Read, 1975).

The strategies children use to spell words without complete knowledge of the English phonological system was the purpose of Read's study of pre-schoolers (1971). Read analyzed the spontaneous spelling attempts of children as young as three years of age who had not received any type of formal reading or writing instruction but were encouraged to "toy" or to play with writing. The performances of twenty children from professional and academic homes were discussed in the findings. Parent interviews were conducted to elicit information about the home writing experiences of the pre-schoolers. In most cases the parents indicated that although the children produced unconventional spellings, they supported the children's writing efforts by providing feedback and acceptance.

Read concluded that with regard to the phonological system, children acquire and demonstrate awareness of phonetic relationships which they have not been taught at home or in school. Before they read or write, children make abstract inferences based
on some knowledge of phonetic principles. The results suggested that children make use of this knowledge to spell words with some degree of consistency and logic. He found that when spelling words, the children analyzed the sound in a word and related that sound to the word as a whole. Read (1971) postulated that young writers are inventive spellers who possess some knowledge of the phonological system that aids the production of words.

A case study with similar conclusions about invented spelling was conducted by Bissex. She studied the literacy development of her son as he engaged in writing and reading experiences at home (Bissex, 1980). Literacy was prevalent in the home environment and writing played a significant part. Analysis of Paul’s writing revealed phases of spelling growth and change. In research findings similar to Read, Bissex found Paul’s sound/symbol approximations to be consistent and logical. For example, Paul’s written message to Bissex "RUDF" (Are you deaf?) demonstrates the logic of the spelling production that reflects letter/name associations. Bissex concluded that Paul’s emergence as a writer progressing through various stages of development is a natural phenomenon.
The results of this case study research were significant in that they were parallel to and substantiated by the findings of Read (1971).

In another study on writing acquisition, Gentry (1981) noted the spelling efforts of kindergarten, first grade and second grade children. The children in the study were instructed to generate the spellings of designated words. Gentry proposed that children naturally progress through these developmental spelling stages that eventually lead to conventional spelling production. From findings of the study, Gentry concluded that children progress through five developmental stages of spelling.

The identified stages are precommunicative spelling, semiphonetic spelling, phonetic spelling, transitional spelling and correct spelling. Children functioning in the precommunicative stage randomly string arbitrary letters together that have no correspondence to the intended word. During the semiphonetic stage, children represent words with one or two letters that actually make up the word. Children who spell phonetically write the words representing all of the phonemes. The transitional speller, however, exhibits more conventional forms of
spelling with syllables that include vowels and with inflectional endings. The final stage in the developmental sequence is correct spelling. Gentry (1981, 1984), like Bissex (1980) and Read (1971), views inventive spellers as active constructors of knowledge. These writers in supportive learning environments explore, manipulate and adjust the phonological system making rational decisions which aid them in approaching and understanding conventional spelling during writing.

Writing Experiences in the Literacy Environment

Literacy research which focused on reading and writing development surfaced during the 1970s and impacted our knowledge of children's writing development. Studies of this type considered the influence of the physical environment, the functions of writing, and social interaction on literacy growth. Although these studies addressed reading and writing, their contributions to beginning writing development are discussed in this segment of the review of literature. Discussions of ethnographic studies of writing at home and in school with reference to emergent writing, environment, and uses of writing form the basis of this segment of the review.
Ethnographic Studies

Researchers attempted to study literacy experiences at home and in school through an ethnographic approach. Ward (1971), a pioneer in ethnographic study of the literacy experiences of young children at home and at school, studied seven families in a small Louisiana town. One objective of this study was to observe and to describe the writing experiences which were relevant and real to the members of that community. Mothers were asked to explain the writing events that they engaged in with their children. Often during the study, Ward focused on writing events in the homes, observing the environment, the literacy events and the interaction. Ward studied the writing experiences of these same children at school and compared the findings to the results in the home.

She found, in many cases, that the physical environments of these homes were poorly lighted and contained limited forms of printed matter such as the Louisiana Weekly and TV Guide (Ward, 1971, p. 37). Another finding was that writing was not encouraged in these homes where oral language was the primary form of communication.
A reciprocal situation existed in the classrooms of these children. Oral language was limited whereas written language was predominant. This, for Ward, represented distinct differences in the physical environment and the purposes of writing at home and in school for these children. Other studies on literacy reported similar inconsistencies between home and school writing experiences.

Heath (1983), in an ethnographic study of three southern communities, researched the literacy experiences of children and adults at home, in school, and in the workplace. Heath's interest in how the children of the three communities were socialized as writers, talkers and readers was the predominant focus of the ethnographies (Heath, 1983, p. 6). For a ten-year period, Heath lived with members of these communities, participating in the everyday events of the families. With respect to children's writing, what Heath found in Mainstream, Roadville, and Trackton were variations in experiences. Due to the school-oriented nature of the members of the Mainstream, writing events at home were similar to writing events at school.
However, writing experiences in Roadville and Trackton homes were not congruent with those of the classroom. Forms of writing typical to the residents of Roadville were letters and notes, while in Trackton notes were the most common form of writing. Any writing beyond these forms was sparse. The children of both communities, for example, basically engaged in mandatory writing directly related to school assignments. Heath indicated that the women and children of Roadville were more frequent writers of "disconnected texts" than men. Disconnected texts refers to brief writing episodes which include making lists, completing forms, jotting reminders and writing checks. Trackton women, however, used writing as memory to write names, addresses, dates and reminders, with few women writing letters.

Heath expounded on the conversational tone of these letters written to other family members of Roadville residents. The context of the conversational print was common to the sender and the receiver; therefore, extensive explanation and detail were not necessary. In other words, "Senders and receivers of letters develop a two-sided relationship in which they maintain a closed conversation on paper."
Any single letter in this dyadic linkage makes little sense to an outsider" (Heath, 1983, p. 214). Writing was mainly a private act, except when letters were received. The receipt of a letter was announced to other family members and often read to the children. Writing in the community of Roadville was a low priority among life's experiences and was basically used for memory aid, substitution for or reaffirmation of oral message, financial purposes and social interaction.

Uses of writing in Trackton were similar to those in Roadville but public records replaced social interaction. When Trackton residents encountered writing outside their homes and their community, they lost the oral support and social interaction that provided clarification of text. Heath indicated that the reading and sharing of text was a common event among the residents of Trackton. For example, friends and family would gather to discuss a letter, a bill or a notice in an effort to ascertain the meaning of its contents. Print in situations such as these supports social interaction. Like the residents of Roadville, people in Trackton viewed writing as a low priority.

In summary, prolonged experiences with writing and
reading were seldom exhibited by the families of children in Roadville and Trackton. Heath proposed that the limited "literacy events" of the families in their homes as well as in their communities, eventually, if not immediately, were reflected in the children's school success.

Continuing the quest to observe young readers and writers at home, Anderson and Stokes (1984) studied families in the San Diego area. This research was conducted over a period of eighteen months. The purpose of the research was to study the life experiences of these families that lead to literacy development. In the words of Anderson and Stokes, "We wanted a description of those literate events that were so much a part of people's lives with one another that they pass by unnoticed" (Anderson & Stokes, 1984, p. 26). Each home was visited approximately thirty-four times to make such observations.

The results revealed that literacy was very much a part of the lives of the people in this ethnographic study. Anderson and Stokes concluded, much like Heath, that families engaged in a variety of literacy experiences that promoted social interaction. Writing, specifically, was used to initiate and
organize activities, and to learn literacy techniques, skills or information. Uses of written language showed emphasis that stemmed from social institutions, namely, the church, organizations and businesses.

Following an ethnographic approach, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) discussed Black families in an urban city, with particular emphasis on the literacy development of the six-year-olds. These researchers discovered uses of writing which corroborated and expanded the uses cited by Heath. Writing was used as reinforcement or substitution for oral language, to establish social interaction, for memory aids, for financial purposes, for public records and for expository writing. The residents of Shuy like the residents of Roadville read and wrote letters. Contrary to Heath's discovery of limited extended literacy experiences, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines found that the children of these families spent considerable amounts of time with their parents engaged in reading/writing events.

In their conclusion, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines stated, "The families use literacy for a wide variety of purposes (social, technical, and aesthetic
purposes), for a wide variety of audiences, and in a variety of situations" (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 202). They added that children must be allowed to create public and private texts, experience sharing emotion, and acquiring new meanings and retain understanding of and distinctions between various uses of literacy.

**Emergent Literacy**

The emergent literacy experiences of young children were explored by Sulzby (1985) and Teale (1986). They studied the influence of early literacy experiences of writers and readers. Sulzby (1985) studied 24 kindergarten children from middle-income homes to explore their knowledge of writing. Writing samples were collected and analyzed. The results revealed six forms of writing which included drawing, scribbling, letter-like forms, letter units, invented spelling and writing with conventional English. From these findings, Sulzby concluded that different levels of writing development for young writers are affected by sociocultural context (Sulzby, 1985).

Preschool children from low-income homes were involved in a study conducted by Teale (1986). Through naturalistic investigation he studied the home
literacy experiences of children ages 2 through 3 1/2. Teale found that the children in these homes encountered literacy via daily living routines, entertainment, school-related activities, work, religion, interpersonal communication, information networks, and teaching/learning situations. Teale (1986, p. 192) concluded that these children experienced literacy, writing and reading, as a social process before entering school.

**Environment**

Leichter (1984), in *Awakening to Literacy*, observed family literacy environments to explore early writing events. She recommended that the education of children at home prior to school must be studied to discover the uniqueness of the experiences to that family. Leichter identified three basic categories of exploration. The physical environment is explored to observe artifacts, the position of the artifacts, and the persons in the environment. The second category highlighted the interpersonal interaction that occurs between family members during the event. The final category focused on the emotional and motivational climate in the literacy environment. This involved determining the literacy experiences, including
writing, and the aspirations that influence the child’s literacy development. Leichter suggested that the observation of these conditions vary from family to family, and need further investigation.

Cannella (1988) studied the effects of the classroom environment on children’s writing development. The compositions of children in kindergarten through third grade from two types of classroom environments were analyzed for developmental level, creativity, legibility, risk taking, and enjoyment of activity.

Overall, for kindergarten through third grade, Cannella found that children in the teacher-structured classroom wrote more legibly. Children writing in the child-structured classroom where play and exploration were allowed took more risks and expressed more enjoyment of the activity. No difference in developmental level or creativity was found between writers in the teacher-structured and the child-structured environments.

However, kindergarten children in the child-structured classroom demonstrated better writing performance in all of the five categories. As a result of her findings, Cannella (1988) addressed the
idea of writing environment by saying, "The responsibility of the educational community is to decide which perspective and corresponding expectations are most beneficial to the child" (p. 219).

**Functions of Writing**

Florio and Clark (1982) and Hudson (1986) studied the functions of writing and its context of developing writers. Florio and Clark studied the functions of writing in school. The role of audience was emphasized. Social interaction with peers and the teacher was commonplace. Florio and Clark (1982) found that children in those classrooms wrote for four purposes: to participate in community; to know oneself and others; to occupy time; and to demonstrate academic competence. In this study, knowledge of a wider audience was evident.

Later, Hudson discovered that most of the children in her study perceived writing as a school activity, although they wrote at home and in school. According to Hudson, children begin to perceive a wider audience with various contextual factors after second grade. The younger children in this study
recognized audience as a person known to them and present in that situation.

Written Language and Spoken Language Relationship

Prior to 1980, written language with emphasis on cognitive stages or spelling development had been the primary focus of research on writing process. During this same time period, discussions of oral language and written language focused mainly on contrasts between the two modes. Halliday (1973) addressed the functions of oral language, emphasizing the social aspect, close contact, and spontaneity of this form of communication. In contrast, written language was described as solitary, distant and planned. Distinctions between oral language and written language were soon followed by studies with yet a different interest.

With the advent of the 1980s the scope of research on writing process expanded to include studies on the relationship between written language and spoken language, which had been recommended by Britton (1970). Several qualitative studies were conducted by researchers to explore children's uses of oral language in the composing process (Blazer, 1984;
Harste, Burke and Woodward (1981) conducted a qualitative study in order to explore the literacy experiences of children before they enter school. Children ages three through six from a cross section of socioeconomic status were the focus of the study. The parents of the children supplied the researchers with information about the home writing experiences of the children. One underlying premise of their research was that concepts of oral language development should be applicable to understanding processes of children's writing acquisition (Harste, Burke, & Woodward, 1981).

Information provided by the parents led these researchers to several conclusions about the writing experiences of children prior to entering school. First, the parents and children often collaborated on the writing through dialogue. Harste et al. stressed what they term the "interrelatedness" of oral language and written language in these situations. Categorizations of oral and/or written strategies utilized by the children for writing development were identified. Strategies identified by Harste et al.
were textual intent, negotiability, language fine tuning, risk taking and hypothesis testing. Second, the children were given many opportunities to write at home. Third, the parents provided books, paper, pencils, pens, magic markers and crayons for the children to use. Harste et al. suggested that the connection between the two language modes and the strategies were possible through contact with others and the availability of writing and reading materials.

Dyson (1983), with an interest in children's writing behaviors, established a writing center in a kindergarten classroom to observe children engaging in spontaneous writing to determine the role of oral language in the writing process. Twenty-two kindergartners who were asked to "write" participated in this study; however, five case studies were highlighted in the results. "Write" in this sense referred to the child's own perception of writing. As a participant observer, Dyson collected data that included writing samples, audio-recordings, interviews and observations. Using the written products of the children, Dyson analyzed and categorized each composition according to message quality. Message quality consisted of the message being expressed and
the means of expressing that message which pertained to why and how the children wrote and whether any sound/symbol relationships were analyzed. Purposes for writing established from the resulting forms of composition were to label, to represent an object, to share, to produce a message, to produce a product, to produce conventional symbols, to write, to communicate with an audience, to express emotions, to organize and record information and to investigate relationships between oral and written language.

Results of the study related to vocalization and composition revealed the uses of talk during prewriting, writing and postwriting. Dyson (1983) stated in her conclusions, "Initially talk is used to invest written graphics with meaning; eventually talk is viewed as the substance of written language" (p. 7). Purposes for talk included using it to acquire information, to aid encoding and decoding; and to distance themselves from the composition for reasons such as evaluation. Dyson stressed the variability of children's writing processes and discouraged the use of adult standards to analyze the writing as well as the acquisition of data through inappropriate research design. In her analysis of
oral language, Dyson stated that oral language was integral to the writing process of these kindergartners.

In an attempt to study the writing behaviors of three young writers, Lamme and Childers (1983) noticed the children's use of oral language while they composed. Three children between the ages of two and four from middle class backgrounds were involved in this study which was conducted in a university laboratory. During sixteen group writing sessions, the children engaged in designated writing episodes with a participating adult. The young writers composed personal communications to direct audiences based on topics assigned by the adult and wrote books about personal experiences. According to Lamme and Childers (1983), the children used various techniques to compose such as copying, tracing and asking for spellings of words. Furthermore, similar to Clay's (1975) discussion of beginning writing development, Lamme and Childers found that the children produced scribbles, mock letters, real letters and words. They concluded that oral interaction or talk was constant throughout the sessions. Uses of talk cited by Lamme and Childers were to ask questions, to respond to
questions, to share work, to explain, to ask permission, to provide related talk and to discuss material. In essence, oral language was an aspect of the composing processes of these children that occurred frequently.

A study of kindergarteners was conducted by Blazer (1984). Children in a self-contained kindergarten classroom were observed in order to determine what children have to say about writing and what they say while they are writing. This ethnographic study was conducted over a five month period. Spontaneous writing which allowed self-generated topics was the source of composition. Similar to Dyson’s (1983) discovery of writing variability, Blazer observed a range of writing knowledge among the beginning writers. This range of knowledge consisted of several conceptual levels identified as affective, concrete, constructive and creative. The affective level related to the children’s feelings about print. Knowledge of actual form and graphic display comprised the concrete level. A third level, the constructive level, referred to the communicative function and meaning of writing. The creative level related to the abstract and imaginative
aspect of writing. Other qualitative and quantitative results revealed information about the role of oral language during composing.

Through observation, Blazer found that the children wrote and talked simultaneously. Blazer (1984, 1986) referred to the talk that occurred during the writing as "child's talk." She reported that those children who supported their writing with talk flourished as writers, composing sentences and even stories by the end of the school term. In summary, Blazer concluded that children use oral language to support literacy as well as to guide them through literacy acquisition. In addition, she proposed that children who make the discovery that writing is speech written down develop multiple expressive systems that aid them in acquiring meaning and learning.

Summary

Research on writing process since the early 1970s has addressed cognitive stages of development, spelling development, written language and oral language relationships and writing in social context. Inherent in most of this research were the roles of oral language and social context. According to Cazden (cited in Lamme & Childers, 1983), writing is social.
Writing is discourse. Therefore, the social element of written language cannot be ignored.

Studies of the social context of writing in a particular setting have provided insight into the functions of writing within that environment. Many of these studies have emphasized one setting. This research discussed the variety of the literacy experiences of children, including audiences and purposes for writing. The use of the ethnographic approach contributed to the discovery of the importance of talk and social interaction.

Recent research on children's composing processes have addressed the relationship between written language, oral language, and the functions of speaking for beginning writers in one particular context. Ethnographic research needs to be conducted to address the functions of written language and oral language for beginning writers from different literacy environments as well as in more than one literacy environment. Hill (1989) recommends that we extend the family partnership beyond the home. In extending this relationship to the school, we preserve and enhance the home literacy experiences of the young children. Rubin (1988) refer to this preservation of
writing and reading events as the "ecology of literacy." Therefore, the range of writing experiences of children with others in the environment and the messages which are being communicated must be explored (McLane & McNamee, 1990). This study will explore and describe the diverse but unique writing experiences of children from different types of home literacy environments, as well as their experiences in a classroom where writing is encouraged.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the relationship between written language and spoken language and its functions during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from diverse literacy environments. The writing of the children at home and in school was examined. Ethnographic methodology was employed to study these kindergarten children who were enrolled in a classroom where talk was permitted during writing. This chapter discusses the pilot study, a second study, the site and participants, and the data collection procedures to be used in this study.

The Pilot Study

The purpose of the initial study was to observe two kindergarten children writing at home and to describe the relationship oral language had to writing in parent/child interaction. The parents of both children indicated an annual family income of ten thousand dollars or less. In addition to the low-income status, both girls were in the same
classroom, attending school for the first time. Each girl was 5.1 years of age.

The review of kindergarten records at one school aided in determining which children had not attended school of any kind prior to entering kindergarten. Voluntary participation was acquired from the parents through consent forms, after which data collection began. Interviews to identify authentic home writing events, audio-recordings to record oral language, field notes to document action, interaction and surroundings and writing samples for connections to oral language served as the sources of data collection. Detached observation was employed throughout the investigation to avoid influencing the data.

Similar to Blazer (1986), I conducted individual informal interviews with the parents and the children to ascertain their uses, patterns and knowledge of writing. I developed an adaption of Blazer's (1986) interview tool to discover what these participants said when they wrote, what they wrote and why they wrote, particularly, in the presence of others (Appendix). The identified uses of writing served as
the basis for subsequent observations in the two homes.

I visited each home seven days for a variable amount of time to collect data. For the first observation, the parent was asked to engage in a writing task identified in the interview and to do so in the presence of the child. The second observation involved the child writing. To prompt child writing, the parent was asked to make writing utensils available to the child and to remain in the room to facilitate possible dialogue. It was discovered that for these families child writing elicited more oral language between parent and child than adult writing. Therefore, the five remaining parent/child or dyad observations highlighted children’s writing. The child participated in copy writing, (writing with a model) or spontaneous writing, (writing without a model) for the duration of the study.

Alternating spontaneous and copy writing tasks occurred each visit. In an effort to promote spontaneous writing, I asked the parent to make writing utensils available to the child and remain in the room during the writing event. Copy writing in the form of homework assignments was provided by the
classroom teacher. To record the activity that transpired during the writing events, I kept field notes to record environment, dialogue, action and interaction. In addition, I collected audio-recordings to document dialogue and one writing sample per child for each visit to document writing.

In reviewing the writing behaviors, I developed a concept which I termed "collaborative units." Michaels and Cazden (1986) used a similar term, "collaborative exchange", to describe dialogue between teacher and child in a language classroom. Collaborative units transpired as the child wrote and discussed the writing with the parent. A collaborative unit represents a connected stretch of discourse between parent and child on a particular writing topic. Change in writing topic was characterized by the production of a different written symbol. One turn per participant was necessary for each shift in writing topic to constitute a collaborative unit.

I found that with regard to spontaneous writing for both dyads, the child initiated dialogue during the writing event with a question or with a statement to seek confirmation or to capture parent attention.
The parent, on the other hand, as initiator, questioned the child about the content of the writing or urged the child to write. Copy writing discourse consisted of directives and questions about the formation of symbols.

During both forms of writing, spontaneous and copy, dyad participants exhibited at least one turn for a single writing topic per observation. Interestingly, the collaborative unit topic for both dyads often focused on name writing. Topic shift, indicating the beginning and the end of a collaborative unit, was present during spontaneous writing and copy writing. Although topic shift for both dyads was limited, change in topic for them was more evident during spontaneous writing.

It is important to note that the proximity of one dyad varied according to the type of writing event. The parent and child sat closer to each other during spontaneous writing. The second dyad, however, sat beside each other on all occasions. Despite the differences in closeness of the parent and child, interaction did occur. Another observation common to both dyads was the brevity of both types of writing events, with copy writing being the shorter.
My observations led me to believe that collaboration or interaction between these two parent/child dyads exists during writing in the form of discussion for spontaneous writing and copy writing. However, it appears that writing in these homes is secondary to other events (Heath, 1983) and that writing is an intrusion on everyday household activities. These observations suggested that with greater opportunity for self-generated writing and parent availability more dialogue or collaboration between these dyads may have been possible. Further research in this area was considered to explore the writing experiences of young children, particularly during spontaneous writing.

The Second Study

During the second semester of the 1989-90 school year, still interested in the writing experiences of these two kindergarten children, I continued my observations in the classroom rather than at home. The purpose of my inquiry was to describe the writing perceptions and practices of these same two girls and the relationship of these practices to their teacher’s concept of writing in their classroom. Copy writing was the major form of writing in this classroom.
Separate pre- and post- interviews with the children and the teacher were conducted to determine whether the girls' perceptions of writing differed at the end of the study and whether their perceptions of writing resembled that of the teacher. The interviewing tool established for the pilot study was used for the pre- and post-interviews. Interviews were followed by classroom observations.

Observations of writing in this classroom indicated that copy writing exercises were introduced by the teacher with demonstrations at the chalkboard. Following the demonstrations, the children moved to assigned tables to complete the copy writing worksheet. Writing topics for the exercises included name, the letter z, last name, numbers 1-30 and numbers 1-50.

Initially, the two young writers were seated at different tables due to teacher assignment based on ability grouping. The children were eventually seated at the same table. For a period of eight weeks, as an outside observer, I observed the girls once per week for thirty to forty minutes to collect data. In order to record the oral language, the written language and the interaction of Keisha and Jessica,
audio-recordings, writing samples and field notes were kept.

Approximately six hours of dialogue, six writing samples, interview responses, and classroom interaction were analyzed to identify patterns of behavior for the two young writers. I discovered that both girls interacted verbally and nonverbally with other children at the table while writing, despite teacher demands for silence and independent writing. Exhibited verbal behavior consisted of talking for the purpose of recalling the writing pattern, obtaining writing approval, marvelling over writing, supplying writing advice, defending writing performance and engaging in conversation. I further noted that the girls engaged in self talk, shared talk and unrelated talk as they wrote.

