AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF THE INFLUENCE
OF THE HOME ENVIRONMENT ON THE DEVELOPING
READING SKILLS OF FIRST GRADE CHILDREN

DISSERTATION

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This study described (a) the factors and activities in the home environment which appear to affect children's reading competence and affective dimensions of reading, (b) the parents' language style when interacting with their children, (c) the rate of reading acquisition for children from differing home environments, and (d) observable behaviors as children learn to read.

The subjects of this study were three boys and three girls at different levels of reading readiness. In order to control the teacher variable, the subjects were randomly selected from a single first-grade classroom.

The majority of the data from this study was collected through systematic and ongoing observations in the home environment of each subject. However, one important strategy of the data collection was to corroborate the propositions formed in the home environment with observations of the subjects' patterns of behavior in their school classroom and in their school library. Other relevant kinds of data included subject interviews, parent interviews, a teacher interview, test results and educational records. Data were
gathered and analyzed for eight months and involved over 6,600 minutes of observation.

The conclusions of this study are based on data from six subjects and their families. Within the limitations of this study, the following conclusions have been formulated.

1. The home environment is a definite and ongoing influence on a child's development of reading skills.

2. A child's intrinsic interest in learning to read may be encouraged by the human interactions with print in the child's environment.

3. In these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, an abundance of print and manipulative materials may be necessary but not sufficient factors in the development of reading competency by beginning readers.

4. Children's reading competency and affective dimensions of reading are both positively influenced by being read to frequently.

5. Children, regardless of their level of readiness or subsequent degree of reading competency, unanimously demonstrate positive responses toward someone reading to them.

6. Opportunities to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities may be related to children's intrinsic motivation to learn to read and their reading competency.
7. Parents' perception of reading is important inasmuch as it ultimately influences the quantity and quality of the reading activities in the home.

8. Regardless of whether parents themselves are active readers, they uniformly endorse the importance of their child learning to read well.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF TABLES                           | vi  |
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS                   | vii |

## Chapter

### I. INTRODUCTION    1
- Statement of the Problem
- Specific Purposes of the Study
- Abandonment of A Priori Hypotheses
- Definition of Terms

### II. SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE 9
- The Influence of the Home Environment
- The Determination of Reading Readiness
- Ethnographic Techniques in Research

### III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES 47
- General Overview of the Method
- Selection of Subjects
- Guidelines for Ethnographic Research
- Specific Procedures for the Collection of Data
- Instruments
- Limitations

### IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA 74
- Introduction
- Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Data
- Factors Affecting Reading Competence
- Activities Affecting Reading Competence
- Affective Dimensions of Reading
- Parental Language Style
- Rate of Reading Acquisition
- Observable Behaviors
Chapter | Page
--- | ---
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION | 184

Summary
- Introduction
- Specific Purposes of the Study
- Specific Procedures for the Collection of Data
- Analysis of Data
- Results
- Conclusions
- Recommendations for Further Research
- Implications of the Study
- Methodological Implications

APPENDIX | 206

BIBLIOGRAPHY | 223
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Chronology of Data Collection in the Four Phases of Study</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Global Factors of Home and Family Background</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Initial Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality Concepts</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Rating of Family Reading Models</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Affective Dimensions of Reading</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Parental Indications of Factors which Interested Their Child in Learning to Read</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Initial Assessment of Subjects September and October, 1979</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Final Assessment of Subjects April, 1980</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Comparative Data Influencing Rate of Reading Acquisition for Two Female Subjects</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Independent Work Behaviors</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Structure of the Ecological Environment</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Observational Data Collection</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Analysis of Data</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive Reading Group Behaviors</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Negative Reading Group Behaviors</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The home is a learning environment. Babies learn to communicate their needs and to develop attachments for the people who care for them. Toddlers learn to walk and communicate through their developing verbal and nonverbal language. Preschoolers learn to get along with others and to solve the daily tasks created by a curious mind while developing their conceptual and language base for learning.

The school is also a learning environment. That these two learning environments affect one another is recognized by both laymen and national educators. C. B. Smith (1971) suggests that, instinctively, most people know that the home environment has some effect on success in school. At the national level, federal programs, such as Head Start and Follow Through, recognize the need for home and school to coordinate learning environments. Provision for parent involvement in these programs is a mandate (Ward, 1970).

When children arrive at first grade, society and common practice dictate that it is time for them to learn to read. But these children have come from different home learning environments and enter first grade in various stages of readiness for reading. As Almy (1949) states, "...it is
everywhere acknowledged that there will be great individual
differences in the way children attack whatever is offered
and in the rate at which they master it" (p. 392).

It is generally agreed that one of the variables which
influences a child's reading readiness and reading achieve-
ment is the home environment (Duffy, 1978; Teale, 1978;
Ware & Garber, 1972). Thus, it becomes important for
educators to investigate how experiences or factors in the
home learning environment may influence achievement in the
school learning environment.

Numerous research studies have been concerned with
the identification of the specific factors in the home
environment which relate to a child's beginning reading
achievement (Almy, 1949; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1974; Miller,
1969; Plessas & Oakes, 1964). While these studies have
made significant and valued contributions toward an under-
standing of the influence of the home environment, the
methods of some studies have limitations which need to be
scrutinized. For example, the results of these investigations
were largely based on maternal responses to questionnaires
or interviews, and only a small percentage, if indeed any,
of the total time devoted to the study was spent in the home
environment (Durkin, 1966; Miller, 1969). Some studies
sent questionnaires to parents, thereby allowing no personal
interaction or communication (Sutton, 1964; Plessas & Oakes,
1964; Price, 1976). Ironically, other studies investigated the effect of the home environment by interviewing the research subjects away from the particular setting under investigation, i.e., the home environment (Clark, 1976). One might caustically suggest that this procedure is equivalent to an anthropologist investigating a tribe of Australian bushmen by asking them to come to Sydney for an interview. The possibility of contamination to the validity of the conclusions of these studies must be considered.

In general, some factors in the home environment which influence the child’s academic achievement have received much consideration in the previous studies. Physical aspects such as the abundance of printed materials and surface characteristics such as socioeconomic status are frequently reported inasmuch as these factors are most readily in evidence. Several conscientious researchers have also carefully gleaned, from interviews with mothers, several factors in the home environment which influence learning in school (Almy, 1949; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966). However, the methods of these studies did not allow for either the behaviors of the child or the interactions of the family members in the home environment to be observed to corroborate the results from the interview data.

Reliability might be assumed in the previous studies in that several studies have reported similar results. But it
could be questioned whether the results are similar because they are indeed valid, or if their similarities are due to the limitations of similar methods.

Limitations in previous studies suggested to this researcher that a study was needed which was based on a method allowing much observation of children and their families in natural settings. Obviously a developmental study conducted over several years on a full-time basis could produce a wealth of information regarding the influence of the home environment. However, such an undertaking hardly seems feasible for the individual researcher. Therefore, as a reasonable alternative, this study employed comprehensive observations in the home, and recorded patterns of behaviors and interactions of children and all family members throughout the year of first grade as children began formal reading instruction. Hence, this study employed ethnographic techniques and combined data from multiple and systematic observations of the home environment with corroborating data from observations at the school and at the school library in order to determine which factors in the home environment influence the developing reading skills of first-grade children.
Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to describe the manner in which the home environment influences the reading acquisition of six first-grade children.

Specific Purposes of the Study

The specific purposes of this study were as follows:

1. Identify and describe the factors present in the home environment which appear to affect children's reading competence;

2. Identify and describe the home prereading activities and reading activities which appear to affect reading competence;

3. Identify and describe the factors and the prereading and reading activities present in the home environment which appear to influence children's affective dimensions of reading;

4. Describe the parents' language style when interacting with their child;

5. Describe the rate of reading acquisition for children from differing home environments;

6. Describe observable behavior as children learn to read.
Abandonment of A Priori Hypotheses

Many researchers stress that it is necessary and desirable in ethnographic studies to abandon the traditional deductive processes such as a priori hypotheses formation (Carey, 1980; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wolf & Tymitz, 1976). Glaser and Strauss explain:

The consequence [of the traditional approach] is often a forcing of data as well as a neglect of relevant concepts and hypotheses that may emerge. Allowing substantive concepts and hypotheses to emerge first, on their own, enables the analyst to ascertain which, if any, existing formal theory may help him generate his substantive theories. He can then be more objective and less theoretically biased. (p. 34)

However, Guba (1978) adds that "...while the naturalistic investigator does not impose a priori constraints, neither does he approach his task in a mindless fashion. Having an open mind is not equivalent to having an empty one" (p. 42).

Thus, while no a priori hypotheses were formulated for this study, the extensive and systematic observations were guided by (a) the specific purposes of the study as specified in this chapter; and (b) the specific procedures for the collection of data, as delineated in Chapter III.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have a specific meaning and are defined for this study.
Affective Dimensions of Reading - A person's degree of enjoyment of reading, degree to which reading is used to enhance and enrich life, and the frequency with which reading is selected as a free-choice activity.

Ethnography - The research technique of directly observing human behavior and interaction in an ongoing, naturalistic fashion (Rist, 1975, p. 86).

Observational Studies - "Studies that inquire into the learning and development of human beings in the natural environments in which these processes occur" (Cooley, 1978, p. 9).

Participants - The people with whom the subjects primarily interact during the course of the observations in the home, school and library environments; particularly the subjects' parents, siblings, teacher and librarian.

Phase I Observation - Classroom observation by the researcher before the subjects of the study have been identified.

Phase III Observation - Observation by the researcher of the subjects and their home, school and library environments.

Reading Competence - A person's independent reading level and development of basic reading skills, commensurate to that person's age and ability.
Reading Readiness - "The adequacy of existing capacity in relation to the demands of a given learning task" (Ausubel, 1959, p. 246).

Reading Readiness-Average - Reading readiness test score in the fourth, fifth or sixth stanine, and teacher rating of "Ready" or "Somewhat Ready" to read and "Good" or "Fair" expectancy of reading success.

Reading Readiness-High - Reading readiness test score in the seventh stanine or above, and teacher rating of "Very Ready" to read and "Excellent" expectancy of reading success.

Reading Readiness-Low - Reading readiness test score below the fourth stanine, and teacher rating of "Not Ready" to read and "Poor" expectancy of reading success.

Socioeconomic Status - An indication of socioeconomic level which includes parent education, occupation, and income.

Structural Corroboration - The process of gathering data from multiple data sources, e.g., observational data, data from unobtrusive measures, data from interviews, and combining that data to validate (a) propositions formulated during the study; and (b) the conclusions of the study.
CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

The significant literature for this study will be discussed in the following categories: (a) factors in the home environment which appear to influence subsequent reading achievement; (b) the criteria for determining reading readiness; and (c) the significance of ethnographic techniques in educational research.

The Influence of the Home Environment

Bloom (1980) asserts that there is a "curriculum" and "teaching style" in every home and that it is variables in that home curriculum and teaching which account for much of the difference in children's preparation for learning at school. Numerous studies during the last thirty years have investigated these variables in the home environment and attempted to delineate which variables significantly influence subsequent achievement, especially in the primary grades.

An examination of these studies reveals that the actual focus of the studies is a point of considerable variation. For example, some researchers concentrate on broad, surface characteristics such as chronological age, occupation of the principal wage earner, or the intelligence of the child,
and attempt to relate these characteristics to reading achievement (Callaway, 1972). Other researchers concern themselves with the influence of a single aspect affecting a child's achievement such as cognitive development (Elkind, 1975) or language development (Chomsky, 1972a). A study like that by Plessas and Oakes (1964) primarily examines the factors associated with the learning environment of the child. Yet, many researchers investigate both the child and the environment of the child (Almy, 1949; Clark, 1976; Clay, 1972; Durkin, 1966; Moon & Wells, 1979).

For the purpose of organization, this review of the literature will dichotomize the research on the home environment according to the primary focus of each study: (a) factors within the home environment; and (b) factors within the child. Finally, the methods of the studies will be examined and implications for research methods will be discussed.

**Factors within the Home Environment**

One of the earliest research studies concerning the influence of the home environment on beginning reading achievement was conducted by Almy in 1949. At the end of the first-grade year, she conducted parent interviews to record the types of home prereading experiences in which children had participated prior to their entrance into first grade. She then used a teacher rating scale and a standardized reading test to assess the spring first-grade
reading achievement of these same children. She concluded that a significant, positive relationship exists between success in beginning reading and the child's responses to home prereading experiences.

Since Almy's study, many researchers have assessed home prereading experiences (Durkin, 1966; Miller, 1969; Plessas & Oakes, 1964; Sutton, 1964). With the exception of the research by Miller, the results of these studies indicate that the quality and quantity of home prereading experiences significantly influence a child's first-grade reading achievement. Miller's research, however, concluded that home prereading experiences were related to middle-class children's reading attainment but not to the first-grade reading achievement of lower-class children "...possibly because of the intervening factors of teacher personality and competence" (p. 644).

Moon and Wells (1979) found that (a) reading attainment at age seven was predicted by the child's knowledge of literacy on entry to school; and (b) parental interest in literacy and the quality of child-parent verbal interactions were significant contributors to the child's knowledge of literacy. However, the factors which determined "parental interest in literacy" were not delineated. Hence, this interesting study offers little specific information regarding significant factors in the home environment.
A synthesis of other significant studies indicates that the following home environmental factors are repeatedly associated with children who are successful in reading acquisition: (a) presence of an adult who reads frequently to the child; (b) multiple opportunities for the child to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities; (c) an abundance of a wide range of printed materials; (d) presence of adults and older siblings who willingly answer the questions of the child; and (e) availability of manipulative materials such as pencils, crayons, scissors and paper.

An Adult Who Reads to the Child. Of all the home environmental factors reported by researchers, reading to a child is the factor most frequently cited as influencing reading achievement. Indeed, both reading and early childhood educators express virtually unanimous endorsement of the policy (Clay, 1972; Cazden, 1972; Larrick, 1975; McDonell, 1975). Studies by Clark (1976), Durkin (1966), Plessas and Cakes (1964), Price (1976), and Sutton (1964) all conclude that reading to a child is a vital factor in the learning environment of that child.

Reading to a child serves to foster a child's interest in print while exposing the child to the language of books (Cazden, 1972). Teale (1978) states that reading narrative or other types of prose to children sensitizes them to the
structure and nature of written language. It is apparently also an asset when reading to a child to repeat the same stories or rhymes several times. This repetition increases the enjoyment of print because young children enjoy repeating the words or sentences with which they become familiar.

Clark (1976) suggests that repeated readings of the same material is probably a more valuable preparation for school than attempts at teaching the child phonics or sight words.

Guinagh and Jester (1972) point out that the quality of the interaction between parent and child while reading is also relevant.

Simply because a mother reads to her child does not mean that the quality of the relationship is optimal for developing positive attitudes towards books and reading. If the child is forced to listen to his mother read, or if his mother views the process as a bother, then the interaction might be a negative rather than a positive influence in developing the child’s attitudes toward reading and books. It is important that a distinction be made between quality and quantity. (p. 171)

Recently a study by Flood (1977) investigated the relationship between parental style of reading to children and the child's performance on prereading tasks. He found that several components of the parent-to-child reading episode correlated significantly with the child’s prereading score: (a) number of words the child spoke; (b) number of questions the child answered; (c) number of questions the child asked; (d) preparatory questions the parent asked;
and (e) positive reinforcement by the parent. Flood concludes that a cyclical model based on those components can produce effective results. While no "formula" for reading to children can guarantee to influence the child's reading achievement, Flood's results are helpful in their attempt to specify behaviors which appear productive during parent-to-child reading experiences.

A Reading Model. Ziller (1964) discusses reading as social imitation in that children attempt to duplicate the adults they observe peering at printed material. The importance of a child having opportunities to observe and model others engaged in reading activities is not frequently discussed in the literature. Yet, it would seem that modeling might play a vital role in the child's development of an intrinsic interest in reading. The modeling potential from observation of adults reading is what Gagliardo (1971) applauded when she wrote that a child had the best start when born into a reading family which thus provided a climate for learning.

Dale (1976) suggests that modeling is probably not a significant influence on learning to read because most of the process is internal. However, Ziller (1964) concludes that readers who are more successful have parents who provide a better reading model. Similarly, Durkin (1966)
states that mothers of early readers reported reading more often than did mothers of non-reading children.

**An Abundance of Printed Material.** Many educators believe that there is a correlation between involvement with books at home and successful reading achievement at school (Durkin, 1966; Larrick, 1972, 1975, 1978; Miller, 1969; Sheldon & Carrillo, 1951). Miller states that the successful readers in her study had considerable contact with books in their homes. Moreover, the study by Sheldon and Carrillo concludes that as the number of books in the home increases, the percentage of good readers also increases.

The range of printed materials in the home should include some books which are owned by the child. In Japan, for example, where children frequently learn to read before first grade, much of the credit is given to parents who are said to buy two or three books a month for each child (Larrick, 1978).

Other researchers note that print in the immediate environment plays an important role in reading achievement, but they emphasize that valuable printed material is not confined to books (Clark, 1976; Flessas & Oakes, 1964; Smith, F., 1976). These studies report that children learn to read by reading car names, captions on television, and names on products at the supermarket. Similarly, Torrey (1973) discusses a five-year old boy who learned to read
with television commercials and labels. In general then, books are an important aspect, but the everyday print of signs, labels and television commercials is likewise influential.

**Response to the Child's Questions.** Frank Smith's (1973) "one difficult rule for making learning to read easy" states that adults need to "respond to what the child is trying to do" (pp. 194-195). Through this rule, Smith is accenting the importance of adults providing cues, feedback, and encouragement of the kind required by a child at various stages of readiness and learning to read. It stresses the value of responding to the child's attempts to make sense out of print.

Sutton (1964) reports that a significant percentage of successful readers were in the habit of asking questions. But more importantly, their interest was appreciated and encouraged by someone available to answer their questions. Price (1976) reports the anecdote of a child who was extremely interested in letters and numbers before he was two years old. Without anyone directly teaching him, he learned the letters from alphabet blocks before he could talk. His family would say a letter name and he would bring them the correct block. Obviously this family was responding to what the child was interested in doing.
Studies by Almy (1949), Durkin (1966), and Clark (1976) relate the important effect which answering questions about letters and words had on beginning interest in reading. Almy notes that, when a child showed an interest in words or letters, parents tended to have the child repeat the experience and seized on any opportunity of teaching value in the experience. Durkin writes that parents of early readers stimulated and responded positively to the child's questions about words. Clark adds that successful readers had an interested adult who listened and talked with them about print. Thus, the children's curiosity about print was acted upon and encouraged by the significant adults in the home environment. Durkin's (1966, 1974) research indicates that, indeed, the child's need for responses to questions most often is met by parents but that siblings in the home may also make significant responses to the child's questions.

Availability of Manipulative Materials. Miller (1969) found that children from all levels of socioeconomic status had used manipulative materials such as crayons, paint, pencils and scissors in their homes. All twenty children in Flessas and Oakes (1964) study of early readers were able to write their own name before first grade, thus suggesting that some manipulative materials had been available and used by these children prior to entrance in school.
In Clark's (1976) study, the parents of fluent readers indicated that their children were interested in writing words, as well as in reading, prior to starting school. These children had blackboards and chalk and used them for early attempts at writing words. In Clark's opinion, it is unlikely that this writing interest and ability is merely a by-product of the child's developing skill in reading. Rather, Clark views it as "...evidence of a sensitivity to the composition of words which is developing from a variety of stimuli in their environment in addition to books" (p. 14).

Durkin (1966) emphasizes that "...interest in reading very often develops from a prior interest in copying and writing" (p. 108). She suggests that the ability to read may follow a learning sequence of (a) scribbling and simple drawings; (b) attempts to copy letters; (c) questions about letters and words; and (d) ability to read.

Chomsky (1972b) shares the view that manipulative materials and early writing opportunities are important. She proposes that the typical sequence of read-then-write should be inverted and the children should "write now, read later." In Chomsky's opinion, the writing activity is a natural prerequisite for children to teach themselves to read.
The most natural sequence by which children should learn to read is a question to be probed by further research. However, the evidence from these studies does support that manipulative materials are a positive influence on a child's development of reading skills. As a rule, children who have participated in many home experiences will achieve better in first-grade reading than the children who have not had these opportunities (Miller, 1972; Milner, 1951). Teale (1978) cautions, though, that environmental factors such as these do not exist as entities for the child learning to read. "...The factors are not independent; they are bits in the reader's network of experience and must be regarded in that manner" (p. 925).

**Additional Significant Home Factors.** The research repeatedly cites the home environmental factors just discussed: (a) reading to children; (b) modeling opportunities; (c) printed materials; (d) response to questions; and (e) manipulative materials. However, three additional factors require some consideration and clarification. These factors are (a) socioeconomic status; (b) ordinal position of the child within the family; and (c) gender of the child.

The correlational findings between socioeconomic status and academic achievement are mixed. Almy's (1949) research found no significant relationship between parent occupation
and her criterion of reading success in first grade. However, her results may reflect the prevailing attitude by parents in the late 1940s of "leaving education to the school," which in effect suggested that parents should not encourage pre-reading activities at home (Almy, 1949). Parent attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s were influenced by the effects of Sputnik and by researchers in early childhood and psychology who stressed the importance of the learning years before first grade (Bloom, 1964; Brunner, 1960; Hunt, 1961). Parents gradually assumed a more active role in the development of their children, especially the more educated parents who had access to information regarding current trends and theories. Hence, research after 1960 generally cites socioeconomic status and educational level of parents as a factor which correlates with educability (Bloom 1980; Durkin, 1966, 1974; Sutton, 1964).