Nonverbal behavior surfaced in the form of displaying (sharing) or not displaying one’s writing with others. At times the children freely shared writing with their peers. On other occasions the writers guarded their writing. These observable nonverbal and verbal behaviors were compared to their own pre- and post- interview responses and the teacher’s responses.
Throughout the study Keisha interacted with peers, talked to herself, shared her writing and asked questions during writing time. Keisha sought approval by asking a neighbor, "Is this right?" I observed Keisha writing the letters of the alphabet of her own volition once she had completed the assigned copy writing worksheet, demonstrating an interest in spontaneous writing. Consistent with her voluntary writing behavior, Keisha expressed an opinion that writing is "the abc's." Furthermore, she engaged in show and tell during writing although the teacher discouraged interaction and talking.

Jessica was not reluctant to talk while she completed the copy writing worksheet. Other students seated near Jessica spoke to indicate whether she was doing her work correctly. The verbal interaction, in Jessica's case, was sustained throughout the writing event in the company of others. I also observed that Jessica, at times, experienced difficulty completing the worksheet when she was seated alone at the table.

Based on the interaction, dialogue and spontaneous writing experiences observed in these two studies, I felt it necessary to study children engaged in spontaneous writing and talking simultaneously to
determine the relationship between written language and oral language in these situations. Another objective of this study is to observe the behaviors of several children from diverse literacy environments at home and in school.

The Major Study

The Site and the Participants

In August of 1991, the major study began to determine the relationship between written language and spoken language for kindergarteners. The site for study was a kindergarten classroom at a school in a southeastern Louisiana town with approximately 15,000 residents. Many persons in this rural town were employed at local industrial plants. The classroom studied was one of ten kindergarten classrooms in a K-3 school that served 857 students.

Seven homes served as the sites of home observations. The homes studied during this research were located in different subdivisions within the city limits. The makeup of these communities were such that the neighborhoods studied were predominately one-race neighborhoods.

A teacher who permitted self-generated writing and talk during center time agreed to participate in
the research. Mrs. Patterson was assigned 20 children, 11 boys and 9 girls, for the 1991-92 school year. The seven volunteer participants and their families were identified for the study on the first day of school. Introductory letters and consent forms were presented to the parents during the kindergarten orientation. Voluntary participation was documented through parental consent. Permission was given to study the children at home and in school.

The seven kindergarteners and their families were studied at home. Two preliminary observations were conducted in the homes of each of the volunteer families to categorize the home environment as more literate or less literate. From the seven families, five families were identified as the case study families. Three of the home environments for case study were classified as more literate, and two of the home environments were classified as less literate. Four preliminary classroom visits were conducted to develop a classroom description. The classroom, the homes, and the participants are discussed in more detail in the section below and the profiles in Chapter IV.
**Data Collection**

A combination of data collection techniques was used at home and in school. The tools used for data collection are discussed according to preliminary data collection and primary data collection. Parent interviews, observations, field notes, checklists, photographs, audio recordings, video recordings and writing samples were used for data collection at home and/or in school. Additional details on data collection are presented below and in Chapter IV.

**Preliminary Data Collection**

Two initial visits were made to the homes of the seven volunteer family to classify the home environment as more literate or less literate. More literate and less literate environments were determined by the identification of the purposes and the forms of print used in the home and the degree to which the print available in the home promotes these purposes and forms. These literacy criteria were identified through parent interview and two preliminary observations. The designation of the home environment as more literate or less literate was relative to the purposes and forms of print unique to that single home environment. Field notes were
maintained during the observations to document the physical environment, action, interaction and dialogue.

The information from the field notes was applied to a checklist that incorporates Leichter's (1984) three categories of family literacy environments. Information from the checklist guided the questions for interviewing and focused observations. The checklist categories are physical environment, interpersonal interaction, emotional and motivational climates.

Each preliminary literacy observation per home was conducted on two consecutive days for a period of three hours each. Observations focused on the literacy activities unique to that environment. The behaviors displayed during these observations were recorded in field notes which were used to complete the checklist using Leichter's categorization of a family literacy environment. Since child writing is the emphasis of this study, the reading and writing experiences where the child was involved were audio recorded and dictated the movement of the tape recorder for documentation.
The checklist information acquired through interview and observation served as the basis for identifying the home environment as more literate or less literate. Families with similarities in physical environment, interpersonal interaction and emotional and motivational climates were given the same classification (Leichter, 1984). The components of physical environment were educational resources, visual stimulation, and physical arrangement (proxemics) of the family during writing. Informal corrections, explanations, and feedback were the components of interpersonal interaction that were considered. The emotional and motivational climates were studied for emotional relationships, parents' recollections of literacy experiences, aspirations of family members, and rewards. Once these determinations were made, the five case study families were selected for further study. Three children from more literate home environments and two from less literate home environments were selected.

Preliminary classroom observations began in mid-August. Four preliminary classroom observations were conducted for two hours per visit to develop a classroom profile. Field notes were used to document
the physical environment, the interaction, dialogue and action. Video recordings and photographs captured these same aspects of the writing event. Teale's Literacy Environmental Checklist was adapted and used to assess and describe the classroom environment.

The components of Teale's Checklist are physical environment; modeling, function, and purpose of reading and writing; social interaction and independent writing experiences. Through the use of these categories on a checklist, I described the classroom environment with regard to writing and reading.

**Primary Data Collection**

Home observations were conducted on a weekly basis for a period of twelve weeks. These observations were audio recorded rather than video recorded to reduce the degree of observer's paradox. I visited each family 10 to 12 times for one hour to observe the child engaging in spontaneous writing. The parent was instructed to make writing materials available to the kindergarten child in a designated room and remain in that room where the child may decide to write. Parents were asked to remain in the room to discover whether the child will interact
verbally or nonverbally with the parent or others in the home environment. Field notes were maintained to document the physical environment, interaction, action and dialogue. A tape recorder was used to record dialogue, whereas photographs were used to document action and environment. One writing sample per week was collected for analysis. Dialogue that accompanied the writing at home was audio recorded and transcribed.

For twelve weeks, the seven children in the classroom phase of the research were observed at least once per week during the morning routine and center time. The visits were conducted on varying days of the week, but between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Mrs. Patterson was provided with a schedule of observation days. The day of the week for observation varied, but the time of the visit was consistent.

Prior to entering the classroom for observations, I asked the participating teacher to assign the five case study children to the same center group for a period of twelve weeks. Mrs. Patterson preferred to assign a maximum of four or five students to a center at one time. Since all seven of the volunteer children were considered for the classroom
observation, Mrs. Patterson assigned the children to one or two groups for the observations. Mrs. Patterson was asked not to alter her routine for the study, but continue with the regular classroom routine. The teacher supplied the reading/writing center with writing utensils for the children, allowed the children to write freely, and permitted them to converse. The teacher resumed her usual activities as she worked at teacher table and circulated from center to center answering questions, talking to children and modeling.

Writing behaviors were documented through observation, field notes, video recordings, audio recording and writing samples. At least one writing sample per week was collected in the classroom, when possible. Writing folders were placed in the writing area for the seven children to collect writing samples on days when observations were not conducted.

Writing samples generated by the seven classroom participants were collected once per week at school during the months of September, October, November and December to explore changes in writing. Along with the writing samples, dialogue generated during the
writing events in the centers was obtained through audio recordings and video recordings.

The writing samples and the accompanying dialogue generated by the child in school and at home were analyzed using Dyson's (1983) identified writing behaviors. The writing combined with the dialogue was evaluated for writing purposes, writing process components, and forms of written product. Writing behavior that transpired during the event was documented by video recordings and photographs.

Data Analysis

Data in the form of dialogue, action, and interactions were analyzed via qualitative means, especially ethnographic analysis (Spradley, 1980), to discover patterns in writing behavior. The transcription and analysis of audio and video recordings for the primary observations began after the initial visits. Therefore, the analysis of transcriptions was a continual process which helped direct focused observations.

Open coding (Glaser, 1978) was used to search the data for patterns. Units of information, specifically dialogue with the accompanying action and interaction, were placed on cards and reviewed for evolving
categories. Constant comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of data across families enhanced the discovery of categories. As categories emerged, rules and relationships for the categories were determined. However, this approach was a recursive process that was continued until significant categories were discovered and the rules and relationships for these categories were constant. Rules and relationships for the categories were validated through triangulation. Two individuals recently awarded doctoral degrees reviewed data and matched it with the categories and the identified types of home environments.

Writing samples were analyzed using Dyson's Worksheet (See Appendix C) and matched with dialogue, interaction and photographs. The writing was reviewed for writing purpose, writing process components and forms of written product. I developed schematic diagrams for each of the categories to assist in the articulation of these categories in this ethnography. The emerging categories were: 1) use of models, 2) the purpose for writing, 3) the relationship between writing and writing tools and 4) the relationship between writing and spoken language (orality).
Summary

During this ethnographic study, I collected data that pertained to descriptions of the home and school environments, the child’s language behaviors (oral and written), and parent perceptions. The writing behaviors of seven volunteers is included in the discussion of the classroom. Five children were selected for case study presentations. The presentation of data for each participant includes descriptions of the home and school environments and analysis of composing behaviors. Writing samples with descriptions of the writing behaviors based on Dyson’s categories of behaviors were provided for each participant. Transcriptions of the dialogue that accompanied the writing behaviors are included. Photographs which highlight social interaction during writing are included in this document.

Copies of each checklist used for assessment are included in the Appendix. This section is comprised of checklists by Leichter (home environment), Teale (classroom environment), and Dyson (writing behavior). The parent interview form designed for investigation is also provided.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to explore and to describe the relationship between written language and spoken language and the function of that relationship during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from diverse literacy environments. Participants were studied at home and in school. Proposed questions for this research were as follow:

1. What relationship exists between the written language and spoken language and its functions during beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds (more literate/less literate)?

2. What observable behaviors will five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds exhibit while composing at home and in school?

This chapter discusses the data collection procedures used to conduct this study and the results of data analysis. Within the discussion on analysis
of data are a description of the classroom that was studied and case studies of the five kindergarten children who participated. Categories that were discovered to support the proposed research questions on writing behaviors will be presented and addressed with regard to the classroom and the home environments.

Introduction

During the initial phase of this study, I conducted a combined total of 18 preliminary observations to analyze the kindergarten classroom and to analyze and select five of the seven volunteer families for case study. A second function of the preliminary visit was to establish rapport with the participants. Following these initial observations, I conducted 72 primary observations, including 15 classroom visits and 57 home visits over a period of four months. Various data collection methods were used to obtain data between late August and late December of 1991. These included video and audio recordings, still photography, a collection of writing samples, interview, and participant observation.

I functioned as participant observer in this kindergarten classroom where I interacted with the
children and maintained field notes during the preliminary and primary observations. Video recordings, photographs and writing samples were also collected in the classroom for data analysis. Information from the 4 preliminary classroom visits was analyzed according to an adapted version of Teale’s Environmental Literacy Checklist (See Appendix B). The analysis of this preliminary information is presented as the classroom description found later in the section on Data Analysis.

The students were observed in the writing center at least once per week for twelve weeks for approximately 15 to 20 minutes per visit for both types of observations, preliminary and primary. A detailed description of the writing center is included in the profile of the classroom. During the times of classroom observations, the teacher assigned all five of the case study participants to one writing center group or divided them between two groups. In the latter situation, one group followed the other group. Group assignments fluctuated so that each child had an opportunity to interact with all of the other participants. The teacher made all group assignments; however, upon my request, she mixed the groups to
include children from more literate homes and less literate homes.

Furthermore, to provide more flexibility in grouping the two kindergarteners whose families were not selected for the case study were grouped with the five case study participants during center time. Fifteen primary observations were conducted in Mrs. Patterson's kindergarten classroom.

As participant observer, I conducted concurrent preliminary home visits with the seven volunteer families for a period of three hours each on two consecutive days and maintained field notes to record observed literacy events. Other forms of documentation in the home were audio recordings, photographs and writing samples. I conducted informal interviews with the parent and the kindergarten child during the latter part of the second preliminary visit to obtain responses to unanswered questions taken from Leichter's environmental checklist. An overview of the analysis tool and the results in the form of a home description are included in the Case Study section of this chapter. Included in that same section is a discussion of how five of the seven volunteer families were selected as case studies to
participate in primary observations for the remainder of the research.

Further data collection in the five case study homes involved participant observation, field notes, photographs, writing samples and audio recordings. However, interviewing was not employed at this phase of the research. Ten to twelve observations per family were conducted between September and December to record the physical environment, dialogue, action and interaction.

The following section of this chapter includes descriptions of the environments studied, school and home, and discussions of the discovered categories. Elaboration of these composing behaviors and writing samples are found within the specific discussions of the classroom and the individual case studies. The presentation of the classroom consists of a classroom profile and discussions on use of models, purposes for writing, writing tools, and use of oral language. The same categories are discussed for the case studies and further subdivided into presentations that focus on the more literate homes and the less literate homes.
The Classroom

Developing writers from more literate and less literate home environments were observed in the classroom context to describe writing behaviors. Oral language in conjunction with interaction, environment, and material were explored within the context of the classroom to describe the writing behaviors common to home and school and between children from more literate home environments and less literate home environments. Data were collected in the classroom during four initial visits, then applied to a checklist. Teale's checklist on literacy was adapted to obtain a refined analysis of the information and to develop a description of the classroom. Although Teale's Checklist was originally used in the home, I adapted the tool for classroom observation because its components amply address the areas of focus in this study. These include the physical environment, action, interaction, and dialogue. Discussions of the physical environment, modeling of writing and reading, social interaction and independent writing experiences in that classroom are included in the classroom profile that follows.
Mrs. Patterson's classroom was one of ten kindergarten classrooms at this K-3 school in a southeastern Louisiana town. Physically, print of all types was located throughout the classroom but some of the literacy material serving functional purposes for adults such as the class roster, the school map, the daily classroom schedule, the library schedule, my visitation schedule and the school calendar were hanging on the wall near the teacher's desk. Children's cubbies, cups, and school supplies were labeled. Many items in the room were labeled such as the door, window, chair, table, household items, and toys. Bulletin boards and chalkboards contained print. Helper charts and a center wheel with children's names were posted for use. Environmental print such as food containers and household cleaning containers were dispersed throughout the classroom in different centers. Signs were posted with the names of centers on pictures of teddy bears and clothes pins with a child's name written on each pin.

This classroom housed several centers, including one for art, one for housekeeping, one for puzzles and one for blocks that contained age-level appropriate items and material. The reading and writing center is
the focal point of this classroom profile because the bulk of the observations were conducted in this area where a considerable amount of the literacy material was kept and where literacy events transpired. The physical makeup of the classroom separated reading and writing into two different areas with the material stored in the identified area. However, when Mrs. Patterson assigned the children to centers, the children were assigned to the reading and writing center, as opposed to being assigned to either as a separate center. This assignment to reading and writing allowed the children to move from one area to another during center time.

Each morning, the children in Ms. Patterson's classroom participated in the daily classroom routines before moving to centers. The children sat in their chairs that were in a semi-circle while the teacher stood up front to begin the routine. The routine was as follows: helper assignments, roll count, calendar exercise, star of the week, morning lesson and center time. The modeling of reading and writing occurred during these routine activities. The children read the calendar and wrote the date on the board. They read information such as names, numbers, and color
words that were included in the morning lesson or posted in the classroom. The teacher read books like *The Three Little Pigs*, charts, and information from the local newspaper to the children. Mrs. Patterson wrote names, lists, letters of the alphabet, color words, daily news, class stories, and words from environmental print as the children watched. Modeling of reading and writing was exhibited in Mrs. Patterson's kindergarten classroom during the morning lesson and during center time.

The children were assigned to centers after the morning lesson. Mrs. Patterson removed clothes pins from the center wheel located on the chalkboard at the front of the room, and assigned the children to a particular center. The children used the clothes pins to attach their personalized laminated teddy bear to the teddy bear center signs. The children rotated from one center in the classroom to another. Mrs. Patterson or a child turned off the classroom lights to indicate center change. The center rotation occurred in a clockwise direction and the children were familiar with the change of center movement. Time in each center per day ranged from 15 to 20 minutes between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.
During this research, the children in Mrs. Patterson’s kindergarten classroom were observed working in the reading and writing center for approximately 15 to 20 minutes per visit. Mrs. Patterson’s classroom was filled with movement, interaction, and chatter as the children worked and played in centers. Children in the art center stood around the table criticizing each other as they finger painted, drew pictures, and built play dough models. Parents volunteered to assist the children in the art center, particularly, when the artwork was assigned work that required supervision or created a mess. Boys in the housekeeping center sported men’s blazers, neck ties, sun hats, fedoras, and firemen’s hats, and paraded around the room playing with walkie talkies and telling others to look. Girls adorned themselves in women’s evening gowns, robes, tutus, and heels. Rather than walking around the room in garb, the girls spent most of their time in the housekeeping center washing dishes in the classroom sink or cooking on the toy stove.

Children in the block center and the puzzle center were more stationary than those in the art center and the housekeeping center. As the children
in the block center sat on the floor playing with large wooden blocks, they talked very little, but made lots of noise. The sound of the children knocking down a bridge or simply a stack of blocks seemed thunderous compared to the talk that occurred throughout the classroom. Wooden puzzles, alphabet puzzles, number puzzles, animal puzzles, and legos were kept on shelves in the puzzle center. The children retrieved the desired puzzles from the shelves and worked at the two tables near the shelves. The art center, the housekeeping center, the block center and the puzzle center were places in Mrs. Patterson’s kindergarten classroom where the children interacted freely and were allowed to select their own material for use. The same type of freedom and selection was provided in the reading and writing center.

Children’s trade books, big books and resource books were on bookshelves and readily available to the children in the reading area that was located in one corner of the classroom. There was a listening station in the reading center where the children operated the tape recorder to listen to and read taped stories. Mats and a rocking chair were provided for
the children to relax as they read. When the children visited the reading area they independently selected and browsed through books, and read books. Sharing books, discussing books, listening to recorded stories, and writing collaboratively were other activities in which the children engaged. Examples of books found in this area were Goodnight Moon, Charlie Brown’s Dictionary, and Things We Like. Mrs. Patterson read books to the class as a whole prior to center assignments, while the children read independently or with a classmate while in the reading area.

The writing area was a specified place in the classroom located between two bookshelves between the reading area and the art center. The teacher stocked the bookshelves in the writing portion of the reading and writing center with paper, pencils, markers, stencils, envelopes, coupons, stamps, stamp pads, chalkboard, chalk, environmental print, mailbox, stationary, newspaper, telephone book, and catalogs. Additional items in the writing center were glue, magnetic letters, magnetic storybook characters, rulers and clipboards. A rectangular table with chairs was situated in the middle of the writing
center. The children were familiar with the material available in the reading and writing center and moved about with ease as they made selections.

While in the writing area, the children selected their own material for exploration, use and sharing. Each day, writing and drawing occurred in the writing area. Children shared their writing and drawing by looking over shoulders, writing together, and displaying their work for their classmates, their teacher and me. The children laughed and talked as they wrote lists, copied words, used magnetic letters and traced stencils. The children shared their writing with other children and with Mrs. Patterson when she visited the writing area. The children enjoyed visits from Mrs. Patterson in the writing center. During these visits, the teacher asked the children to read their writing and complimented them for their efforts. She visited each center after she finished working with the children at teacher table.

The teacher sat toward the front of the classroom at the kidney-shaped table known as "teacher table" while the children worked and played in centers. The teacher table was a station similar to a center where Mrs. Patterson provided individual or small group
instruction for 15 to 20 minute segments. All of the
children visited the teacher table and each center
once a day. When circumstances did not allow for
daily visitation to each, Mrs. Patterson made sure
that the children got in as many visits as possible
during the week. Occasionally, while Mrs. Patterson
worked with other children at the teacher table,
children from the reading and writing center walked
over to show her their writing and receive feedback.
The children were allowed to display work on the
bulletin board or put it in their cubby to take home.

During center time, the children and Mrs.
Patterson interacted in the writing area for various
reasons. Interaction during center time with respect
to use of models, purposes for writing, writing tools,
and oral language is discussed in the following
sections on the classroom. Five case study
participants studied at home and in the classroom are
presented in this classroom discussion. Descriptions
of writing at home for Edward, Mandi, and Brandon from
more literate homes as well as Justin and Ranekia from
less literate homes are found later in the case study
section of this chapter. Two volunteer participants
from more literate homes, Brittney and Curtell, were
not selected for case study were considered during the classroom phase of the study. They were included in the classroom study to increase grouping flexibility between children from more literate home environments and less literate home environments.

Within the presentation of the data, the children are addressed as a community of writers exhibiting certain writing behaviors. Additionally, the children are identified by their type of home environment. Exemplary dialogue, action, and writing representative of the seven writers are presented for the discovered categories. Summaries of behaviors exhibited by the more literate home environments and less literate home environments are included in the concluding section of each category.

Use of Models

Models of writing were present throughout Mrs. Patterson's kindergarten classroom on the bulletin boards, in the centers, on the closet doors, on the cubbies, and on numerous labeled items. While in centers, the children were observed using books, catalogs, environmental print, bulletin board information, daily lesson information, and teacher prepared writing as models of writing. Books like Ask
Mr. Bear were used by the children to develop their own Ask Mr. Bear books while they used the Sears catalog and sales pages from the newspaper to prepare Christmas wish lists. Mrs. Patterson incorporated environmental print into her lessons on initial consonant sounds. Print from a Popeye's chicken box, peanut jar, and a popcorn box were used as models for writing when the children studied the letter "P."

All of these models were accessible to the children in the reading and writing center.

The seven children studied in this phase of the research worked in one or two groups during center time. Heterogeneous grouping permitted the children from more literate and less literate homes to work together in the reading and writing center. The kindergarteners used writing models in the writing area whether the writing was self-generated or assigned. Self-generated writing in the reading and writing center was more prevalent than assigned writing. Models of all types were used whenever the children selected their own writing topic. Children copied writing models of other children as they wrote and copied writing samples found in the writing area that focused on the morning lesson for that day.
The children shared their writing with other members of the group when they wrote. Justin did not hesitate to hold up his writing or post it on the bulletin board in the writing area for display. Children who did not display the writing as models were observed by classmates as they wrote and their writing was copied. Writing forms were copied more often than writing content. Brittney enjoyed writing letters (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Name on envelope: Brittney

Brittney was from a more literate home environment. When engaged in self-generated writing, Brittney always wrote a letter, put it in an envelope, and placed it in the classroom mailbox. Mandi, who was also from a more literate home environment, watched Brittney write a letter, wrote her own name on an
envelope, then placed it in the mailbox. She copied Brittney’s purpose for writing, but did not copy Brittney’s name which had been written on the envelope. Mandi wrote her own name on the outside of her envelope (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Name on envelope: Mandi

Many times the copying from others and the copying of models from the lesson occurred during the same writing event. Mrs. Patterson often placed writing models in the writing area for the children after the morning lesson, and the children took advantage of the models. During one of the preliminary visits, Mrs. Patterson placed a name card for each child with their name and photograph on the bulletin board in the writing area. The children copied their own name and copied the names of
classmates from the board. Other models written by the teacher and placed in the center were holiday words and environmental print.

For example, during the morning lesson Mrs. Patterson wrote the 911 emergency number on the chalkboard at the front of the classroom. Later, Mrs. Patterson wrote the number on cardstock and put it on the table in the writing area. Ranekia, Edward, Justin, and Mandi moved to the writing area when the morning lesson was over and engaged in conversation about 911 as they wrote. Mandi, a child from a more literate home environment, did not participate in the discussion nor did she write 911. Intermittently, Mandi glanced at the group at the table as she wrote on the chalkboard in the writing area. Brandon, Brittney and Curtell were absent on that day. The following dialogue and writing samples for Figures 3, 4, & 5 represent a combination of the children’s use of a provided model of 911, then the modeling of 911 for others during the writing event. Writing samples from Justin, Ranekia, and Edward are presented.