Sutton (1964) found a relationship between socioeconomic status and early progress in reading. Durkin (1966) found no simple connection between early reading and the socioeconomic status of a family and concluded that what is more important is parents spending time with their children, reading to them and answering their questions and their requests for help. Bloom (1980) states that studies of socioeconomic status, including parent education, occupation
and income, reveal correlations of .30 to .50 with school achievement.

The child's ordinal position in the family and the gender of the child are also included in some studies as factors influencing reading achievement. Sheldon and Carrillo (1951) state that "excepting only children, the earlier the ordinal position in the family, the higher the percent of good readers" (p. 269). They hypothesized that the amount of time the parents were able to spend with each child might account for their finding. But Durkin's (1966) results contradict the earlier study. She emphasizes that children benefit significantly from the reading expertise of siblings and that many early readers are the younger or youngest child in the family.

There is an abundance of research literature relating the gender of the child and reading achievement (Downing & Thomson, 1977; Dwyer, 1973; Johnson, 1973; Naiden, 1976). The evidence establishes that girls characteristically learn to read earlier and achieve significantly higher in beginning reading than do boys. Researchers increasingly identify cultural causes for the sex differences in learning to read. Specifically, the results suggest that adult attitudes and expectations regarding appropriate sex roles, as well as the behavioral characteristics typically associated with boys or girls, contribute to the sex differences.
The child's ordinal position in the family and the gender of the child are discussed in this section with socioeconomic status, rather than in the section discussing the factors within the child, in order that the following point may be made. Socioeconomic status, ordinal position, and gender have been shown to correlate with beginning reading achievement. While this correlational information is of interest, it may not be educationally helpful inasmuch as these characteristics are not alterable. Such correlations offer no clues as to what parents or schools may do to improve the child's learning (Bloom, 1980). Thus, this review is more concerned with studies which consider what parents do in interacting with their children in the home environment, and in presenting the characteristics and factors which facilitate or hinder beginning reading progress.

**Factors within the Child**

Clay (1972) conducted a systematic observation in New Zealand of one hundred children as they learned to read. She eventually determined that children must have implicit awareness of the visual concepts of print, the language concepts about print, and the integration of the two concepts before children become successful readers. The visual concepts of print include directionality, the concept of a letter and word, and the knowledge that a word is surrounded
by spaces. The language concepts about print include an understanding that speech can be transformed into print in order to convey a message. She emphasized that none of these concepts can be learned unless the child has many opportunities to interact with books and print.

Researchers consistently indicate three other factors within the child, or characteristics of the child, which influence beginning reading: (a) behavioral characteristics; (b) experiential background; and (c) language facility. Realistically, these factors may also be influenced by factors within the environment. However, the dichotomy of factors within the environment and factors within the child enables consideration to be given to the importance of the child as a learner and not just to the environment of the child. Yet Teale (1978) cautions: "The only reasonable conception of the development of reading is to view it as dependent on both reader and environment" (p. 930).

**Behavioral Characteristics.** Durkin (1974) discusses the influence of certain factors which she reports as being difficult to measure, yet having a noticeable effect upon achievement in reading. She labeled these factors "behavioral tendencies" (p. 48). For example, certain children entered the language arts program with behavioral tendencies that decidedly facilitated learning (Durkin, 1974). These children were interested in everything; they listened
attentively and persisted in task completions. In contrast, other children displayed behavioral tendencies that had a negative effect on learning. These tendencies were the opposite of the traits displayed by the former group, i.e., restless, inattentive, and distractible. Interestingly, these traits continued throughout the six years of the longitudinal study despite some reported effort to overcome these negative traits through the use of a maximum of high-interest activities. Durkin concluded that "...behavioral tendencies are amazingly persistent and, depending on their nature, have either positive or negative effects upon learning to read in the setting of a classroom" (p. 48).

It is unfortunate that the design of Durkin's (1974) study did not allow for the investigation of possible explanations for these significant differences in behavior. These behavioral traits can not be attributed to differences in gender inasmuch as in Durkin's control group more boys than girls displayed the positive behaviors; conversely, in her experimental group, more girls than boys displayed the positive behaviors. Since the school atmosphere and activities did not appreciably alter these traits, it seems possible that a systematic examination of the home environment and the interactions within that environment could increase understanding of these behaviors.
The prevailing influence of behavioral characteristics is exemplified in Torrey's (1973) case study of a child of average general and verbal ability who taught himself to read by asking "...just the right questions in his own mind about the relations between language and print" (p. 156). The environmental influence on this child's learning was apparently limited to the repetition of television commercials. Nonetheless, he had a persistent interest in words, he was competitive with siblings, and he became an early reader. It is interesting to note that Torrey's insights into this child's learning behaviors came about through her numerous opportunities to observe the child in his home environment.

**Experiential Background.** Carl Smith (1971) asserts that "an adequate supply of concepts gained from experience and the manipulation of language constitute a basic ingredient for the eventual comprehension of what is read" (p. 14). The years before first grade are replete with environmental experiences which equip the child with certain concepts, feelings, and skills to form the prereading foundation upon which formal reading instruction is built. Experiences and other data are gradually integrated within the child's existing conceptual repertoire through thought processes which Piaget labeled as assimilation and accommodation (Evans, 1975). By first grade, much of the child's knowledge
of the world and knowledge of language has been acquired through these experiences (Bloom, 1976; Chomsky, 1972; Smith, F., 1978). In a general context, psychologists refer to the organization of this knowledge and experience as cognitive structure (Ellis, 1972).

In a specifically reading context, Frank Smith (1978) refers to these developmental experiences as nonvisual information, the information one already has "behind the eyeballs," and contrasts this information with visual information, the information one receives from print "through the eyes to the brain" (pp. 4-10). He further asserts that these two sources of information share a reciprocal relationship, i.e., the more nonvisual information one has, the less visual information is required during the reading process, and vice versa. As Frank Smith concludes, "From a reading point of view: information brought to reading by the brain is more important than information provided by the print" (p. v). If the printed material does not relate to the prior experiences of a child, learning to read becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible. Thus, learning to read is dependent on the child's cognitive structure which is shaped by prior experiences.

**Language.** Researchers in linguistics, psychology, early childhood and reading indicate that a rich background of early experiences with spoken and written language is
related to successful beginning reading (Chomsky, 1972a; Elkind, 1975; Goodman, 1973; Smith, N., 1975). As Goodman (1973) succinctly states, "The reader...is a user of language" (p. 159). Goodman and Burke (1969) conclude that a child learning to read, like a child learning to speak, needs intense exposure to language in order to generate hypotheses about its regularities and to test and modify these hypotheses on the basis of the feedback received through subsequent language exposure.

Much of this exposure to language is provided through natural and ongoing oral communications within the child's environment. Specifically, Milner (1951) found that children who were successful in reading came from enriched verbal environments and more often engaged in conversations with their parents than did children less successful in reading. Clay (1972) wrote: "The child who already uses a wide range of English language features in a flexible manner, will find it easier to remember the sentence structures in his reading book. He simply has to select the appropriate structures from his speech repertoire" (pp. 31-32). However, Clay's statement is slightly misleading inasmuch as oral language and written language frequently differ in sentence structure and degree of formality (Marquardt, 1964). Hence a child may not always be able to comprehend a formal, written structure by selecting from his speech repertoire. The child
must also be familiar with the unique characteristics of the different forms of written language. Oral language facility is related to reading, but oral language and written language are not the same (Smith, F., 1978).

Elkind and Chomsky are among the outstanding researchers who have investigated the relation between comprehension of written language forms and learning to read. Elkind (1975) suggests that early experiences with written language forms are best provided in homes where books and magazines are plentiful and where parents frequently read to children. Chomsky (1972a) expresses a similar conclusion, but she more specifically delineates the factors which relate positively to language facility as (a) the complexity level of the books read to or by the child; (b) the amount of time spent reading to the child; (c) the amount of time the child spends reading; and (d) library usage. Her research indicates that "...exposure to the more complex language available from reading does seem to go hand in hand with increased knowledge of the language" (p. 33).

Chomsky's (1972a) important study was based upon observations of children's language in informal settings rather than upon standardized instruments. This method is consistent with Black's (1979) conclusion that informal means of language evaluation tend to provide more complete and accurate information about a child's oral language skills. Hence,
observations of a child's informal and spontaneous language at home or at school may provide more information about a child's language than would a standardized language test.

Another important aspect of language is its role in social behavior. According to Bernstein (1961, 1971, 1973), language is used by people to elaborate and express social and other interpersonal relations. Simultaneously, language is shaped by these relations (Bernstein, 1971). Bernstein's work has implications for studies of the effect of home environment on achievement inasmuch as the language patterns of the child and of the family members may offer insights into these interpersonal relations.

Hess and Shipman (1965) built on Bernstein's work and investigated the language patterns of two types of family control: (a) status oriented; and (b) persons oriented. In status-oriented control, behavior is regulated in terms of role expectations and there is little opportunity for the characteristics of the child to influence the decision-making process. Behavioral norms are stressed with imperatives such as, "You must do what I tell you to." In persons-oriented control the characteristics of the child influence the interaction. Behavior is justified in terms of feelings, preferences, and subjective states such as, "I want you to get down from there so you won't get hurt." Thus, in status-oriented control the role of power in the interaction is
more obvious and compliance rather than rationale is stressed (Hess & Shipman, 1965). Hess and Shipman determined that the development of cognitive processes is fostered by the language in family control systems which encourage alternatives of action and thought, i.e., persons-oriented control; conversely, cognitive development is constricted by the language in family control systems which present predetermined solutions and allow few alternatives, i.e., status-oriented control.

Hess and Shipman's study was initiated to distinguish the language variables of four social classes. However, their results are helpful when identifying the cognitive and language environments of individual parent-child interactions.

Research Methods of Previous Studies of the Home Environment

While many studies discussed thus far in this review have made significant and valued contributions toward understanding the influence of the home environment, the methods of some studies have weaknesses which necessitate viewing some results with caution. A basic weakness in the method of several studies is that the conclusions are based upon retrospective reports by parents or students (Almy, 1949; Price, 1976; Ryan, 1977). Indeed, in one study the parents were asked to accurately recall prereading behaviors exhibited
four to six years earlier (Price, 1976), and in another study, college freshman were asked to recall their early home reading environments (Ryan, 1977).

In other studies, parents were sent questionnaires to supply information concerning the home environment and personality characteristics of their children (Plessas & Oakes, 1964; Price, 1976; Sheldon & Carrillo, 1951; Sutton, 1964). Thus, these researchers attempted to investigate the home environment in absentia, i.e., without observing that environment.

Another weakness in the method of most studies is that only maternal responses and opinions were investigated (Miller, 1969; Milner, 1951). Some studies were able to record responses from a very limited number of the fathers of the children involved in the study (Almy, 1949; Clark, 1976). In some studies the researcher failed to specify if data were obtained from one or from two parents (Durkin, 1966; Koppenhaver, 1974).

Moon and Wells (1979) conducted an interesting study based on transcripts of spontaneous language between preschooler and parent, parent interviews when the child was age five and age seven, and assessments of reading when the child was age five and age seven. However, information gleaned from child-parent interactions and parent interviews may vary depending upon whether only one or both
parents were involved. Yet Moon and Wells failed to specify if one or two parents were involved, and left the reader unclear as to the locale of the interviews and language sampling, i.e., in a laboratory setting or homes. These weaknesses cloud the results of their study.

In general, previous investigations of the influence of the home environment on learning to read have consistently devoted major attention to the school environment. Home interviews or observations or both, when included in the method of investigation, have represented a much smaller percentage of the total time of the study. Indeed, the majority of prior data regarding home environmental influence have been gleaned from school or laboratory settings and from maternal reports. Little, if any, direct, ongoing and purposeful observation of the home environment has been employed to investigate its influence on a child's development of beginning reading skills.

The Determination of Reading Readiness

The determination of reading readiness is a vital aspect of a beginning reading program since a child's success in learning to read partially depends upon whether the child is ready when formal reading instruction is begun (Dykstra, 1967; MacGinitie, 1969). Yet, over forty years ago Gates and Bond (1936) stressed that readiness is not entirely dependent upon the child, but rather it is in a large
measure determined by the nature of the reading program. Thus, the precise issue of reading readiness is to determine the child's readiness for the method and materials that will be utilized in formal reading instruction (MacGinitie, 1969, 1976). This is in keeping with Ausubel's (1959) definition of readiness: "The adequacy of existing capacity in relation to the demands of a given learning task" (p. 246).

The determination of readiness is an essential element of a first-grade reading program. Researchers have substantiated three major methods of determining the reading readiness of a child: (a) standardized reading readiness tests; (b) teacher judgments; and (c) a test of letter knowledge.

**Standardized Reading Readiness Tests**

Standardized reading readiness tests are frequently utilized by educators as an aid in determining if a child has sufficient command of the skills necessary to begin formal reading instruction (Farr, 1969). They are also commonly used by first-grade teachers to determine the group placement of the children within each class (Bremer, 1959). In fact, a national survey revealed that eighty percent of the contacted schools "always" or "often" relied on reading readiness tests for prereading evaluation (Austin & Morrison, 1963).
Several researchers have investigated the validity and reliability of standardized reading readiness tests. The predictive validity of these tests is especially important inasmuch as reading readiness tests are commonly used to predict how well a given pupil will progress in reading. The predictive validity correlation coefficients of readiness tests are generally quite consistent and range from .40 to .70 with a few extremes at either end (Barrett, 1970; Dykstra, 1967; Farr, 1969). Whether a correlation of .40 to .70 is high enough to be of practical usefulness is a matter for individual determination. Farr (1969, p. 167) considers it to be a "fairly low correlation." Dykstra (1967) comments that "...the wide-spread use of readiness tests for prediction is not essential and may be an inefficient use of the teacher's time" (p. 49). Kermonian (1962) suggests that time, effort and money could be saved if teacher judgments of readiness were exercised and the use of formal instruments made optional.

The more closely readiness test factors resemble the act of reading, the higher the relationship between the test results and subsequent reading achievement. For example, reading acquisition seems to be predicted better by visual discrimination of letters and words than by visual discrimination of geometric forms (Barrett, 1965; MacGinitie, 1969). Indeed, the single factor which best predicts reading

Fendricks and McGlade's (1938) investigation was also concerned with the predictive validity of reading readiness tests. Generally, they found that children who score well on a readiness test do in fact learn to read well; yet prediction for children who score poorly on a readiness test is less valid. Therefore, they conclude that the use of reading readiness tests to predict reading success for individual pupils is hazardous.

The reliability of reading readiness tests has also been investigated. Dykstra (1967) examined numerous reading readiness test manuals and concluded that "...in general the reading readiness test is a reliable instrument. Reliability coefficients based on the total score of the test often reach .90 or better" (p. 36). However, while the total score of a readiness test is highly reliable, the reliability of the subtests within the test is questionable. "...There is a question as to whether or not subtests of readiness batteries are sufficiently reliable to permit the teacher to make a differential diagnosis of the child's prereading capabilities" (Dykstra, 1967, p. 46). Nonetheless, test manuals frequently suggest that one of the purposes of reading readiness tests is diagnostic—to pinpoint the
readiness skills which pupils need to develop further. But teachers need to be cautious in using readiness tests for diagnosis as there is almost no evidence that the increased teaching of these subtest skills greatly increases success in learning to read (Barrett, 1966).

**Teacher Judgment**

Teacher judgment is another method frequently employed to determine reading readiness. Indeed, researchers have established that teacher judgments and readiness tests are highly correlated and equally valid procedures in predicting beginning reading achievement (Kermonian, 1962; Mattick, 1970). Kermonian (1962) found a correlation of .73 when he compared the predictive validity of teacher ratings of reading readiness with scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. A weakness in Kermonian's study, however, was that he failed to compare the teacher ratings and the Metropolitan test scores with subsequent reading achievement. Hence, the accuracy of the teacher ratings could not be ascertained. That weakness was corrected in Mattick's (1970) investigation of teacher judgment. He compared five coefficients of correlation with later reading success and found that the highest correlation was the Metropolitan Readiness Test and first-grade teachers' judgments.

Other researchers have also investigated the validity of teacher judgments. Carr and Michaels (1941) established
a mean rank order correlation of .79 between teacher ratings of pupil readiness early in the year and the pupil's actual rank on a criterion of success in reading near the conclusion of first grade. Parr (1969) reported the results of several studies regarding the validity of teacher judgments and concluded that teacher evaluations appear to be quite valid and reliable.

However, while Farr and Anastasiow (1969) suggest that the teacher's observation of a child's daily performance is the main source for determining a child's level of readiness, it is seldom the only criterion by which schools determine reading readiness. In practice, teacher appraisal of a child's performance is used in conjunction with standardized readiness tests (Austin & Morrison, 1963). A combination of criteria possibly does enhance the validity of the prediction of a child's readiness. Mattick (1970) concludes that reading readiness tests, specifically the Metropolitan Readiness Test, when supplemented by the teacher's judgment of pupils, is highly useful in predicting early success in the first grade and in the placement of pupils according to ability. Barrett (1970) recommends combining readiness test results with the teacher's systematic observations and evaluations in areas such as oral language facility, informational and experiential background, interest in reading, and attitude toward reading.
Test of Letter Knowledge

An impressive body of research indicates that the single best predictor of first-grade reading success is a test of letter knowledge (Barrett, 1966; Clay, 1972; DeHirsch, Jansky & Langford, 1966; Muehl & DiNello, 1976; Nicholson, 1958; Richek, 1978; Silvaroli, 1965). Silvaroli (1965) found that the single factor of letter identification could be used to predict reading achievement as well as all or any combination of other readiness factors. More recently, Richek (1978) showed that the ability of kindergarteners to recognize letters predicted success for both sight-word and sound-symbol methods of instruction. Muehl and DiNello (1976), in their seven-year followup study of first-grade skills, concluded that letter-naming ability serves as a significant predictor for both short-term and long-term reading performance. Clay's (1972) investigation in New Zealand reported that the letter identification scores of beginning readers showed a higher relationship with reading progress for children aged six, seven, and eight than any other variable. In fact, Clay reported correlations of .80 to .86 between letter knowledge and subsequent reading progress.

Yet, as Barrett (1966) cogently pointed out, a test of letter identification has no validated diagnostic value. "It should not be inferred...that teaching children to
recognize letters by name will necessarily ensure success in beginning reading" (p. 453). Indeed, Samuels (1971) conducted two studies to determine what component of letter-name training, if any, facilitates reading acquisition. He found no evidence that teaching the alphabet facilitates learning to read. Hence, Samuels concludes that "...the correlational findings between letter-name knowledge and reading may be a product of some other factor, such as intelligence or socio-economic status" (p. 607). Other researchers have concluded that letter knowledge is more likely a reflection of the child's home background and early experiences with written materials (Barrett, 1966; DeHirsch et al., 1966; Dykstra, 1967). These researchers believe that children who come to school with the ability to name letters have likely come from homes where the presence of books and reading models provide practice and approval for developing prereading skills including letter naming. Clay (1972) suggests that letter identification skills are merely the tip of the iceberg, used to represent all of a child's stored information about print symbols. Thus, research findings suggest that letter knowledge is a valid predictor of first-grade reading success inasmuch as it probably indicates the child's prior experiences with print.
Ethnographic Techniques in Research

Thus far, this review of the literature has specified the need to investigate the influence of the home environment on beginning reading achievement by investigating the behavior of the child and the interactions of the members in the home and school environment with the child. Such an investigation does not lend itself to experimental research methods. What is needed is a method which allows for extended observation to generate theories, examine theories, and cross-validate these theories through a variety of data collection and analytical procedures. Such a method is currently emerging and making its value known in educational literature. It is referred to as ethnography—the research technique of directly observing human behavior and interactions in an ongoing, naturalistic fashion (Rist, 1975).

Historically, experimental research has been the predominate method employed in educational studies. As Cronbach (1975) cites, the aim of social and behavioral science since Comte has been to establish lawful relations comparable to those of the traditional natural sciences. Yet, Kaplan (1964) criticizes the assumption that the social and behavioral sciences must mimic the methods of the physical sciences. He compares the dependency on experimental research to the drunkard's search for his keys under the lamppost because
it is lighter there, not because he believes he lost them near the lamppost rather than elsewhere in the dark.

Bronfenbrenner (1971) also expresses concern of an exclusive dependence on experimental research. He suggests that human environments are so complex in their basic organization that they may not be comprehended through simplistic research models which make no provision for ecological structure and variation. It is thus more realistic to assume that different methodological approaches are appropriate for different levels of analysis and for different levels of abstraction (Rist, 1977).

Currently, there is a growing interest within many different disciplines in the use of observational studies in educational research. Labels attached to this type of research vary according to the discipline involved and include constructivist (Magoon, 1977), naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1978), phenomenology (Lewin, 1935; Wilson, 1977), ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and ethnography (Rist, 1977). Yet, in general, the methodology refers to the research technique of directly observing human behavior and interaction in an ongoing, naturalistic fashion (Rist, 1977). The method is an analytical process which includes the disciplined and systematic uncovering of human behavior and socio-cultural interaction patterns within an environment (Wolf & Tymitz, 1976).
For many years, ethnographic techniques have been employed by anthropologists in their field studies of different cultures (Malinowski, 1922). But one of the best known researchers to utilize extensive observational techniques in a natural setting is Jean Piaget. Piaget's approach, referred to as his "clinical method," is described in his *Language and Thought of the Child* (1926). His method, which he regards as the art of questioning, does not confine itself to superficial observations, but attempts to capture what is hidden behind the immediate appearance of things. Thus, Piaget's approach led him to record and question everything he observed, not knowing where the findings might guide him.