Justin: Hey man, we got the same color.
Edward: You here, too? (talking to Mandi about the center)
Justin: Hey man, what you doing? (Edward using model of 911).
Edward: Oh! Then they got housekeeping. Oh! after we suppose to -- Oh! No writing in books. (Talking to Ranekia)


Justin: (looks at 911 on the card) Mrs. Patterson, look what I write! Ms. Patterson, I write 911 (walks over to teacher at teacher table).

Patterson: Good! Okay.

Justin: I’m writing 911 again.

Edward: I’m writing 911 again.

Justin: Watch. Look. Look! You go like this. Go like this. And it go down. Then it go like that and like that. 911.

Ranekia: I could make 911.

Justin: She say 911. That ain’t no 911. This a 911.

Rankeia: I’m fixing to write 911 for real.

Justin: And then you go one, two-- I got 911.

Edward: This 911.

Justin: I know. No, that crooked. 911 go like this.

Edward: Like this.

Ranekia: I made 911.

Figure 3. 911: Justin
Justin and Ranekia were children from less literate home environments. Edward was from a more literate home environment. Edward used the model of 911 to write 911. Justin observed Edward and
questioned him about his task by saying, "Hey man, what you doing?" Then, Justin picked up the model of 911 and copied the model. Raneka watched the boys interact and said, "I could make 911." Rankeia wrote 911, and the children from the two types of literacy environments engaged in dialogue as they continued to write 911.

Like the shared writing model presented in the previous example, Mandi in a group with Brittney, Edward, and Raneka copied the model of a holiday word provided by Mrs. Patterson after a lesson on Halloween. Mrs. Patterson encouraged the children to use the models of Halloween words if they wanted to use them. Working in group 1, Mandi used the model to copy the word "jack-o-lantern" to support her picture (See Figure 6). Raneka, a child from a less literate home environment, observed Mandi, a child from a more literate home environment, and drew a picture of a jack-o-lantern without a label. Edward who was from a more literate home environment did not attend to Mandi as he practiced writing the letter "A." While the children in group 1 wrote, Brittney played with a stamp and stamp pad.
Figure 6. Jack-o-lantern: Mandi
Brandon who worked in group 2 copied that same writing model to label his picture of a jack-o-lantern (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Jack-o-lantern: Brandon
He wrote the word backwards when he copied it. Curtell sat at the table cutting paper and did not interact with the children in the group. Justin, who was also in group 2 with Brandon and Curtell, watched Brandon draw and write. Justin was a kindergartener from a less literate home environment. However, Brandon and Curtell were from more literate home environments. After observing Brandon using the model to label his jack-o-lantern, Justin used the word "pumpkin" to label his picture (See Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Pumpkin: Justin](image)

The children used the models of writing presented by Mrs. Patterson when she assigned the writing topic. For example, the Ask Mr. Bear book, the Christmas list, and the get well card for Brandon were writing
assignments in which the children used the same
writing model. Sometimes the children used other
writing models in conjunction with the model provided
by Mrs. Patterson.

The following data represent the children's use
of the several writing models to prepare their Ask Mr.
Bear books after listening to the recorded story.
Justin, Mandi, Brandon, and Edward sat around the
table in the writing area listening to the story on
the recorder. Along with the recorder, Mrs. Patterson
placed laminated name cards of the characters from the
story on the bulletin board in the writing area. The
children removed the name cards from the bulletin
board to copy the characters' names as they developed
their own books. Included in this data are dialogue
between the children as they worked at the writing
table and a writing sample from the writing activity.
Brandon uses the name card from the bulletin board to
write the word bear (See Figure 9).

Patterson: Did you remember to write your name
first?
Justin: I did.
Patterson: Name first.
Mandi: You can copy off here?
Patterson: Now. When everybody's ready. When
Edward's finished, Brandon, you can
turn it on. When Edward is
finished. Okay?
Mandi:  (unintelligible)
Patterson:  You don't have to copy. You can just write it from what you think. Okay?
Go put it. You can turn it on for me and start listening to it.
Brandon:  Wait. Y'all got to wait.
Mandi:  Wait.
Brandon:  How you spell goat? How you spell goat?
Edward:  Goat?
Brandon:  How you spell goat? ah, ah (looks for the word goat on the bulletin board)
Mandi:  Here's Danny. You don't need Danny?
(walks to bulletin board to put the name Danny back)
Brandon:  No. Get goat. (Mandi gets sheep from bulletin board to hand to Brandon, but he would not take it. She gives it to Edward. Get sheep.
Brandon:  Give me goat. Give me goat. Give me goat. Where goat? Give me that goat. Edward, I'm a bop you. Give me goat. Give me goat. Give me goat. Give me goat. (Edward walks over to the bulletin board, but returns without the bear card.) Get the bear. Get the bear, Edward. (Edward gets the bear.)

Figure 9. Use of models. Brandon
Justin, who was the only child in the group from a less literate home environment, traced the pictures on the back as he watched and listened to Brandon, Edward, and Mandi. They talked to try to help Brandon determine which model was the word "goat." The three of them were not able to figure out which word was "goat." Brandon decided to label the picture of the bear instead. As these children began to label pictures, Justin stopped tracing his pictures and began labeling. However, he did not engage in the dialogue with Mandi, Edward, and Brandon.

The children used their existing knowledge of phonetic principles to select a model for which some letter-sound association was known. Although Brandon copied "bear," he used invented spelling to write the names of the other characters in the booklet. All of the case study children used invented spelling during this writing event in which several writing models were presented. Brandon labeled the pictures of the characters with strings of letters. Mandi produced exact copies of all of the characters' names. Justin, Ranekia and Edward, like Brandon, used invented spelling. Justin and Ranekia identified the pictures of the characters with a combination of letters and
letter-like symbols. Edward consistently wrote one letter or two letters to label the pictures. When exact copies of models were not written, the children exhibited the precommunicative and semiphonetic stages of invented spelling.

In December, Mrs. Patterson instructed the children to prepare a Christmas list. She provided a Christmas list as a model that included pictures of items from the Sears catalog with the name of each item written under the picture. The children located pictures of toys and clothing and attempted to write the names beneath the pictures. The writing form provided by Mrs. Patterson was used as a model. All of the children prepared a list similar to hers in form. Lists were compiled to make a class book of Christmas wishes. Get well cards to Brandon who was ill demonstrated a situation where the form was copied, but the children composed their own message. The cards were mailed to Brandon in a large class envelope. The same writing models were used by the children when topics were assigned, but the messages conveyed were different.

Numerous models of writing were presented in Mrs. Patterson's kindergarten classroom. The models were
composed by the teacher and by the children. Copying models was practiced by the children as they engaged in writing. Children from more literate homes seemed to be less observant of writing modeled by other children and focused more on their own composition.

The children from less literate homes observed others write before they wrote. The children from both types of environments usually talked when one writing model was provided. It appears that children from less literate home environments observed more than talked when several writing models were used. The children from the more literate home environments engaged in dialogue with shared input when several writing models were provided. Choice of writing models was allowed. Basically, the children selected their writing topic, choose a writing model, and talked as they generated writing.

However, all of the seven children used one writing model when the writing task was specified by Mrs. Patterson. When the writing task was specific, the children followed the form of the writing model but not the content. The children from more literate homes used the models provided by the teacher, while the children from less literate homes used the models
after seeing the children from more literate home environments use the models. Furthermore, when several models were provided, if exact replicas of models were not copied, the children produced invented spelling. Whether the writing was self-generated or assigned, the children used the models of writing available to them to develop their writing knowledge and writing purposes and explore letter-sound relationships.

**Purpose for Writing**

During each of the fifteen classroom visits, most of the seven children considered during the research composed while in the reading and writing center. The alphabet, words, numbers, names, telephone numbers, notes, letters, lists, and stories were the focus of the children's writing. The kindergarteners spoke of their purposes for writing. They made statements like "I'm writing my name on my truck," "I'm writing a note to Geri," "Watch, 'is'," "I made a 'B'," "Let's write 'woman'," and "687, I got to write the 7." Whether announcements accompanied the writing or not, the children wrote during center time.

The names of items were posted in the classroom, and the names of children were visible throughout the
classroom. The door, a window, the stove, and other objects were identified with the name attached. The cubbies, the bulletin board, the birthday calendar, the center wheel, the center bears, and plastic cups were items in the classroom visibly labeled with the children's names. The most prevalent focus of writing during center time was name writing. The children observed names displayed in the classroom then wrote their own names and the names of fellow classmates. Those children who did not know how to write their names copied models of their names found in the classroom.

The children wrote their names for various reasons. Names were written to identify work, to practice name writing, to label an envelope or a picture, and to sign a card or letter. Figure 10 represents Ranekia's copying of her name from the bulletin board in the writing area. At the time, Ranekia, a child from a less literate home environment, did not write her name from memory. During a separate visit, Ranekia copied the name of one of her classmates to practice writing (See Figure 11).
Figure 10. Name writing: Ranekia

Figure 11. Classmate's name: Ranekia

Other children in the classroom wrote their names and copied the names of classmates. The purposes for copying the names included making a list and identifying a telephone number. Figure 12 is an
example of Brandon’s copying of names from the bulletin board to form a list. Brandon was a child from a more literate home environment, and so was Mandi. In Figure 13, Mandi copies Brandon’s name to identify his telephone number.

Figure 12. List of names: Brandon
Writing names occurred frequently, while writing letters, numbers, telephone numbers and lists occurred less often. Students' purposes for writing were many times related to information from the morning lesson or a model of writing that Mrs. Patterson had placed on the table or the bulletin board.

The children used environmental print to write the letter of the day in context. Instead of practicing writing the letter "P" from the morning
lesson, the children copied words such as "Popeye's" from environmental print. The lesson on 911 was followed by the children writing and discussing how to write 911. The writing followed classroom discussion and interaction that transpired during the morning lesson. During this event, Justin and Ranekia watched Edward use the model of 911 to write 911. Then the two of them used the same model to write 911 and copy Edward's purpose for writing. Justin and Ranekia were from less literate home environments, and Edward was from a more literate home environment. Similarly, during a different writing event, Justin watched Brandon write for the purpose of labeling his jack-o-lantern. Copying the word "pumpkin" from the chalkboard, Justin labeled his picture.

The children also related their writing to models placed in the writing area for center time. For example, when Mrs. Patterson put the classroom directory on the table in the writing area the children wrote telephone numbers. The classroom directory contained the telephone numbers and addresses of all of the children in the classroom. There was a page for each child, and it was arranged in alphabetical order. Ranekia, Mandi, Justin, and
Brandon browsed through the directory then wrote telephone numbers. These children worked in two different writing groups. Figures 14, 15, & 16 found below represent telephone numbers written by Ranekia, Justin, and Brandon. Their purpose was to practice writing their telephone number. Mandi’s example is found above the previous paragraph. The purpose for writing for Mandi was to use the telephone number at home to call her classmate.

Figure 14. Telephone number: Ranekia

Figure 15. Telephone number: Justin
Many of the models placed in the writing area were copied or used as models to practice writing or to name a picture. Models of the words "bear," "goat," and "jack-o-lantern" were copied to identify pictures. The word "Santa" was added to a Christmas wish list to relate the word to the list. Models placed in the writing area were used by the children whenever they were available.

Assigned writing was a purpose for writing in Mrs. Patterson's classroom. The purpose was identified by Mrs. Patterson. The children were instructed to make a book, write a get well card for Brandon, and prepare a wish list for Christmas. The children used models of the writing task such as the card and the list to help them accomplish the task.
However, the children generated their own ideas for the content of the card and the wish lists.

Word cards on the bulletin board assisted the children in labeling the pictures in the Ask Mr. Bear book that the teacher presented to the children. They were told to write the story, but to use the name cards to help them. Their initial purpose as indicated by the teacher was to write a story. The children's purpose shifted from writing a story to labeling pictures of characters. Mandi, Brandon, and Edward talked as they labeled pictures, while Justin traced the pictures. Justin, a child from a less literate home environment watched the remaining children in his group, who were all from more literate home environments, copy words from the name cards. Eventually, after watching Mandi, Brandon, and Edward write for the purpose of labeling pictures, Justin labeled his pictures. Ranekia exhibited similar behavior in group 2 when she watched Curtell and Brittney label their pictures. Ranekia was from a less literate home environment while Curtell and Brittney were from more literate home environments. Through observing the girls, Ranekia established a purpose, then used the character cards for models.
All of the children wrote strings of letters or copied the words from name cards to label their pictures.

The children established purposes for writing that consisted of topics common to the majority of them, especially information from the morning lesson. Letters of the alphabet, numbers, names of products, and the names of characters were information included in the lessons. These purposes for writing extended the morning lesson and allowed the children to practice writing and discuss the content. Name writing was also a popular focus of the writing. Children from less literate homes wrote names to practice and to identify their writing. Similarly, children from more literate homes wrote names to practice writing and to identify their writing. Additionally, children from the more literate homes wrote names to compile a list, sign a letter, and identify a telephone number. The writing during these events was not assigned, but was often related to the writing models placed in the writing area by Mrs. Patterson.

The teacher's assigned purpose for writing often changed and became the children's own purposes for writing. The children labeled pictures instead of
writing a story. The children from more literate homes copied the models to accomplish their purpose, whereas the children from less literate homes observed those children to determine a purpose, and used the children's models and/or the teacher's model. The children from both types of writing environments wrote for purposes that were known and comfortable to them.

Relationship between Writing and Writing Tools

The bookshelves on each side of the table in the writing area in Mrs. Patterson's classroom were filled with writing utensils. Stamps, stamp pads, stickers, glue, scissors, paper clips, stationary, notepads, crayons, markers, pencils, rulers, clipboards, and coupons were found on one of the bookshelves. The bookshelves on the opposite side of the table held boxes and boxes of stencils that contained letters, animals, and other shapes and figures. The classroom mailbox with the number 213 was placed on top of this bookshelf. Magnetic letters, magnetic characters, and chalk were located on the chalkboard. Beneath the chalkboard were the posters of the letters of the alphabet. Tacks were placed on the bulletin board so the children could display writing and art. A telephone book, a trade book, and a basket with lined
paper or typing paper were usually kept on the table in the writing area. These materials were always available to the children during center time.

As the children moved to the writing table in the writing area, they immediately selected the tools of their choice and began writing. Some of them stood up to write while other sat at the table to write. The children moved around as they shared writing with others, watched others write, and retrieved more writing utensils. The tools that the children got from the shelves remained the same. Mrs. Patterson replenished the consumable items such as paper clips, glue, tape, and markers when necessary.

Writing models and writing tools on the writing table frequently changed. Sometimes writing models such as the city telephone directory, the classroom directory, catalogs, and trade books were placed on the table either by the children or by Mrs. Patterson. However, the same models did not remain on the table throughout the study.

Just as the books as writing models varied, the type of paper available varied. A metal basket similar to a secretary’s mail tray was kept on the table to hold paper. The kindergarteners were aware
of the choices in writing material. For example, while playing school, Brittney commented to Edward and Mandi about the paper that was on the table. She stated, "We got three kinds of paper just for y'all. This time draw something or write words." During this and other visits, the children used several types of paper such as lined paper, stationary, typing paper, steno pads, butcher paper, and construction paper. Each type of paper was not always available at the writing table. Mrs. Patterson supplied the paper for the writing area.

The children used any type of paper that was available to write a name, a telephone number, the alphabet, a note, a story or a letter whenever the writing was self-generated. The children did not select stationary to write a letter although it was always available on the bookshelf. Brittney, Edward, Mandi, Ranekia, Justin, Curtell, and Brandon wrote letters or notes to friends on any type of paper available. Most of the children from more literate home environments wrote several letters during the weeks of observation. Specifically, they were Brittney, Mandi, and Brandon. Curtell seldom wrote anything at all, while Justin, Ranekia and Edward
wrote few letters. Justin and Ranekia were from less literate home environments, but Edward was from a more literate home environment. All of the children wrote the letters then put the envelopes in the classroom mailbox. The envelopes written by Brittney and Brandon are presented below (See Figures 17 & 18). Brittney put a color sheet in her envelope. Brandon put a picture of a truck that he had drawn in his envelope.

Figure 17. Envelope for color sheet: Brittney

Figure 18. Envelope for truck: Brandon
Brittney and Brandon wrote their letters on typing paper. Those who desired to write something other than a letter used typing paper, too. The kindergarteners in the classroom used whatever paper was provided such as typing paper, lined paper, butcher paper, and steno paper. The children made a choice when one was available.

"Let me give you a clipboard. Curtell, do you want a clipboard?" When Curtell sat in the reading area attempting to write in her lap, Mrs. Patterson offered her a clipboard to make writing more comfortable. The children selected writing tools for use while Mrs. Patterson encouraged the use of different writing tools and provided various writing tools. The children used stencils, markers, crayons, and stamps for writing. Mrs. Patterson reminded them that the materials were available. Ranekia, Curtell, Mandi, and Brandon enjoyed using stencils to write the alphabet and draw designs. Stencils were located in boxes on one of the bookshelves near the writing table. In Figure 19 below, Ranekia uses a stencil to produce designs. Figure 20 that follows shows Curtell's use of a stencil to write the letters of the alphabet.
Figure 19. Stencil: Ranekia

Figure 20. Stencil: Curtell

Mrs. Patterson supplied the children with one or more types of paper when she did not assign a writing task. For assigned writing tasks, the children were required to use the paper provided for the task. Butcher paper was supplied to write a get well card to
Brandon and to prepare wish lists. Typing paper stapled together was available for the Ask Mr. Bear books (See Figure 21). The children wrote on the paper and used the teacher’s model of these writing samples that were written on the same type of paper.

Figure 21. Ask Mr. Bear booklet

Writing on a special type of paper for a particular writing purpose was not necessary when the children directed their own writing. They used the type of paper that was available at the time of the writing event. The paper that was readily available
on the writing table was commonly used to write. Mrs. Patterson replenished the paper when the stack in the basket was depleted. The replacement may have been steno pads, typing paper or construction paper. When the writing task was assigned, Mrs. Patterson replaced the paper on the table with the paper specified by her for the writing activity. Mrs. Patterson wrote on that same type of paper to provide models for the children. A variety of writing tools was available, but the type of paper used was controlled.

All of the children used a variety of writing material such as index cards, colored paper, typing paper, and note paper. The children from more literate homes wrote more letters and used more envelopes. The differences in use of material by children from more literate and less literate homes were limited.

Relationship between Writing Events and Spoken Language

Moments of silence were present in the writing area during center time, but not as often as segments of discourse. The amount of talk that occurred during each visit varied. However, all of the children talked as they wrote, and some were more vocal than
others. For example, Curtell wrote very little, but she spoke rapidly, constantly and to herself. Mandi seldom spoke but she wrote often. When the children spoke, they spoke to provide assistance for writing; identify the content of the writing; and praise or criticize one’s writing.

It was not unusual for the children to speak during a writing event to seek assistance, offer assistance, identify content, and praise or criticize writing. All or most of these forms of talk were exhibited during lengthy segments of dialogue. The children gave directions and negotiated on how to spell a word, write a name or write a number. They talked as they wrote to identify or tell others what they were writing. Praising and criticizing their own writing or someone else’s writing occurred when the children analyzed each others work. The following excerpt from one of the visits represents a combination of most of the uses of oral language. The group members were Brandon, Edward, and Justin (See Figure 22).

Justin: Fixing to do something, brah.
Edward: I beat y’all.
Justin: Edward, I’m fixing to write your name.
Brandon: Edward, your name start with a .... Un, un. That’s wrong. Your real name don’t start no "E". Cause look, a "L". "L", what his name start with? "L?

Justin: His name don’t start like that. Huh?

Edward: Yeah it do.

Justin: That cat don’t know how his name go. I know how my name go. Huh, Brandon? I know how my name go.

Brandon: My name is Brandon. B R A N D O N (spells name)

Justin: Boy, that’s easy. Brandon, you got to start with a "B". Got a start.

Brandon: B R A N D O N

Justin: Boy, look. You lazy. This how Edward name go, huh? Just like that. Just like that. And just like that. Huh? And what else?

Brandon: "U".

Edward: "B".

Justin: "D".

Edward: No, "B", "B". You take it down and you take it right there. Down, up, down, up. Take down right there up to the top.

Brandon: Boy, you lying.

Edward: Un, hun. And then after that you go down then around.

Brandon: Down. You go down, make a line, and then go like that.

Edward: You wrong.

Justin: Like that?

Edward: No! Like this. Like this down.

Brandon: That’s a "P".

Edward: No, down and take it around. Like that.

Justin: Now I know. I know how Brandon name go. Your name start with a "I", too?

Brandon: Yeah.

Justin: "C", "I".

Brandon: "N".

Justin: How a "C" go?

Brandon: No, "C", "I". C I, B C I N. (Brandon demonstrates for Justin on his own paper)

Brandon: Like that.

Justin: Ooo! Like this.

Brandon: "N", "D".

Justin: "N", "D"? I don’t know how "N", "D" go.
Brandon: A "D". You know. Go down.
Justin: Go down.
Brandon: Then go cross.
Justin: Cross.
Brandon: And then up. Nope, no, no, no. Like.
(Brandon leans over the table to show Justin how to make a "D")
Brandon: And that's all.
Justin: That Brandon name. That's your name. I know how to write Brandon name.
(Edwards gets up from the table, stands over Justin's shoulder, and watches him write. Brandon puts his head on the table to watch Justin write.)
Justin: Like that.
Brandon: B R A N D O N

Figure 22. Boys talking and writing: classroom
Initially, Justin and Brandon voiced criticism of Edward's writing of his name. Justin was a child from a more literate home, but not Brandon and Edward. The focus of the remainder of the discussion was on to how to write Brandon's name. Throughout this writing event, the boys talked to identify the content of the writing, Brandon's name. They exchanged dialogue to assist each other in spelling the name and to give directions on how to form the letters. Justin asked most of the questions during this exchange of dialogue. He asked for help when he said, "How 'C' go?" Brandon and Edward answered his questions and offered assistance. They provided verbal directions for spelling and letter formation. Brandon provided nonverbal assistance when he demonstrated how to write his name for Justin. Dialogue, interaction and talk of this type occurred during several visits.

Mrs. Patterson placed tablets on the table for the children to work on wish lists. Mandi, Ranekia and Brandon engaged in a rather lengthy conversation about the word "Santa" as they prepared their lists. Analysis of writing transpired as Mandi and Brandon observed Ranekia's writing. Although Mandi and Brandon did not verbally criticize Ranekia's writing,
they criticized her writing by laughing. Mandi indirectly praised Brandon's writing when she indicated that she would write what Brandon had written. The children announced that they were writing "Santa", and assisted each other with the spelling. The following discussion transpired when Mandi, Ranekia, and Brandon wrote the word "Santa."

Figure 23 represents Brandon's writing of the word, and Figure 24 represents Mandi's writing of the word. Ranekia's writing of the word "Santa" was less similar than the writings of Mandi and Brandon (See Figure 25). The children produced invented spelling as they talked about how to spell the word. Ranekia, Mandi, and Brandon engaged in dialogue on how to write "Santa."