Rist (1980) refers to the "rush to ethnography" and asserts that ethnography is currently finding widespread application among researchers from diverse disciplines. However, a 1975 survey of 902 published studies in child development found that only eight percent of the studies were observational (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore Weintraub (1980), in perusing 1100 published articles in reading research, noted no significant increase in ethnographic studies. Thus, ethnography seems far from common as a research method. Yet, its value is substantiated by acknowledged researchers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rist, 1980; Weintraub, 1980; Wolf & Tymitz, 1976).
Recent educational researchers have attempted to refine the method and clarify observational techniques. Wolf and Tymitz (1976) state that the ethnographic paradigm demands the amassing of large quantities of evidence involving multiple data collection strategies. Flexible, sustained observation and sensitive probing are crucial as "...any single observation of a child, or of a group of children, can not be assumed to be 'typical' of either" (Carbonara, 1961). Furthermore, an insightful and inductive analysis of data is required, with emphasis given to clinical reasoning and iterative examination. The investigation culminates in "...the interpretation of the whole phenomenon under study on the basis of clues provided by the constituents parts" (Wolf & Tymitz, 1976, p. 8).

However, the validity of the ethnographic paradigm does not rely on large samples. In fact, Wolf and Tymitz urge that it is desirable to explore settings that involve few children, particularly at first. They suggest that the intensity of the exploration is far more critical than sample size.

A pupil's behavior is complexly influenced by the context in which the behavior occurs (Wilson, 1977). Therefore, another basic criteria of ethnographic study is the importance of the natural habitat as the locale for the investigation. Henry (1971), an anthropologist, stresses that research should concentrate on studying individual
children in their natural environment since the home, school and peer group experiences of a child influence the outcome of that child's experience with the formal educational system. This aspect of the ethnographic paradigm is paramount to the method and requires consideration in some depth.

In 1935, Kurt Lewin published his classic equation, $B = f(PE)$, which symbolically expresses the principle that behavior evolves as a function of the interactions between person and environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) clarifies that this "environment" extends beyond the immediate setting affecting the person, to the interconnections between that person's different settings. More specifically, he defines the structure of this environment as involving several components: (a) the developing person; (b) a microsystem, i.e., the pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting; (c) mesosystems, i.e., the interrelations among two or more microsystems in which the developing person actively participates, such as the relations of the home, school and peer environments; (d) exosystems, i.e., microsystems in which the developing person does not actively participate, but in which events occur that affect the developing person; and (e) macrosystem, i.e., the systems common to a particular culture or subculture.
Bronfenbrenner conceives this environmental structure as a set of nested structures, like a set of Russian dolls. However, because of the inclusive or exclusive relationships or both between parts of the structure, this researcher diagrams Bronfenbrenner's concept as in Figure 1.

As Figure 1 depicts, at the center of the structure is the developing person within the immediate setting or microsystem. This person and microsystem are linked to other settings which directly or indirectly affect the person and are referred to as mesosystems and exosystems. Then the total structure is further influenced by the macrosystem.
Bronfenbrenner proposed the analogy of a three-legged stool which is more easily upset if one leg is broken or shorter than the others. Hence, the positive development of a child may be interrupted if one of the significant settings, e.g., home or school, is less than optimum.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory has important implications for ethnographic research. His conception of the environment of the person requires that researchers look beyond single settings. Indeed, the interconnections between settings may be as decisive for development as are the events taking place within a given setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Specific application of this theory thus dictates that research should consider the behaviors of the child within multiple settings, e.g., home, school and play activities, and interactions with others, e.g., parents, siblings, teacher, and peers.

To summarize, the review of ethnographic literature concludes that ethnography is a valued and valid method to employ when observing human behaviors and interactions. As Wolf and Tymitz (1976) conclude, ethnography "...is action-oriented and allows for theories to be generated, examined, and cross-validated through a variety of data collection and analytical procedures" (p. 11).
CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

General Overview of the Method

The work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and others pinpoints the inherent complexity in the observation of human behavior. Investigations of human learning behaviors thus need to include disciplined and systematic uncovering of the inter-relations of a developing person within multiple and relevant settings. However, the detection of wide-ranging influences on a child's beginning reading is possible only if one employs a theoretical model that permits them to be observed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, the method of this study was based on the ethnographic paradigm.

In this ethnographic investigation of the influence of the home environment on the developing reading skills of first-grade children, the primary source of data consisted of extensive and systematic observations of the subjects and their home environment. Observations of the subjects in their classroom and school library, as well as the other varied sources of data described in this chapter, served to corroborate the observations and propositions formed from the home observations. Thus multiple types of data were involved.
The following sources provided the majority of the data in the four phases of this study:

Phase I
Observation at school

Phase II
Identification of subjects
Testing of Subjects
Educational history of subjects

Phase III
Observation at home, school, and library
Parent interviews
Situational testing
Subject interview
Unobtrusive measures

Phase IV
Testing of subjects
Subject interview
Teacher interview

All of these data were gathered simultaneously throughout the study from September, 1979, through April, 1980. Table I presents the chronology of the data collection.

Throughout the multiple phases of the data collection, all of the following were relevant kinds of data in regard to the subjects and/or participants:
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<th>Time Segments</th>
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<td>Observation School</td>
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<td>Identification of Subjects</td>
<td>II</td>
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<td>Testing of Subjects</td>
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<td>Educational History of Subjects</td>
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<td>Observation Home, School, Library</td>
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<td>Parent Interview</td>
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<td>Situational Testing</td>
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<td>Subject Interview</td>
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<td>Teacher Interview</td>
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1. Observable behaviors of subjects and participants,
2. Observable interactions between subjects and participants,
3. Form and content of verbal interactions between subjects, subjects and participants, subjects and researcher, and participants and researcher,
4. Nonverbal behaviors of subjects and participants,
5. Patterns of action and nonaction of subjects and participants,
6. Test results of subjects,
7. Educational records of subjects,
8. Artifacts of subjects,

To obtain permission to conduct the study, the proposal was reviewed by appropriate staff members of the involved school district. The Director of Planning and Institutional Research then recommended approval to the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction, who gave final approval. Permission to conduct the study was also granted by the principal of the school involved in the study and by the first-grade teacher involved in the study.

**Selection of Subjects**

The subjects in this study were six pupils from a single first-grade classroom of an elementary school in the suburban area in North Central Texas during the school year of August, 1979, through May, 1980. The school and the
first-grade classroom were selected by the administration and the Director of Planning and Institutional Research for the school district involved in the study. The subjects were all chosen from the same first-grade classroom in order to minimize the teacher variable. So doing also minimized the socioeconomic variable and limited it to the neighborhood of the selected school. The school district classified the socioeconomic level of the school as middle class to upper-middle class. However, Carl Smith (1971) suggests that reading problems are not isolated to poor neighborhoods. Indeed, it is not affluence that creates an atmosphere conducive to reading; "...it is what happens to the child in his home and neighborhood that makes the difference" (p. 11).

Toward the end of the first month of the school year, the parents of each child in the involved first-grade classroom were sent a letter (Appendix). The letter informed the parents of the study and requested that the parent return the form at the bottom of the letter if they did not wish their child to be visited in their home. Two forms were returned: (a) one because the family planned to move; and (b) one because of a lingering illness in the family. The children of these two families were therefore not included in the random selection of subjects.
The intention of the study was for the subjects to be selected by the researcher according to the following criteria:

1. One boy and one girl, randomly selected from the category of Reading Readiness-High, whose parents agreed to participate in the study;

2. One boy and one girl, randomly selected from the category of Reading Readiness-Average, whose parents agreed to participate in the study;

3. One boy and one girl, randomly selected from the category of Reading Readiness-Low, whose parents agreed to participate in the study.

However, the readiness level of the involved classroom was negatively skewed, possibly due to the socioeconomic status of the school. In fact, there were no low readiness girls in the class. Therefore, the readiness composition of the classroom required that one boy and two girls were selected from the Reading Readiness-High category, one boy and one girl were selected from the Reading Readiness-Average category, and one boy was selected from the Reading Readiness-Low category.

The teacher was not informed of the number or identity of the subjects as that knowledge might have allowed her to alter unknowingly her interactions with the subjects. No information about the subjects was discussed with the teacher.
until Phase IV of the study. No specific data from the study were discussed with the teacher until the study was completed in May.

The principal of the school requested that she be placed under the same restrictions of information as the teacher. She indicated that this limitation of specific data would prevent her from inadvertently revealing data when talking to parents.

**Guidelines for Ethnographic Research**

The guidelines for this research are discussed in terms of the effect of the researcher, the transcription of tape recordings, and the establishment of validity, reliability and objectivity for the study.

**Researcher Effect**

The following guidelines attempted to deal with the problem of reducing the effect of the researcher while having access to the true behaviors of the children at home, school, and in the library.

1. At the outset of the study, the researcher promised anonymity to all those observed and interviewed.

2. At the outset of the study, the researcher assured the parents of the subjects that the research was concerned with the learning achievement of the subjects and was not directly measuring parental effectiveness.
3. At the outset of the study, the researcher assured the teacher and the school librarian that the research was concerned with the learning achievement of the subjects and was not directly measuring the teacher's or the librarian's professional effectiveness.

4. The researcher learned the names of each child in the class during the first two observations in the school. For each subsequent visit, the researcher spent the first two minutes quietly and slowly walking around the room to briefly talk, touch, or make eye contact and smile at each child in the room. This behavior insured that each child felt known and recognized by the researcher. It also served to minimize the teacher's and classmates' awareness of the identity of the subjects. The end result was that all the children in the class would smile at the researcher and freely talked with her during lunch or after school. The researcher was surprised to learn, during the teacher interview, that the teacher had remained unsure of the identity of the subjects throughout the study.

Transcriptions

Throughout the entire study, any data in the form of tape recordings were transcribed into typed copy within twenty-four hours of their collection. Because of the variety and amount of data being accumulated, the researcher believed that these immediate transcriptions were an important
factor in the maintenance of undistorted and accurate records for the study.

**Establishment of Validity, Reliability, and Objectivity**

The classic criteria of authenticity applied to educational research are validity, reliability, and objectivity. These concepts are relevant, but require some reinterpretation in order to be fully applicable to ethnographic investigations. Guba (1978) suggests new terminology in order to avoid confusion with the conventional connotations and denotations of these terms: (a) intrinsic adequacy, in lieu of internal validity; (b) extrinsic adequacy, in lieu of external validity or generalizability; (c) replicability, in lieu of reliability; and (d) impartiality, in lieu of objectivity.

In this study, the following strategies were implemented to establish the criteria of intrinsic adequacy, extrinsic adequacy, replicability, and impartiality.

**Intrinsic Adequacy.** Intrinsic adequacy was established by (a) prolonged engagement at the home, school and library environment of each subject to overcome distortions resulting from the effect of the researcher's presence; (b) as a non-participant observer, the researcher limited interaction with the subjects and concentrated on qualitatively reporting observations; (c) use of structural corroboration, i.e., the data were gathered from multiple data sources and combined to
formulate initial propositions and final conclusions; (d) careful recording of data to limit errors in the data collection; and (e) systematic observations, as detailed in this chapter, to differentiate typical from atypical situations.

**Extrinsic Adequacy.** Due to the small number of subjects (N=6), and the use of a single classroom in a single geographic area, generalization of the research results must proceed with caution.

**Replicability.** Replicability was established to the degree that the researcher was successful in establishing intrinsic adequacy at each phase of the study.

**Impartiality.** In establishing the criteria of impartiality for this study, one must first detach the traditional connotation of "subjectivity" with qualitative research and "objectivity" with quantitative research (Guba, 1978; Rist, 1977; Scriven, 1972). Guba (1978) asserts that impartiality is inherently possible in ethnographic investigations. She believes that the methods of a trained naturalistic inquirer should be considered as valid a source of objective data as the methods of an investigator using a quantitative approach. After all, data from quantitative sources may also be biased, e.g., the cultural bias said to exist in many "objective" tests. Thus, as Guba states, the issue is the confirmability
of the information once it is obtained. Hence, in this study, impartiality was established to the degree that the researcher was successful in establishing intrinsic adequacy at each phase of the study.

**Specific Procedures for the Collection of Data**

The specific procedures for the collection of data in this study are delineated through a discussion of the role of the researcher during observations, the sources of the data, the model of the observational data collection, and the validation strategy of structural corroboration.

**Role of Researcher During Observations**

Inasmuch as observational data constitute the majority of the data collection, the role of the researcher during these observations must be carefully clarified. In the various phases of the data collection, the researcher assumed the role of either participant observer or nonparticipant observer.

As a participant observer, the researcher systematically strove to become more aware of the meaning of observations. Some perspective was gained by hearing the subjects and the participants express themselves during the flow of events. To gain additional perspectives, the researcher asked questions in an approach similar to Piaget's. Wilson (1977) clarifies, "Human behavior often has more meaning than its
observable 'facts'. A researcher seeking to understand behavior must find ways to learn the manifest and latent meanings for the participants, and must also understand the behavior from the objective outside perspective" (p. 253).

In contrast, as a nonparticipant observer, the researcher limited any interaction with the subjects and the participants. Instead, the researcher concentrated on factually and impartially reporting the observation.

Sources of Data

During the four phases of the data collection, the following sources provide the majority of the data in this study.

Phase I School Observation. The main purpose of the Phase I school observations was to allow the teacher and pupils to become accustomed to the presence of the researcher. Due to the natural organizational demands of initiating first graders to school procedures, the teacher and the researcher mutually agreed to wait to begin the school observations until the second week of school, i.e., the first week in September, 1979.

Both of the Phase I observations occurred during the first month of school. Each observation continued for about two hours, and occurred approximately two-and-one-half weeks apart. The schedule of these observations was mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the researcher.
During the first observation at school, the teacher stated to the children: "I would like you to meet Mrs. Kingore. She will often visit our room. She is interested in many of the things you do and how you learn. When she is here, she will be writing these things down."

The basic objective of the researcher during these observations was to be friendly, unobtrusive, and clinically busy. Conversation with the children was not initiated unless the researcher had a specific question contributing to the data of the study. In general, the role of the researcher was that of nonparticipant observer. During Phase I observations, the researcher made brief written notations as an overview account of the general classroom atmosphere and procedures, since the subjects for the study had not been selected.

Phase II Identification of Subjects; Testing of Subjects; Educational History of Subjects. It is the policy of the school district involved in the study to administer a reading readiness test at the beginning of the first-grade school year. During the second week of school, the teacher administered the Metropolitan Readiness Test, Level II, Form P, which was the readiness instrument adopted by the school district.

At the end of four weeks of first grade, the teacher was asked to rate the level of reading readiness of each
first grader in the class by completing the Teacher Rating Scale of Pupil Reading Readiness (Appendix) for each pupil. The lapse of four weeks of the school year before obtaining such ratings was deemed long enough to allow the teacher to make a preliminary assessment of the readiness achievement of the pupils.

The teacher's ratings and the results of the Metropolitan Readiness Test were the criteria by which the researcher determined the pupils' placement in the categories of Reading Readiness-High, Reading Readiness-Average, or Reading Readiness-Low.

The subjects for the study were then selected according to the procedures specified in the Selection of Subjects section of this chapter, and the parents of each subject were individually contacted. During these initial meetings, the researcher established rapport with the parents, presented an overview of the study, and outlined the scope of the required involvement by the family. The researcher then asked if the family would be moving before the end of the school year. Finally the parent(s) were asked to complete a Use of Human Subjects: Informed Consent Form (Appendix) which authorized their child's involvement in the study. The parent(s) of every selected subject agreed to participate in the study.
In keeping with the research by Clay (1972) regarding children's development of concepts of print, the subjects' knowledge of print concepts was explored during the second visit in each home. Two informal measurements, Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality (Appendix) and Assessment of Letter Knowledge (Appendix), were individually administered to each subject. These instruments assessed the subjects' concept of letter, word, directionality, and association of letter names with the correct graphic symbols.

The educational history of each subject was compiled by consulting the school's cumulative records. Inasmuch as these children had only attended public school for one year, their cumulative records were sparse.

**Phase III Home Observation.** The home observations were intended to provide the majority of the information in this study. The procedures for the visits centered around a discussion or series of questions preplanned by the researcher and informally presented in the course of conversing with the parent(s). These preplanned discussions and/or questions served to encourage parents to share other types of information relevant to their particular situations. During these visits, the role of the researcher was that of participant observer.
The content of the eight home observations follow:

1. Researcher and parent(s)' initial discussion of the study and obtainment of written parental consent for participation;

2. Testing of subjects;

3. Interview with parent(s) (Appendix);

4. Discussion of Child's Daily Schedule (Appendix) and situational testing with parent(s) reading to the child (Appendix);

5. Subject Interview I (Appendix);

6. Discussion of the parents' perceptions of their child's learning (Appendix);

7. Situational testing with child, parent(s), and siblings interaction (Appendix);

8. Testing of subjects and Subject Interview II (Appendix).

The eight home observations ranged in length from forty-five minutes to three hours, and occurred approximately three weeks apart. A schedule for each visit was mutually agreed upon by the parent and the researcher.

The first home visit, the parent(s)' interview, and the parents' perception of their child's learning were conducted between just the parent(s) and the researcher. The subject's interviews and testing involved just the child and the researcher. The other home visits occurred when the entire
family might at times be present and interact as it was appropriate.

During the first home visit, no notes were written by the researcher so as to maximize the establishment of rapport with the parents(s). Immediately after leaving the home, the researcher wrote notes of the session describing parental reactions and questions.

During the second through eighth visits, the researcher used a tape recorder to record the visits and thus maximized the eye contact between researcher, parent(s), siblings and subjects. The researcher introduced the use of the tape recorder by saying, "I'll be using this tape recorder to help me be more accurate as I learn about [child]'s style of learning." The tape recorder was then placed in an unobtrusive location. No parent objected to the recorder and the tapes were transcribed by the researcher within twenty-four hours of the session. After leaving the home, the researcher occasionally wrote notes of any additional information relevant to the session.

In addition, frequent phone contact was maintained between the researcher and all the parents. The researcher contacted each family by phone to schedule each home observation. The parents also felt free to contact the researcher and did so on numerous occasions to either alter a scheduled visit or ask a question. Some questions which
the parents asked involved information which might contaminate
the data collection, e.g., "How did [child] do on those
tests?" In those instances, the researcher reminded the
parent that the information would be shared at the conclu-
sion of the study.

**Phase III School Observation.** The main purpose of the
Phase III school observations was to corroborate the data
from other data sources in the study and to provide further
perspective of the developing reading skills and behavior
of the subjects.

During these observations, the basic objective was to
be friendly, unobtrusive, and clinically busy. Conversation
with the children was not initiated unless the researcher
had a specific question contributing to the data of the
study. The teacher had also instructed the class not to
interrupt the researcher by asking her questions or asking
for her help when they had a problem. In general, the role
of the researcher during these visits was that of nonpartici-
pant observer.

Some of the fifteen Phase III school visits varied by
time of day and day of week in order that most of the school
day might be observed. However, the majority of the visits
were timed to observe the period of reading instruction
which occurred each morning. The visits were spaced
throughout the entire length of the study. A schedule for
each visit was mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the researcher.

During these Phase III observations, an overview account of the general classroom atmosphere and procedures was recorded by hand. A handwritten account was also kept of the specific classroom activities and the behaviors and interactions of the subjects.

The classroom observational data were recorded by the two specific procedures of time sampling and event sampling. Wright (1960) describes time sampling as the procedure of fixing the researcher's attention upon "...selected aspects of the behavior stream as they occur within uniform and short time intervals" (p. 92). This procedure is intended to secure representative "time samples" of the target phenomena, i.e., reading and learning behaviors. Mash and McElwee (1974) determined that observer accuracy was increased through clearly defined yet simple coding systems. Therefore, the coding system for the time sampling procedure in this study was kept simple and observations were recorded on the Classroom and Library Observation Sheet (Appendix). Every five minutes, the researcher noted the location of each subject, the activity in which each subject was engaged, and whether the subject was interacting with anyone. The additional time in each five-minute segment was spent recording specific observations of any subject's behavior, as deemed relevant.
The Classroom and Library Observation Sheet, along with the described procedure, was utilized whenever the researcher needed to observe all six subjects as simultaneously as possible, e.g., during library observations and during the reading period of classroom observations.

The second observational recording procedure was event sampling. Wright (1960) describes event sampling as the procedure intended to study integral behavioral events. Each recorded event represented a sample in the behavior streams of children in selected settings (Wright, 1960). With this procedure, the researcher was stationed where a subject could be readily seen and heard. The researcher then waited for the designated event to begin, e.g., oral reading in the reading group. The researcher described the event by recording the behaviors and occasionally the dialogue of the subject being observed. This procedure was utilized whenever the researcher wished to observe a single subject in a specified activity.

**Phase III Library Observation.** The main purposes of the library observations were (a) to acquire data regarding the affective dimensions of the subjects' reading by observing their behavior in the library, the number and type of books checked out, and their interactions with other people; (b) to corroborate the data from other data sources in the study;
and (c) to provide further perspective of the developing reading skills and behavior of the subjects.

The researcher observed the subjects in the library on five occasions, evenly spaced throughout the study. During these observations a handwritten account was kept of the specific activities and the behaviors and interactions of the subjects (Appendix), as well as an overview account of the general atmosphere and procedures.

**Phase III Unobtrusive Measures.** During the observations at home, school, and library, the researcher noted and recorded unobtrusive measures such as (a) amount, types, and locations of reading material in the home; (b) variety and location of books in use at school; and (c) number of books checked out by the subjects in the library.