Patterson: Did everyone get a tablet?
Brandon: Yes. I don't know how to write mine.
Patterson: Just do it the way you think it might be. Okay?
Ranekia: Ms. Patterson, we writing this. (holds up ad. Teacher walks over to art center) Ms. Patterson. Let's write "woman."
Brandon: I'm trying to find me a bike.
Ranekia: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.
Brandon: Oh! Yeah! I see something.
(Randerson stands as he writes in his tablet. He shows his writing to Mandi as Mandi and Ranekia share an ad from the newspaper.)
Ranekia: Let's write "woman."
Mandi: I ain't writing no "woman." Let's write the name.
Ranekia: Okay.
Brandon: I'm fixing to get this. (girls not looking)
Mandi: Let's write this.
Ranekia: Okay, wait I'm fixing to erase mine. Okay?
Brandon: Look, this how you spell "Santa."
T A N. No, T A N.
Mandi: Turn on the other side.
Ranekia: Yeah! Look, see you suppose to do it like this. (children laugh)
Brandon: Look at that cat.
Ranekia: Come on. "T", um, T I.
Mandi: I'm writing what Brandon write. T A N
Brandon: Boy. Oh, I thought. Ms. Patterson! (Brandon walks over to teacher table)
Ranekia: T A
Mandi: T A N. T A N.
Brandon: Ms. Patterson.
Ranekia: I'm writing something for Christmas. Not right now. I'm fixing to write something for Christmas.

T A N I V S U S

Figure 23. Santa: Brandon

T A

Figure 24. Santa: Mandi
Figure 25. Santa: Ranekia

Ranekia’s remark "Come on. 'T', um, 'T, I'." represents her request for assistance, and Mandi responds. Mandi indicates that she is watching Brandon. Consequently, the children continued their conversation on how to spell the word.

The children in Mrs. Patterson's classroom talked as they wrote. They talked for several reasons. The content of the talked fluctuated, but the longer discussions included more uses of oral language to aid writing. The children helped each other to write, particularly, when the writing topic was known or verbalized. Discussions of how to spell words occurred between the young writers. Praise and
criticism of writing knowledge and ability was another use of oral language during writing events. Criticism did not hinder the writing efforts nor did praise. The children continued to write and talk throughout the event. Much of the time, the children from less literate home environments watched, talked and asked for assistance. The children from more literate home environments showed, watched, talked, sort assistance, and responded to questions. The use of oral language helped the more literate and the less literate children work through the writing together.

**Case Studies**

The case study presentations that follow include descriptions of the home environments of the five kindergartners who participated in this research. The introductory descriptions represent the ethnographer's analysis of the information obtained during the preliminary observations that were conducted to determine the degree of literacy demonstrated by each child in the classroom and to categorize the home environments as more literate or less literate. Descriptions of these environments represent a compilation of observational and interview information acquired relative to the physical environment,
interpersonal interaction, and motivational and emotional climate. Questions for the observations and interviews were taken from Leichter's categorization of home literacy environments (See Appendix A).

Data acquired during these preliminary home visits were analyzed to classify the home environments as more literate or less literate based upon the family's purposes for writing and reading and the forms of print available in the homes that promoted these purposes. Those families that represented the upper and lower extremes between the purposes and the forms of literacy in the home were identified. Once the extremes were determined, interaction between the kindergartner and others in the household during a writing event was considered to make the distinction between the more literate and the less literate home environments. Three more literate and two less literate families were selected for case study. The children from more literate homes are discussed, followed by discussions of the children from less literate homes. The contrast of literacy ranges is most effectively understood with this order of presentation.
The parents and two sons of the Reed family spent the majority of their time during the preliminary observations in adjoining rooms, the dining area and the living room. Objects in this tidy mobile home appeared to have fixed locations that fostered neatness. The dining room table was that designated focal point for writing, especially for Edward, the kindergartner. He used writing materials that had already been placed on the table or that he retrieved from a desk in the living room. Pencils, ink pens, magnetic letters, paint, paint brushes, stencils, manuscript tablets, spiral notebooks, loose leaf paper, and envelopes were available for use.

Edward's parents subscribed to Ebony and Jet magazines and purchased books for him through the mail and from local stores. Other reading materials in the house were several Bibles, the local newspaper, telephone book, calendars, greeting cards, certificates, mail, taped stories with read-along books, posters and environmental print. These various written materials in this home were found in magazine racks in the parents' bedroom, on the chest in Edward's bedroom, in the desk in the living room and
on the refrigerator in the kitchen. Edward's mother stated that more books were locked in the outside shed due to unavailability of space in their home.

Edward's parents indicated that they wrote to jot grocery lists and notes; to complete order forms; sign greeting cards and school papers and to demonstrate for Edward. Reading the local newspaper and reading books to the children were reading events that they engaged in regularly. Edward's parents indicated that when they wrote or read for their own purposes little talk, if any, occurred. In fact, on one occasion it was noticeable that as Edward wrote his father simultaneously read the newspaper.

The writing that I observed during these visits took place at the dining room table in the Reeds' home. I noted that as Edward sat at the dining room table writing his mother gave him verbal praise, pats on the head, short breaks and opportunities to paint which encouraged him to continue writing. Edward's father praised him verbally and Edward praised himself several times, describing his writing as "pretty." Interaction between Edward and his parents as he wrote included discussions on the neatness, correctness and form of his writing. While patting Edward on the head
to praise him and address the appearance of his writing, his mother said, "Take your time doing things. I told you do that "C" better than that." Edward wrote the "C" and replied, "Ma, look it’s more prettier. Ain’t this more prettier?"

The one-to-one exchange in dialogue usually occurred between Edward and one parent at a time, not both. Edward’s infant brother, Brandon, crawled back and forth from the living room as Edward practiced writing his name. Brandon watched Edward write whenever one of his parents held him as they observed Edward write. Edward’s parents made frequent trips to the dining room table from the living room since they were dividing their time between observing Edward, watching television and supervising Brandon.

During the six-hour preliminary visit, I had the opportunity to observe Edward’s mother stand over him at the table and read Dr. Seuss’ *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* to him while she held his brother, Brandon. Edward turned pages of the book, emulated the characters, and answered questions that his mother asked. He was amused and laughed at his mother’s inflections and gestures as she read the book to them. The next day I watched Edward as he perched himself on
his father's knee and listened to Bears on Wheels by Dr. Seuss. His father explained the book to Edward as he read and related it to life experiences.

According to Edward's parents, most of their reading and writing experiences in school were "okay" but the most memorable literacy experiences for Edward's mother were those in her high school French class. Edward's parents indicated that they were pleased with his progress in kindergarten, and hoped that Edward would have the opportunity to attend college.

The use of models, purposes for writing, writing tools and use of oral language during writing events for Edward and his family are presented in the sections that follow. Descriptions of the action, dialogue and writing samples acquired during the study have been provided when applicable.

Use of models. "My daddy writing my name." Edward made this announcement as he smiled and watched his father write his name. This announcement was followed by Edward copying the model of his name provided by his father. Modeling during this specific writing event transpired at the time of the actual event. Edward sometimes used a model from a previous
writing event or received modeling and wrote simultaneously, parent and child side by side writing the same thing at the same time. The modeling parameter for them was open to all persons in the household interested in participating. Participation in the modeling of writing for them involved observation and dialogue. Many times Edward’s parents and his baby brother who was usually held by one of his parents observed him as he wrote. They would walk over to the dining room table from the living room and look over Edward’s shoulder. Talking was used to coax and to coach Edward through the writing. His mother, in her soft-spoken voice, urged him to write by telling him to go on while his father told him what to write next and how to write. Like persons who assist as beginners learn a skill, Edward’s parents directed him through writing events. The following dialogue, writing sample, and photograph represent parent modeling during a writing event where Edward’s family was involved through demonstration, observation, and discussion. (See Figures 26 & 27).

Edward: My daddy writing my name.
Handy: Your daddy’s writing your name?
Edward: Un, huh.
Handy: He sure is. How do you know that’s your name, though?
Edward: I know he writing it.
Handy: Oh.
Edward: Ooo, that’s pretty.
Mother: Go on. Do it Lil Edward.
Father: Come on. .... Come on.
Edward: E, first?
Father: Go head. Do it on that paper. The "E" first. Down.
Now put the "D".
Edward: How you do that "D"?
Father: Do it on the paper like I showed. Down.
Edward: I know. Down and around.
Father: Round the other way.
Edward: Down and this way?
Father: This a way. Start it right there in the middle and bring it to the bottom of the line. Make a circle.
Edward: (humming)
Father: Make a W.
Edward: You take it on both side?
Father: You know how to make a "W."
Edward: Up?
Father: Down
Edward: Down, up, down, up. ... Down, up, down, up.

![Handwritten text](image)

Figure 26. Role of family: Edward
Written models for Edward were provided voluntarily by his mother and his father or upon request by Edward through the use of written example or magnetic letters. Edward's parents often initiated the writing and Edward responded by replicating the model. Most of the modeling Edward received focused on how to write his name. Modeling was offered when Edward did not write his name well or when he did not know how to write. Writing well, according to his
parents' perception, was correct letter formation, appropriate letter size, straightness of the writing, and neatness. Edward's parents voluntarily demonstrated how to write his first name, his last name and the alphabet.

A model was also presented whenever Edward requested assistance in writing his name. Edward asked for help in various ways, such as "Dad, help me do that A," "Here, do this for me," "How this go?," or "I don't know how it, how you write it?" Communicating his need for help to his parents was followed by his parent accommodating him with a writing demonstration. Sometimes, rather than modeling immediately, Edward's mother or father responded verbally but eventually modeled writing. Delayed modeling occurred when Edward's parents misunderstood the type of assistance he was requesting or when his parents believed that Edward already knew how to write that for which he was requesting help. The following excerpt is an example of Edward requesting help and his mother not understanding what he was asking. Once Edward's mother understood his request she modeled for him with magnetic letters.

Edward: How this go?
Mother: You know where it go.
Edward: I don’t know how it, how you write it?
Mother: Let me show you. Set it like this.

The lines of communication were open between Edward and his parents for writing support. Edward was not hesitant to seek help through verbal expression and nor were his parents reluctant to respond and offer assistance. Edward’s parents modeled writing to assist him with his writing and to introduce what they considered to be a new writing concept for Edward such as learning to write his last name. In both situations, whether offering or requesting a written demonstration, Edward copied the model.

Purpose for writing. Edward wrote his name during all of the home visits even on days when he did not feel very well. Then, he wrote his name fewer times. On several occasions when his parents requested that he write his name, he shut down and refused to write at all. This was especially true with the writing of his first name. Eventually, Edward’s parents shifted from having him write his first name to having him write his last name. The main purpose for writing for Edward throughout this study was to learn how to write his name, since his
parents considered name writing to be an important school skill. Therefore, his parents encouraged and many times forced him to practice writing his name in preparation for school purposes; specifically, writing his name on his paper. Although his parents had him write his name to be prepared in kindergarten, his mother indicated to Edward that he should write his name on everything that he did. Consequently, Edward attempted to write his name for identification on his school notebook. His mother, however, tried to discourage him from writing his name to label his notebook. Adult-like writing that was neatly written and easily read was placed on his school supplies and thought of as appropriate writing for labeling, not Edward’s developing writing. Edward had discovered his own purpose for writing and followed through despite his mother’s warning not to write on the notebook. After writing his name, Edward opened the notebook and proceeded to practice writing his name as he had done during the previous nine visits. The following dialogue accompanied this particular writing event.
Edward: First name, last name. (Edward writing on the notebook)
Handy: Ooo.
Mother: Lil Edward, don’t write on the back a there.
Edward: I want put my name on the back of it so I could know who it’s for.
Mother: You know who it’s for.
Edward: Case I lose it at school when I get there. Case I lose it up in my desk.
Mother: Lil Edward! Don’t do that Lil Edward.
Edward: Ma, who wrote that? (Edward opens the notebook.)
Mother: Your daddy. (Edward writes his first and last names.)

Similarly, Edward decided that he wanted to write a letter and put it in the family’s home mailbox. Prior to writing the letter he asked whether his father would mail it for him. His mother told him that he could not put it in their mailbox, but he was encouraged to write the letter and put it in his classroom mailbox the next day. Once again Edward had discovered his own purpose for writing but his parents tried to discourage him. Edward ventured to branch out and initiate his own purpose for writing at home while his parents continued to reinforce school purposes for writing and purposes important to them.

Relationship between writing and writing tools. During most of the visits, Edward eventually refused to write anymore after he had written for a long period of time, he had written his name several times,
or his parents criticized his writing. His refusal to write was met with encouragement from his parents to continue to write. Paint, magnetic letters and stencils were writing tools that Edward's parents promised to allow him to use whenever he wrote his name as often as they thought he should write or write it as well as he should write. The following dialogue is an example of criticism, followed by Edward's refusal to write, then of his mother offering writing tools as an incentive to write.

Mother: You need to practice with your W's and them D's and that R. So try it one more time and take your time.
Edward: Okay.
Mother: Straighten all your letters the same size.
Edward: Like that! Down up, down up.
Mother: That W is a lil big.
Edward: Like this?
Mother: Un, un. It's
Edward: I ain't doing it.
Mother: Come on. Try one more. Look, go straight cross. Straight across.
Edward: Why you want me to do it again?
Mother: Look, you went like that. You go straight. Just set there and take your time.
Edward: Ma, I don't want do this.
Mother: What? You do your name one more time, I'm a let you do that. (referring to stencil)
Edward: Okay.
Mother: Take your time. That ain't the hardest thing there. You gone have to learn how to spell Reed.

In addition to these incentives, Edward was provided with a variety of paper for selection,
including loose leaf paper, notebook paper and manuscript tablets. Pencils, ink pens, paint and magnetic letters were available for use by Edward and he interchanged them with frequency. Edward’s parents were aware of which tools were his favorite tools. Therefore, they used these writing tools to coerce him into writing his name at least one more time or better than he had written it the previous time. From week to week during my visits with Edward and his family, the writing material provided for Edward changed. Some weeks there was loose leaf paper and a pencil while other weeks there was loose leaf paper and an ink pen or paint. Edward would select his own writing tools for that day from the desk drawer in the living room or from the chest of drawers in his bedroom. When he did not select his tools, his parents provided them. A choice of material aided Edward’s desire to write and his parents were aware of this situation and used it to encourage him to write his name.

Relationship between writing events and spoken language. Talking was the norm while Edward was writing in his home for all of the members of the family who could talk. If Edward was not talking to himself as he wrote, he was talking to his parents or
to me. Most of the time the talk that occurred was continual throughout the visit with a few breaks in dialogue that lasted for several minutes. Writing and dialogue were limited when Edward was not feeling well. Edward and his parents engaged in discussions unrelated to the writing events, and Edward enjoyed singing and humming as he wrote. Instructing, commanding, questioning, praising, and criticizing related to the writing occurred during writing event, too.

It was not uncommon for Edward and his parents to engage in dialogue during a writing event that included instruction, imperatives, questions, praise and criticism. The following dialogue and the accompanying writing sample (See Figure 28) represent a combination of most of them.

Edward: I can put my whole name.
Mother: Just put Edward.
Edward: I'm is just gone put my D.
Mother: Un, un.
Edward: You want me to put my whole name?
Mother: Edward, like your daddy was showing you.
Edward: Ah, un.
Mother: Take your time.
Edward: I ain't gone do that then. I know how to do up and down, up and down.
Mother: Look your daddy coming watch you.
Handy: You know how to do up and down?
Edward: Yep! You go down up, down up.
Edward: I can do it again.
Father: Do the E.
Edward: Down up, down up.
Father: Do like I tell you. Do the E.
Mother: Do the first letter.
Edward: What?
Father: The E.
Edward: D?
Father: E.
Edward: How E go?
Father: Down.
Edward: I'm going down.
Father: Right there. Now stop. Put a line cross. At the top! Un, huh. One in the middle. Come out some more. Stop, Brandon.
Edward: Brand.
Mother: Come here, Brandon.
Father: One in the middle and one at the bottom of line. It's a little long. You don't put it that long. Why you want clown?
Handy: See, like you did right here. Like that.
Edward: Oh.
Handy: Yeah, oh like that.
Edward: (humming)

Figure 28. Combination: Edward
Dialogue between the first primary visit and the final visit ranged from verbal instruction on the formation of letters to instruction on the position of missing letters when Edward wrote his name. In the previous dialogue, Edward's parents directed the movement of his writing tool for letter formation with comments such as "Down, up, down, up," and "Put a line cross." Comments from several of the other visits were "Go down. Take it down in a circle." and "This a way. Start it right here in the middle and bring it to the bottom of the line." Edward understood and followed the formation directives, and sometimes repeated the directives as he wrote. Initially, these discussions were coupled with the random placement of letters in his name on the page (See Figure 29). As time passed and the spoken directives for letter formation decreased, Edward wrote his name in a left to right progression (See Figure 30).

Discussion about the position of letters was generally very brief, since indicating the position of a letter required less explanation. Since Edward had been writing his name for weeks and his parents believed that he should know how to write his name correctly, most of the talk regarding letter positions
occurred during the latter visits. The following example from visit ten shows the brevity of this type of discussion and his parents' perception of his knowledge.

Father: Bring it here. Let me see. You left the R out. I told you about that.
Edward: I know one I ain't left out. I forgot to do it.
Father: How you forgot, you knuckle head? Put the R right there. You put the other R there. You go head.

Figure 29. Random: Edward

Figure 30. Left-to-right: Edward
Also, found within the first presentation of dialogue under this category is an example of Edward's father commanding him to write. His father demanded that he write the letter "E", while Edward decided that he wanted to write the letter "D" which was more familiar to him. After his father's persistence, Edward asked his father how to write the letter E before he attempted to write it.

This same example of dialogue was composed of questions asked by Edward. Most times his questions were followed by responses from his parents. The responses facilitated Edward's attempt at writing the letter or letters of his name that his father ordered him to write. His parents asked him questions to find out what he had written, but Edward asked the majority of the questions to assist him in writing his name. During each visit Edward asked questions such as "How E go?," "You take it on both sides?," "Ma, how you do this letter?," and "I got to learn how to write smaller?" His parents answered his questions or modeled the writing and Edward continued writing until he had another question.

Criticism was a common occurrence while Edward was writing. Sometimes, direct or obvious criticism
similar to the following excerpt accompanied one of Edward’s writing attempts and prompted him to cease writing. During this writing event, Edward stopped writing during the visit after the straightness of his writing was criticized (See Figure 31).

Edward: I got it right? I got it right?
Father: Let me see. You can write straighter than that, can’t you? Go head.
Edward: I don’t feel like writing no mo.
Father: You can write better than that. Go head. You got to write straighter than that, brother!
Mother: You go head Lil Edward. Lil Edward, do what you suppose to do.
Edward: I’m tired.

Figure 31. Straightness: Edward

Although Edward received criticism as he wrote his name, he also received verbal praise from his parents. On one occasion, Edward’s mother said to him, "See, you getting better with them. But you got
to get them lil more straighter. You be doing them straight sometime and sometime you don't." Whenever he was praised for his writing, regardless of how minute the praise, Edward gloated in the praise, praised himself, and continued to write. Edward's parents did not praise him for his writing as frequently as they criticized him or as frequently as Edward praised himself. In fact, most of the praise given by his parents was in response to Edward's solicitation of praise. Rewards in the form of writing and reading tools were more common than verbal praise. An example of Edward praising his own writing and seeking confirmation from his parents is found in the dialogue below.

Edward: Ma, I did the two. Come see them now.
Mother: Let me see what you did. You can write some mo on these pages Lil Edward.
Edward: Ain't this look straight?
Mother: Yeah. You getting straighter but you can write some more here. Tell him Edward.
Edward: Dad, ain't this getting straight?
Father: Yeah. But you got a whole page up there. You can write all up there.
Edward: Ma, this the best pencil I ever use.

Edward and his parents used oral language during writing events to direct Edward's writing.

Instruction, commands, and criticism were vocalized by his parents; whereas, questions and praise were
provided by Edward. Certain types of dialogue were characteristic for Edward and his parents, but most of the dialogue elicited reciprocal responses. Basically, one listened to the other and responded to direct the writing which eventually lead to analysis of the writing. Edward and his parents scrutinized the writing for growth and improvement and vocalized it through praise and criticism. After the praise or criticism, the process began again.

Porter Family (Mandi) - More Literate

Entering Mandi’s home for the first time, I noticed the prevalence of literacy artifacts as I walked from room to room. It was evident to me that this household of six, two boys, two girls, mother and father, displayed written material that ranged from children’s work to adult reading material. Children’s artwork lined the walls of the kitchen and the living room. Computer paper, typing paper, construction paper, newsprint, journals, labels and writing slates were visible throughout this three bedroom house. Other writing tools used by members of the Porter family were pencils, pens, highlighters, paint, paint brushes, markers, chalk, magnetic letters and colors.
Through observation or interview, I discovered that an array of reading material was available in the house. For example, children's books, children's magazines, encyclopedias, a Bible, novels, newspapers, magazines, cookbooks, cards, tags, certificates, grocery lists, building plans, journals, environmental print and mail were in plain sight as I perused the surroundings. These and other written material were found in file cabinets, jewelry boxes and on the bulletin board in this home.

Mandi's six-year-old brother who was in first grade and her eight-year-old sister who was in second grade, wrote and read for school purposes, to write stories, and to play school. The parents indicated that Julian, Mandi's toddler brother who was saying a few words, participated in writing and reading whenever he could. In fact, Julian sometimes watched the children write and picked up a pencil to write on the closest thing available. Mandi's parents wrote to compose notes and lists, complete applications and forms, as well as to copy recipes. Mandi's mother wrote notes and reminders in a personal journal. The parents read the newspaper, books, recipes, and blueprints.
An assortment of writing tools and reading material were used by all members of the household and occurred in all rooms in Mandi’s home. I found out during the preliminary visits that every room in the house was used for reading and writing. However, Mandi’s parents stated that they had a favorite room in the house for writing and reading such as the living room or the bathroom. I observed the children and the parents writing and reading to each other and with each other in the bedroom, the living room, the kitchen and the family office. Mandi’s parents indicated that it was not uncommon for the family to engage in writing and reading outside on the front porch or under the carport.

Mandi enjoyed listening to her mother read a book that had been purchased at a liquidation sale during the closing of an old elementary school. Mandi’s mother held her in her lap to read while her sister, Melissa, sat beside them in a chair. Mandi’s parents stated that everyone in the Porter Family engaged in writing and reading, two-year old Julian included. During the first preliminary visit, the children and I played school in the girls’ bedroom, and used a variety of writing tools. It was interesting to see
the variety of writing utensils and the various places for storing them such as labeled shoe boxes in the closet and Mandi’s jewelry box.

Family-oriented literacy activities were supported by dialogue between the parents and the children and at other times between the children. During one of the preliminary visits, the children sat on the floor in the living room playing with blocks, magnetic letters and numbers, computer paper, and slates with chalk. Their parents were relaxing on the sofa watching the football game but observing the children write and interacting with them the entire time.

In general, as the children wrote, the family discussed the writing, the spellings of words, the appearance of the writing, the content of the writing and how to make books. Generic conversations about family matters and school were also common discussions during writing. Mandi’s parents rewarded the children for their writing efforts with praise, water, the opportunity to paint, and the display of their work on the walls, the bulletin board or the refrigerator.

According to Mandi’s parents, she was doing well in kindergarten and they were pleased. Her parents
indicated that their fondest memories of reading were the Dick and Jane readers and Dr. Seuss books. They expressed a desire for their children to succeed and at least complete high school, but further education would be the children's choice. The parents emphatically stated that they would not push their children to go to college.

Mandi's case study is expanded further with a presentation of the various writing models, purposes, tools and language observed in her home. Within each category, data representative of that area of discovery are provided and discussed.