**Phase IV Testing of Subjects.** In April, 1980, a series of tests were administered by the researcher to further determine the level and extent of the reading skills and attitudes developed thus far by each subject. First of all, as a group, the subjects were administered the *Durrell Listening-Reading Series, Primary Level, Form DE*. The test was administered at the school in a room separate from the classroom. Each subject was then individually administered the *Classroom Reading Inventory, Form A*. Each subject was also individually asked to say the words on the Kucera-Francis
list of the 220 most frequently-used English words (Johnson, 1971). The words were presented in a tachistoscope and exposed for approximately one-half second each. The 220 words were divided into four equal sections and each section was presented on a separate occasion to reduce the subjects' fatigue.

During the eighth home visit in April, the researcher individually administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) to each subject. Finally, Subject Interview II (Appendix) was completed with each subject and the subject's responses and elaborations were recorded by the researcher. The Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality (Appendix) was also re-administered at this same time.

Phase IV Interview with Teacher. The teacher interview was completed in four sessions during the last two weeks of April, 1980. The first two sessions of approximately forty-five minutes each were used to answer questions about the classroom and classroom procedures which the researcher had formulated throughout the study, e.g., "How do you determine the arrangement of the children's desks in the room?" and "What do you do during the first week of school?" The final two sessions of approximately one-and-one-half hours each were involved with the Interview with Teacher (Appendix) and intended to further determine the teacher's judgment of the
level and extent of the reading competence of each subject in the study.

Model of the Observational Data Collection

Observations in ethnographic investigations cannot be "pure" in the sense of being "absolutely free of constraints placed on either antecedents or responses" (Guba, 1978, p. 6). Typically, the initial observations of the researcher may influence subsequent investigations. Thus, the process of the observational data collection in this study is represented as in Figure 2.

![Figure 2—Observational data collection](image)

As Figure 2 indicates, at the beginning of the study the researcher adopted the discovery mode and observed in order to discover patterns of behavior. After some period
had passed, propositions emerged prompting the researcher to adopt a verification mode. Then the researcher extended the inquiry to new inputs in another discovery mode. The process of formulation and verification of propositions continued until the termination of the study when the conclusions were formulated.

**Validation Strategy of Structural Corroboration**

Throughout the data collection, this study employed the strategy of structural corroboration to validate the propositions formulated during the study and the conclusions of the study. The researcher continually combined the multiple data sources to determine convergence of the data and to cross-check the different data sources. Eisner (1979) suggests that in the process of structural corroboration, the data are combined to establish links which lead to a whole that is supported by the bits of evidence which constitute the whole.

A more specific example of structural corroboration in this study is the researcher's use of subject and participant interviews to corroborate observational data. Magoon (1977) refers to anthropological ethnographic approaches where the key to the success of such accounts was to have the account corroborated by some of the participants. "The important methodological lesson is that ethnographic studies often should be joint cooperative enterprises where the
integrity of the participants' views are to be carefully maintained" (p. 667).

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the course of the data collection for this study:

1. Metropolitan Readiness Test, Level II, Form P;
2. Teacher Rating Scale of Pupil Reading Readiness (Appendix);
3. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R);
4. Assessment of Letter, Work, and Directionality;
5. Assessment of Letter Knowledge;
6. Interview with Parent(s) (Appendix);
7. Subject Interview I and Subject Interview II (Appendix);
8. Interview with Teacher (Appendix);
9. Child's Daily Schedule (Appendix);
10. Parental Perceptions of Their Child's Learning (Appendix);
11. Classroom and Library Observation Sheet (Appendix);
12. Durrell Listening-Reading Series, Primary Level, Form DE;
13. Classroom Reading Inventory, Form A;
These instruments were selected because they are reliable and valid for this particular study, and the researcher is familiar with the range of behavioral responses typically given by children to the different test components. All of the instruments, except the standarized tests, the Classroom Reading Inventory, and the Kucera-Francis Word List, were developed by the researcher for this study. All of the instruments were administered by the researcher.

Limitations

Due to the small number of subjects (N=6) and the use of a single classroom in a single geographic area, generalization of the research results must proceed with caution.

The observations, while involving approximately 6,615 minutes of researcher time, covered only selected segments of what is a continuous process in the three environments of home, school and library. Any given observation period might have been hindered by the researcher's lack of knowledge of precisely what happened since the last observation period that might have affected the behavior and patterns of activity of the subjects and/or the participants. However, this time represented a maximum effort by the researcher and it is believed that the strategy of structural corroboration minimized this limitation, i.e., if any data seemed atypical to developing patterns it was investigated through the other data sources.
It is possible that the presence of the researcher in the home, school and library environments altered the true behaviors of the subjects or participants. However, the Researcher Effect guidelines, established in this chapter, attempted to minimize this problem.

Inasmuch as none of the subjects were from single-parent families, generalization of the research results may be limited to two-parent families.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the manner in which the home environment influences the reading acquisition of six first-grade children at different levels of reading readiness. Ethnographic techniques were employed and the following were relevant kinds of data in regard to the subjects and/or participants:

1. Observable behaviors of subjects and participants,
2. Observable interactions between subjects and participants,
3. Form and content of verbal interactions between subjects, subjects and participants, subjects and researcher, and participants and researcher,
4. Nonverbal behaviors of subjects and participants,
5. Patterns of action and nonaction of subjects and participants,
6. Test results of subjects,
7. Educational records of subjects,
8. Artifacts of subjects.

One strategy of the data collection was to corroborate the propositions formed in the home environment with
observations of the subjects' patterns of behavior at school and at the school library. Therefore, the study was timed to begin simultaneously with the start of the school year, i.e., the last week in August, 1979. However, due to the natural organizational demands of initiating first graders to school procedures, the teacher and the researcher mutually agreed to begin the study the second week of school, i.e., the first week in September, 1979. Data were thus gathered and analyzed from the beginning of the study in September, 1979, and continued, at the scheduled intervals presented in Chapter III, until the study was completed in April, 1980. The data from each observation, interview, or other source of data acquired at a given session were analyzed according to the specific purposes of the study. Therefore, the data were continuously analyzed (a) to identify and describe the factors present in the home environment which appear to affect children's reading competence; (b) to identify and describe the home prereading activities and reading activities which appear to affect reading competence; (c) to identify and describe the factors and the prereading and reading activities in the home environment which appear to influence children's affective dimensions of reading; (d) to describe the parents' language style when interacting with their child; (e) to describe the rate of reading acquisition for children from
differing home environments; and (f) to describe observable behavior as children learn to read.

Thus, the analysis of data for this study, in keeping with the ethnographic paradigm, may be represented as in Figure 3.

![Figure 3—Analysis of data](image)

The observational data and the data from all the data sources were continually analyzed in an effort to discover patterns of behavior. This analysis led to the formulation of propositions to assimilate and to account for the specific observed behavior. Verification of these propositions through all data sources enabled further discovery of patterns of behavior. However, if the propositions were not verified by
the data, new propositions were formulated and verified. The continuous analysis of the data ultimately resulted in conclusions regarding the influence of the home environment on the developing reading skills of first graders.

**Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Data**

The data from this study are organized and discussed in terms of the specific purposes of the study: (a) factors affecting reading competence; (b) activities affecting reading competence; (c) factors and activities influencing children's affective dimensions of reading; (d) parental language style; (e) rate of reading acquisition; and (f) observable behaviors as children learn to read.

**Factors Affecting Reading Competence**

One specific purpose of this study was to identify and describe the factors present in the home environment which appear to affect children's reading competence. Data regarding the factors affecting reading competence were collected through parent interviews, unobtrusive measures, and multiple and systematic observations of the subjects and their families in their home environment. These data will be discussed in terms of (a) general background history of the families and subjects; (b) abundance of printed material; (c) availability of manipulative materials; (d) use of television; (e) encouragement of reading;
(f) parental perception of education; and (g) total development of the child.

**General Background History.** Several questions on the parent interviews were intended to enable the researcher to ascertain general information about family background and about the developmental history of the subjects. These questions provided information such as the age and education of the parents, the siblings in the home, and a general developmental history of the subjects.

Table II describes some global factors of the home environment and family background. The subjects were from families of upper-middle socioeconomic status. Children with only one parent were not included in the classroom selected by the school district to be involved in this study. Hence, all of the subjects in the study were from two-parent families. None of the subjects were only children. Half of the families had mothers employed outside of the home. All of the parents were in their thirties and all had attended college. Interestingly, every family was from a different state and none were native to the state in which they now live. Thus, these families were not unlike upper-middle-class families identified by United States census statistics, except in that no single parents are represented.

The developmental history of the subjects was also ascertained from the parent interviews. The developmental
# TABLE II

GLOBAL FACTORS OF HOME AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Anne</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Brad</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Todd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Parents in Home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Mother</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
<td>30 to 35</td>
<td>30 to 35</td>
<td>30 to 35</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Father</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
<td>30 to 35</td>
<td>30 to 35</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
<td>35 to 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Mother</td>
<td>Coll* Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Att** Coll</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Att Coll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of Father</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Coll Grad</td>
<td>Att Coll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Parents Employed</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income in Thousands</td>
<td>30 to 40</td>
<td>35 to 45</td>
<td>30 to 40</td>
<td>30 to 40</td>
<td>30 to 40</td>
<td>30 to 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of People in Family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects' Birth Order in Family</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*College Graduate  
**Attended College
history of the subjects was average and typical. All of the subjects walked and talked within expected age limits. The general health of each subject was reported to be good, and no subject had experienced serious illness nor trouble with ears or eyes.

Thus, the general background of the families was quite similar. The developmental history of the subjects was also quite similar. Therefore, these two factors do not appear to discriminate between the reading competence of the subjects.

A thumbnail sketch of the community is also appropriate inasmuch as the family environment is influenced by the immediate community setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The school district administration classified the socioeconomic level of the school used in the study as middle class to upper-middle class. The community was composed of a high percentage of college graduates who were characteristically interested in education and active in numerous community organizations. In general, the school district was noted for its high quality of education and its high percentage of community support and involvement. An administrator of the district noted that many families have moved into the area because of the school system's reputation for quality education. A further indication of active community support was verified by the fact that the voters of the district
have always approved the bond elections proposed by the school district.

**Abundance of Printed Material.** Prior studies by Almy (1949), Clark (1976), Durkin (1966), and others reported in Chapter II, repeatedly identify an abundance of printed material as a major home environmental factor which positively affected the reading competence of children. All of the families in this study had an abundance of printed materials available in their homes. Because of the parents' educational level and socioeconomic level, these were homes where books, magazines and newspapers were evidenced throughout the study. In addition, every subject had at least a small personal library. Therefore, an abundance of printed material was not a factor which differentiated between these subjects. The researcher suggests that in these homes, printed materials were very affordable items. Furthermore, these families, possibly because of their educational level and the influences of the community, took the presence of newspapers and magazines for granted. Perhaps an abundance of print may be more of a significant factor in homes where the cost of printed materials represents a larger percentage of the family's available income. It would seem that, in these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, the abundance of print may be a necessary but not sufficient factor in the reading competence of beginning readers.
The "abundance" of printed materials is, of course, a relative term. A perusal of prior studies suggests that they discussed "abundance" in the context of the variety of forms of printed material rather than in the sense of a specific number of books. In this study, the researcher considered both the variety and the approximate quantity of printed material. As previously reported, books, magazines, and newspapers were in evidence in every home. Therefore, there were no clear differences in the variety of printed materials available to the subjects. However, there were differences in the quantity of printed materials. One family subscribed to six magazines while another subscribed to "one or two a year." One child reported having "hundreds" of workbooks and her mother corroborated the accuracy of that statement. There were also differences in the number of books evidenced in the homes. But, in general, the quantity of printed material is at best a hazardous indication. There was a relationship between quantity and reading competency in that the subjects who were the lowest achievers did have the smallest quantity of printed material available in the home. However, the relation between quantity and reading competency was not perfectly linear, i.e., the quantity of printed material did not proportionally increase as the level of reading competency increased. This is partially due to the fact that ownership is not the only way, or in
some subject's opinion even the best way, to have print available. One parent encouraged trading books and magazines with others to continually refurbish that family's supply of printed material. Moreover, one subject stated that he didn't like to buy books. He preferred to borrow them from friends or the school library. He reported that he could look at many more books that way.

Two additional aspects of this factor emerged from the data: (a) the location of printed materials in the home; and (b) whether printed materials were used as presents. Both aspects differentiated between the least competent and most competent readers. In the homes of the most competent readers, printed material was evidenced in most rooms. In the homes of the least competent readers, printed material was typically evidenced in just a couple of rooms, such as a newspaper in the living room and/or recipe books in the kitchen. All the more competent readers had books in their bedrooms. In contrast, the least competent reader kept his small personal library on the top shelf of his sister's closet. When asked why he kept his books there, he replied: "I need room in my closet for my toys."

In the homes of the more competent readers, printed materials such as books and workbooks were used within the family as presents. One parent returned from a trip with books for the children who had remained at home. Three other
parents spontaneously mentioned getting a book or workbook for their child as a reward or as a surprise. In the homes of the least competent readers, the use of printed materials as presents was never spontaneously mentioned. When the researcher asked the parents about the use of books as presents, one parent said, "Maybe, once or twice," and another parent replied, "Not really."

It seems to this researcher that the location of printed materials in the home and the use of printed materials as presents may reflect the attitudes of the family toward print and the priority of reading in the home. The children who spend more time looking at books and those who may wish to read more often have books and other forms of print in more convenient locations. Families who think of books as rewards or presents may consciously or unconsciously view reading as a more positive and enjoyable activity. This attitude may ultimately influence the child's development of an intrinsic motivation to read.

Availability of Manipulative Materials. All of the families in this study had manipulative materials readily available in their homes. Pencils, paper, scissors, crayons and markers were evidenced in every home throughout the study. Thus, the availability of manipulative materials was not a factor which differentiated between these subjects. Again, manipulative materials were very affordable and
commonplace items for these families. Thus it would seem that, in these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, the availability of manipulative materials may be a necessary but not sufficient factor in the reading competency of beginning readers.

Parent interviews substantiated that some children were interested in using manipulative materials at an early age. One child reportedly knew the letters of the alphabet at two years of age and tried to copy them soon after that. All of the parents reported that their children had drawn or colored before kindergarten and that each child could write his or her name, at least to some extent, before kindergarten.

The child's interest in using manipulative materials and the frequency of the child's use of manipulative materials were not consistently related to either readiness level or subsequent reading competence. At the beginning of the study, for example, one child of high readiness reportedly chose to use glue, scissors and drawing or writing materials every day. Another child of high readiness reportedly "didn't really like to color or draw or write." The two children who were deemed the least ready to begin learning to read were reported as showing little interest in using manipulative materials. Yet by April of first grade, one of these children, while below grade level in reading
competency, was reportedly drawing or writing "all the time." She had begun corresponding weekly with a relative in another state and was ranked by the teacher as having the best penmanship in the class. Thus, the interest in using manipulative materials and the frequency of the use of those materials is not consistently related to the subjects' level of readiness or reading competency.

Further analysis of the parent interviews and observations of the subjects suggest that whether or not these subjects participate in pencil and paper activities may be more related to their activity level than to their readiness level or reading competency. Specifically, the subjects identified by parents as "active" rather than "quiet" do not frequently choose paper and pencil activities regardless of their initial level of readiness or current reading competence.

Use of Television. Television is often viewed by educators as detrimental to reading. Hence, some questions in the parent interview concerned the role television plays in each family. The families unanimously expressed negative feelings about television. One parent stated: "I think it's awful, to be blunt." Another parent commented: "Tremendous waste of time; the nation would save a lot of money if we'd turn it off and use the energy elsewhere!"
The parents verbalized concern about the dangers of television addiction and several feared that it stifled creativity. Yet, one parent candidly admitted that she encourages the children to watch television whenever she, as an adult, needs some personal time.

When asked if they were aware of any valuable learning which their child gained from watching television, most credited "Sesame Street," "Mr. Rogers," and "The Electric Company" with helping children learn the alphabet and numbers. Parents also noted that children learned to recognize products and labels from commercials on television. One parent commented on the influence of television on the language development of his children. He felt that the pace and the recurrence of rhymes and jingles demonstrated the fun of oral language. Another parent believed that her child had gained an awareness of other cultures and socioeconomic levels through television viewing. Seeing families on television who had less material things reportedly increased her child's appreciation for the way their family lived. The same child had also become interested in learning Spanish from seeing and hearing Mexican-American children on television.

These children began watching television at an early age. A television was typically on in the same room where the children played as babies. However, most of these children reportedly did not begin to enjoy television programs until they were two or three years old.
Data regarding the activities and schedules of the subjects were collected from parent interviews, subject interviews, and from the child's daily schedule completed by the parents. Television was spontaneously mentioned as a favorite activity by every parent and every subject. Television was also most frequently mentioned in response to questions asking what the child likes to do after school, when the weather is bad, or when no other children are present.

The families unanimously stated that they limit their child's television viewing, especially on school days. These limits ranged from a low of one-and-one-half hours of television viewing per day to a high of three hours per day. On weekends and during the summer these amounts characteristically double. Thus, television occupies a large percentage of every subject's waking hours at home. These data indicate that the use of television is not a factor which clearly discriminates between children of different levels of reading competence inasmuch as all the subjects and their families watch television a minimum of one-and-one-half to three hours per day.

**Encouragement of Reading.** Frank Smith (1973) stresses the importance of an adult responding to what a child is trying to do. Almy (1949), Durkin (1966), and Clark (1976)
all relate the importance of the presence of adults and older siblings who willingly answer the questions of the child. Data from this study likewise indicated that a factor affecting children's reading readiness and subsequent reading competence is the presence of a person who positively responds to the child's interest in reading. The reactions of family members to the child's initial signs of reading interest may be crucial to the continuance of those interests. For example, in the initial parent interview with the parent of an average readiness child, the parent recalled that, as a preschooler, the child would take books to bed at night and "read" to herself. Then the parent added: "But she doesn't do that now." No member of this child's family was a reading model; no member of this family read to the child. Thus, the data suggest that this child's initial interests in reading had neither been responded to nor received much encouragement.

As a contrast, the mother of one of the competent readers was a teacher and stated that she had "worked" with the child since the child was one and had first shown an interest in books. Further discussions with this mother, and prolonged observations of interactions between the mother and the child, suggest that this teacher-mother was wise enough to "teach" only when the child's interest merited it. Thus, the mother was positively responding to,
and encouraging, the child's interests in reading and related activities.

As a final example, one high-readiness subject, who became a competent reader, has an older sibling who liked to read to him. When this child was a preschooler, his older brother would frequently play school with him and act out all the things the brother had learned in school. The father and mother reported that these children would use paper or a chalkboard and read from an old basal text and books authored by Dr. Seuss. Thus, that sibling encouraged the reading interests of the child.

However, the presence of older siblings in the home is no guarantee that a younger child will receive encouragement in reading. Four of the subjects had older siblings. But only two of the siblings interacted with the subject in reading activities and, consequently, had a positive influence on the subject's readiness and reading competence. The data suggest that in homes with many ongoing reading activities, the siblings may or may not be influential in their interactions with the subjects. But, in homes where reading activities are a low priority, no siblings were influential in their interactions with the subjects. Further aspects of these data will be considered when the importance of reading models is discussed later in this chapter. It seems, however, that the siblings who encourage
the reading interests of the subject may be continuing the reading model provided by the home.

Thus, one factor which positively affects the readiness and reading competence of a child is the presence of some interested adult or older sibling who takes the time to encourage reading. All of the subjects had parents and siblings who were observed to care about the child and who expressed interest in the child and in the child's development. But the interactions of some families did not cultivate reading interests. The parents of one family where reading was a low priority had never noticed, for example, if the child pretended to read. These parents also could not remember if the child had been interested in letters or words before kindergarten. Furthermore, they had never regularly read to the child.

The data suggest that a child's reading competence is related not only to the parents' interest in the child but also to the priority that reading and reading activities have in their life. In homes where reading is a priority and where numerous reading activities are evidenced, the parent(s) or some family member is more likely to be aware of the child's indications of reading interests and also more likely to positively respond to those interests. For example, in these families where reading was an active priority, the parents tended to react to a child's indication
of reading interest by having the child repeat the experience while the parents and other family members expressed verbal encouragements. Specifically, when one child brought home her first reader from school she was encouraged to read it to "everyone who came by." Each time she read, the family members smiled and applauded. In another family, the parents related that when their child had first tried to write his name as a preschooler, they had "framed the paper and still have it on their wall." Their child had been very proud and spent "days" trying to copy other words.

In homes where the child's reading interests were cultivated, the person who interacted most frequently with the interested subject in reading activities was the mother or an older sibling. Fathers also encouraged the reading competence of the child, but less frequently. This fact was substantiated by interviews with both of the parents. Interestingly, in two cases, a grandmother was also influential in encouraging the child. However, this encouragement occurred less frequently because the grandmother did not live in the same city as the subject. The physical distance separating these relatives thus limited the frequency with which the grandparents were available to encourage the child's reading interests. In one instance, however, the grandmother sometimes mailed books to the child. In another family, the child and the grandmother wrote letters to each other every week.
Parental Perception of Education. The parents of the subjects in this study all valued formal schooling and considered it a basic and vital element in the child's development. All of the subjects had attended kindergarten and five of the six subjects had attended preschool. Preschool in this instance means formal schooling before kindergarten. The subjects had attended preschool for one-and-one-half to three years, with a mean of 2.2 years.

Preschool education was viewed by four of these families as a beneficial experience for their child. Three of these families applauded the social growth which they felt their child had experienced in preschool. As one parent commented, her child had "learned that there were other kids in the world." The fourth family valued the preschool experience of their child because the school was a Montessori school which stressed disciplined learning and academic development. This family was very interested in the intellectual development of their child.

One of the families viewed preschool as less than beneficial. The mother stated that preschool was "a negative experience as far as learning was concerned" because the teachers had not responded to the interests of her child. Both the mother and the father characterize their child as "captivated by learning; she can't get enough." The child was happy to go to preschool and enjoyed playing
with the other children. But the mother reported that when
the subject got home, the first thing the child wanted to
do was to read a story and do what the child reportedly
referred to as "real work" by writing letters and words.
Hence, in this instance, the family viewed preschool as
less than beneficial because it did not fulfill the inter-
est and needs of the child.

Kindergarten was viewed by four of the six families
as a beneficial experience for their child. These families,
again, accented the social developmental aspects of the
experience, although one parent also reported that his
child had "many learning experiences with words in kinder-
garten." Two of the families considered kindergarten less
beneficial. The mother of the child "captivated with
learning" again felt that the teacher had been unable to
respond enough to the interests of her child because the
"class was too large." The mother of the child who attended
a Montessori preschool stated that she was "unimpressed
with the kindergarten experience" because "nothing academic"
was included in the program. These were no indications
in the parent or subject interviews that the child was
indicating interest in more academic activities than the
kindergarten offered. Hence, in this instance, it seems
that the family, i.e., the mother, viewed kindergarten as
less than beneficial because it did not fulfill the interests or needs of the parent.

People in the United States place a high priority on learning to read (Downing, 1977). Moreover, our society generally believes that the critical period for the essential initial stage of learning to read is first grade. Downing (1977) caustically suggests that an American child is likely to be branded as reading disabled if not reading at grade level by the end of the first grade. All of the parents in this study generally concur with that view. The parents were asked: "What do you think is the most important thing for [child] to learn in first grade?" Both parents of every subject responded that reading, or some specific reading skill such as phonics, was most important. For example, in one family the mother responded, "Learn to read," and the father added, "Absolutely! If they don't learn to read they are behind for the rest of their lives!"

Thus, it may be concluded that regardless of whether parents themselves are active readers, they uniformly endorse the importance of their children learning to read well. However, parental interest in their child's reading development is not a sufficient factor affecting the reading competence of children. All the parents valued their children learning to read, but all of the subjects were not developing as competent readers. Data from the home
observations and continued discussions with the parents and subjects suggest that the adage "actions speak louder than words" may also be valid for the beginning reading development of children. It seems that parental endorsement of the importance of learning to read needs to be reinforced through positive responses to, and encouragement of, the child's reading interests.

**Total Development of the Child.** While interviews with the parents indicated unanimous interest in their children learning to read, there is considerable evidence that academic development is but one of the concerns these parents have for their children. Data from interviews and ongoing discussions with both parents indicate that these parents are concerned with the total development of their children, i.e., the mental, physical, emotional and social development of their children. Parents expressed concern with the all-around adjustment, happiness, and self concept of their children, as well as concern for their children's mental development. As one father succinctly stated: "If you can get a kid going with a positive self concept, boy, you've got it! That self confidence will carry them."

This verbalized concern for the total development of children was verified by the fact that all of these children are involved in numerous organized and spontaneous activities
which range from neighborhood play, to sports, music and
dance classes, and religion-oriented activities. This
evidence nullifies somewhat a concern frequently expressed
by faculties from schools in areas of middle to upper-middle
socioeconomic status, that parents tend to over-emphasize
the academic development of their children. In the limited
incidence of this study, and with one exception, academic
pressure in the home was not excessive or at the expense
of the other aspects of the child's development. This
parental attitude may reflect the age of the child, i.e.,
the child is still young enough that academic pressure
and parental concern for intellectual development is mini-
mized. However, this attitude may also reflect a genuine
interest on the part of these parents for the development
of the whole child.

Summary. Factors present in the home environment
which appear to affect children's reading competence have
been identified and described. The general background of
the families and the developmental history of the subjects
were similar and do not appear to be factors which dis-
criminate between the reading competence of the subjects.
A variety of print was available in every home and the data
suggest that the availability of a variety of print may be
a necessary but not sufficient factor which influences
reading competency in these families of upper-middle socio-economic status. Interestingly, however, the location of printed materials in the home and whether printed materials were used as presents did differentiate between the least competent and most competent readers. This differentiation may reflect the family's attitudes toward print and the priority of reading activities in these homes.

All of these families had manipulative materials available in their homes. Again, in these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, the availability of manipulative materials may be a necessary but not sufficient factor which influences reading competency. The interest in using manipulative materials and the frequency of the use of those materials were not consistently related to these subjects' level of readiness or reading competency, but rather were related to whether the subjects were reported to be "active" or "quiet." Likewise, the use of television was not a factor which clearly discriminated between children of different levels of reading competence inasmuch as all the subjects and their families watched television a minimum of one-and-one-half hours to three hours per day.

One crucial factor affecting children's reading competence may be the presence of some interested adult or older sibling who takes the time to respond to the child's interest in reading and to encourage reading. This behavior
was most likely to occur in families where reading was an active priority and where numerous reading activities were evidenced.

All of these parents valued education and were concerned with the total development of their children. However, parental interest in their child's learning to read may be another necessary but not sufficient factor affecting the reading competence of children if it is not demonstrated through parental responses to, and encouragement of, the child's reading interests.

**Activities Affecting Reading Competence**

A second specific purpose of this study was to identify and describe the home prereading activities and reading activities which appear to influence reading competence. These prereading and reading activities include reading to the child, someone who serves as a reading model and the family's use of the public library. Data regarding the activities affecting reading competence were collected through parent interviews, subject interviews, situational testing, and multiple and systematic observations of the subjects and their families in their home environment.

The initial parent interview instrument contained two kinds of questions which attempted to learn about the availability of reading activities in the home and the child's responses to those activities. Some questions
focused on general inquiries about the child's activities during which parents would have the opportunity to spontaneously mention reading activities if they were appropriate. Questions of this type included: "Does [child] prefer quiet or active activities?" and "What types of activities does [child] do well?" The second kind of question made more specific reference to prereading or reading activities. These questions included: "Does [child] do any writing activities?" and "Did [child] ever pretend s/he was reading?"

Propositions regarding the activities affecting reading competence were formulated from the parental responses during the initial parent interview. The subsequent data served to verify or reject those propositions. Thus, the degree of accuracy and completeness of the parental responses were substantiated by subsequent data. These data will be discussed in terms of (a) reading frequently to the child; (b) a reading model; (c) use of the public library; and (d) provisions for reading activities.

**Reading Frequently to the Child.** Prior studies by Almy (1949), Clark (1976), Durkin (1966), and others reported in Chapter II, identify the presence of an adult who reads frequently to the child as a factor associated with children who are successful in reading acquisition. The initial parent interview suggested that this factor may be an influence on the readiness level of the subjects.
in this study. The four most-ready subjects did have an adult or family member who read frequently to them. The less-ready subjects did not have an adult or family member who read to them regularly. Thus, this factor does seem to differentiate between the most-ready and the less-ready subjects.

Specific responses by the parents are helpful in understanding the frequency of this activity. The four families who reportedly read to their child started the activity when the child was quite young. One parent had started reading to her child when the child was five months old; another parent started after the child was a year old. The other two parents started when the child was about three years old. These parents indicated that this reading activity occurred daily or almost daily. One parent reported that both father and mother "provide the time" to read to the child daily. Two other families reported that the mother is primarily the one who reads to the child but that the father does so occasionally. Interestingly, one family stated that an older sibling was the one who read to the child daily but that the father also read to the child "some." The mother in this last family added: "I read those same books so many times to the others [siblings] that I'm sick of them. I've told them it's their turn to read to [child] and my time to read for me!"
This mother's comment could be interpreted as a somewhat negative interest in her child's reading, but probably it was simply an honest reaction of an adult eager to read adult material. The sibling and the child reportedly enjoyed reading together, and the mother made a strong testimony to the enjoyment of reading by demanding her time to read for herself. Subsequent data affirmed that the mother was actively responding to her child's interest in reading by answering his many questions and listening to him read the printed material he brought home from school.

In contrast, the families of the less-ready subjects reportedly did not read to their child frequently. One mother related that her child had started to pick out nighttime stories when she was about two years old. The parents responded at first by reading to her a "couple of times a week" but "somehow" they stopped and now reported reading to the child "only a couple of times" since kindergarten. The mother concluded: "We're just not in the routine of reading."

The mother of the least-ready subject reported that she had read to her child but "not often, perhaps once a month." In a later interview with both parents, this mother described herself as a person "in tune with adolescents." She stated: "It's more difficult for me on the primary grade level. I lack the patience really. It's
not a plus for us to sit down and read to him." This mother's attitude illustrates the point made by Guinagh and Jester (1971) that the quality of the interaction between parent and child while reading is also relevant. Not all parents enjoy reading to their children. One mother vocalized concern about the reading attitudes which parents who don't like to read may project to children. She questioned: "For parents who don't read a lot or find they're not interested in reading—might they not do more harm? I can just hear some parent going on about it. So now the kid is going, 'This is a dumb, stupid thing'." The point may be that children benefit from someone reading frequently to them. However, that person may not have to be their parent.

Further insight into the value of children being read to was gained from the situational testing with a parent reading to the child (Appendix). These sessions occurred about halfway through the study. In each case, the mother was the parent involved in the situation. In addition to tape recording the session, the researcher made brief notes regarding the behaviors of the parent and child. Excerpts from those field notes for each mother-child dyad follow.

Anne (competent reader)
Observation: By the third page, Anne began to read some words with Mother...Mother and Anne smile each time the words are repeated and they read them together. The fourth time the refrain
is repeated, Mother stops reading and lets Anne read that part alone.

Opinion: Comfortable situation as if one which occurs frequently. Both laugh and visibly enjoy the session.

Carol (competent reader)
Observation: Carol snuggles close to Mother as story begins. Sibling playing nearby slips in beside Mother to listen to story...Mother points with finger to signs in the story and reads them...Mother waits, smilingly, as Carol points to words she knows.

Opinion: Comfortable situation. Neither Carol or Mother seemed surprised when sibling joined them.

Sara (reading below competency)
Observation: Sara smiled in anticipation as Mother opens book...Much sharing of illustrations and details...Mother held book so Sara could see, but not directly aimed at her. Sara leaned head on Mother's shoulder at times to see print more clearly or at better angle...Sara moved Mother's hand so she could see the print...Helped turn pages at appropriate times.

Opinion: Mother's voice enthusiastic but very loud; more as if she was performing or reading to a crowd rather then just to Sara. Sara's behavior shows more interest in print than her Mother may be aware of.

Brad (competent reader)
Observation: Brad and Mother sat close together holding book equally between them...Many smiles...Mother points out several details in illustrations and asks Brad's opinion...Brad silently mouthed the words from the second page to the end of book.

Opinion: Both enjoyed the session. Brad could read the story but liked to listen to Mother.

Scott (competent reader)
Observation: Scott took a very long time to choose his book. Looked carefully through all of them...Mother impatient while waiting, asks Scott to hurry...Mother reads enthusiastically...Scott stands by Mother, leaning over her shoulder to see print...Moved Mother's hand so he could see print.
Opinion: I believe Scott silently read most of the books before he chose the one for Mother to read. Scott and Mother visibly enjoyed the story. Scott didn't want to answer the comprehension questions Mother asked after the story; Mother disappointed in his answers.

Todd (reading below preprimer level)
Observation: Some difficulty getting started. Mother had to instruct Todd to sit by her: "No, honey. Over here by Mommy." Mother held book on her lap where Todd could see...Mother pointed to every word; exaggerated enunciation; read slowly, almost work-by-word...The text asks questions; Todd gives answers but Mother goes on reading without responding...Todd asks: "What's that?" Mother turns page and goes on without comment.

Opinion: Session was stilted, as if reading between them doesn't happen very often. Mother seemed to be performing for the researcher rather than reading to Todd. Todd's interests not responded to.

The subjects and mothers from homes where someone frequently reads to the child were most comfortable during the sessions. They indeed seemed to be engaged in an activity that was commonplace for them. The mothers in homes where no one frequently reads to the child were somewhat less comfortable and less natural in their behavior.

These sessions substantiated the proposition that reading to children provides opportunities for children to explore and test their developing concepts of print. Anne realized that the refrain would be repeated and she could read it. Carol spontaneously applied the words she could read to this print. Sara, Brad, and Scott were each associating their language concepts about print with their visual
concepts about print by following the print as their mothers read. Todd was comprehending and responding to the language of the text, but his response was not encouraged.

These sessions tend to verify the proposition that the less competent readers were not read to frequently and, moreover, that their interests in prereading and reading activities may not be actively responded to. Furthermore, these sessions tend to verify the proposition that the competent readers were read to more frequently and received encouragement and positive responses to their interests in reading activities.

Clay (1972) determined that children must have implicit awareness of the visual concepts of print, the language concepts about print, and the integration of the two concepts before children become successful readers. She concluded that none of these concepts can be learned unless the child has many opportunities to interact with books and print. These situational testing sessions reiterate Clay's conclusion. Differences in the children's development of print concepts were readily observable between children frequently read to and those not frequently read to. These differences were also exemplified in the initial Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality (Appendix) administered in October. Table III shows the results of that assessment. The subjects who had been frequently read to understood the concepts of
letter, word, and directionality. The subjects infrequently read to lacked complete understanding of those concepts.

### TABLE III

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF LETTER, WORD, AND DIRECTIONALITY CONCEPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Anne</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Brad</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Todd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directionality of Page</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ = accurate response  0 = inaccurate response

As a further indication of the development of the subjects' concepts about print, a question on the parent interview asked if the subject had ever pretended to read. One family, where no members reportedly enjoy reading, stated that they had never noticed their child looking through books much. All the other families reported that their child had pretended to read. In a family where reading activities are a low priority, the child reportedly pretended to read when she was about four years old by "saying names for pictures" while holding the book upside down and turning the pages from the back to the front. The
activity reportedly occurred when she "just looked through books." The other four children were from families where someone enjoys reading to the child. These children reportedly pretended to read when they were about four years old by turning pages from the front to the back of the book and trying to mimic the language of the text. The activity reportedly occurred after the child had memorized a story which had been repeatedly read by the family members. Mimicking the language of the text is what Clay (1972) refers to as "talking like a book." Thus these children were attempting to use a more formalized language that approximates the language used in books. Since the language of written text often differs from informal, conversational speech, this activity may be viewed as an important preparation for learning to read. The children from homes where someone reads to them also knew much more about handling books, e.g., turning pages from front to back. Thus, the development of the visual and language concepts about print, and the integration of these concepts, seems to go hand in hand with children being read to frequently.

Another aspect of the importance of frequently reading to children emerged from this study: Regardless of the level of readiness or the degree of reading competence, children like to have someone read to them. This fact was substantiated by several data sources. Every subject,
except one, responded affirmatively to the question, "Do you like to have someone read to you?" The negative response came from a competent reader who said: "No. I need to read to myself." However, observations of the behaviors of the subjects indicated that they all enjoyed the activity when someone read to them. For example, every subject, regardless of activity level, was observed to be quiet and attentive when the librarian read a story during visits to the library. Furthermore, every subject was likewise quiet and attentive when the teacher read a story after lunch each day. The subject who was the least competent reader was seldom read to at home. Nonetheless, his mother spontaneously remarked: "He likes to have someone read to him." Finally, given the opportunity to hear their mother read a story to them, as in the situational testing, all the subjects were eager to participate. Thus, these subjects unanimously enjoyed having someone read to them. Furthermore, data from this study suggest that being read to may correlate with the development of visual and language concepts about print.

Other data from this study indicate that the frequency with which a child is read to may decrease as the child's reading skills increase. At the beginning of the study, the presence of an adult who frequently read to the child seemed to be a factor which differentiated between the
competent and less-than-competent readers. A direct correspondence was evidenced inasmuch as the competent readers were being read to at home every day; the less able readers were read to very infrequently at home. However, this direct correspondence was not evident by the end of the study. Specifically, the least competent readers were still read to infrequently. But only one of the four competent readers was still read to every day. Two other competent readers were now read to intermittently, i.e., when the subjects requested that the mother, father or sibling read a book to them. The fourth competent reader was now read to infrequently. This is the child who responded to the researcher that he didn't need to be read to by someone else. His mother commented that she felt it was best that he read to himself now. The subject stated: "I can do it [read to self] faster! But, my dad reads to me sometimes, the hard books." The researcher asked the subject: "How does that happen?" No response. "Do you ask him to read to you?" Then the subject replied, "No, he just likes to read 'um if they're hard."

Further conversations with the subjects and their parents suggest two related reasons for the decrease in reading to the subjects: (a) the parents' interest in the child's development of individual reading skill; and (b) the subjects' enthusiasm to prove their own reading abilities.
In regard to the first reason, the parents seemed to feel that the children needed to practice their emerging reading skills in order to continue their reading growth. There was also a suggestion that these parents felt that it was not as necessary to read to their children now that the children had gained some independence in reading. In regard to the second reason, the subjects were eager to read for themselves. The subjects voiced responses such as: "But I can read it for myself!" and "Watch me read that!" These responses, and others like them, suggested the subjects' desire to demonstrate, to themselves as well as to adults, that they can read now. It is as if they are asserting their right of passage into that previously unavailable and grown-up world of independent reading.

A Reading Model. The importance of a child having opportunities to observe and model others engaged in reading activities is not frequently discussed in the literature. However, some authorities have acknowledged modeling as a possible influence inasmuch as children typically attempt to duplicate the behaviors of the adults they observe (Durkin, 1966; Ziller, 1964).

Data from the two parent interviews and spontaneous conversations with the parents indicate that several parents and siblings in this study may present opportunities for the subjects to observe and model family members engaged in
reading activities. Three questions spaced throughout the parent interview provided specific opportunities for the parents to respond with information about their personal reading habits. Those questions follow.

1. Does anyone in your family check out books from the library? Who? How often?


3. What books do you remember reading as a child?

In addition, conversations with the parents throughout the study presented further opportunities for parents to discuss their personal reading habits and verify their earlier responses. These data were quantified with a rating of zero to three as follows.

1. A rating of zero was given if there was no spontaneous mention of personal reading and if negative responses were given to specific reading questions.

2. A rating of one was given if there was no spontaneous mention of personal reading and if answers to the reading questions indicated that reading was an infrequent and low-priority activity.

3. A rating of two was given if there was spontaneous mention of personal reading, if affirmative answers were given to reading questions, and if reading was indicated
as a frequent but not daily activity and/or involving a limited variety of print, e.g., newspapers and magazines.

4. A rating of three was given if there was spontaneous mention of personal reading, if affirmative answers were given to reading questions and if reading was indicated as a daily activity involving a variety of print.

5. The rating of NA indicated that the factor was not applicable.

Table IV presents the compilation of the data regarding the family reading models.

**TABLE IV**

**RATING OF FAMILY READING MODELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Anne's Family</th>
<th>Carol's Family</th>
<th>Sara's Family</th>
<th>Brad's Family</th>
<th>Scott's Family</th>
<th>Todd's Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Sibling A</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>NA</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spontaneous responses that were quantified ranged from a mother describing herself as a "compulsive reader" who "reads
114

everything in sight daily," to a father who commented he just doesn't "think of reading" when he contemplates something to do. The subjects who are competent readers are all members of families where at least some family members received a two or three rating. The subjects who are less-than-competent readers are all members of families where no family member received a rating of more than one. Thus, the presence of a reading model is a factor which seems to differentiate between the subjects who are competent readers and those who are less-than-competent readers. However, in this study, the families which provided a reading model were the same families who frequently read to their children. Both of these activities may reflect the positive attitudes of the family toward reading and the active priority of reading in these homes.

It should be noted that in families where parents received ratings of zero or one, no sibling received a rating above zero. However, in some families where parents received ratings of two or three, some siblings received ratings lower than their parents. If a reading model is truly a positive influence on the reading development of children, it would seem that the siblings' ratings should mirror those of the parents and other family members. However, the relationship does not seem to be that simple as there are other influential variables. If the rating
system is valid, two possible explanations are indicated by the data. First, parents indicated that the reading habits of older siblings may change. For example, one mother remarked: "After third grade he just stopped reading. He really balks at it now, although I think he reads OK."

Another parent commented: "He's into records and 'Dungeons and Dragons' [a game] and doesn't make time for reading books."

A second possible explanation for the difference in sibling ratings is that the reading habits of the parents may have changed. Two parents consider themselves avid readers now, but one commented that she "didn't used to like to read," and another remarked that she "hated to read until recently."

Another point of interest from the data on Table IV is that four mothers, but only one father, received ratings of three. It is not a simple matter of the mothers being home and therefore having more time to read, as two of those four mothers are also professionally employed. Investigation of this phenomenon, as well as the noted contrasts in sibling ratings, are beyond the purposes of this study yet provide interesting research questions for further consideration.

The data regarding reading models provide a brief insight into a more long-term aspect of modeling. The six mothers were asked about the reading models in their childhood homes. The two mothers mentioned earlier, who
had changed from inactive readers to avid readers, reportedly had each come from homes with no positive reading model. As one noted: "My parents weren't readers. I don't remember ever seeing them with a book or magazine." The other two mothers rated as active readers reported living in a reading environment. One of these mothers said: "I was raised reading. Both my parents are avid readers." The final two mothers were rated as inactive readers. One reported that no one in her background was a reader. The other mother reported: "I don't remember Mom reading as a child. She reads now." The first four mothers each had a child who was a competent readers. The final two mothers had children who were less-than-competent readers. This brief sketch suggests that reading models may have long-lasting effects on reading habits. But it simultaneously suggests that other, presently undefined influences may alter reading habits established earlier in life. These phenomena provide another area for further research.

In conclusion, it seems that opportunities to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities may be related to the subjects' reading competency inasmuch as reading models may reflect the positive attitudes of the family toward reading and the priority of reading in these homes. Hence, reading models may help develop the child's interest in reading. Two additional examples support this
conclusion. When asked what may have helped to interest his child in reading, one father answered: "The fact that he knows people at home read. He is exposed to it."