Use of models. Mandi often used previously written models such as grocery lists and labeled pictures to guide her writing. Previously written models that Mandi used had been prepared by different family members, parents and siblings. Once while the entire family was sitting at the kitchen, Mandi, her father and two of her siblings engaged in their own form of writing. Mandi's father wrote construction notes in a binder, Alex made a book, and Melissa jotted her name and other words. Mandi, however, copied the picture of a fish that her father had drawn a few nights before while he was talking on the
telephone. Then, Mandi used one of her mother's old
grocery lists as a model to prepare her own list of
items that the family needed (See Figure 32). Mandi
followed the format of the list to construct her own
list but she asked how to spell the words. The family
participated by spelling the words for her list.

Dialogue from that writing event is presented below.

Mother: Are you writing on my list again? Here,
write cereal right here for me.
Mandi: Cereal.
Mother: C
Mandi: C
Mother: E
Mandi: E
Mother: R
Mandi: R
Mother: E A L. Cereal
Mandi: Write eggs?
Mother: Do I need eggs?
Mandi: Yep
Mother: No, Waffles.
Mandi: Waffles. W (phonetic sound)
Mother: W A FF
Mandi: F
Alex: Waffles
Mother: L
Alex: Waffles
Mother: E S. That's it, waffles. What else you
want?
Mandi: Cereal.
Mother: You wrote that.
Mandi: Daddy, do you know what we need on our list
to buy?
Father: You asking?
Mandi: I got cereal and waffles. Some pancakes.
Father: Speed stick.
Alex: S Speed Stick. And it ends with a K
During a later visit, Mandi copied a labeled drawing that had been sketched by her sister, Melissa. Mandi copied the following labels on her paper: flower, leaves, stem and roots. Similar to the pre-written list that Mandi used in the last example, this drawing model was completed prior to the actual writing event. Although the model was written in advance, Mandi's father modeled reading the labels for her picture during the event. Seldom did Mandi use writing models that were provided at the time of the writing event. Mandi received modeling during writing events when a writing concept was unfamiliar to her or she had difficulty writing the model.

Mandi's family naturally constructed writing models that could be easily located by Mandi and used
at any time. Mandi did not have to ask for previously written models. She simply found them and proceeded to write. Prewritten models led Mandi's family to assist her in spelling words and reading words on models. Upon request, her parents provided models during the writing event to introduce a concept that had not yet been explored by Mandi. Examples of modeling to introduce a concept is explained below in two-way communication.

"How you spell Ms. Handy?" was what Mandi said that resulted in her Mother modeling writing. Melissa and I spelled my name for Mandi as her mother prepared supper. Approximately five minutes after we spelled my name for Mandi, her mother finished the meal, walked over to the kitchen table, and modeled my name for Mandi. Mandi wrote Mrs. Handy above the model presented by her mother after she had already written "MSH." Mandi made her own letter-sound associations to write "Ms. Handy" as "MSH." The conversation for this modeling and the writing sample are shown below (See Figure 33).

Mandi: Was that the period in your name?
Mother: M R S ., short for Mrs.
Handy: Un, huh.
Mandi: M S H ?
Mother: No, no, no. M R S .
Figure 33. Modeling: Mandi

Assistance was offered when Mandi expressed difficulty in writing something. During another early visit, Mandi's mother handed her a number book to use the numbers as a model while her mother washed dishes. In writing the numbers, Mandi wrote the number 2 backwards. Her mother told her to try it again but Mandi wrote it the same way the next time. Consequently, her mother told her to trace the numbers but Mandi still had difficulty. Mandi's mother walked over to Mandi at the table to find out what was causing the problem. She discovered that the paper was too thick to see through and that the numbers were too bold for Mandi to recognize. Mandi's mother responded by modeling the numbers and making the following comments. "They're doubled. See. They're big bold letters. You were right. You can't see
through it. Here, look. This is the way it should go. See?" After the modeling, Mandi continued copying the numbers without difficulty.

Mandi’s mother provided a written model for Mandi whether the need for assistance was indirectly or directly stated. Her mother listened as Mandi engaged in writing even though she was busy performing household chores. When Mandi’s mother heard her inquire about a new writing task, her mother eventually modeled the writing for her. Likewise, if Mandi expressed a problem while writing her mother offered her help. Modeling was automatically provided in a supportive and pleasant environment. Mandi and her family engaged in reciprocal dialogue during writing events as models were presented that assisted her in her writing.

**Purpose for writing.** It was not necessary to search for writing purposes in Mandi’s home because her family frequently wrote for their own reasons. For example, Mandi’s mother wrote personal information in her journal and her father kept work notes in his binder. Her brother, Alex, and her sister, Melissa, wrote stories and spelling words for school purposes. Mandi exhibited her own purposes for writing on
several occasions. Writing grocery lists, preparing Christmas lists, jotting notes, making her own homework assignment, and copying telephone numbers for use were among those purposes.

In early December, Mandi came home from school with a sheet of paper on which one of her classmates had written his telephone number. Mandi scrawled a message below the telephone number that indicated her like for this particular classmate. She had requested the telephone number of this classmate that she liked with the purpose of calling him at home. Besides phoning of her classmate to discuss things in common, Mandi expressed her private emotions for this student in writing. Finally, on that same paper, Mandi wrote the child's first and last names so she could remember whose telephone number was written on the paper (See Figure 34).

Figure 34. Telephone number: Mandi
Mandi was observant of others who wrote in her environment and assumed some of the same writing behaviors relative to her purposes for writing. A prime example of her observation was when Mandi decided to take a photograph of me with my own camera as I had done during my visits with her family. The fascinating part of this whole incident was when Mandi grabbed my field note journal and asked, "How do you write Mandi took a picture?"

First grader, Alex and second grader, Melissa completed many homework assignments in the presence of Mandi. Since Mandi was in kindergarten, she had fewer homework assignments than her school-age brother and sister. Mandi sometimes developed and completed her own writing assignments such as writing her name when her siblings completed their homework. In addition to filling a sheet of computer paper with her first and last names during one of the writing events, Mandi put a large check mark across the paper when she finished.

Most of the time Mandi initiated her own purpose for writing and the purposes changed from one visit to the other. Mandi worked independently as much as possible, but shared what she had written with her family. The writing was meaningful to her and
she used the writing for real purposes which affected the constant change in writing purposes during the study. Mandi's purposes for writing were the result of her watching others while they wrote and making connections about their purposes for writing.

Relationship between writing and writing tools.

There were comments made by Mandi's parents in reference to "your" paper and "my" paper, but everybody used all of the writing utensils in their home. The following conversation that ensued prior to Mandi's construction of a grocery list demonstrates examples of the ownership of writing material, the conservation of writing material and the use of a variety of writing material.

Mandi: Please, may I have a piece of paper? (Her father gives her a steno pad that belongs to her mother.)

Mother: I sure wish you would have gotten some of your drawing paper, Mandi instead of my list. (The family discusses other topics. Then the conversation pertaining to writing tools continues.)

Mother: Make use of that piece, Alex. Because that's all I want you to have.

Father: That's, that's what we need to do.

Mother: We need to do?

Father: When people ask what to get the kids for Christmas, tell them each a roll of tape and some staples.

Mother: Staples: They don't have a stapler.

Mandi: Look how ugly this is.

Father: Yeah, but what else is back there that they're not supposed to use?
Writing materials were used wisely, not frivolously. For example, Mandi indicated that she had messed up her sheet of notebook paper and that she needed a new sheet. Mrs. Porter responded, "You don't even have nothing to write with. What you writing with? Use the other side. I'm sorry, but the little fairy doesn't come bring these notebooks to us."

Mandi's parents limited the amount of paper that the children used depending upon the type of paper and sometimes the type of writing activity. When Mandi, along with her siblings and friends, played school or drew pictures, paper use was monitored less and encouraged. The children used construction paper or computer paper during these writing events where less restrictive monitoring was employed.

The variety of writing tools and the purposes for writing facilitated the writing events, especially for the children. The children located the array of writing material available in their home office and in their bedrooms. Mandi and her brothers and sister were stimulated to finish their writing or drawing when their parents offered to let them paint. Painting was not one of their parents favorite writing activities, nevertheless, Mandi's parents used it as a
reward. Mandi’s father slipped one day and gave the children permission to paint after they finished compiling a Christmas list and drawing Christmas pictures. The dialogue shown below indicates Mandi’s father’s reservations about painting, but the children were allowed to paint.

Mandi: Daddy said we could paint when we get through. He did.
Mother: What, Mandi?
Mandi: He said to let us paint when we finish drawing.
Father: What? You painting?
Mandi: Yeah.

Father: I didn’t say that.
Mandi: Yes you did.
Father: No I didn’t.
Mandi: Yes you did.
Father: Well, y’all all must have misunderstood me cause I didn’t say paint.
Melissa: Yes you did.
Mother: Yes you did. That’s exactly the word you used.
Father: Well, I sure didn’t mean it.

There was an abundance of writing material in the Porter home, but Mandi’s parents sometimes monitored the use of writing materials and specified ownership of the material. Although Mandi’s parents expressed ownership of the material, shared used of the material was possible. This was true when the material used suited the writing purpose such as the grocery list in the steno pad. The children were allowed to use more
of their own material, including computer paper and construction paper as much as desired when the writing activity involved school and artwork that the children displayed at home. Furthermore, the writing tools varied according to user and purpose.

**Relationship between writing events and spoken language.** The Porter children asked many questions during writing events. Their parents seldom asked questions, but responded to the children's inquiries. The questions that Mandi's parents asked were "What is that?" What's the name of your fish?" and "Are you writing on my list again?" "How you spell purse?" "What else?" and "That's better?" were questions asked by Mandi, Melissa, and Alex. The children frequently asked questions to learn how to spell words. Once the questions were asked, the Porter family used oral language to spell the words that the children wanted to write.

The parents spelled words for the children and the children spelled words for each other. When the Porter's exchanged spelling dialogue the discussion ensued for several minutes. The children asked how to spell words such as purse, hat, number, love, phone, gerbil, old, earring, Sholonda, and Christie. Mandi's
parents spelled words for the children and her mother made it clear that this was a frequent occurrence.

Once when the children were preparing to write Christmas lists, her mother remarked, "I really want them to write it. Just let them sit at the table and write. But then I said, well, I would be spelling over half the words." The following discourse on spelling between Mandi, her mother and me presented with the writing sample represent parent/child interaction and Mandi’s attempt to write the word "purse" (See Figure 35).

Mandi: How you spell purse?
Mother: Purse?
Mandi: P what? How you spell purse?
Handy: P U R
Mandi: P U R
Handy: P U R S E

Figure 35. Spell purse: Mandi
The children sometimes modeled the discourse behaviors of their parents and spelled words for each other when they wrote. During one of the visits, Mandi and Melissa sat in the living room writing on computer paper and in notebooks while they shared conversation on how to spell the word earring. Mandi spelled "earring" for Melissa, her older sister, but changed her spelling after hearing Melissa's spelling of the word. Figure 36 is a photograph of Mandi writing at the living room table as they talk. The discussion between Mandi and Melissa follows the photograph.

Figure 36. Spelling and writing earring: Mandi
Mandi: How you spell earring?
Mandi: Un, un.
Mandi: Un, huh, earring.
Mandi: She say you spell earring N T S.
Handy: (hunches shoulders)
Mandi: Ear starts with "E". And ring starts with "R". I'll show you. This is my pencil.
Mandi: Look, "I". Funny.
Mandi: How you spell earring?
Mandi: E, earring. E R E S.
Mandi: Mandi, how you spell ear? Ear, ear.

In addition to using oral language to spell words, Mandi sometimes read her own writing. For example, Mandi asked her mother how to spell her own middle name. Mandi wrote her full name, including her middle name then she read her name aloud. Mandi also read words, telephone numbers, and letters of the alphabet that she had written. At other times, Mandi praised herself for her writing instead of reading it. If Mandi praised herself, her parents looked at her writing and responded with their analysis of her writing. "Mama, look how good I wrote Mandi." is an example of Mandi praising herself. Her mother's response was "You still doing that "M" the other way. You gone learn though."

Just as Mandi praised herself, her parents praised her, too. They praised her for the appearance
of her writing. Her father said things like "That's beautiful. Read it to me." while her mother made comments such as "You need a little work. That's good." Mandi responded to praise that included other specific feedback. Sometimes her parents indicated what she had written correctly and that which she needed more practice. The excerpt that follows represents Mandi’s response to her parents praise and specific feedback.

**Mother:** Good. You got your "I" the right way. Your "N"'s all the wrong way down. Mandi, your M’s right, too!

**Mandi:** My "M" right? Right here I could make a "N".

**Mother:** Do it straight.

**Mandi:** (whispers alphabet)

**Mother:** That’s good Mandi. You almost didn’t have enough room for your lump on your "D", huh? That looks good.

**Mandi:** Daddy, look a my "N"'s.

**Father:** Yeah, that’s good.

Feedback of this type is the kind of criticism that Mandi’s parents offered to all of their children for their writing.

Mandi, her parents and her siblings spoke frequently during writing events. Assistance through modeling and encouragement with praise were obvious uses of oral language during the discussions. Much of the talk that highlighted the children’s writing
consisted of the spelling of words. Mandi's parents provided writing assistance for their children by spelling words. The Porter children modeled this assistance when they spelled words for each other as they wrote. Although assistance in spelling words dominated the dialogue during the writing events, encouragement and direction was offered through praise and slight criticism. Mandi responded positively to both by either continuing to write that which her parents considered to be written correctly or making a correction in her writing. Oral language in Mandi's home facilitated and fostered writing.

Webb Family (Brandon) - More Literate

Conversation, noise, movement and activity were readily apparent in Brandon's home. It seemed as though Brandon, his brother, his sister, his cousin, his parents and other relatives talked at the same time in different rooms about different things, and had competition with the television. The kitchen table was covered with sales magazines, coupons, brochures and school worksheets that were standing in a napkin holder. Stashed away on a shelf in the hall closet were 20 spiral notebooks, 24 packages of loose leaf paper, rough tablets and worksheets. In addition
to these stored writing utensils, visible items such as pencils, pens, markers, calendars, catalogs, encyclopedias, children’s books, romance novels, coupons, newspapers, a Bible, telephone book, mail and environmental print were found in various rooms throughout the house.

Thirteen-year-old Shandreka and eight-year-old Elson, Brandon’s siblings, used writing to complete homework assignments whereas his mother wrote to order children’s books; jot notes, letters, lists and invitations; complete forms and sign homework. Writing for Brandon consisted of some self-generated writing but the bulk of his writing activity involved completing duplicated worksheets. Verbal praise, letter grades and small toys were incentives for Brandon awarded to him by his mother and his siblings.

The children in the family read to complete homework, but Shandreka, who hated to read, did read to entertain Brandon. Reading for Brandon’s mother included reading books to him, enjoying romance novels whenever she had the time, and browsing through her favorite sales catalogs. Based on the informal interview and the observations, interaction was
certainly a component of the family's literacy experiences.

I watched Brandon sit at the kitchen table interacting with several members of the family as he wrote letters of the alphabet on loose leaf paper in a binder. As he sat there writing, his mother answered his questions, prepared dinner, helped his brother and his cousin with their homework, and folded clothes. Brandon followed his mother around the house asking her questions about his writing as she moved from room to room performing what seemed to be routine chores. When Brandon’s mother was unavailable, his brother, Elson, answered Brandon’s questions about which letter came next or how to write that letter. Shantley, a cousin who was also sitting at the kitchen table completing a homework assignment, volunteered information, too.

Children and adults alike sat at the kitchen table and chatted as they engaged in literacy events. Brandon’s mother and her sister addressed invitations for a surprise party as they discussed plans for the party and other family matters. Brandon and his brother were in and out of the room looking over the ladies’ shoulders and inquiring about the details of
the party and the information on the invitations. The literacy experiences in this household expanded beyond the involvement of members of the immediate family to include extended family.

Brandon's parents remembered no significant writing or reading experiences from their school days. At the time of the study, his parents were pleased with his academic performance in school but were concerned about his behavior. They had aspirations for their children to complete college and live successful lives that would provide them with good jobs and nice living conditions.

A discussion of the Webbs' use of writing models, purposes for writing, use of writing tools, and use of oral language is presented in the remainder of this case study on Brandon. The behaviors exhibited in the form of interaction, talk, and writing samples are incorporated in the discussion to add to the understanding of writing in their home environment.

Use of models. The conversation, movement, and blasting of the television that occurred in Brandon's during each visit were constant. However, in the midst of all of the hustle and bustle, the Webbs prepared dinner, washed clothes, folded clothes,
talked on the telephone, read, and wrote. Each member of the Webb household was observed modeling writing except Brandon's father. Various forms of writing were demonstrated during these episodes of modeling.

Brandon's brother and his cousin spent time at the kitchen table or the coffee table completing homework for school or writing for fun. As these boys worked, Brandon worked, too. He wrote on worksheets that his mother had copied for him from a Modern Curriculum Press workbook. While Elson and Shantley completed page after page of addition worksheets for practice, Brandon completed sight word, phonics and coloring worksheets from his folder of copied pages. Brandon sometimes glanced at Elson and Shantley as they worked, but immediately resumed his own writing. Besides doing worksheets, Elson wrote addition problems, copied his name and other names listed on the honor roll from the local newspaper, and drew pictures. Brandon engaged in similar writing when this occurred. Brandon wrote addition problems, names of family members and drew pictures.

The models of writing provided by Brandon's mother and sister were not as frequent as those exhibited by Elson and Shantley. Mrs. Webb often
browsed through sales catalogs and coupon books, but demonstrated writing once when she wrote a grocery list for Thanksgiving dinner. Shandreka wrote addition problems and names for him. On the two occasions that she modeled for Brandon, Shandreka talked on the telephone when she wrote the names. The following presentation of dialogue between Brandon and his mother and the accompanying writing sample occurred when Brandon and Elson were writing addition problems (See Figure 37).

![Addition: Brandon](image)

Figure 37. Addition: Brandon

The boys positioned themselves on the floor to write on the coffee table while Mrs. Webb and Shandreka watched from the sofa.
Mother: Erase that. That don't look like "6".
What you got?
Brandon: 12
Mother: 12
Brandon: 100 + 100.
Mother: What's 0 + 0?
Brandon: Nothing.
Mother: Okay. Put 0 there. Un, un. Put
nothing. 0 + 0 is 0. What's 1 + 1?
Brandon: 2
Mother: So 100 + 100 is 200.
Brandon: 3 + 3 = 6. Ma, this right?
Mother: (nods yes)
Brandon: Jr., what you doing?
Mother: He making up problems, too.
Brandon: Now you suppose to put a chalk mark.
Mother: Check mark. All of them right. All of
them got the right answer.
(Shandreka takes the notebook from
Brandon and writes two problems for him
and answers them.)
Brandon: This 6? (problem is 18 + 18 = 36)
Shandreka: Un, huh. (Brandon resumes writing
problems and answering them.)

Following this conversation, Shandreka wrote problems
with answers for Brandon. She did not provide
discussion about the problems as her mother did in the
dialogue presented above. During another modeling,
Shandreka wrote the last name of a family member for
Brandon when he was compiling a list of names. He had
trouble recalling a family member’s last name so
Shandreka wrote the name for him. Like before, she
provided the model without discussion, and Brandon did
not ask any questions. Other forms of modeling that
Brandon used when the children in the family did not
talk to him during writing were photographs and refrigerator magnets with printed names.

The presence of others modeling writing enticed Brandon to become involved in the writing activity. This nonverbal enticement was supported by verbal communication. His family's modeling of writing presented Brandon with ideas for writing. Brandon observed, wrote, made comments and asked questions during modeling. He also modeled writing and stimulated members of his family to write. Sometimes Brandon used more than one writing model when he wrote. Brandon copied words from photographs, magnets, or worksheets and received modeling of writing from family members. Talk between Brandon and his family during modeling was not always present, but communication transpired. The inclusiveness during writing was a role of the members of the family.

It was evident that the modeling of writing in the Webb home communicated a message to Brandon. When members of his family wrote, Brandon watched and automatically joined in on the activity. Brandon obtained his own paper and pencil and produced writing forms similar to those he observed. If Elson wrote addition problems, Brandon wrote addition problems.
This pattern of writing what others wrote continued throughout this research. Shandreka modeled writing for Brandon when she wrote problems for him without uttering a word. This silence during the writing was contrary to the usual loquacity of the Webb family. Brandon did not request her assistance. Shandreka watched Brandon write, reached for the notebook, and wrote problems with the answers for him. During this same writing event, Mrs. Webb talked to Brandon about the problems as he wrote.

Criticism of his writing was something that Brandon heard quite often from his mother before she modeled writing. Mrs. Webb told him what she considered to be wrong with his writing and helped him determine what he needed to do to correct it. "You not doing that right." was one of the statements that Mrs. Webb used. Brandon listened attentively. Although Mrs. Webb criticized his writing, she talked to Brandon to help him complete the writing task. Sometimes, Brandon asked questions to find out what he should have written. On various occasions, Mrs. Webb complimented Brandon for his writing. Brandon's brother, sister, and cousin talked with Brandon during
writing, modeled writing, but seldom criticized his writing.

Much of the talk between the children was about food, television programs, and family. Whenever the children addressed Brandon's writing, they assisted him in correcting or continuing his writing, and spelled names for him. For example, Shantley informed Brandon that he had written the number "5" backwards. Brandon was not offended by the assistance, and began to ask whether other numbers were written backwards. Shantley also helped Brandon write the alphabet by saying them in unison with him. Brandon wrote as they spoke and paused when he was uncertain of the next letter. Spelling words was something that Elson and Shandreka did for Brandon whenever he asked for assistance. Brandon asked and they responded. Brandon wrote and they responded.

Brandon's family reacted to modeling when Brandon wrote. Elson and Shantley sometimes asked for paper and pencil when Brandon wrote. During the Thanksgiving holiday, Brandon and his siblings were home alone because their mother was working. Brandon wanted to write so Shandreka offered her notebook and pencil to Brandon for him to practice writing. Later,
Elson asked for a pencil and obtained a notebook to copy honor roll names. Modeling by Brandon that enticed Elson occurred again when Brandon drew pictures in an art tablet. Minutes after Brandon sat down to draw, Elson entered the kitchen with his own art tablet and began to draw. Brandon and Elson talked very little as they drew.

Nonverbal and verbal communication during the modeling of writing was exhibited by Brandon and most of his family members except his father. Mrs. Webb, Shandreka, Elson and Shantley wrote in Brandon’s presence and he followed their lead most of the time without a word being said. Likewise, when Brandon took the initiative to write, his brother Elson decided to write or draw. Indirectly, his sister reacted to his modeling when she took his tablet to show him how to write and answer addition problems. Brandon and his family talked during modeling. The talk included criticism, guidance and questions. Brandon asked the questions and his family offered assistance and criticism. The modeling was supported by the oral language that occurred between Brandon and his family.
Purpose for writing. Brandon wrote math problems, names, his telephone number, his address and completed worksheets. His purpose for writing was influenced by his family's purposes for writing. The content of his writing was different from the content of his family's writing, but was of the same form and usually occurred at the same time. Writing like other family activities was an event that made Brandon a part of the whole. When his family played, he played; when his family watched television, he watched television; when his family, had snacks, he had snacks; and when his family wrote, he wrote. Inclusion in the activity was part of his purpose for writing, but content and form indicated additional purposes for Brandon's writing.

The writing forms that Brandon copied were problems, worksheets, lists, and drawings. The content of Brandon's writing was information that he knew how to write and was interested in writing. He wrote math problems that he could solve rather than copying Elson's addition problems. When Elson copied the list of honor roll names from the newspaper, Brandon wrote a list of family members (See Figure 38).
Figure 38. List of family: Brandon

At the end of his list, he copied the name from an autographed photograph. The name from the photograph was the name of a relative who played professional football. The writing that Brandon did was his own with similarities to his family's writing efforts.