Furthermore, the mother of another subject commented: "She's always interested when I'm reading. You know, do I like it and what I'm reading about. So I'm always telling her that I like the book and that's why I'm reading. Basically, whatever she sees she has to do. It's been like that all along."

**Use of the Public Library.** This researcher was interested in whether the frequency and content of library visits by the family might be a factor in the development of these children's reading competence. The community in which these families live was generally assumed to utilize the public library facilities frequently. In fact, a large branch of the public library was in the immediate area and quite accessible by these families. Yet, the data from parent interviews, subject interviews, and spontaneous conversations with parents indicated that use of the public library was minimal. At the beginning of the study, one family reported going regularly to the library and one family reported going occasionally. Both of these families had mothers who read daily and children of average or high readiness. By the middle of the study, and throughout the remainder of the study, no family reported going regularly
to the public library. Hence, the frequency and content of the public library visits did not seem to be a factor in the subjects' development of reading competence because the families of these subjects did not go to the public library frequently or consistently.

The data suggest three explanations for the minimal use of the public library. First, these families were involved in numerous organized activities which ranged from sports, to music and dance classes, and religion-oriented activities. These activities all competed for the period of time after school and on weekends. Hence, parents reported "there isn't time" to go to the library. Secondly, these families had a ready supply of printed materials available at home. Thus, they reportedly did not feel as great a need to borrow library books. Finally, these families expressed satisfaction that their children were able to go to the school library. Fortunately the school library was well stocked and the librarian was an exceptionally talented teacher who skillfully incorporated library and research skills while modeling a love of literature.

**Provisions for Reading Activities.** Prereading activities and reading activities require certain provisions on the part of parents, such as physical areas and periods of time. Data regarding these provisions were collected from the multiple and systematic observations of the subjects.
and families in their homes, from spontaneous conversations with parents and subjects, and from unobtrusive measures.

In this study, every subject had his or her own room. Thus, the subjects were assured of some area where they might spread out a project or engage in activities conducive to the development of reading skills and interests. As previously mentioned, a variety of printed material was evidenced in the rooms of the competent readers. Hence, reading activities involving books more frequently occurred in the rooms of competent readers than in the rooms of less-than-competent readers.

Every subject reported being interested in some activity which might be considered conducive to reading development. The activities most frequently mentioned included drawing, writing, following the directions for constructing with Lego building blocks, working in workbooks, and reading. These activity choices did not differentiate between the competent readers and the less-than-competent readers. For example, the most competent reader and the least competent reader preferred identical activities, i.e., Legos and drawing. Rather, these activity choices differentiated between children described by their parents as either active or quiet. The "active" subjects, who were mostly but not exclusively boys, preferred drawing and Legos. The "quiet" subjects, who were mostly but not exclusively girls,
preferred writing, reading and working in workbooks. As previously reported, all subjects also preferred being read to.

These activities were most often completed on the floor or bed in the subject's room. One subject preferred working on a small table in the living room and thus remained "equally involved with the activities of the rest of the family." One family indicated their high priority for reading activities by providing a table in the child's room where she wrote stories and did art work almost daily. In fact, the father of that child remarked that the siblings often joined her in her room because they did not have a table in their rooms. This child was one subject who demonstrated an enormous interest in reading and paper and pencil tasks. The provision of a table was this family's way of positively responding to the child's reading interests.

Periods of time also had to be provided in order that these activities might occur. In the majority of situations, no formal time allotment was made. Children were free to initiate these activities whenever they so chose. Characteristically, the subjects who spontaneously initiated these activities on a regular basis were those subjects who (a) were members of families where reading was a priority; and (b) were described by their parents as "quiet."
Since the subjects and their siblings had numerous scheduled activities outside the home, these prereading and reading activities were not a daily occurrence in some homes. In fact, in some families these activities occurred rather infrequently, e.g., when the weather was bad or there was no one to play with.

Only three homes established somewhat formal allotment of time for reading activities. In these homes, the thirty minutes before bed was typically reserved for reading by the child, paper and pencil activities, or reading to the child. It may be that this provision of time for reading activities is but another reflection of the priority of reading in those families.

In general then, the home environment of all the subjects provided physical areas conducive to reading activities. However, not every home provided specific periods of time for reading activities. While these activities might spontaneously occur at any time, three homes where reading activities were a priority provided a somewhat regular period for reading activities. The subjects from these homes were all competent readers.

Summary. The home prereading activities and reading activities which appear to influence reading competence have been identified and described. The presence of an
adult who frequently reads to children seems to influence children's development of reading skills and, specifically, their development of visual and language concepts about print. However, parents tend to read to children less frequently as the children develop some independent reading skills. Inasmuch as all the subjects like to have someone read to them, it may be advantageous for someone to continue responding to that interest.

The data suggest that opportunities to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities may be related to the subjects' reading competency. Reading models seem to reflect positive attitudes toward reading and thus may help develop the child's interest in reading. The frequency and content of the public library visits did not seem to be a factor in the subjects' development of reading competence because the families of these subjects did not go to the public library frequently or consistently.

Some differences were evidenced in the provisions for reading activities by the parents of competent readers, such as the provision of printed material in the rooms of some subjects and a daily period set aside for reading activities for some subjects. These provisions, however, may be another reflection of the priority of reading in those homes.
Factors and Activities Influencing Affective Dimensions of Reading

A third specific purpose of this study was to identify and describe the factors and the prereading and reading activities in the home environment which appear to influence affective dimensions of reading. The affective dimensions of reading were defined as a subject's degree of enjoyment of reading, degree to which reading is used to enhance and enrich life, and the selection of reading as a free-choice activity. Data regarding the affective dimensions of the subjects' reading were collected through subject interviews, parent interviews, situational testing, and multiple and systematic observations of verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the subjects during reading activities in their home, school and school library. These data will be discussed in terms of (a) a measurement of the subjects' affective dimensions of reading; (b) the influence of the parents' perception of reading; (c) the child's development of a reason for learning to read; and (d) parental indications of factors which interested the child in learning to read.

Measurement of Affective Dimensions. Table V summarizes the data measuring the affective dimensions of reading. Not unexpectedly, the more competent readers vocalized or demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading. The less-than-competent readers vocalized or
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Anne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Interviews Indicate Enjoyement of Reading</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous Mention of Participation in Home Reading Act</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Behaviors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading as Free-Time Choice</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses Library Time to Read</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses Reading to Gain Information</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses Reading for Pleasure</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Story Read by Parent</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Story Read by Teacher</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Story Read by Librarian</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest in Story Read by Researcher</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Reading to Researcher</td>
<td>+</td>
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+ = positive response  0 = negative response
demonstrated more negative attitudes toward reading. In fact, the only positive response toward reading on the part of the least competent reader was in response to someone reading to him.

Further discussion of Table V is beneficial in understanding the subjects' responses. Several questions during the subject interviews provided data regarding the subjects' enjoyment of reading. Some of these questions follow.

1. What do you like to do best at school? Least?

2. Do you ever read or look at books at home by yourself?

3. Do you think it is important to learn to read?

4. Do you think you are going to be/are a good reader?

In addition, during the numerous conversations with the subjects, spontaneous discussions were hand recorded of indications of enjoyment of home reading activities or initiation of reading activities at home. All of the subjects, except the least competent reader, verbalized that they like to read. Most of the subjects also evidenced initiating reading activities at home such as asking a parent to read to them, asking a family member to listen to them read, working with their word card box from school, and writing creative books.
The researcher felt that the nonverbal behaviors of the subjects would corroborate or negate their verbal indications of enjoying reading. Numerous observations in the classroom revealed that all of the subjects, except the least competent reader, occasionally chose to read a book during their free time. Many books beside basal texts were in the classroom. Three of the subjects were observed to prefer looking through the science books. Two other subjects usually chose fiction, brought from home or the school library, which they kept in their desks. The least competent reader consistently used his free time to use the shelf games and puzzles provided in the room.

The subjects' use of free time in the school library was another nonverbal indication of reading interest. Four of the subjects consistently chose a book and sat down to read it. Field notes of one subject during the library observations illustrate the behaviors which were typical for these four subjects.

Observation: ...Finds a book in two or three minutes. Checks it out. Goes to a table with the book. Sits next to a friend, but reads book to self. Mouths words. Smiles at text. Stops to quietly read a line to friend. Back to reading silently....As leaves library, asks a second friend if she had ever read the book. Shows it to her. Opinion: Visibly comfortable with procedures and location of materials in library. Gaining pleasure from print.
Thus, these subjects demonstrated that they were able to locate books in both the classroom and library to read on their own. They already exhibited a preference in their tastes in books. While they enjoyed a variety of print, fiction was frequently chosen and nonfiction, especially science books, was also a frequent choice.

Discussions with the subjects and their parents revealed that many of the subjects were reading to gain information and that all except the least competent reader were reading for pleasure (Table V). The four most competent readers selected, read, or asked to have read to them, nonfiction books relating to many specific areas of interest. These areas of interest were frequently those topics read about or discussed in some phase of classroom instruction. Dinosaurs was one great favorite. But how-to-books about puppetry and drawing were also frequent choices. Three of these children were reported to be beginning to read the newspaper, especially the mini-pages of activities for children. One child evidenced a more comprehensive use of the newspaper when he initiated a discussion with his mother about an article "he'd seen in the paper" about cloning an ice-age mammal. This child's early use of the newspaper to gain information was possibly influenced by the model of his parents. Both parents reported reading the paper from beginning to end each day. Thus, adults modeling
reading behaviors and adults reading nonfiction to children may be a positive influence on children's intrinsic motivation to read for information.

The children who chose reading as a free-time activity were the same ones who reportedly read for pleasure. Reading for pleasure was evidenced by children smiling at the text, sharing their books with friends, and reading the same book more than once. Another indication of reading for pleasure was that most of the subjects, at one time or another, asked the librarian for a particular book which she or the classroom teacher had read to the class. Three of the subjects asked their parents to buy them a book which was a particular favorite in the classroom. Thus, the subjects' reading for pleasure was influenced by being read to frequently.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the subjects' unanimously demonstrated positive responses toward someone reading to them. As Table V shows, each subject responded positively when the parent, teacher, librarian, or researcher read a story.

Parental Perception of Reading. The parents' perception of reading may influence their child's attitude toward reading and enjoyment of reading. All the parents in this study, as previously reported, value reading as the most
important thing to be learned in first grade. Regardless of whether parents themselves are active readers, they uniformly endorse the importance of their children learning to read well. However, a synthesis of the data suggests that some parents may value reading more as a skill to be mastered than as an informative and enjoyable activity.

The parents' perception of reading is important inasmuch as it ultimately influences the quantity and quality of the reading activities in the home. Parents who value reading primarily as a skill know how to read, but do not. Hence, they are not a reading model for their child. These parents also do not read frequently to their child. Thus, they continuously demonstrate nonverbally to the child that reading is not as enjoyable as the other activities to which they devote their time. That this attitude would seemingly influence a child's development of an intrinsic interest in reading is demonstrated by comparing Table IV and Table V. The subjects whose verbal and nonverbal behaviors demonstrate more negative responses on the measurement of the affective dimensions of reading come from families where all family members indicate that personal reading is an infrequent and low-priority activity. Furthermore, data reported earlier in this chapter suggested that parents in homes where reading is a low-priority activity may fail to recognize and respond to indications of the child's interest in print. This lack
of encouragement may be detrimental to the child's continued interest in reading or learning to read.

Hence, parents who perceive reading primarily as a skill to be mastered rather than as an informative and enjoyable activity may be less of a positive influence on the development of their child's attitude toward reading and enjoyment of reading. Parents need to be aware of the nonverbal statements about reading which they may be making to their child. Some parents may be saying that reading is important and good for one but not particularly enjoyable.

A Reason for Learning to Read. The affective dimensions of reading, by definition, measure some of the same factors involved in the presence or absence of an intrinsic reason for learning to read, i.e., reading for pleasure and reading for information. Bettelheim (1976) reports that children being taught to read in first grade complained that they could see no reason to learn to read; more specifically, that "...in the early grades they never learned anything through reading that they didn't already know..." (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 8). Bettelheim contends that the child must be intrinsically motivated to learn to read or his unconscious will not support his conscious efforts.

Two intrinsic reasons for learning to read are to gain personal information and to gain personal pleasure from
reading. As Table V indicates, four children exhibited evidence of reading to gain personal information. One mother spontaneously discussed that one reason for her child learning to read was that the child "loves workbooks." The mother commented: "She has hundreds of workbooks she's saved since she was three. She's always coming to ask me, 'What does this say?' I think that's a motivation." Another child's parents discussed how he used reading to satisfy an interest in a specific subject. He had become fascinated in a typical first-grade topic of study—dinosaurs. The parents bought him some dinosaur books which he "devoured and memorized." These books were the impetus for the child writing his own dinosaur books which used the vocabulary and the concepts from the purchased books. These incidences suggest that these children had an intrinsic reason for learning to read. They were using reading to learn something they did not know before. It is also significant to note that their interests were responded to by their parents.

Table V also indicates that five of the subjects read for pleasure. One child greeted the researcher at the beginning of a home observation by enthusiastically declaring that she had just finished a funny story and she wanted to share it with the researcher. Her mother laughingly explained that everyone who came to the house got to listen to the child read or read to her. Reading was such a pleasurable
activity for this child that she assumed that everyone else would enjoy it too.

These subjects who are choosing to read for information or pleasure seemingly evidence an intrinsic motivation to read. Their attitude is very positive toward reading. When asked if they can read and if they like to read, they answer enthusiastically and positively.

Obviously, however, all children do not have intrinsic reasons for learning to read. The least competent reader in this study illustrates this point. Reading was given a low priority in his home. He got most of his attention and encouragement at home from sports-related skills and activities. Asked why it may be important to learn to read and he responded: "'Cause you're 'posed to." Given opportunities to read or to do something else, he invariably chose the latter alternative. His only positive responses to reading occurred when someone read to him (Table V). This subject did not choose to read for information or pleasure. He apparently lacked an intrinsic motivation to learn to read. His attitude was largely negative toward reading. When asked if he can read, he stammered and finally answered: "Yes, well, only a little." When asked if he liked to read, he answered: "No!"

The data from this study suggest that an intrinsic interest in learning to read may be encouraged by the human
interactions with print in the child's environment. Specifically, this environment might include reading models who seemingly suggest to the child that reading is enjoyable, someone who reads to the child to stimulate new areas of interest, and adults who actively respond to the child's interests in print.

**Factors Influencing Interest in Reading.** During the interview discussing the parental perceptions of children's learning (Appendix), the parents were handed a separate piece of paper with a list of items on it and asked: "In your opinion, which of these helped to interest your child in learning to read?" This list of items corresponded to the list included in question eight of the instrument. Both parents were present for this interview and their responses are enumerated on Table VI.

This question was highly productive in terms of the discussion it generated. The items served to elicit numerous recollections and much discussion between the parents. In fact, the responses to this question typically involved twenty to thirty-five minutes of the interview time.

All of the parents, except those of the least competent reader, largely credited aspects of the home environment as the factors which interested their child in learning to read, i.e., parents, being read to at home, interest in books, and books and reading materials available at home.
TABLE VI

PARENTAL INDICATIONS OF FACTORS WHICH INTERESTED THEIR CHILD IN LEARNING TO READ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Interest in Writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>Interest in Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Library Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Watched &quot;Sesame Street&quot; or &quot;Electric Comp.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers and Sisters</td>
<td>Pretended to Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Attention to Signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Commercials</td>
<td>Attention to Household Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Read to at Home</td>
<td>Books and Reading Materials Available at Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked About Words, Letters or Numbers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers represent total of parents positively responding to that item (N=12)

The parents of the least competent reader credited television and household products as the factors which interested their child most.

Television, curiosity about print, and attention to signs and household products were frequently mentioned as influential. The item considered least influential was "interest in writing." This item may reflect the fact that only two of these parents reported that their child was very interested in writing activities.
The parents generally believed that a variety of print had influenced their child's interest in reading. When discussing "attention to signs," one parent recalled: "We used to drive down franchise row and he'd recognize Burger King, Pizza, McDonalds and Texaco when he was three or four." The discussion of "attention to household products" revealed that most of these children could identify cereal boxes before they started kindergarten. Candy and ice cream labels were also mentioned as a form of print in which these children were interested.

The parents were encouraged to mention any items not on the list which they felt helped to interest their child in print. One family mentioned that the child's grandmother had been influential by reading to the child and buying books. In addition, two of the four families where older siblings were present mentioned that the model of the older siblings was influential. In one instance, the child started copying the school papers which the sibling had brought home.

Thus, these parents perceive that a variety of print had influenced their child's interest in learning to read and that the availability of print in the home was important. However, the primary influence may have been the human interaction in the home involving print, i.e., someone to
read to the child, model reading, and respond to the child's interest in print.

**Summary.** Some factors and activities in the home which appear to influence affective dimensions of reading have been identified and described. Not unexpectedly, the more competent readers vocalized or demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading. The less-than-competent readers vocalized or demonstrated more negative attitudes toward reading. It seems that adults modeling reading behaviors and adults reading nonfiction to children may be a positive influence on children's intrinsic motivation to read for information. Furthermore, the data suggest that a subject's interest in reading for pleasure was positively influenced by being read to frequently.

The parents' perception of reading was important inasmuch as it ultimately influenced the quantity and quality of the reading activities in the home. Parents who perceived reading primarily as a skill to be mastered rather than as an informative and enjoyable activity may model more negative attitudes for the child and thus be less of a positive influence on their child's affective dimensions of reading.

The data indicate that the subjects who were choosing to read for information or pleasure evidenced an intrinsic motivation to read. Their attitude was very positive toward reading.
Finally, the parents' perceptions of some of the factors influencing the child's interest in reading were discussed. These data suggest that the primary influence which parents perceive as affecting their child's interest in learning to read may be the human interactions in the home involving print.

Parental Language Style

A fourth specific purpose of this study was to describe the parents' language style when interacting with their child. "Style" is defined by this researcher as an individual's characteristic approach to a situation or interaction with another person. Parental language style would thus involve the parents' typical communication behaviors in recurring situations or interactions. Data regarding parental language style were collected through the situational testings initiated by the researcher. Multiple and systematic observations of spontaneous communicative behaviors between the family members of the subjects in this study provided corroborating data regarding these language styles. In keeping with the focus of this study, these observations were not intended to provide a detailed analysis of each language interaction between parents and subjects. Rather these observations were intended to provide a global indication of parental language style as a possible influence on the learning behaviors of the subjects.
Bernstein (1961) determined that language is used by people to elaborate and express interpersonal relations. Hess and Shipman (1965) then determined that parental language patterns reflect the control system of the family and subsequently influence the child's development of cognitive processes. Specifically, Hess and Shipman's study, initiated to distinguish language variables of four social classes, determined that upper-middle class parents utilize more statements oriented toward persons and that lower class parents utilize more statements oriented toward ascribed roles or status.

Data from this study indicate that the language styles of these upper-middle socioeconomic status parents represent both person-oriented control and status-oriented control. Indeed the language styles and control systems of the families may be more related to parental needs for power and authority rather than to membership in the upper-middle class.

The language style of the parents of four of the subjects may be characterized as person oriented. In these families, the statements of the parents reflect an awareness of individual differences, feelings, and preferences. The parents are the head of the family, but interactions suggest an appreciation and respect for the needs and feelings of the children as well. The parental language style
in these person-oriented families is exemplified in the following interaction between parents and a child during the situational testing when the family was given the opportunity to draw cartoons together.

Father: [To subject] "What do you want to do here?"
Child: "I'm going to make this penguin."
Father: "That looks hard."
Child: "Yah."

[Later]
Mother: "You don't have to have it exactly like in the book."
Child: "I want to."

In this interaction the child was asked to plan the initial procedures of the activity. The parent offered an opinion but did not try to counter the choice of the child since it infringed on no one else's rights or needs. The mother gave the child permission to make errors or be different, but accepted the child's need to try to duplicate the original drawing.

In contrast, the language style of the parents of the other two subjects may be characterized as status or role oriented. In these families, the parents' statements suggest that the child's characteristics and needs are less influential. The role of power and authority is more obvious. Behavior is regulated in terms of role expectations. The parental language style in these two status-oriented
families is exemplified in the following mother-child interaction, again occurring during the situational testing involving cartoon drawing.

Mother: [To researcher] "What is he supposed to do?"

[Later]

Child: To Mother "Now you draw one."

Mother: "You show yours to [researcher] first to see if it's all right."

In this example, the mother initially took over the activity and attempted to clarify the "rules" or procedures in order that the child might properly conform. After the child had completed a drawing, he made a suggestion to the mother. But instead of responding to his ideas, the mother re-established her power by declaring his role as one of compliance to whatever some authority figure deemed appropriate.

As another insight into the parental language style, the researcher timed one home visit to coincide with the child's bedtime. The researcher had previously asked to arrive just before bedtime to enable the researcher to work with the child for ten minutes and then talk with the parents alone for an hour. The researcher did indeed have a ten-minute task to complete with the child, and an interview to finalize with just the parents. However, one additional purpose was to observe how the family approached
the task of sending the child to bed. The mothers in each family assumed the major responsibility of getting the child headed toward bed. One mother, whose language style was person oriented, made the following declaration: "You go on to bed now and get your rest. It's our time to talk privately with [researcher]." In so doing, the mother provided a logical reason for the requested action. Rationale was stressed in her communication and logical consequences were suggested for the child to contemplate.

Another mother, whose language style was status oriented, issued the following statement in order to get her child to go to bed: "Go to bed! I won't tell you again. You know the rules." This mother demanded action and compliance. The role of the child was identified as passive as the mother reaffirmed her role of power. She was the person in control and the child was to submit to her rules.

Hess and Shipman (1965) suggest that parental language style influences the child's development of cognitive processes. They believe that person-oriented styles help to develop a cognitive approach that involves reflection and reflective comparison. On the other hand, the language of status-oriented styles demand that the child passively obey. One consequence of status-oriented styles may be for children to tend to act without taking sufficient time to think and plan their action. This then is impulsive
behavior in the sense that the act seems not to be related to the activity that preceded it or to its consequences (Hess & Shipman, 1965).

Data from this study seem to support Hess and Shipman's (1965) conclusions relating person-oriented language to the development of reflective processes and status-oriented language to the development of impulsive processes. The parental language styles in four families were characterized as person oriented. The subjects from these families displayed reflective behaviors in school tasks. They appeared able to think through situations and plan before they acted. They were able to verbalize alternative solutions to problems. Their work habits were more conducive to the school setting inasmuch as they were generally able to organize their time and work toward a goal while conforming to the social norms of the setting. During the teacher interview the teacher described the behaviors of one of these subjects.

She's a diligent worker. She plans her time so that she gets the required things done. And most of the time she'll have time to do other things...She's an asset in the classroom.

In contrast, the parental language styles in two families were characterized as status oriented. The subjects from these families displayed impulsive behaviors in school-related tasks. For example, during the administration of the performance subtests of the WISC-R, the researcher
noted that these two subjects approached each task by quickly scanning the material and working very quickly without deliberation. The WISC-R performance subtests are problem-solving situations. Searls (1975) notes that "excessive speed indicates impulsiveness, a lack of ability to postpone action until the solution is thought out" (p. 4).

In the classroom, these two subjects tended to immediately act upon ideas which crossed their mind rather than to postpone action until the task they were working on was completed. They displayed much less regard for social norms. Hence, their behaviors were less conducive to the school setting and they often created disturbances in the classroom. During the teacher interview the teacher described the behaviors of one of these subjects.

He is the kind you have to watch all the time. If he decided he wanted to play, well he'd just get up and do it...If you asked to check his work it was usually that he hadn't done it. Then he would sit back and huff and be mad and pout or whatever. The minute you weren't looking he might circle any answer just to look like it was done.

The relationship between reflectivity or impulsivity and reading competence is not clear for these subjects at this early point in their formal schooling. One impulsive child was a very competent reader; one impulsive child was the least able reader. However, impulsive behaviors seem less conducive to learning in a school setting.
In summary, data from this study indicate that the language styles of these upper-middle socioeconomic status parents represented both person-oriented control and status-oriented control. Information regarding parental language styles may provide one more link in the effort to understand the influence of the home environment on a child's beginning reading skills. The data suggest that the parents' language style may be either a positive or negative influence on the child's development of cognitive processes. Language styles which fostered rational thought and contemplation may be related to more reflective behaviors in children and more conducive to the demands of the school learning environment. Language styles which fostered compliance without rationale may be related to more impulsive behaviors in children and less conducive to functioning in the school setting.

Rate of Reading Acquisition

A fifth specific purpose of this study was to describe the rate of reading acquisition for these children from differing home environments. Data regarding the rate of reading acquisition were collected by comparing assessments of the subjects at the beginning of the study with final assessments of the subjects at the termination of the study. The initial assessment included results from a standardized readiness test, informal tests, teacher rating of reading readiness and information from the school's cumulative
records. The final assessment included results from standardized reading and intelligence tests, informal tests, teacher judgment, and multiple and systematic observation of the subjects. The data regarding the rate of reading acquisition will be discussed in terms of (a) initial assessment of subjects; (b) final assessment of subjects; and (c) discussion of the rate of reading acquisition.

Initial Assessment of Subjects. Data from the initial assessment of the subjects in this study is summarized on Table VII. Austin and Morrison (1963) found that somewhat more than sixty-five percent of the school systems in their study use chronological age as the criterion for entrance to first grade. The policy of the school system in this study was to admit children to first grade if they were six years old before September first. However, in an effort to allow for individual differences, the schools were authorized to admit children to first grade on a tuition basis if (a) the children would be six by November first; and (b) the classrooms were not overcrowded. The parents of one of the subjects in this study thus elected to enroll their daughter in first grade even though she would not be six years old until October. Therefore, the ages of the subjects in this study ranged one full year, from the youngest child who was six in October, to the oldest child who was seven in October. However, Hirst's (1970) three-year
**TABLE VII**

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF SUBJECTS
SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Total</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Rating</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectancy of Reading Success</td>
<td>Excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Letter Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-case</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-case</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Letter, Word, Directionality**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directionality of Word</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Page</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reported in stanines
**+= accurate response  0 = inaccurate response

The study concluded that chronological age had no practical significance as a predictor variable for academic success of first or second graders. Therefore, the wide range of ages was not deemed to be detrimental to the determination of the readiness of the subjects.
The Metropolitan Readiness Test was administered by the teacher to the entire class during the second week of school. The results of that test indicated that the readiness level of the class was negatively skewed, possibly due to the socioeconomic status of the school. The teacher's rating of the class' readiness level was also negatively skewed. In fact, no girl in the class could be included in the Reading Readiness-Low category, i.e., reading readiness test score below the fourth stanine, and teacher rating of "Not Ready" to read and "Poor" expectancy of reading success. Therefore, two of the female subjects were selected from the Reading Readiness-High category, i.e., reading readiness test score in the seventh stanine or above, and teacher rating of "Very Ready" to read and "Excellent" expectancy of reading success. One girl was randomly selected from the upper limits of that category and one girl was selected from the lower limits of that category. The third female subject was randomly selected from the Reading Readiness-Average category, i.e., reading readiness test score in the fourth, fifth or sixth stanine, and teacher rating of "Ready" or "Somewhat Ready" to read and "Good" or "Fair" expectancy of reading success. Each of the three male subjects was randomly selected from one of the readiness categories.
The Assessment of Letter Knowledge (Appendix) and the Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality Concepts (Appendix) were administered by the researcher during the second home observation in October. The Assessment of Letter Knowledge assessed the subjects' association of letter names with the correct upper-case and lower-case graphic symbols.

Research, as discussed in Chapter II, has consistently indicated that the single best predictor of first-grade reading success is a test of letter knowledge (Barrett, 1966; Clay, 1972; DeHirsch, Jansky & Langford, 1966; Muehl & DiNello, 1972; Nicholson, 1958; Richek, 1978; Samuels, 1971; and Silvarili, 1965). However, as Table VII shows, the initial assessment of letter knowledge failed to discriminate between the subjects of the different readiness levels inasmuch as all the subjects scored very high on the test. The explanation for this phenomenon emerged during the teacher interview at the end of the study. The teacher revealed that she tested each pupil's letter knowledge during the first two days of first grade. Pupils who had not mastered the names of the letters were then identified and arrangements made for drill in this skill to be conducted at home. In the teacher's assessment of letter knowledge, only the two highest girls and the two highest boys had mastered the letter names.
According to the teacher, the lowest girl had "a few" of the letters she still needed to learn and the lowest boy needed to learn "the majority" of the letters. The drill was completed in the homes and one month later when the researcher tested letter knowledge in October, all of the subjects were able to score very high.

Two further aspects of this situation involving the assessment of letter knowledge deserve mentioning. First, the situation testifies to the effectiveness of structural corroboration. The researcher had not observed the teacher's procedures during the first week of school inasmuch as the teacher and researcher had mutually agreed to wait to begin observations until the second week of school when the pupils might have had a chance to adjust to the initial organizational demands of school. However, the events of that week which were relevant to the data emerged from the other data sources, e.g., the teacher interview and spontaneous conversations with the parents when one parent mentioned that she had worked with the child to "help him learn his letters." Thus, structural corroboration proved to be a valued and valid strategy.

The second aspect of this assessment of letter knowledge involves the boy who scored the lowest on all the other assessments of readiness. The fact that this test was the only indication upon which this boy scored high (Table VII)
testifies to the fact that he had learned the letter names as a recent rote skill. It further suggests that letter knowledge may lose its usefulness as a predictor of first-grade reading success if it is acquired as a rote skill rather than as the result of exposure to print in natural situations. Furthermore, this situation reaffirms the importance of utilizing multiple criteria to assess reading readiness since a single criterion may be contaminated due to situations beyond the control of the study.

The Assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality concepts, as reported on Table VII, indicated that the two highest girls and the two highest boys understood the concepts of letter, word and directionality. The lowest girl and the lowest boy lacked complete understanding of those concepts.

The cumulative records of the subjects were also reviewed. These records proved to be a sparse source of data inasmuch as the obvious readiness differences between the subjects were not clear from the cumulative records. The girl with the lowest readiness rating had transferred from another state. Her academic records from kindergarten were not available. The kindergarten records of the other five subjects included categories of affective behavior, self concept, social-emotional, work habits, communication, oral language and comprehension, auditory skills, visual
skills and math. However, most of these categories for most of the subjects were checked so as to indicate satisfactory progress. Specifically, all of the categories for the three high-readiness subjects were checked indicating satisfactory progress. The average-readiness boy and the low-readiness boy received indications of satisfactory progress in all categories except social-emotional and work habits. Thus, the cumulative records which were available for five of the subjects suggested that all academic skill areas for all the subjects were satisfactory, but that the two lower boys lacked satisfactory progress in social-emotional and work-habit behaviors.

The review of the cumulative records revealed a health record for every subject. Each subject's health record contained a current and complete immunization record and a physician's statement indicating no eye or ear disorders and no significant medical problems.

**Final Assessment of Subjects.** Data from the final assessment of the subjects in this study are summarized on Table VIII. This final assessment was conducted toward the end of the study in April, 1980.

It was necessary to determine some estimation of the intellectual level of the subjects. Otherwise, much variation in reading rate may be attributable to differences in the intellectual ability of the subjects. Hence, the Wechsler
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
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<td>Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Expectancy*</td>
<td>1.97</td>
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<td>Teacher Judgment*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durrell*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentences</td>
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<td>Classroom Inventory</td>
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<td>Indep. Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instr. Level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kucera-Francis</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Letter, Word, Directionality***</td>
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TABLE VIII—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Anne</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Brad</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Todd</th>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reported as grade equivalent
**A grade equivalent of K indicates below first grade level
***+ = accurate response  0 = inaccurate response

Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) was individually administered to each subject by the researcher. As anticipated, most of the subjects were of above-average intelligence. As Table VIII shows, the Full Scale score of the WISC-R indicates that five of the subjects were within the Superior range of 120-129, and that one subject was within the Average range of 90-109 (Wechsler, 1974). However, research indicates that the Verbal Scale score is more relevant for reading inasmuch as it involves auditory verbal input and vocal verbal output (Searls, 1975). In fact, able readers tend to score higher on the Verbal Scale than on the Performance Scale (Clark, 1976; Searls, 1975). But that tendency was not consistently demonstrated by these subjects. Of the four most able readers, only two subjects scored higher on the Verbal Scale and only one
of these subjects scored significantly higher on the Verbal Scale than on the Performance Scale. As Table VIII shows, just the Verbal Scale score of the WISC-R indicates that two subjects score within the intelligence classification of Average (90-109), one subject scores High Average (110-119), two subjects score Superior (120-129), and one subject scores Very Superior (130 and above) (Wechsler, 1974).

Wechsler (1974) suggests that a difference of fifteen or more points between the Verbal and Performance scores merits further investigation. Searls (1975) clarifies that a fifteen or more point difference may indicate "deficiencies in processing information, in modes of expression, or in working under conditions of pressure, all of which may also be involved in reading disability" (p. 8). Two of these subjects did score a fifteen or more point difference between their Verbal and Performance scores. Yet both of these subjects are competent readers. Observations of these subjects suggest possible explanations for the score differences. One subject, Anne, scored twenty-one points higher on her Performance Scale. The Performance Scale involves motor, nonverbal output and visual, nonverbal input (Searls, 1975). This subject is an artist who has received city-wide awards. Hence, her visual and motor skills probably are refined. Furthermore, she is shy and reserved. Hence, her verbal responses were characteristically brief, lacked
elaboration, and possibly lowered her overall verbal score. The other subject, Brad, scored fifteen points higher on his Verbal Scale. This subject is verbally articulate and well informed. His Performance Scale was depressed because of a low score in one subtest, Coding. The Coding subtest measures visual-motor dexterity and the association of meaning with a symbol (Searls, 1975). This subject has consistently been observed to be very slow in writing activities and has verbally expressed disinterest in writing. Thus, it seems that the significant point differences between the Verbal and Performance Scales of these two subjects are a reflection of specific aspects of their behavior and ability, and not suggestive of a general reading disability.

At a minimum, the results of the individual WISC-R tests indicate that all the subjects are intelligent enough to learn to read. The WISC-R Verbal Scale was then used to compute an estimate of reading potential for each subject. The Bond and Tinker reading expectancy formula, with its emphasis on years in school and intelligence, was utilized, i.e., Reading Expectancy Grade = \( \frac{Y.I.S. \times IQ + 1}{100} \), where Y.I.S. equals Years In School. The reading expectancy for each subject, after eight months in first grade is shown on Table VIII.

The teacher's judgment of each subject's reading level was determined during the interview with the teacher. As
Table VIII shows, the levels ranged from preprimer to the end of second grade. Other indications of reading level were gained from the results from the Durrell Listening-Reading Series and the Classroom Inventory Record, also recorded on Table VIII. The Durrell was group administered and provided information about listening comprehension and silent reading competency in a standardized testing situation. The Inventory was individually administered and provided information about oral reading competency and oral reading behaviors.

In general, the ranking of the subjects' reading ability by the teacher and by the Durrell is similar, with the Durrell results being somewhat higher. The Inventory results indicate a different ranking of the subjects' ability with the results being somewhat lower than the teacher's judgment. The results are fairly consistent if the Inventory is used to determine independent reading level, the teacher's judgment used as an indication of instructional reading level, and the Durrell used as an indication of frustrational reading level since standardized tests typically measure the frustration level of students.

Differences in the subjects' rankings among the three measures may largely be explained by noting some of the test behaviors of the subjects. Standardized reading tests present problems in administration to this age level. Almy (1949) stresses that test administration is extremely
difficult inasmuch as the children's attention may not be consistent, some coaching or comparison of work may occur, some child may speak out, some children may misunderstand directions, or that creative children may be rather highly penalized in this situation in which "children must do exactly as they are told and not exercise their creative powers in any way" (Almy, 1949, pp. 35-36). These factors must be considered in any testing situation with first grade children. However, the diagnostic value of factors such as these must also be evaluated. This examiner carefully observed during the administration of the tests and noted the test behaviors of each subject. The following are excerpts from field notes during the administration of the Durrell.

Anne: Very quiet; went about task cautiously and slowly...face showed concern when she didn't know the correct answer...sustained concentration ...worked consistently.

Carol: Very conservative approach; little risk-taking; if not sure of answer, she left blanks...sustained concentration on the task.

Sara: During listening section she left blanks; seemed to accept matter of factly that she didn't know some. Reading section--face showed concern because she didn't know many words ...Looked around at others some to see how they were doing...asked researcher for help.

Brad: Seemed to enjoy the test, as if the challenge was stimulating...Very quiet; concentration on task.
Scott: Much difficulty following direction. Asked to do tasks his own way; argued about the procedures...Worked quickly; no apparent deliberation; he either knew it or he didn't...complained out loud that he didn't like to do this...Asked to take a break. "I'm tired. Can I quit?"

Todd: During listening section when words were being read to him, he stared at paper, looked around, did not respond to two or three words. Then he would quickly mark several in a row as if to catch up...Complained that he didn't want to do this...Reading section was completed very fast; characterized by random markings.

Hence, the impulsive behavior of Scott and Todd, as discussed earlier in this chapter, was exemplified by their test behaviors. Behaviors such as these may negatively influence the scores and thus not be a completely accurate indication of reading ability. However, if these behaviors are typical of the approach to classroom tasks, then these tests may be an accurate measure of reading performance in a classroom setting.

Thus, there is a similarity between the teacher's judgment of reading level and the Durrell results for these subjects. Yet, an examination of the Inventory scores for Scott suggests that he actually reads exceptionally well if presented with a task he wants to do. As Scott verbalized at another time: "I'll like it when I'm done with Signposts [basal test] and I won't have to do any more reading. I can just take the book and read then. I won't have to go to reading group anymore. That's just a waste of time."
Carol's very conservative approach probably depressed her Durrell scores. Every question she answered was correct. Apparently if she was not sure, she left it blank. This conservative approach was also evidenced during the WISC-R. When the examiner reminded her on one task that she was being timed, she calmly replied: "Yes, but you've got to do it right." The researcher suggests that the Inventory is a more likely indication of Carol's reading level.

Anne's behavior during the test is typical of her conscientious approach to tasks. Her mother describes her as "competing with herself all the time." Her obvious concern during the Durrell may have depressed those scores somewhat as they are slightly low for an indication of her frustration level, when compared to the teacher's rating and the Inventory.

Brad's test behaviors are characteristic of his confidence in reading activities. His Durrell scores are appropriate as an indication of frustration level when compared to the teacher's rating and the Inventory results.

Sara's Durrell scores also seem appropriate as an indication of her frustration level. Her behavior during the test demonstrated that she knew she could not perform the tasks very well. Interestingly, the Inventory and the Durrell suggest that the teacher's judgment of Sara's reading level may be somewhat high. Extensive classroom
observation indicates that Sara's positive work habits and conscientiousness may make her reading performance seem higher, much as Scott's more negative work habits and impulsivity may make his overall classroom reading performance seem lower.

The researcher wanted an assessment of the subjects' sight vocabulary which goes beyond their mastery of the vocabulary in their basal texts. The Kucera-Francis Word List was administered because it contains the 220 English words which appear most frequently in print. The researcher felt that this assessment might further differentiate the subjects who read most frequently inasmuch as their more frequent exposure to print might result in a higher percentage of known words. As Table VIII shows, the Kucera-Francis did differentiate between the competent and less-than-competent readers. However, it failed to differentiate significantly between the four most competent readers because of the ceiling effect. It seems that these four subjects' exposure to print has been extensive and resulted in a very high mastery level for these most frequent words.

Finally, Table VIII shows the results from the second administration of the assessment of Letter, Word, and Directionality Concepts (Appendix). Five of the subjects demonstrated that they understood the print concepts. However, the least competent reader demonstrated that he
understood letter and directionality concepts, but not the concept of word. He was unable to distinguish a word from the rest of a line of print.

Discussion of the Rate of Reading Acquisition. A synthesis of the data from this study indicate that the home environment is a definite and ongoing influence on the rate of reading acquisition. Specifically, the subjects who enter first grade the most ready to begin to learn to read are those children who live in homes where someone consistently responds to and encourages the child's reading interests and where reading activities are a priority. That the home influence is ongoing is indicated by the fact that, after eight months of first grade, subjects from homes where reading is a priority demonstrate more progress in reading than children of similar IQs who live in homes where reading is a low priority.

The influence of the home environment on the rate of reading acquisition may best be illustrated by comparing two of the female subjects who are very similar in intelligence but whose home reading environments differ markedly. Table IX presents the data for this comparison.

As Table IX shows, these two subjects are very similar in chronological age, intelligence, and reading expectancy.
TABLE IX

COMPARATIVE DATA INFLUENCING RATE OF READING ACQUISITION FOR TWO FEMALE SUBJECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Sara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISC-R, Verbal Scale</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Readiness Category</td>
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<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Expectancy*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading Level*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Primer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Reading Level*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 - 3.5</td>
<td>1.0 - 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Competency</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competent Reader</td>
<td>Below Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses Reading to Gain Information**</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses Reading for Pleasure**</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Home Environment:

A. Response to Child's Reading Interest
   Consistent | Infrequent

B. Freq. of Reading Activities
   Daily | Infrequent

C. Reads to Child
   Daily | Infrequent

D. Reading Model(s)
   2 | 0

*Reported as grade equivalent
**+ = positive response  0 = negative response

They have been in the same first-grade classroom and received reading instruction from the same teacher for eight months. Their work habits and classroom behaviors are
both very similar and very positive, as will be shown later in this chapter when learning behaviors are discussed. The teacher's response to each of them is also very positive. During the teacher's interview, she ranked these two students as demonstrating the most optimum classroom learning behaviors, i.e., attentive, conscientious, interested, and pleasant, of any members of the class.

Hence, these two subjects have much in common. Yet, their rate of reading acquisition is quite different. Carol entered first grade with a high level of readiness and is currently a competent reader who independently reads for pleasure and to gain personal information. Sara entered first grade with an average level of readiness and is currently reading below competency. She independently reads for pleasure but not to gain personal information. Extensive observations, discussions with Sara, and test results all suggest that she does not read for information because she may not read well enough to independently learn from the printed material. Thus despite many common variables, these two subjects entered first grade with different levels of reading readiness. Furthermore, the differences between their reading abilities seem to be increasing as Carol's rate of reading acquisition is faster paced.

A synthesis of the data from this study indicates that differences in the home environments of these two subjects
may be related to differences in their rate of reading acquisition. In Carol's home environment, someone consistently responds to her reading interests, reading activities are a high priority, someone reads to her daily, and both of her parents are reading models. In Sara's home environment, responses to her reading interests are infrequent, reading activities occur infrequently, she is read to infrequently, and neither her parents nor her older sibling model reading. This data should not be interpreted to imply that Sara's home environment is less caring or loving, as this is certainly not indicated. Both of these subjects enjoy warm, nurturing interactions with other members in their family. However, in Sara's family, reading simply has less priority. Her reading interests receive less encouragement and, possibly, are often unnoticed.