During the first visit, Mrs. Webb stated that Brandon enjoyed working on pages taken from a workbook that his grandmother, Mrs. Webb's mother, had given him. Brandon's grandmother was a retired school teacher who gave the children reading and writing material to use at home. Brandon demonstrated his purpose for writing when he used the same type of writing form as the boys, but with his own content. They completed a stack of twenty to thirty worksheets during one visit. Brandon sat at the table with them
and completed six to eight worksheets. The worksheets that Brandon completed consisted of basic vocabulary, color words, numbers, lines, circles, and the alphabet. During this writing event, the boys said little to each other as they wrote. They wrote and intermittently glanced at each other's writing. At one point, Shantley, a second grader, made an observation and vocalized his opinion about Brandon's academic potential. The discussion proceeded as follows:

Shantley: Brandon must be the best in class.
Mother: Why?
Shantley: He better than me. (Brandon copying words.)
Brandon: I'm badder than Shantley. Oh, yes I'm is.

A sample of one of the writing worksheets completed by Brandon is presented below (See Figure 39).

Figure 39. Worksheet: Brandon
The purposes for writing in Brandon’s home varied. The variety in writing purposes was accompanied by the unity of the writing event. Although lists, worksheets, and problems were written, the children united their writing efforts by composing similar forms of writing during each visit. Each child wrote what they could write or enjoyed writing. Most of the time, Brandon’s purposes for writing were sparked by his family’s purposes for writing. When Brandon initiated his own purpose for writing, it was similar to the writing purposes exhibited by his family. Writing was a family event just like other family events.

**Relationship between writing and writing tools.**

Writing tools were located throughout the Webb home and outside. Brandon retrieved pencils from his mother’s dresser, his sister’s purse, his backpack, the carport and the family car. When Brandon felt the urge to write, he found the writing utensils of his choice or asked for them. Whether he asked for the tools or not he always obtained his own pencil and paper. Brandon wrote with pencils rather than with ink pens. His paper selection was much more diverse. Brandon wrote on loose leaf paper in a binder, on
notebook paper, on workbook pages, and in drawing tablets. He wrote lists and problems on notebook paper, drew pictures in a drawing tablet, and wrote the alphabet on loose leaf paper.

Brandon’s workbook pages were kept in a special folder that he occasionally misplaced. There was no specific place that Brandon stored his folder. When Brandon misplaced his worksheet folder, he searched until he found it. Brandon completed several worksheets after he found the folder. Drawing paper that Brandon kept in his bedroom was easily located. Locating other types of paper usually required that Brandon ask for the material. He asked for paper from spiral notebooks and loose leaf paper in a binder. If Brandon wanted to write on these types of paper, Mrs. Webb asked Shandreka or Elson to give Brandon a sheet or tell him where to get it. Notebook paper and loose leaf paper were kept on shelves in the closet or in Shandreka or Elson’s backpacks, not Brandon’s backpack. Brandon knew what type of paper he wanted to use for writing. Regardless of how long it took him to find a pencil or paper, Brandon sat down to write even if it was for five minutes.
Writing tools were plentiful in Brandon's home. Therefore, he used paper frequently and used a variety of paper. The type of paper that Brandon used varied according to his purpose for writing. Although the writing tools were available in Brandon's home, locating them was sometimes a problem for Brandon. Brandon had access to all of the paper in his home, but he occasionally needed assistance to reach the material. Brandon always obtained his tools with or without assistance and engaged in writing.

Relationship between writing events and spoken language. The Webbs talked incessantly and spoke loudly to be heard over the television. Despite the family's love of orality, they directed small segments of talk during writing to writing. Family matters, meals, chores, and upcoming activities dominated the discussions during writing. Sometimes, the family wrote in silence. The oral language used by the Webb's with respect to the writing included criticism, directions, compliments, questions, reading and spelling.

"Erase that. That don't look like a 6," "That's the worst 3 I ever seen," and "You not doing that right" were statements that Mrs. Webb used to
criticize Brandon's writing. However, sometimes, she would erase what he had written then say, "Let me show you." Mrs. Webb wrote in silence. She offered compliments when Brandon was successful at his writing task. Compliments from his mother were subtle words such things as "See how easy that was." and "All them right. All them got the right answer." Talk between Mrs. Webb and Brandon was slight compared to the other amounts of talk that occurred in their home.

During a visit when Brandon initiated his own writing, he completed several worksheets while his mother prepared dinner and folded clothes. As Brandon worked on the sheets, his mother walked back and forth from the stove to the kitchen table to glance at Brandon's work. Mrs. Webb sat at the table with Brandon when she noticed that he was having problems with the alphabet worksheet. Brandon had completed the page, but some of the letters were written backwards and not in correct succession. Through talk, Mrs. Webb directed Brandon on how to make corrections and complete the page. The dialogue and the worksheet from that event are presented below (See Figure 40).
Mother: You not doing that right. (Mrs. Webb erases.) Let me show you.
Brandon: That's suppose to be "C".
Mother: What comes after "H"?
Brandon: "I".
Mother: Erase and put "I".
Brandon: After "I", "J".
Mother: Okay, what come after "I"? That's backwards. You made your "J" the wrong way. What come after "M"?
Brandon: (Brandon thinks for a few seconds.) "N".
Mother: Right. Un, un. That not a "N". That's a "M". "M", "N".
Brandon: "O".
Mother: "P", "Q" and what come after "Q"? Un, un. Think about it.
Mother: See how easy that was. Now you need to go back and do your numbers.
Brandon: Oh! Just like the ABC. (Brandon works on numbers on that same sheet.)

Figure 40. Alphabet: Brandon
Questions were asked by Brandon to receive assistance from anyone who was present when he wrote. Comments from his family evoked questions from Brandon, too. The comments from the children pertaining to his writing focused on the formation of a letter or a number. Brandon asked questions after their comments to find out whether more of his writing needed to be corrected. When Brandon read what he was writing, Shantley read with him. During one writing event, after Shantley informed Brandon that a number was backwards Brandon asked about other numbers. Then, Brandon read the numbers 18, 19, and 20, and Shantley read with him. Elson was usually self-absorbed and barely talked to Brandon when writing transpired. Mrs. Webb observed Brandon write and answered his questions as he wrote at the kitchen table and in the living room. Mr. Webb was most of the time working outside or not home during writing events. Shandreka was often away from home or talking on the telephone when the rest of the family wrote or read. She participated in the writing event whenever it occurred in the living room near the telephone (See Figure 41).
Figure 41. Shandreka assisting Brandon: Brandon
Elson and Shandreka spelled names for Brandon when he asked for help. While watching Elson copy names from an honor roll list, Brandon wrote a second list of names of family members. Brandon wrote his name first, then added the names of his immediate family and a cousin. He added his address and telephone number to the list. The dialogue during this writing event was lengthier than any other that had occurred in the Webb home during writing and
pertaining to writing. An excerpt from the conversation and the list have been provided below (See Figure 42).

Brandon: I wrote my whole name, Brandon Webb. How you spell Keuren?
Elson: Go look on that heart.
Shandreka: K E U R E N
Shandreka: M I T C H E L L
Brandon: I got it. How you spell Spoon?
(The conversation continues with Brandon asking how to spell names and Shandreka and Elson spelling them.)

Figure 42. Spelling names: Brandon

Brandon and members of his family spoke frequently. However, oral language use in Brandon’s home concerning writing during writing events was not prevalent. Talking was used to criticize, give directions, ask questions, give compliments, read writing and spell words. Mrs. Webb spoke to criticize and compliment Brandon for his writing, while his
siblings spoke to spell words and direct Brandon with his writing. Brandon used oral language to ask questions when he needed assistance and to read what he had written. The small amounts of talk in which Brandon and his family engaged did help Brandon accomplish or complete a writing task.

**Hamilton Family (Justin) - Less Literate**

Justin lived with his parents and his year older brother in a neatly kept mobile home located in a trailer park that housed approximately ten homes. As I studied the home to identify literacy artifacts, I soon noticed a calendar on the wall and household items that were labeled such as canisters.

During the preliminary observations, Justin sometimes played outside with children in the neighborhood and other times he sat at the kitchen table writing. While he was writing his family watched television in the adjoining living room. His parents admonished his brother about disturbing him and they basically remained off limits to Justin. In fact, Justin’s parents were so remote that they left me alone with the boys several times during the two preliminary visits while they ran errands and visited with relatives who lived nearby. They left despite
the fact that I informed them prior to the observations that their staying in the room or near the child was a vital part of the research.

Through discussion, Justin's mother indicated that they kept note pads and tablets in the kitchen drawer and sometimes ordered children's books. Observed literacy tools were magnetic letters and numbers, environmental print, a plaque, diplomas, the Bible, a campaign brochure, the local newspaper, a soap opera digest, a calendar, a bus tag, telephone books and mail. Justin used pencils and colors and wrote on the back of used school worksheets. According to the parents, Justin's grandmother kept an accordion file with all of her grandchildren's school work. Consequently, Justin's mother seldom had an opportunity to display Justin's work. Also, Justin's mother stated that once he received a birthday card from an aunt that his grandmother kept to put in her files.

Their purposes for writing included making grocery lists; preparing notes and messages; copying verses from the Bible to carry in their pocket and signing the children's homework. Reading for Justin's family involved reading Bible verses, the soap opera
digest, the local newspaper, notes and the boys' homework. The one cookbook that Justin’s mother used for recipes was given to Justin’s grandmother who lived two trailers over from them.

Interaction between Justin and his family as he wrote occurred several times during the preliminary visits. Justin’s brother, Warren, received help from his mother and his father to complete his homework while Justin sat at the kitchen table writing. At times, Justin would ask a question or show his writing to his parents who responded from a distance, unless he walked over to them in the living room. Most of their talk with Justin was about him staying at the table to write and not being disturbed or about him showing his teacher (me) what he could do. Praise for Justin and Warren came in the form of snacks, verbal praise, toys and applause.

Mrs. Hamilton indicated that her memorable school experience was an embarrassing moment when her eighth grade history teacher had her read aloud in class and her classmates laughed at her because she made mistakes as she read. Justin’s mother completed eleventh grade and his father was a high school graduate. Both parents indicated that Justin was
doing well in school and that they want their boys to attend college.

The following sections of this case study include a discussion of the use of models, purposes for writing, writing tools and oral language during writing observed in Justin's home. Examples of writing and conversation focusing on the writing have been included to enhance the understanding of each category.

Use of models. Justin was restricted to writing alone without interference from his brother or his parents. Modeling occurred in the Hamilton home, but Justin had to watch writing from afar. While sitting at the kitchen table writing, Justin observed his mother sitting on the sofa in the living room helping Warren complete his homework. Writing to complete homework was modeled several times during the study. Modeling of writing names and writing telephone numbers each happened once. Justin used school experiences and environmental print as other models of writing.

When Mrs. Hamilton helped Warren with his homework, Justin was engrossed in his own writing at the kitchen table. He seldom attended to the writing
activity of his mother and his brother. The possibilities of interaction between Justin and Warren for modeling of writing were relatively slim. The Hamilton's made sure that the boys remained separated during writing activities, telling the boys to sit where they were and not move. Justin and Warren had an opportunity to interact and model writing for each other when their mother asked me to watch the boys while she went to the grocery store. While Mrs. Hamilton was away, instead of writing as Justin was doing, Warren used the kitchen cabinet as a drum for approximately twenty minutes. Justin continued to write despite the loud racket. Intermittently, Warren asked us whether we wanted him to stop. He banged louder even though we asked him to stop.

Just as Warren was kept away from Justin during writing, his parents isolated themselves from him, too. Justin's parents watched television, talked with friends, did household chores, or left the house when Justin wrote. He usually wrote sitting at the kitchen table or on the floor in the living room. Figure 43 below shows Justin working in isolation at the kitchen table.
Figure 43. Working in isolation: Justin

During one of the visits, after writing his name, Justin walked over to his father in the living room to show him his writing. Mr. Hamilton was surprised to know that Justin knew how to write his name. His comment to his wife was, "I didn't know Justin could write his name. You didn't tell me that." Minutes later, Mr. Hamilton modeled writing the family's last name for Justin. In the conversation presented below,
Mr. Hamilton spells the name for Justin then shows him how to write "Hamilton."

Father: Write your last, look. Write your last name. Look. H A M I L T O N, Hamilton. Where your pencil?
Mother: Where your pencil?
Justin: I know how to write Justin, Justin.
Father: Put it up there. Come here. Let me show you.

After the modeling, Justin not only copied Hamilton under his father's presentation of the name, but he wrote his full name under his copied version of Hamilton (See Figure 44).

![Diagram of Justin's writing (Figure 44)]

Figure 44. Names of classmates: Justin

Then, Mr. Hamilton wrote his first name for Justin. Justin copied his father's model then used the model to write the name of classmates. He wrote the first
letter of the classmate's name and tacked on the rest of his father's name.

Justin made use of other models when he wrote at home. For example, Justin used a model of writing from a classroom writing experience to write "SAC", the name of a classmate, Sharon. Justin copied words from school worksheets, the names from packages, days of the week on a calendar, and words from kitchen canisters. Justin observed items in the kitchen as he wrote and sometimes copied what he found. He copied words such as "sugar" and "tea." It was observed that Justin showed this writing to his family for identification of the words. The dialogue and writing sample that follow demonstrate Justin's use of words on the kitchen canisters as writing models (See Figure 45).

Mother: Let me see. Just, how you know how to spell sugar? That's sugar, huh?
Justin: Yeah!
Mother: You got it from that thing.
(Justin returns to the kitchen table and begins writing again.)
Justin: Ma, that's the same thing.
Mother: Huh? You got coffee, too.
Justin: Yeah!
Mother: Un-n-n-n
(Justin writes again and returns.)
Justin: The same old thing.
Mother: What's that? Tea?
Justin: Yeah!
During this same visit, Justin looked around in the kitchen and the living room for other writing to copy. He copied the word "you" from a plaque in the living room then showed it to his mother. Mrs. Hamilton, like before, asked him whether it was the word "you." Justin responded, "Un, huh." Justin continued this behavior of observing, writing and displaying until he began watching cartoons with his family and me.

A variety of writing models were used by Justin when he wrote at home. Justin observed little demonstrated modeling of writing at home by his parents and his brother. Justin relied, basically, on his memory of writing from school and models of print located in his home. Models that were more familiar to him were read or identified, but writing that he
discovered in his search for models was shown to his parents for identification. Justin made use of written models from his environment, home or school, to assist him with his writing development.

*Purpose for writing.* The purposes for writing for Justin were many. Justin wrote letters, words, names, sentences, numbers, and scribbles. Justin composed other forms of writing such as a greeting for a letter, a note, and a telephone number. Justin established his purposes for writing during his periods of isolation for writing. As Justin sat writing at the kitchen table or on the floor in the living room, he wrote different things. Some of what he wrote he had seen modeled at home or he had experienced at school. Justin’s models were not exact replicas of the writing he observed, but of the same form.

"Same thing you did." This was what Justin said to me as he scribbled on a sheet of paper while he watched me keep field notes. His scribbles filled every line. After writing scribbles, Justin wrote letters and numbers to the left of each line of scribbles (See Figure 46). The letters, according to
Justin, were his name. His scribbles represent the precommunicative stage of spelling development.

Figure 46. Scribbles: Justin

Justin demonstrated this same type of writing pattern after he watched his mother jot down a telephone number. Mrs. Hamilton wrote the family doctor's telephone number on a sheet of paper to phone the doctor at a later time. Justin's comment soon after his mother wrote the number was "Ma, I'm a write Momo [Grandmother] number." During this same visit, Justin wrote words from the back of a school worksheet, his name, several classmates' names, and words from a crayon box. Justin changed writing forms throughout each visit.

Sometimes, Justin simply wrote his name and the names of his friends from school. Justin made his
writing known to his parents or me by saying, "This Angelle name." when he had written the letter "A." or "This Melissa name." when he had written the letters "MSS." He not only wrote the names of classmates, but he used their names in other forms of writing that he composed. Justin also wrote his own name during some of the visits.

Drawing pictures was one of Justin's favorite writing activities, too. He drew pictures of pumpkins, cars, children, and cartoon characters. Once Justin wrote a series of letters in a circular pattern on a page where he had drawn a picture of Bart Simpson, a cartoon character. It was typical for Justin to write or draw and show his work to his parents or me. During this particular visit, Justin walked over to his mom to show her what he had done. Mrs. Hamilton told him to show it to me. Justin had written a greeting to one of his classmates. The conversation related to this writing and the writing sample are presented below (See Figure 47).

Justin: Ma.
Mother: Huh?
Justin: Look.
Mother: What you got there? What that is?
Justin: Dear Walter.
Mother: Huh?
Justin: Dear Walter.
Mother: Dear Walter. That’s all you wrote?
Justin: Yeah.
Mother: Go show your teacher.
Handy: Tell me about that.
Justin: Dear Walter.
(Justin stopped writing and talking to watch cartoons.)

Figure 47. Dear Walter: Justin

Justin wrote that which he had seen modeled, which he found as a model, or which he felt like writing. Justin wrote his name, the names of classmates, and words that he found in his home when modeling was not demonstrated. Justin used information from school such as the names of classmates to include in his writing. First-hand modeling gave Justin new ideas for writing that he employed without hesitation. Justin provided his own models when necessary and used models that he had observed to broaden his range of writing purposes.
Relationship between writing and writing tools. Labels, the inside of a coloring book, the back of a school worksheet and the back of a calendar were some of the items used for writing by the Hamiltons. Mr. Hamilton, Mrs. Hamilton, Warren, and Justin wrote on the back of worksheets or whatever was available when needed. Pencils were kept in one of the drawers in the kitchen or in one of the canisters on the kitchen cabinet. Usually, there was a search for paper. Justin requested paper when nothing else was available or in sight. Whenever Justin said, "I need a piece of paper," his mother or father responded in various ways such as "Jr., get him something to write on" or Brenda, please give Justin a piece of paper to write on. Here the pencil." The paper, in most cases, was a note from school or a school worksheet. The notes and worksheets were retrieved from backpacks or the drawer in the kitchen where the pencils were kept. An example of Justin using a coloring sheet to write his name is presented in Figure 48.
Justin wrote on purchased paper if available, but most of the time it was not. Justin wrote on the back of calendars, math worksheets, spelling worksheets, and parent notes. Once, Justin used the back of the calendar that I had given the family to indicate future visits. Justin wrote the letter "T" in the boxes, indicating that the letter meant going on a trip. He wrote a sentence and drew pictures on the back of the calendar before his mother posted it on the wall in the kitchen. The following dialogue is a continuation of the previous dialogue where Mr. Hamilton asked his wife to give Justin some paper. Mrs. Hamilton told Warren to give Justin an old
worksheet and indicated that she would get paper for
Justin.

Father: Brenda, give Justin a piece of paper, please, to write on. Here a pencil.
Justin: What that is? (looking at the worksheet)
Mother: Write on the back of this here until I get some.

Although Justin's old papers were used for writing, his parents reviewed the material to determine whether it was important and needed to be saved. The members of the Hamilton family wrote on the reverse side of used paper that no longer was of importance.

Notebook paper and other forms of purchased paper were scarce in Justin's home. His parents and Warren wrote on the back of any paper that was readily accessible. Justin demonstrated similar tendencies of writing on the unused side of school papers. Justin, however, received permission to use school papers before he wrote. When paper was not available, coloring books and labels were just as useful. If school papers and purchased paper were not available, Justin adapted any type of paper to accommodate his own writing purposes.

Relationship between writing events and spoken language. Writing events for Justin were incidents where he wrote and talked without being observed by or
interacting with his family. Unlike Warren, who talked with his mother as she assisted him with his homework, Justin talked to himself or me. The Hamilton's spoke to Justin about his writing when he walked over to display it for them. Self praise, identification of writing, and knowledge statements were commonly used when Justin spoke of his writing.

"That look good, boy." was one of Justin's favorite compliments for his writing. Praise for his writing was superseded by his identification of what he had written. Statement after statement, during each visit referred to the content of his writing. His constant use of this type of talk was prevalent, especially during the fourth visit. Dialogue from that visit is presented below.

Justin: This, ah, Melissa name. That's Justin P. name. (Father and friends in living room talking.)
Justin: That's a "T". Look, a door. (Justin colors for approximately 5 minutes.)
Justin: Look. (Father and friends continue to laugh and talk. Justin is silent.)
Justin: Look. That's a "P". A little "P".
Handy: A "P"?
Justin: Yeah.

Justin identified letters, names, and other writing forms. To indicate names, he made comments such as "This all my names," "I wrote Warren H.," and
"This Melissa name." An example of his identification of a sentence was the time that Justin wrote "Is it Friday" on the back of the calendar. Although Justin had written a string of letters that were possibly undecipherable to others, he identified the content to ensure understanding. The string of letters were "ITismmNNtKEYZ." The conversation with that identification and others were as follows:

Justin: Ms. Handy, what this is?
Handy: That's a "P".
Justin: Is. It is Friday? Crystal name start with a "K". That's her first name.
Handy: That's good. You did write that. Watch. It says "is". And then you said, "It is Friday." Right? That's good.
Justin: I T. Look. It is Friday.
Handy: Un, huh.
Justin: Now I'm fixing to write Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, .... Frienday, Friday, Saturday. Look. It is Sunday.
Handy: Un, huh.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Warren and I listened and responded as Justin showed us his writing and identified the content. When Justin was unsure about the content of his writing, he waited for his parents and me to ask, then tell him what it said if we could read it.

Besides praising and identifying his writing, Justin expressed his knowledge in "I know" comments that were sometimes always accompanied or followed by
writing. "I know how to make a "K." and "I know how to write Jr. name." are examples of Justin using spoken language to announce his knowledge of writing. Justin made the statements when writing and when showing his work. I responded to his comments as he wrote, and his family responded when he exhibited his writing. Mrs. Hamilton asked him if that was how that word or name was spelled. Justin always responded, "Yeah." His remark was sometimes followed by subtle praise such as "Go on Justin."

Justin's parents spoke to Justin after his writing activity. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton provided indirect praise in the form of amazement of his writing knowledge. Warren, however, criticized Justin, telling that Justin's writing was "nothing." Justin was encouraged by his parents remarks and countered Warren with his own remarks or more writing. Once again, Justin used the identification of his writing to ward off the verbal attacks by his brother, Warren.

Mr. Hamilton stated that he did not know that Justin knew how to write his own name. Mrs. Hamilton, on the other hand, was surprised to see that Justin knew and wrote the beginning letters of different
children in his classroom. In addition to verbalizing amazement, Mrs. Hamilton always asked Justin to tell her what he had written if he had not volunteered the information. Finally, both parents frequently used oral language during writing events to separate the boys. Common phrases were "Sit down, Jr.," "Jr., sit down and don't move," and "Sit down, Justin. Now, sit down. Alright?" Most of the oral language used by Justin's family was after the act of writing.

Oral language in the Hamilton home that pertained to writing was used more by Justin than by his family. Justin talked during writing, although he had few opportunities to converse with his family as he wrote. As the writer, Justin provided his own incentives for writing such as praise and reading. Justin read his writing to himself, then to his family. Warren seldom spoke to Justin concerning his writing. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were surprised to know that Justin could write and read some names and words. Responses from Justin's parents were supportive, not critical. Specifically, Justin's mother asked Justin what he had written when he showed her his work even though she may not have been able to read or understand the writing. Justin used oral language to support his
writing and solicit interaction and support from his family.

Tyler Family (Ranekia) - Less Literate

During the first visit, Ranekia’s mother indicated that there were no writing tools in the home. However reading material was available. The reading material in this home consisted of the Bible, the local newspaper, environmental print, mail, one magnetic letter, calendars and bumper stickers. Bumper stickers were attached to the refrigerator and to the exterior of the house and campaign signs were posted in the front yard. School work and certificates were saved in a cedar chest located in the mother’s bedroom. Ranekia’s more recent school work was kept on top of the refrigerator to keep it away from her younger brothers and her nephew, who most of the time, tore up the material.

Essentially, Ranekia’s mother wrote to sign her name on papers at the health clinic and to sign her welfare check. I found out from her mother that the family did not have paper and pencils to use for writing and that the reading material mentioned was all that they owned. Because of the lack of literacy material, Ranekia did not have an opportunity to
engage in a writing event during the preliminary observations. Most of her time was spent talking, eating and playing with her immediate family, adult male cousins, and neighborhood children.

Topics of discussion during the discourse were gangs, hair, money, relationships, behavior, and cursing. For example, in a conversation with me, Ranekia stated, "If people grown up that mean you curse. No lil children curse." Ranekia’s mother seldom participated in the conversations because she moved constantly to take care of basic household chores, talk to adult family members, or rest. Occasionally, when the children were outside playing her mother would come out and sit on the porch steps to watch the kids. It was then that she talked to caution the children about playing in the street and in the ditch.

Ms. Tyler indicated that she loves to read and write but does not have the opportunity. Her most memorable reading experience was in 1989 when she had the opportunity to read magazines while recuperating after the birth of her last child. She feels that Ranekia is doing well in school and hopes that Ranekia
will go to college in the future. Ranekia added that she would like to be a dentist.

The discussion that follows represents the use of models, purposes for writing, use of writing tools, and use of oral language relative to Ranekia's home during writing events. Persons involved in the writing event and the behaviors exhibited by those persons are also addressed. A writing sample, a couple of photographs and dialogue add to the presentation of Ranekia's case study.

Use of models. Ranekia's mom and her cousin, Willie, sat in the living room eating, watching television and playing cards while Ranekia and her brothers watched. Modeling writing for Ranekia by family members transpired when writing was a necessity. Ranekia's mother modeled writing when she kept score for a card game or when she signed Ranekia's school work. Modeling for any other reason was not observed or described as part of the family's activities.

Models of writing were seldom provided for Ranekia at home and did not occur when interaction was absent. Ranekia and her younger brothers spent most of their time playing in one room of the house while
the adults and older children spent time talking in another room. When Ms. Tyler and Ranekia were in the same room, interaction occurred sometimes, but not modeling. Writing utensils were either not available or misplaced when interaction occurred. This made modeling difficult. During my twelfth and final visit with the Tyler family, Ranekia’s mother produced paper and modeled writing for the first time. Ranekia watched her mother record card scores on the back of one of Ranekia’s homework sheets that had been returned. The dialogue exchanged between Ranekia and her mother during this modeling experience was as follow:

Ranekia: Who name this is?
Mother: My name and Willie name.
Ranekia: Mama, your name with a "K"?
Mother: Un, huh.
Ranekia: Willie name with a "W"?

Ms. Tyler modeled writing once and Ranekia wrote once during the study. Ranekia wrote on the back cover of a children’s book that she got from someone on the school bus. This was the only tangible writing sample that was collected from Ranekia at home during the entire study. Ranekia used bumper stickers, magazines and her mother’s tattoo to practice writing as she traced words with her finger. Ranekia
wrote other times but she used her finger to do imaginary writing on the coffee table in the living room, on the table in the kitchen, on the wall in her mother's bedroom and outside on the front porch (See Figure 49).

Figure 49. Imaginary writing: Ranekia

Other members of her family were seldom around or actually observed Ranekia whenever she did imaginary writing. Ranekia wrote her name, numbers, the alphabet or geometric figures. Some of the models
that she used for imaginary writing came from her memory of a school writing experience. While writing an imaginary "K" on the kitchen table, Ranekia remarked, "My teacher told me how to write a 'K'. Her told me to do it like to corner to corner. That's how you do it."

The one tangible writing sample that Ranekia produced at home consisted of her name, her teacher's name and names of her classmates. A portion of the conversation between Ranekia and me that preceded this writing is presented below.

Ranekia: I know how to write my teacher name.
Handy: You do?
Ranekia: I write her name today. When we was in housekeeping. I write her name on a piece of paper and I put it in my folder for you.

Writing these names was an extension of her school writing experiences to her writing experiences at home.

The modeling of writing by members of the Tyler family was rare, and writing tools in the home were almost nonexistent. Although few writing models and utensils were presented at home, Ranekia found her own means of circumventing the existing home situation that provided little support for writing. Ranekia used school experiences to guide her home writing
experiences and engaged in tracing and imaginary writing. Consequently, Ranekia used her own previously established models to assist her in satisfying her own desire to write.

Purpose for writing. There were few opportunities at home for Ranekia to use paper and pencil to write. This lack of writing material did not stifle Ranekia’s purposes for writing. She demonstrated her own purposes for writing. Ranekia often practiced imaginary writing for the purpose of writing her name, the names of others, letters of the alphabet, numbers, and shapes. Ranekia wrote at home as she expressed her knowledge of concepts. "I know how to write a "P," "I know how to write my whole name," "I know how to write my teacher name," and "I know how to make triangle" were statements that Ranekia made to her mother, her sister and me.

When Ranekia expressed her purpose for writing to her mother, Ms. Tyler asked questions or made brief comments. In the following example of imaginary writing at the kitchen table, Ranekia announces her purpose for writing and her mother responds. Ms. Tyler diverts her attention as she tries to listen to Ranekia and cook Sunday dinner.
Ranekia: Ma.
Mother: What?
Ranekia: I know how to write a "P".
Mother: Huh?
Ranekia: I know how to write a "P".
Mother: Write a what?
Ranekia: "K".
Mother: Write a "K"?
Ranekia: Un, huh. In my name. You know how?
Mother: Huh?
Ranekia: You go like this. Like that, huh?

Ranekia prefaced much of her writing with "I know" statements. Her purposes for writing were to demonstrate her present knowledge and inform her family of that knowledge. The knowledge that she showed was most times of an academic nature or school related.

**Relationship between writing and writing tools.**

Ranekia: Ma, how you signed my report card?
Mother: I sign my name.
Ranekia: How you signed it?
Mother: What’s my name, Ranekia?
Handy: I think she means what you used to sign it with.
Mother: I used a ink pen. A ink pen.
Ranekia: I want use it. I’m a write my name on the back of on the back of this. Go get it cause I could write my name. Huh, Ma? Go get it.
Mother: What?
Ranekia: Pretty please. Pretty please, Ma.

Ranekia begged her mother to allow her to use the ink pen that she had used earlier that day to sign Ranekia’s report card. After a second plea from Ranekia, Ms. Tyler finally told Ranekia that she did
not know where she had put the ink pen. Ranekia resorted to imaginary writing until her younger brother, Demarcus handed her the cartridge of the pen.

As in the example above, Ms. Tyler occasionally used ink pens that she soon lost. Writing tools were not available to Ranekia. She asked to use ink pens but her request was not granted. The misplacement or destruction of pens and pencils made use difficult. School papers were the only form of paper found in the Tyler home. These papers were locked in a cedar robe and not available for use. Sometimes Ranekia provided her own writing material such as the back cover of a book and a crayon that she claimed to have received from a little girl on the school bus. Ranekia resorted to imaginary writing when none of these writing tools were available.

Relationship between writing events and spoken language. The Tylers engaged in oral language during writing but the dialogue was limited since writing was seldom practiced at home. However, on a couple of occasions Ranekia discussed writing concepts with her mother or her sister even though writing did not actually occur. Writing in the Tyler home included imaginary writing, tracing and writing with writing
tools. Talk during imaginary writing, tracing and writing were used to make announcements, to explain letter formation, and to identify writing components. Talk related to writing without writing transpiring involved quizzing and expression of knowledge.

Ranekia sat down at the living room table after a trip to the neighborhood convenience store. She used the stick from her lollipop as an imaginary writing tool and exclaimed, "I write my name. Right now with this stick. Watch." Announcements of this type were always made by Ranekia as she engaged in writing. Similar announcements were made by Ranekia when she traced letters in a magazine, words on bumper stickers, and the tattoo on her mother's hand. Imaginary writing was exhibited by Ranekia more than any of the other forms of writing that I observed.

There were other vocalizations made by Ranekia during imaginary writing besides announcements. Statements pertaining to letter formation and writing component included: "You write a "C" like this," "Ain't I told you to write a "K" like this? Take to corner. You write a line down. Like this. That's how you make a 'K', huh?", and "A 'J'. Ma, this a 'J', huh? Huh, Ma? A 'J'. Ma, look. A 'J' right
here, huh?" Responses to Ranekia’s comments by Ms. Tyler or Kim, Ranekia’s sister, were brief. They responded by saying "Yeah" or "Huh?". Comments from Ranekia’s family were the same when she wrote with writing tools.

Oral language use during the one writing event that Ranekia used writing tools included announcement, letter formation and identification of writing component. The writing sample is presented below with the photograph and dialogue (See Figure 50 & 51).

![Writing Sample]

Figure 50. Writing: Ranekia

While in conversation with her mother and me, Ranekia announced what she knew how to write, explained how to form the first letter of a friend’s name, and identified the names that she was writing. Although
Ranekia was identifying her writing, she continued to ask whether her identification was right.

Figure 51. Writing and oral language: Ranekia

Ranekia: Look, Ma. (writes her name)
Mother: Un, huh.
Ranekia: Let me show you how to write my, Ms. Patterson name. You do it like this. Look, Ms. Handy. I do it like this. Her name start with this. Her name start with this.
Handy: Sure does.
Ranekia: Her name start with a "B" go like this. (writing "H") A "B" look kind of upside down, huh? Like this. (Mother leaves the room)
Ranekia: Like that, huh? I know how to write my friend name. My friend name go like this. Who name I'm writing? It look kind of like Curtell name. (writes "S") Angelle name, huh? I write all these
first name. I write my name. I write Ms. Patterson name. Now, I’m fixing to write Curtell name. Curtell name start with "C". Wait that "S".

(Mother returns)

Ranekia: I almost made her name, huh? Ma, Jr. coming back here. I know how to write Justin H. name. Kind of like this, huh? Like Ms. Patterson name, huh? Kind of like this, huh? Cross, cross and then you go that way, huh? Like this. I made this one up.

During writing related discussions without writing, Ms. Tyler or Kim, instead of Ranekia, asked questions. They talked with Ranekia about her name, the date, and her birthday. For example, Ms. Tyler asked Ranekia a series of questions when she was unable to locate an ink pen for Ranekia to write. The conversation proceeded as follows.

Mother: What today is?
Ranekia: Huh?
Mother: What today is?
Ranekia: Tuesday.
Mother: What the month is?
Ranekia: Huh?
Mother: What month is this?
Ranekia: October 26th.
Mother: Un, un. What today is?
Ranekia: I know what. I know what.
Mother: What today is?
Ranekia: Huh?
Mother: What today is?
Handy: October what?
Ranekia: October the 26th.
Mother: Un, un.
Ranekia: October the 24th.
Mother: Un, un.
Ranekia: What?
Mother: What today is?
Ranekia: October 25.
Mother: Un, un. (we all laugh)
Ranekia: 9
Mother: Un, huh. The 29th.
Ranekia: I know what number is. A 26.
Mother: What month you born in?
Ranekia: I don't know that.
Mother: You know when you born! When you born, Neka?
Ranekia: November.
Mother: What month you born, Neka? I'm a tell you one more time. What month you born in, Neka? (could not answer)

The conversation between Ranekia and her mother continued in this manner until Demarcus, Ranekia's brother, found the cartridge of the ink pen that her mother had used earlier. Kim engaged in similar questioning sessions with Ranekia just as her mother had done. Kim quizzed Ranekia on how to spell her name. When Ranekia had difficulty understanding what Kim wanted her to do, Kim attempted to rephrase the question to assist Ranekia. The dialogue is presented below.

Kim: Tell her your name from the beginning. What's the first letter your name begin with? A what?
Ranekia: "L"
Kim: What your name begin with? No, what your name begin with? Don't tell me. Tell her. What your name begin with? What do your name begin with?
Ranekia: "P"
Kim: A what?
Ranekia: "P"
Kim: No, your name is Ranekia. Ra-nek-ia. Now what do it begin with? Ra-nek-ia.
Ranekia: Ra-nek-ia.

Regardless of the form of writing that Ranekia engaged in, she talked during the event. Ranekia’s mother and sister exchanged dialogue with Ranekia during writing but talked less than Ranekia. Ranekia informed them about her writing by expressing her knowledge. She explained the construction of certain letters and identified letters and names that she had written to ensure recognition by the reader. Dialogue related to writing transpired, too, even when writing did not take place. Ms. Tyler and Kim talked more, asking Ranekia questions. Ranekia did the best she could to answer the questions and to demonstrate her knowledge. Oral language use, in most cases, ultimately informed others of Ranekia’s writing knowledge and writing content.

Summary

This chapter presented the action, interaction, writing and dialogue present during writing in the classroom and in the homes of kindergarten children from more literate home environments and less literate home environments. Review of the data revealed categories of support and their characteristics germane to writing events in these environments. The
categories were: the use of model; the purpose for writing; the relationship between writing and writing tools; and the relationship between writing and spoken language.

In the classroom, a variety of writing models were visible and available for use. The children from more literate homes readily used writing models, and usually focused on their own writing as they composed. The children from less literate homes often observed the children from more literate homes use writing models before they used models to write. The purposes for writing were more extensive for children from more literate homes than for children from less literate homes. Name writing for children from more literate homes went beyond practice and identifying work. The purposes included labeling, compiling lists, and signing notes or letters. Few differences were revealed in the relationship between writing tools and writing. However, the children from the more literate home environments composed more letters than the children from the less literate home environments. In doing so, the children from more literate home environments used more envelopes as writing tools.
Oral language use between the kindergarteners during writing had several purposes. The purposes included praising, criticizing, assisting, and informing. The children from the more literate and the less literate home environments engaged in conversation as they wrote. Some of the talk centered around the spelling of words when the children worked at producing invented spellings.

It was also noted that children from both types of home environments talked about the writing during writing when a single writing model was used. However, the children from the more literate home environments tended to dominate the discussions when several models were provided. No one group seemed to be more vocal than another. Children from less literate homes often used talk to seek assistance. Many times, the children from more literate homes offered the assistance through talk. Basically, the children talked to collaborate or help each other through writing events.

Analysis of the home writing experiences showed the uniqueness of the experiences along with the similarities based on the identified categories. The availability and use of writing models differed
between the more literate home environments and the less literate home environments. This was directly influenced by the availability of writing tools. The purposes for writing in the less literate homes were more functional in nature and occurred less frequently. The relationship between writing and spoken language showed similar disparities between the activity in the two types of home environments. The frequency and the length of the writing event affected the use of oral language.

Although differences in these areas were evident for these environments, talk during writing occurred that focused on the writing. Spoken language during writing at home was used for purposes similar to those in the classroom. It was used to assist, praise, criticize, direct, read, spell, and explain. Uses of oral language between the two types of homes were similar, but the degree of talk and the manner of presentation differed. Despite the differences in the use of oral language, talk aided the children in writing development.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and to describe the relationship between written language and spoken language and the function of that relationship during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from diverse literacy environments. During this research, participants were studied at home and in school. The proposed research questions were as follow:

1. What relationship exists between written language and spoken language and its function during the beginning writing development of five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds (more literate/less literate)?

2. What observable behaviors will five kindergarten children from different literacy backgrounds exhibit while composing at home and in school?

Discussion

Based upon the findings of this study, the use of spoken language about writing during writing serves two basic functions: to assist the beginning writer in accomplishing a writing task and to identify the content of the writing. The beginning writer engages
in dialogue with the audience to discuss some of the "how's" of writing. For example, the writer and others in the environment talk about how to form letters and how to spell words. Edward's parents used directives to coach him through letter formation. To write the letter "W", his parents used the words "down, up, down, up" to assist Edward. Mandi and Brandon received help in spelling words and names such as "earring," "purse," and "Mitchell". Further use of talk during writing allowed the writer to inform the reader of the content of the writing. The beginning writer announced the content of the writing by making statements such as "This my name," "I write a 'K'," and "Dear Walter."

This study revealed generalizable writing behaviors. For example, it was found that the beginning writer can compose even when conventional writing tools are not available at home. For example, Ranekia resorted to imaginary writing when writing tools were not available in her home. School writing themes were incorporated into home writing activities. At home, Brandon and Justin wrote names of classmates. After copying his address and telephone number from the classroom directory, Brandon wrote this same
information at home with his sister’s assistance.

School writing experiences appear to influence the home writing experiences of children from both types of home environments. However, the influence is not unified. The school writing experiences reinforced the home writing experiences of the children from the more literate home environments and expanded the experiences of the children from the less literate home environments. Finally, young writers focus on the makeup of written language with the presentation of several writing models. Brandon, Mandi, Edward, and Justin collaborated on how to spell a character’s name while at school. The presentation of the several characters’ names seemed to encourage the children to decode and encode to label a picture. During this writing activity, there was shared input.

The discussion that follows provides a presentation of these functions of spoken language and writing behaviors in the different environments while addressing the categories: 1) use of models; 2) purpose for writing; 3) relationship between writing and writing tools and 4) relationship between writing events and spoken language. This discussion is divided into three segments: more literate home
environments; less literate home environments; and the classroom. However, a totally congruent description of the role of spoken language and the writing behaviors for the different environments is not possible because of the range of literacy experiences. Comparisons of the writing experiences between the two types of home environments and between home and school are provided in the summary section of this chapter.

More Literate Home Environments

Data pertaining to writing in the more literate home environments revealed three salient points regarding the use of spoken language and the types of writing behavior. These findings are supported in the presentation that follows.

(1) Children from more literate home environments copied writing that was provided by voluntarily parents or siblings or upon request by the kindergarteners, and reciprocal dialogue transpired. Additionally, the writing activity was often dictated to the writer by persons in the home.

(2) Others in the more literate homes assumed an informant's role, sharing knowledge of
writing to assist the child with writing development through exchange of dialogue that consisted of instruction, reading, spelling, praise, and criticism.

(3) Parents and siblings in the more literate homes made writing tools available, provided a variety of writing tools, and used spoken language to refer to specific tools as incentives for writing.

In the more literate home environments, parents and siblings wrote in the presence of the beginning writer and for the beginning writer. Talk that focused on the writing addressed the content of the writing, and was reciprocal in nature. The children mimicked writing behaviors exhibited at home. Just like her mother who wrote lists of household items, Mandi prepared a list of items for purchase. Mandi's requests for the spelling of the words "waffles" and "cereal" were fulfilled by her mother. During other writing events, Mandi and her sister displayed similar spelling behavior, when they spelled words for each other as they wrote. While writing at home, Edward wrote his name as he had seen it demonstrated by his parents many times. He asked how to produce letters,
making statements like "How 'E' go?" His parents responded by telling him how to form the letters. Also, Edward emulated his parents directives when he made such statements as "Down, up, down, up."

Brandon's mimicking of behavior was reflected in the purpose for writing. He established purposes for writing similar to the purposes of his brother. Lists and math problems were some of his brother's purposes for writing. Like his brother, Brandon wrote lists and math problems during the same writing event.

The purposes for writing for children in the more literate homes were often dictated by family. At the insistence of his parents, Edward wrote his name throughout this study. Because Brandon wrote for the same purposes as his family, indirectly, his writing was dictated.

Occasionally, beginning writers in more literate home environments selected a purpose for writing. During one of those instances of self-selected purposes, Mandi used encoding skills to compose the invented spelling of the ethnographer's name. Although the parent supplied the conventional spelling of the name, the child relied on her knowledge of letter-sound association rather than parent knowledge
to write my name. Single models were usually provided or persons in the environment spelled words for the beginning writers. For example, Edward always wrote his name while parents and siblings spelled words for Mandi and Brandon. These types of writing experiences required little analysis and decision making by the beginning writer about written language.

In Edward's home, handwriting was the focus. Spelling words for Mandi was common in her home. The ability to encode was demonstrated by Mandi when she provided her own spelling of the ethnographer's name even though the model was provided.

In cases where writing was provided for the writer voluntarily or upon request, the beginning writer copied the model. Edward copied models of his name that had been composed by his parents, and used spoken language to address mechanical formation. He often made comments such as "Down, up, down, up." Brandon copied purposes for writing and asked how to spell names. When his brother wrote lists, Brandon wrote lists. As he wrote names for his list, his sister, Shandreka spelled names for him such as "Mitchell." The pattern was similar when he wrote math problems. Mandi, on the other hand, wrote for
purposes such as labeling. Labels for parts of a flower were copied by Mandi from a drawing done by her sister.

Spoken language used during writing that pertained to the writing provided assistance for the child in accomplishing the writing task. Parents and siblings of beginning writers from more literate environments homes used talk to instruct, spell, praise and criticize. Edward’s family assisted him with letter formation through instruction, praise, and criticism. Examples of such are "Down. Put a line across," "You can write better than that," and "Yeah, you getting straighter, but write some more here."

Talk during writing for Mandi focused on spelling words and some mechanical formation. Family members spelled words such as "purse," "earring," "waffles," "cereal," and "Mrs. Handy." Mandi used spoken language to read her writing, specifically, the labels of the flower parts. Brandon engaged in dialogue that addressed numbers and the alphabet, but the spelling of words was the focal point of talk for him. Shandreka spelled names for him such as "Keuren," "Mitchell," and "Torry." In essence, spoken language was used to facilitate writing. The family’s
definition of writing, be it handwriting, spelling words, or math problems, was supported through dialogue.

The children in the more literate home environments used the many writing tools available to them at home. Brandon had access to a variety of paper such as spiral notebooks, loose leaf paper, and art paper. Although ink pens and paper were available, he always used pencils. Edward, however, used ink pens, pencils, stencils, paint, and paint brushes for writing on loose leaf paper, notebook paper, and manuscript paper. Construction paper, computer paper, and notebook paper were accessible to Mandi for writing. She wrote with pencils, ink pens, paint, and markers. Others in their environment referred to the use of special writing tools to promote writing. Such statements as "You do your name one more time, I'm a let you do that (stencils)," and "Daddy said we could paint when we get through." Paint was specified as an incentive for writing for Mandi while paint and stencils were specified for Edward. Indirectly, art paper for drawing was an incentive for Brandon. These beginning writers from more literate home environments were exposed to a
variety of writing material that they used during writing events.

**Less Literate Home Environments**

The writing experiences of the two children from less literate home environments were different, but several basic writing behaviors emerged. Three characteristics distinctive of writing in less literate homes are listed below and followed by discussion.

1. Children from less literate homes observed few uses of and purposes for writing at home and seldom engaged in dialogue with others during writing, but often selected and determined their own models and purposes for writing.

2. Children from less literate homes used spoken language to impart their knowledge of writing to others in the environment by identifying the content of the writing, announcing what they know, and answering questions for their audience.

3. Children from less literate homes fulfilled their desire to write although few or no writing tools were available for use and
spoken language about the tools was
generally negative or prohibiting.

The writing in these homes was functional, and
reflected basic writing needs such as completing
forms, signing papers, jotting brief notes, and
recording game scores. During the preliminary
interviews, Ranekia's mother and Justin's parents
indicated that they signed papers and filled out forms
for school purposes and medical purposes. During the
primary observations, Ranekia's mother kept score for
a card game while Ranekia watched. Justin's mother
jotted a telephone number during one of the major
visits, and Justin wrote a telephone number, too.
Warren, Justin's brother wrote to complete homework
assignments. Most of the time, the children from less
literate home environments, Ranekia and Justin,
established their own purposes for writing.

Purposes for writing in the less literate home
environments were restricted to writing for basic
needs. Additionally, modeling of writing seldom
occurred in the less literate home environments.
Justin and Ranekia selected and engaged in their own
purposes for writing. Justin located models of
writing at home to copy such as environmental print.
For example, he copied the words "tea" and "sugar" from the kitchen canisters during one of the final visits of the study. Ranekia resorted to imaginary writing, drawing on memory for a writing theme. This "topic extraction" was taken from a school writing experience. While composing an imaginary "K," Ranekia stated, "My teacher told me how to write a 'K'. Her told me to do it like to corner to corner." Several of the models used by the children at home were recalled from school experiences. For example, Justin wrote a greeting, "Dear Walter," shortly after the children had prepared get well cards for Brandon. Ranekia practiced imaginary writing of her teacher's name and classmates' names. In summary, writing themes were self-selected and often taken from school writing experiences.

As these beginning writers composed, they exhibited perceptions of writing and their desire to write. Initial visits with Justin revealed his perception of writing as scribbles and letter-like formations. He wrote scribbles as he mocked my notetaking. As the study progressed, his perception of writing appeared to change. Justin's compositions consisted of single letters and strings of letters.
He wrote a salutation, numbers, days of the week, and lists of names; all of which he encountered in school. Ranekia engaged in imaginary writing despite the lack of conventional writing tools at home. The desire to write was not quenched by the absence of writing tools.

Children from less literate homes encountered spoken language used to praise, criticize, inquire, and identify. Statements such as "Go on, Justin." were offered as praise. Justin’s brother criticized Justin’s writing with comments such as "That nothing." The children from less literate homes were usually isolated or working alone as they wrote. As a result of the isolation, the child engaged in self talk. For example, Justin praised himself as he often made the comment "That look good, boy." Others in the presence of the young writer spoke when approached by the child.

Verbal exchanges were brief and the child answered questions about writing for their solicited audience. Parents and siblings inquired about the content of the writing. Mrs. Hamilton asked Justin "What that is?" when he approached her to show her is writing. Justin responded by identifying the content.
For example, when his mother asked about the content he replied, "Dear Walter." A common expression of the children from the less literate home environments was "I know." Ranekia made statements such as "I know how to write a 'P'." and "I know how to write my whole name." I know how to make a 'K'." and I know how to write Jr. name." were used by Justin. In short, the beginning writers informed family members of their writing knowledge.

Writing tools were almost nonexistent in the less literate home environments. While writing tools were scarce, the spoken language that addressed writing tools focused on the absence of writing tools. Adults, many times, expressed little interest in helping the children obtain material. The absence of writing tools and the prohibitive oral language concerning writing tools did not hinder the writing desires of the kindergarteners from less literate home environments. These writers used ingenuity to find or invent writing tools available to them such as used paper and the pointer finger to engage in imaginary writing. For example, Justin wrote on the backs of used school worksheets. Ranekia used a finger as a writing utensil and flat surfaces as paper to engage
in imaginary writing since conventional writing tools were not available. With this display, the child highlighted the significance of writing as a thought process as opposed to permanent graphic representation.

The Classroom

In the classroom, single writing models were often provided, and the children resorted to copying. "911" and "jack-o-lantern" were single writing models presented in the classroom. A different trend surfaced when multiple models but different words were presented. For example, Brandon, Edward, Mandi, and Justin collaborated as they engaged in the analysis and decoding of models to ascertain the correct model of a story character. The writing model that Brandon wanted to use, "goat," was forfeited and replaced with a familiar model, the word "bear." Through multiple input, the children tapped their knowledge of letter/sound relationship to select the familiar model. Analysis of the models aided the children in making distinctions between the desired model and the selected model. Furthermore, when more than one model was provided, the children were less prone to produce exact replicas of the writing and used invented
spelling. In preparing the *Ask Mr. Bear* booklets, Mandi was the only one who matched the names with the pictures when labeling the characters. The other beginning writers used letter-like formations, single letters and strings of letters. Having more than one model can stimulate thought processing during writing.

Purposes for writing in the classroom were often directly or indirectly dictated by the teacher. Mrs. Patterson always placed writing models in the reading and writing center related to the morning lesson such as "911" and "jack-o-lantern." The children adhered to the purposes for writing specifically assigned by the teacher such as making the *Ask Mr. Bear* booklet, a get well card for Brandon and a Christmas wish list for the class book. However, when allowed to select writing purposes, the children tended to write what others were writing or develop their own purpose for writing from a previously introduced writing task. For example, Mandi observed and wrote letters just like Brittney. Brandon and Mandi drew and labeled pictures of a jack-o-lantern, using the model of the word found on the table. Justin watched them, drew a picture, and labeled it "pumpkin" from the word on the chalkboard. A variety of purposes for writing were
provided and exhibited in the classroom, some assigned and some self-selected.

The classroom of these kindergarteners was filled with accessible writing tools. Typing paper, construction paper, notepads, butcher paper, envelopes, ink pens, pencils, markers, stencils, and other writing materials were available. The teacher specified writing tools for assigned writing activities. Butcher paper was commonly used for making books, Christmas lists, and get well cards. Otherwise, the children were allowed to select from what was available at the time of the writing activity. The children from more literate home environments wrote more letters than children from less literate home environments. In writing letters, the children used envelopes for the letters. This was the only time that writing tools seemed to be specific to writing tasks. Occasionally, the children used oral language to acknowledge the availability of different writing tools such as different types of paper and stamps. Brittney indicated that a variety of paper was available for the children. Brittney commented, "We got three kinds of paper for y'all."
In this example, the variety was stressed as an incentive for writing.

While writing in the classroom, children from both groups spoke to assist each other through a writing activity, identify writing content, and praise or criticize writing. Discussions during writing tasks focused primarily on the writing with few exchanges unrelated to the writing. An example of praise was "I’m writing what Brandon write." An example of criticism was "That cat don’t know how his name go." The verbal exchanges were often lengthy as the children functioned as informants, analysts, and collaborators. For example, the children informed each other of how to write and what was written. Justin informed Ranekia and Edward of how to write "911." Similarly, Brandon, Justin, and Edward collaborated on how to write Brandon’s name. Brandon spelled his name while Justin asked questions such as "How ‘C’ go?" during the writing event. Edward made comments about letter formation during that same event. For example, Edward used comments such as "No, ‘B’, ‘B’. You take it down. And you take it right there." The children often functioned in this manner as a community of writers,
working through the spelling of words to accomplish a writing task. Consequently, spoken language during writing was utilized to facilitate writing.

Summary

Models of writing in both the more literate and less literate home environments encouraged the children to copy models of writing whether presented or chosen. Few opportunities for self-selected purposes for writing were presented in the more literate homes. However, encoding and invented spelling transpired during the few opportunities for self-selected purposes for writing. Most of the writing purposes for the children from less literate home environments were self-selected since they rarely observed writing or interacted with individuals in their environment during writing experiences. Encoding and early stages of invented spelling were exhibited by children from more literate home environments. There were distinct differences in the availability of writing tools between the more literate and less literate homes. Despite the differences in access to writing material, the children from both types of home environments found the means to write.
With respect to spoken language and writing at home, one major difference between more literate and less literate home environments was evident. In more literate home environments, the beginning writer engaged in more verbal exchange with an audience than did the beginning writer in the less literate home environment. In both situations, the talk during writing pertaining to writing was minimal, and vaguely touched on spelling and decoding, but extended to a discussion of active decoding.

Writing experiences in the classroom were similar to writing experiences in the home in that controlled writing was promoted. However, differences in writing activities between home and school were revealed. More writing models with increased student control of the writing activity as well as diverse purposes for writing were offered in the classroom. These situations led to sustained dialogue on writing and more opportunity for toying with writing. In toying with the writing, the beginning writers analyzed and explored written language for decoding and encoding purposes. Furthermore, composing while talking was a collaborative event. The writers discussed how to spell words and how to identify words such as "Santa"
and "bear." These behaviors fostered collaboration between the writers for writing in the classroom community.

Collaboration during writing occurred in the classroom, but some differences in writing behavior between writers from more literate home environments and less literate home environments were revealed in the classroom. Sometimes, the children from less literate homes observed writers from more literate homes writing before using writing models and establishing purposes for writing. Use of writing tools for the writers from more literate and less literate home environments showed limited difference. However, distinctions in the use of envelopes for letter writing were found as it purpose for writing. This was found for both groups.

Children from the two types of environments shared input as they engaged in writing tasks in the classroom. It appeared that children from less literate home environments spoke most often when one writing model was provided. Writers from the both types of home environments asked questions such as "How 'C' go?" Justin, in particular, asked questions during many of the writing activities at school
although talk during writing at home was prohibited. Responses to questions were provided by both groups of children, but children from more literate home environments frequently responded to questions. The beginning writers praised and criticized fellow writers through verbal comments and laughter. Talk to assist each other spell a word during a writing event was common in the classroom, similar to writing in the more literate home environments. However, the children from less literate home environments had more contact with talk during writing in the classroom environment than they had at home.

Conclusions

Interest in the role of spoken language during writing development led to an increase in studies in this area. Research by Blazer (1984) and Dyson (1983) conducted in the classroom indicate that young writers use oral language to facilitate writing development and give meaning to the writing. Bissex (1980) studied the writing behaviors of one case study participant in the context of the home. This study explored the relationship between spoken language and written language and the writing behaviors of five
kindergarteners from different literacy backgrounds in the context of the home and the school.

Three major conclusions can be drawn about spoken language and writing behaviors in beginning writing from the results of this ethnographic study. First, spoken language during a writing activity related to the activity is used by the beginning writer to assist in learning the concept. Secondly, for understanding and interpretation of writing to occur, young writers must become actively involved in encoding and decoding processes as well as in writing for real purposes. Finally, the classroom writing experiences of kindergarteners contribute to the home writing activity of developing writers.

The spoken language that occurs during writing is significant in combination with specific writing activity for beginning writers. The talk pertaining to writing in all contexts revealed the writers attempt to understand or express the conveyed written message. McLane and McNamee (1990, p. 25) suggest that writing is an extension and elaboration of speech. This study adds to this premise the theory that speech is a means of progressing toward an understanding of writing through discussion and
explanation. According to Blazer (1984), when children discuss writing they are working at their instructional level. Although the perceptions and complexity of writing varied in the different environments, spoken language about the writing accompanied the writing. The writing experiences and the accompanying talk highlighted such concepts as handwriting and spelling. Handwriting is a precursor to more complex writing. According to Farris (1991, p.314), "Handwriting is a vital tool in the writing process." She indicates that lack of direct instruction in mechanical formation promotes poor and illegible handwriting. Regarding spelling, beginning writers who are encouraged or allowed to spell may enhance their encoding and decoding ability. In either case, spoken language about writing during writing assists young writers in unlocking the codes of writing.

The ability of the young writer to decode and encode a written message, not necessarily in that order, is essential to understanding the concept of writing. The presentation of writing models and establishment of purposes for writing are essential to beginning writing development. However, children must
also be given opportunity to explore writing, and
figuratively, take the language apart and put it back
together to obtain a better understanding of the basic
principles of writing. Berthoff (1987) suggests that
students do not learn by teachers telling them
content. Through exploration and manipulation of the
phonological system, the kindergarteners use their
knowledge to progress through stages of invented
spelling (Read, 1971). In short, understanding does
not come in viewing the final product or watching the
development of models without explanation of the "how"
and the "why."

Self-selection of writing topics and the
presentation of several models may encourage the
children to formulate hypotheses about writing while
writing for their own purposes. Bissex (1980)
discovered that her son progressed as a writer through
naturally occurring writing experiences. The results
of this study revealed the control of writing
exhibited by others in the environment; parent,
siblings, and teacher. Control was established by
assigning the writing topic and providing one writing
model such as a name or a word.
Several examples of a beginning writer attempting to encode and/or decode were exhibited when many models of writing were presented and self-selected purposes for writing were allowed. In one situation, a beginning writer used encoding to compose a name and ignored the model. In another situation, a different writer used decoding to select a word from a group of words to correctly label a picture. Not only was encoding or decoding involved, but the writer used spoken language to aid the learning process for writing. Questions such as "How you spell goat?" and "How 'E' go?" were asked by the writers. As demonstrated by the examples, through active involvement and speech, beginning writers can gain a better grasp of writing.

In view of social context, the writing behaviors of beginning writers are influenced by the characteristics of writing present in the environment. Cooper and Holzman (1989) suggest that the structure and the content of writing activities are governed by the event, but fluctuate in time; due largely to the participants. Such situations are referred to as the "ecology of writing." Taylor (1983) refers to ecology as "conservation and change." The ecology of writing
in this study was revealed through the different communities in the context of the various writing events. The community of writers in the classroom engaged in talk about writing much more than did families and children at home. The children in this study assisted each other through shared input while writing in the classroom. The beginning writers developed a "shared writing community." The knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes of each child contributed to the understanding of the writing event. Emig (1981) suggests that beginning writing is enhanced through collaboration with others in the environment. Children from both types of writing environments interacted through modeling and verbal exchange to accomplish a writing task.

The home writing experiences of the children showed writing communities that reflected diverse values and beliefs of concerning writing. Shared input during writing for children from the less literate home environments was virtually nonexistent. This was due in part to the lack of writing events and dialogue at home. Therefore, I have called this type of community a "restricted writing community." However, the children from the more literate home
environments experienced a writing community that represented some degree of control on the part of parents and siblings in their environment. The result was what I termed a "compromised writing community."

This study supports the premise that writing, which is a component of literacy, is more than just a psychological skill, but a social process of demonstrating knowledgeable (Cook-Gumperz, 1986, p.3). It appears that the home writing behaviors of the children are funneled into their classroom writing behaviors. Furthermore, diverse school writing experiences influenced subsequent home and school writing experiences, creating a cyclical effect.

Therefore, the ecology of writing is critical to the growth of beginning writers.

Evident in this study of the writing experiences of young writers was the more capable writer assisting the less capable writer. The "zone of proximal development" as explained by Vygotsky (1978) is exemplified by these young writers as they collaborate on how to spell words or decode words, compose various forms of writings and understand different functions of writing. Interaction between the beginning writers and their audience could possibly be attributed to the
shared experiences, shared knowledge, share values, beliefs and attitudes, and shared language that exist (Young, Becker & Pike, 1970). Dyson (1988, 1989, 1990) confirms the occurrence of collaboration and sharing of young writers during composing in the classroom. Another important characteristic of writing in this classroom was the carry over of school writing themes into the home writing experiences.

The writing experiences in the classroom extended to writing experiences at home. For example, following the presentation of writing themes in the classroom such as 911 and letters of the alphabet, these same themes became the focus of writing at home. Additionally, while at home children often wrote the names of classmates and used telephone numbers at home that had been copied at school. Other than writing their names, the children did not incorporate any home writing themes into the school writing activities.

Finally, this study suggests that depending on the writer, the social context, and the writing task, both routine and understanding of the concept of writing are necessary. The home and the school writing experiences, dialogue and interaction inclusive, contribute to the emergence of young
writers. Therefore, the writing experiences of beginning writers at home and at school should be challenging and diverse to expand the repertoire of language skills.

Implications

The findings and conclusions of this study suggest implications for writing in the classroom and for parents.

For the Classroom

This study indicates that the school and the home share the task of introducing beginning writers to writing. It becomes the charge of the school to share that responsibility with parents at home, and assist parents in providing the type of home environment that enhances the writing ability of developing writers. Essential to this entire process is teacher training to assist children in the classroom as well as provide recommendations and training for parents. In the classroom, teachers should continue to provide numerous and diverse writing models and purposes that challenge the writer and facilitate understanding of writing. Furthermore, teachers must allow children to work collaboratively during writing to foster active manipulation of written language.
Needs assessments of home writing experiences may be utilized to determine purposes for writing at home to be incorporated with writing purposes at school. Use of this information can be extended beyond the classroom. Perhaps, parent training through biannual one-day conventions can be implemented. The implementation of parent-child-teacher conventions that address the forms, uses and characteristics of writing pertinent to home and school could provide consistency in the two environments. Sign-in sheets, registration forms, t-shirt order forms, post-its for marking material, and message boards are a few of the purposes for writing that can be highlighted during the convention to demonstrate the practicality of writing activities. During the convention, teachers would walk parents and children through meaningful writing experiences that would be flourished and maintained in both environments. A "convention" is suggested because of the positive image the word may portray for the participants.

For Parents

Parents of beginning writers need to examine their purposes for writing and include young writers through observations and discussion. The writing
purposes exhibited should be germane to the home writing experiences. Parents of beginning writers should designate a certain amount of time during a week to writing, and allow children to write for their own purposes by whatever means possible. It is essential that parents give more control of writing to the writer with the audience serving as facilitator. Additionally, parents and sibling should interact as the writer and the audience during the writing to foster understanding of the writing.

Parents seeking assistance in this area should become actively involved in programs designed to train parents to help their children develop as writers. Additionally, parents should be informed of the possible stifling effects of restrictive home writing experiences. In cases where voluntary participation does not occur, the writing suitcase is an alternative approach.

**For Future Research**

Considering the findings and limitations of this ethnographic study several recommendations for further are suggested.

1. Replication of this study with children from diverse literacy backgrounds in different
contexts (e.g., grade levels) and with a larger population is recommended.

2. Longitudinal case study over the course of one calendar school year at home and in school is recommended to obtain a comprehensive view of the relationship between spoken language and written language and other writing behaviors of beginning writing during their kindergarten year of school.

3. Study of writing behaviors of kindergarteners in which numerous writing models are presented and talk during writing activity is allowed is suggested.

4. Study of the influence of school uses of writing at home with active parental involvement and training.

5. Comparative study with children in kindergarten where composing is not encouraged.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENT

STATED OBSERVED

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. What type or writing tools (paper, pencil) are used in the home?

2. Where are the writing tools located?

3. What other forms of written material are available (books, magazines)?

4. Where are these reading materials located in the home?

5. Which persons in the household engage in reading/writing and why?

6. Where do these reading/writing activities occur?

7. Where is (your child) when these reading/writing activities occur?
8. Where does (your child) read/write? ____ ____

9. Where are you when (your child) reads/writes? ____ ____

INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

10. When (your child) reads/writes does any talking occur and with whom? ____ ____

11. What do you talk about? ____ ____

12. When others read/write (yourself included) does talk occur and with whom? ____ ____

13. What do you talk about? ____ ____

14. Where is (your child) when this talk occurs and does (your child) participate? ____ ____
MOTIVATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

15. Do you encourage (your child) to read/write? If so, how?


16. What happens when you encourage (your child) to read/write?


17. Tell me about your most memorable reading/writing experiences (good and/or bad).


18. Tell me about your educational level, your spouse’s, and others in the family.


19. Educationally, what do you want for (your child)?


20. What do you think about (your child’s) reading/writing performance at school and at home?
## APPENDIX B

### CLASSROOM - LITERACY ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

Date ______________________  Evaluator __________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Books appropriate for age level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Books readily available to child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing materials available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written materials for adults</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer in the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MODELING OF READING &amp; WRITING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>demonstrated by teacher or peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading or writing for everyday</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>classroom activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading or writing for pleasure;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>for gaining information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading or writing by teacher in</td>
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<tr>
<td>conjunction with home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading or writing to communicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>with others</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading or writing by students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>for classroom purposes</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL INTERACTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher reads books to children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher involves children in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>reading and writing for everyday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>classroom activities</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher interacts with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(WRITTEN LANGUAGE)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children browse through books and/or pretend to read books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children talk about books or the characters other than storytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children point out environmental print or ask questions about it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children initiate writing or drawing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children freely share writing with others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Writing Sample Checklist

**Category I - Writing Purposes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample #</th>
<th>1. To write</th>
<th>2. Create a message</th>
<th>3. Produce or practice conventional symbols</th>
<th>4. Detail or represent a drawn object</th>
<th>5. Label objects or people (drawn or in the environment)</th>
<th>6. Make particular kind of written object</th>
<th>7. Organize &amp; record information</th>
<th>8. Investigate relationship (oral &amp; written language)</th>
<th>9. Express feelings or experiences (self &amp; others)</th>
<th>10. Communicate a certain message to a certain audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evaluator __________________________ Month: September October November December

(X represents observance in writing sample)
## Category II - WRITING PROCESS COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Formulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Specificity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Message specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Actual wording of message specify.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. No relationship(message &amp; graphic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Message related in thematic way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Entire product (coherent whole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Linguistic organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Two- or three-word phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Simple sentence(3 or more words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Two or more sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message Encoding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Segmented oral message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. No segmenting exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Phrases, syllables, words, sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Systematized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. No orthographic systematizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Some systematized orthography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Combined(systematic/ nonsystematic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanical Formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conventionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Cursive-like script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Letter-like script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Intermingling (letter/letter-like)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Letters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Discreetness
   A. Connected symbols
   B. Unconnected symbols
   C. Mixed

3. Ease & efficiency
   A. Each strokes slowly drawn
   B. Some strokes slowly drawn
   C. Letters/letter-like fluently drawn

4. Spatial Arrangement
   A. Conventional direction not evident
   B. Partial conventional direction
   C. Reversal of conventional direction
   D. Conventional direction
   E. Conventional direction & spaces
   F. Extensive text & direction/spaces

Message Decoding
1. Segmented written message
   A. Not applicable
   B. No segmenting exists
   C. Segmented text

2. Systematized
   A. No orthographic systematizing
   B. Some systematized orthography

Category III- Forms of Written Product
1. Graphic product or section of graphic product
2. Label or caption for drawing
3. Alphabet
4. List
5. Card
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Envelope</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Book</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CIRCLE ONE TO INDICATE THE INTERVIEWEE.

CHILD

PARENT

CHILD’S NAME ___________________________ DATE __________

1. What is writing? _________________________________

2. What kinds of things do you write at home? ______

3. What do you use to write at home? ________________

4. What does ____________ do when you are writing?

5. What does ____________ write?___________________

6. Why does ____________ write?___________________

7. What is a sentence? _____________________________

8. What is a word? ________________________________

9. What is a letter? ________________________________

10. What do you think about writing? ________________

_________________________ _____________
VITA

Wanda Henderson Handy, the daughter of Caleb and Dolores Henderson, was born on December 20, 1954, in Morgan City, Louisiana. She and her son, Charley Handy, IV, reside in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Wanda moved to Baton Rouge from Morgan City after high school. By the end of 1978, she had received the Bachelor of Arts and Masters degrees in elementary education from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

For eleven of her seventeen years of employment, she worked as an elementary school teacher. She has enjoyed teaching first grade and fifth grade at the elementary level. During the remaining years of her employment, Wanda worked at Southern University as reading instructor in the Junior Division and as a reading specialist at the Southern University School of Nursing. Wanda spent nine years as a consultant training readers to evaluate student writing assessment. She is currently employed as Assistant to the Dean of the Honors College at Southern University.

She has attended numerous conferences, including the National Council for the Teachers of English
Convention, the Conference on Critical Thinking, the Conference for the Western College Reading Association and the International Reading Association Convention. She was a presenter at the International Reading Association Convention in Atlanta, Georgia in 1990.

She has conducted several reading and writing workshops for schools and service organizations.

Wanda Henderson Handy’s area of concentration was curriculum and instruction with a focus in emergent literacy and a minor in anthropology.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Wanda Henderson Handy

Major Field: Education


Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]
Jill Brady

[Signature]
[Name]

[Signature]
Rosalind Charlesworth

[Signature]
George Tula

[Signature]
Dana Howard

Date of Examination:

July 6, 1993