Thus, the comparison of these two subjects suggests that the home environment is a definite and ongoing influence on a child's reading acquisition. Homes where someone consistently responds to and encourages a child's reading interests and where reading activities are a priority may be one variable which influences the ability of children to learn to read at a pace more commensurate to their ability.

Summary. To describe the rate of reading acquisition for these subjects, the results of their initial assessments of reading readiness and their final assessments of reading
competence have been presented and discussed. A synthesis of the data suggest that home environments which respond to and encourage reading interests and where reading is a priority may be one variable which influence children learning to read at a pace more commensurate to their potential.

**Observable Behaviors as Children Learn to Read**

A final specific purpose of this study was to describe observable behaviors as these children learn to read. In essence, data regarding these learning behaviors were collected through the Phase III observations at home, school, and library. Specific examples from much of that data have been utilized throughout this chapter to illustrate the information being discussed. Therefore, this section will concentrate on the observable behaviors in the school environment as these children learn to read. These data will be presented in the form of (a) a description of the school classroom environment; and (b) a description of the subjects' observable behaviors during periods of formal reading instruction.

**The School Classroom Environment.** While the home environment provides the majority of the focus of this study, some description of the classroom environment is helpful in gaining a more complete view of these subjects
as they learn to read. Classroom observation revealed that basal texts formed the foundation of the formal reading instruction. The teacher was observed to rely on the basal manuals for content and sequence of instruction. Daily, she was seen to have the manual opened in her lap. She typically introduced the new vocabulary words according to the procedure suggested in the manual and she usually asked the comprehension questions included in the manual for each story.

In general, phonics skills received much emphasis in the reading instruction for this class. The teacher believed that phonics skills enabled children to gain greater independence in reading. The parents also believed that phonics skills were important as five of the six families spontaneously mentioned that they felt children should "know phonics." The teacher stressed mastery of the sounds of individual letters and letter combinations. She also taught many phonics generalizations as well as rules for syllabication. The specific number and kind of phonics skills which the teacher taught varied with the level of the reading groups. The highest reading group received the greatest volume and variety of phonics instruction. The lowest reading group spent approximately the same amount of time receiving phonics instruction, but they were taught fewer phonics skills inasmuch as they required more instruction in each skill
before reaching mastery. Generally, phonics instruction accounted for one-third of the instructional time of each reading group. Furthermore, practice and application of phonics skills formed a major part of the independent seatwork assignments for all the reading groups.

A second one-third of the instructional time of each reading group was used for introduction and instruction in sight vocabulary. The teacher consistently attempted to introduce the sight vocabulary by orally using each word in a sentence. Then each word was written on the chalkboard. Each child had an individual word box where an accumulation of the introduced sight vocabulary was alphabetically filed. The children kept these boxes at their desks and were encouraged to practice the words every day. Sometimes they took the word boxes home for more drill and practice. The teacher often laughingly commented that the children were to know those words "backwards, forwards and upside down."

The final one-third of instructional reading time for each group was used for oral and silent reading of the material in the basal texts. These was a fairly balanced use of oral and silent reading activities. The group initially read the story silently as a group. Then each child was normally asked to read a page or part of a page orally.
Children were placed in reading groups at the beginning of the year according to their level of reading readiness or reading ability. During the teacher interview, the teacher reported that it is not unusual in this school for a few children to enter first grade with some reading ability. She stated that she asked the children the first day of school, "Are there any of you who can read? OK, in just a little bit I'm going to ask you to read for me." She then individually assessed the sight vocabulary and reading level of the children who indicated that they could read by using an informal reading inventory provided by the district. By the end of the first week, she reported that she had individually assessed each child's knowledge of letter names, knowledge of letter sounds, and determined if any sight vocabulary had been mastered. This information, coupled with the results of their standardized readiness test and her further observations of their independent-work skills, determined each child's placement in one of four reading groups, i.e., high, high-average, average, and low.

The criterion for membership in the highest reading group was that the children entered first grade already reading. This group thus began reading instruction at the primer level. The high-average and average reading groups were composed of children who knew the letter names,
some-to-most of the letter sounds, and perhaps a few sight words. These two groups began reading instruction at the pre-primer level, with the higher group receiving a somewhat faster pace. The rest of the children were placed in the low group and began reading instruction at the readiness level. Little mobility was observed between the groups throughout the year. Only two children moved up to a higher group. Two other children moved to lower groups. The only other change in the composition of the reading groups was caused by students moving into or away from the school district.

Clay (1972) suggested that teachers probably spend more time instructing the highest reading group(s) because they are covering more material and it takes more time to read the longer texts. She noted a "natural tendency" to devote more time to those who are responding (p. 103). This study identified a much different situation. This teacher spent more time with the low reading group. They seemed to require more time and slower pacing for every task. For example, checking workbooks took longer because they had more difficulty following directions. It also required more teacher time to instruct them in procedures for their assignments. The length of their text was shorter but their oral and silent reading required more time because their reading rate was much slower and they had more difficulties with words.
The highest group received quality instruction and were the obvious favorites of the teacher as she chatted and joked more freely with them and openly praised their abilities. However, they received the least instruction time from the teacher. Her role with the highest group was frequently that of a resource person who stimulated them to do more work on their own.

One final important aspect of this classroom environment was that the teacher read to the children for thirty minutes after lunch every day. The teacher had taken some graduate hours in children's literature and reading. She vocalized that she felt it was important to read to children and that she enjoyed reading orally. She stated that she loved to "ham it up" when she reads to the class.

The importance of her reading to the class was verified in several ways. First, the children enjoyed the stories and listened attentively. Secondly, some children became very interested in the books she read and bought a copy to read for themselves. Thus, the teacher's reading to the children was beneficial in modeling the enjoyment of reading and in motivating some children to want to read more on their own. One subject who described reading groups as "a waste of time" became excited about reading in late October when he fell in love with a large book of humorous poems which the teacher had read repeatedly to the class.
His parents responded to his interest and bought him a copy of the book. He proceeded to read it daily for months. It is possible that some other experience might have eventually excited him about reading. But the fact remains that the teacher's reading to the class was the catalyst that did it. Data from the subject interviews and observations of affective dimensions of reading suggest that more reading may be taught through the teacher's reading to the children than through the basal texts.

Observable Behaviors During Reading Instruction. Ten of the fifteen classroom observations were timed to occur during the period each day devoted to reading instruction. The majority of the activities during this period involved the children in reading groups or in completing assignments at their desks. In keeping with the focus of this study, these observations during the period of formal reading instruction were not intended to identify "the patterning of complex behavior" (Clay, 1972) involved in the reading process for each child. Rather these observations were intended to corroborate the home observations regarding such individual factors as interest in reading, reading competency, work habits and behavioral characteristics.

While the teacher instructed reading groups, the rest of the class had assignments which were to be completed
independently at their desks. These assignments included pages in several workbooks, silent reading, and activities to copy from the chalkboard.

Time-sample observations of the subjects during their independent work period provided data regarding the relation between behavioral characteristics, reading competency and work habits. The subjects independent work behaviors were noted during five 20-minute observations. The work behaviors were then evaluated and quantified with each subject receiving one point for every minute on task and working independently. A subject received a zero for every minute not devoted to task or when dependent on others, e.g., asking questions about how to do something. Individual totals, for the five observations, were averaged. Table X reports the percentage of time during which each subject's behavior was appropriate to the teacher-directed task, i.e., independent completion of assignments.

At the conclusion of the time devoted to independent work assignments, each subject's work was evaluated to determine if the assignment was completed on time and to determine the correctness of the work. The percentage of time that the assignments were completed on time is reported on Table X. Individual percentages of correctness of assignments, for the five observations, were averaged and are also reported on Table X.
TABLE X
INDEPENDENT WORK BEHAVIORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Worked Independently</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Assignment on Time</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctness of Assignment</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Durkin (1979), in her observational study regarding comprehension instruction, reported the following.

In every classroom, certain children did the busy work promptly—in fact, in very business-like ways. Meanwhile, others did whatever they could to avoid it. Whether a lack of interest or a lack of ability accounted for their resistance could not be discerned. (p. 524)

Data from this study suggest more conclusive reasons for the work behaviors of these subjects. Indeed, these subjects' work behaviors were influenced by both interest and ability, or, more specifically, by behavioral characteristics, reading competency, and interest in the task.

The least competent reader, Todd, was unable to read much of the assignment. This inability partially accounted for the low percentage of work he was able to get correct (48%). Indeed, there seemed to be a reciprocal relationship between the difficulty of the work and Todd's distractibility.
and low interest in reading activities. It was not uncommon to see him leave his desk and go play a game when his assignments were not completed. Hence, Todd worked independently less than half of the time, and he seldom completed his assignments on time.

Scott also worked independently less than half of the time. While he could rather effortlessly do the work, he was not interested in the assignment. He openly voiced his dislike for the work, and behaved in a manner to attract the attention of the other children, e.g., reciting funny poems, laughing very loudly at a book he looked through, and talking to peers. However, he was a very competent reader and was often able to hurry at the last minute to complete his work on time and achieve a high percentage of correctness.

Brad was also a competent reader. His poor management of work time reflected his disinterest and his difficulty with written work. Writing was a laborious activity for him and he commented that he did not like to have to write every day. Therefore, he avoided it as long as possible by watching other children or looking through books. However, he never distracted or annoyed others; he just used the maximum amount of time to complete his assignments.

Sara, a less-than-competent reader, was very conscientious and always completed her work. Her correctness was
high because she persisted in sounding out words until she could get through all the material. She always began work immediately and used her work time diligently. Her one distraction was that she usually stopped to see if she could help someone else as she liked people and sought interactions with the other children. In general, she liked the assignments. Her penmanship was exceptionally neat and she received positive encouragement for that behavior.

Carol was very capable and had a high percentage of correctness. However, she did not like the independent work, and she typically chose to fumble around in her desk and talk quietly to her peers rather than work straight through. However, she always finished early by rushing through the work with little concern for excessive neatness. Then she usually chose a book to read with her free time. As the teacher mentioned in her interview: "Carol always has a book to read. She has about six in her desk right now she's working on."

Anne was also very capable, conscientious, and had a very high percentage of correctness. She reportedly always persisted with a task and completed it, whether at home or at school. Like Sara, she began her work immediately and used her time diligently. She smiled and listened when peers talked to her, but she initiated few discussions.
She always finished quickly and had neatly organized work. When she finished, she typically chose other skill-building activities to do. Anne just seemed to like paper and pencil activities.

It should be noted that interest in these assignments was not necessarily related to interest in reading. Five subjects consistently verbalized and demonstrated that they were interested in reading and that they enjoyed reading. Yet, only two of those subjects evidenced interest in doing the independent work assignments.

Thus, observations of the subjects during their independent work assignments, coupled with a synthesis of the data regarding these subjects' reading competency and behavioral characteristics, indicate that the subjects' work behaviors were complexly related to their interest in the task, their behavioral characteristics, and their reading competency. One subject was unable to read the material and his behavioral characteristics had a further negative effect on his performance. Another subject had difficulty with the material, but her more positive behavioral characteristics enabled her to complete the work successfully. Other subjects could easily read the material, but the quality of their effort was lessened because they appeared uninterested or unchallenged by the assignments. Only one competent reader was interested enough in the
task to diligently apply her time and ability. It is important to note that this situation is malleable. One value of understanding the complex relations between interests, behavioral characteristics and reading competency is that adjustments may be made to enable the independent work period to be a more profitable endeavor for all the children.

The reading group activities are defined as that part of the reading program when subjects are in a reading circle with the teacher. Event-sample observations of each subject in a reading group resulted in the identification of several observable behaviors which were largely conducive to the tasks of the reading group. Figure 4 lists those behaviors.

| Participates in group oral responses |
| Reads orally when asked to          |
| Reads silently when asked to        |
| Attends to oral reading by others   |
| Volunteers to answer questions      |
| Answers questions correctly         |
| Asks questions                      |
| Volunteers additional information or shares past experiences |
| Follows directions when checking workbook |
| Attends to work on chalkboard      |
| Attends to teacher's discussions   |
| Facial expression and body posture indicate: |
| pleasure                           |
| success                            |
| interest                           |

Figure 4--Positive reading group behaviors
Event-sample observations of each subject in a reading group also identified some observable behaviors which were much less conducive to the tasks of the reading group. Figure 5 lists those behaviors.

Diverts attention from reading task
Physically active, e.g., wiggles, fumbling with some item, and playing
Interacts with peers without teacher approval
Facial expression and body posture indicate:
   displeasure
   frustration
   disinterest

Figure 5—Negative reading group behaviors

All of the subjects typically participated in group oral responses, read orally when asked to, and attended to the teacher's discussions. However, there were differences between subjects in the frequency of the other behaviors listed in Figure 4 and Figure 5. These differences seemed to be related to either level of reading competency, responses from the teacher, or behavioral characteristics of the individual subjects. For example, "answers questions correctly" was related to reading competency. Not surprisingly, the most competent readers more frequently answered questions correctly. On the other hand, "volunteers to answer questions" was largely but not exclusively related
to responses from the teacher. All subjects volunteered, at least some of the time, to answer questions. The subjects who were called upon and received positive responses from the teacher continued to volunteer more frequently. Of course, the teacher's responses were also related to the behavioral characteristics and reading competency of the subject, i.e., attentive and competent subjects received more positive responses when called upon to answer questions.

The interrelatedness of responses from the teacher and the behavioral characteristics of the subjects were further exemplified by the differences between subjects in the frequency with which they displayed either behaviors indicating pleasure, success, and interest (Figure 4) or more negative behaviors (Figure 5). Specifically, the teacher was task oriented. Children whose behavior was less than conducive to task completion received more negative verbal and nonverbal responses from the teacher which in turn seemed to negatively affect the children's expressions of pleasure, success and interest in the reading group activities. This phenomenon was further exemplified by the negative reading group behaviors in Figure 5. Those subjects whose behaviors were less conducive to task completion were those subjects who were more frequently distracted from the task and were more physically active. Possibly because they received more negative feedback from
the teacher, these subjects more frequently sought approval from their peers by whispering or saying something funny. In general, they displayed more displeasure, frustration, and disinterest in the reading group activities.

Differences between subjects in the frequency of the other behaviors on Figure 4 were largely related to behavioral characteristics. For example, only the most outgoing subjects frequently asked questions or volunteered to share information or experiences. Moreover, the most interested and attentive subjects frequently read silently when asked to, attended to oral reading by the others, followed directions when checking workbooks, and attended to work on the chalkboard. Surprisingly, the "most interested and attentive" subjects were not necessarily those most competent in reading. For example, a boy, reading at least a year ahead of grade placement, was not frequently interested in the reading group activities, except oral reading. He typically displayed more of the behaviors on Figure 5 which were less conducive to the tasks of the reading group. As a contrasting example, a girl, who was a less-than-competent reader, was consistently interested in all the reading group activities and was very attentive to tasks. Thus, the behavioral characteristics of the subjects were not necessarily related to reading competency.
Durkin (1974) noted similar behavioral characteristics which she labeled as "behavioral tendencies" (p. 48). However, she reported that these "amazingly persistent" tendencies had a noticeable effect upon achievement in reading (p. 48). Observations of these subjects suggest that behavioral characteristics, depending on their nature, do have either a positive or negative effect on task orientation in the classroom environment. But, these characteristics may or may not relate to reading achievement. Specifically, for these subjects, behavioral characteristics conducive to reading group tasks are not necessarily synonymous with individual reading competency. A synthesis of the data suggests that aspects of the home environment may be influential in encouraging the development of reading competency, regardless of the behavioral characteristics of the subject. The boy who reads well but displays more negative behavioral characteristics may be influenced by parents who are active reading models and respond to his reading interests within a home environment where reading activities are a priority. Conversely, the girl who was a less-than-competent reader but displayed more positive behavioral characteristics may be influenced by family members who read infrequently and infrequently respond to her reading interests within a home environment where reading activities are a low priority.
A synthesis of the data further suggests that aspects of the home environment also may be influential in encouraging the development of the behavioral characteristics exhibited by these subjects. This influence was suggested by the discussion in this chapter which seemed to indicate that parental language style may affect the reflective and impulsive tendencies of the subjects.

**Summary.** The final purpose of this study was to describe observable behaviors as these children learn to read. Observable learning behaviors in the school environment have been described in order to corroborate the home observations regarding such individual factors as interest in reading, reading competency, work habits and behavioral characteristics. One important aspect of the classroom environment was the teacher's reading to the class every day which motivated some children to want to read more on their own.

Observations of the subjects during their independent work assignments, coupled with a synthesis of the data regarding these subjects' reading competency and behavioral characteristics, indicated that the subjects' work behaviors were complexly related to their interest in the task, their behavioral characteristics, and their reading competence. Differences were reported between the subjects' behaviors
during their reading group period. These differences were related to level of reading competency, responses from the teacher, and behavioral characteristics of the subjects. However, a synthesis of the data suggests that (a) the home environment may be influential in encouraging the development of reading competence, regardless of the behavioral characteristics of the subjects; and (b) the home environment also may be influential in encouraging the development of the behavioral characteristics exhibited by these subjects.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Introduction

The problem of this study was to describe the manner in which the home environment influences the reading acquisition of six first-grade children. Numerous research studies have been concerned with the identification of the specific factors in the home environment which relate to a child's beginning reading achievement (Almy, 1949; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1974; Miller, 1967). While these studies have made significant and valued contributions toward understanding the influence of the home environment, the methods of some studies have limitations which need to be scrutinized. For example, the results of these investigations were largely based on maternal responses to questionnaires or interviews, and only a small percentage, if indeed any, of the total time devoted to the study was spent in the home environment (Durkin, 1966; Miller, 1969). Some studies sent questionnaires to parents thereby allowing no personal interaction or communication (Sutton, 1964; Plessas & Oakes, 1964; Price, 1976). Ironically, other studies investigated the effect of the home environment by interviewing the research
subjects away from the particular setting under investigation, i.e., the home environment (Clark, 1976). The methods of these studies did not allow for either the behaviors of the child or the interactions of the family members in the home environment to be observed to corroborate the results from the interview data.

Limitations in previous studies suggested to this researcher that a study was needed which was based on a method allowing much observation of children and their families in natural settings. Therefore, this study employed comprehensive observations in the home, and recorded patterns of behaviors and interactions of children and all family members throughout the year of first grade as children begin formal reading instruction. Hence, this study employed ethnographic techniques and combined data from multiple and systematic observations of the home environment with corroborating data from observations at the school and at the school library, in order to determine which factors in the home environment influence the developing reading skills of first grade children.

In keeping with the ethnographic paradigm, no a priori hypotheses were formulated for this study. The extensive and systematic observations were guided by (a) the specific purposes of the study; and (b) the specific procedures for the collection of data.
Specific Purposes of the Study

The specific purposes of this study were as follows:

1. Identify and describe the factors present in the home environment which appear to affect children's reading competence;

2. Identify and describe the home prereading activities and reading activities which appear to affect reading competence;

3. Identify and describe the factors and the prereading and reading activities present in the home environment which appear to influence children's affective dimensions of reading;

4. Describe the parents' language style when interacting with their child;

5. Describe the rate of reading acquisition for children from differing home environments;

6. Describe observable behavior as children learn to read.

Specific Procedures for the Collection of Data

Description of the Subjects. The subjects in this study were six pupils from a single first-grade classroom of an elementary school in the suburban area in North Central Texas during the school year of August, 1979, through May, 1980. The subjects were all chosen from the same first-grade
classroom in order to minimize the teacher variable. So doing also minimized the socioeconomic variable and limited it to the neighborhood of the selected school, i.e., upper-middle class.

The subjects were three girls and three boys randomly selected from categories of Reading Readiness-High, Reading Readiness-Average, and Reading Readiness-Low. The teacher was not informed of the number or identity of the subjects as that knowledge might have allowed her to alter unknowingly her interactions with the subjects.

Sources of Data. The primary source of data consisted of extensive and systematic observations of the subjects and their home environment. Observations of the subjects in their classroom and school library served to corroborate the observations and propositions formed from the home observations. The following sources provided the majority of the data in the four phases of this study:

Phase I

Observation at school

Phase II

Identification of subjects
Testing of subjects
Educational history of subjects

Phase III

Observation at home, school, and library
Parent interviews
Situational testing
Subject interview
Unobtrusive measures

Phase IV
Testing of subjects
Subject interview
Teacher interview

Data were gathered and analyzed from the beginning of the study in September, 1979, and continued, at the scheduled intervals presented in Chapter III, until the study was completed in April, 1980. Ethnographic techniques were employed and the following were relevant kinds of data in regard to the subjects and the participants:

1. Observable behaviors of subjects and participants,
2. Observable interactions between subjects and participants;
3. Form and content of verbal interactions between subjects, subjects and participants, subjects and researcher, and participants and researcher,
4. Nonverbal behaviors of subjects and participants,
5. Patterns of action and nonaction of subjects and participants,
6. Test results of subjects,
7. Educational records of subjects,
8. Artifacts of subjects.
Analysis of Data

The data from each observation, interview, or other source of data acquired at a given session was analyzed according to the specific purposes of the study. Thus the observational data and the data from all the data sources were continually analyzed in an effort to discover patterns of behavior. This analysis led to the formulation of propositions to assimilate and to account for the specific observed behaviors. Verification of these propositions through all data sources enabled further discovery of patterns of behavior. However, if the propositions were not verified by the data, new propositions were formulated and verified. The continuous analysis of the data ultimately resulted in conclusions regarding the influence of the home environment on the developing reading skills of first graders.

Results

The general background of the families and the developmental history of the subjects were similar and do not appear to be factors which discriminate between the reading competence of the subjects. A variety of print was available in every home and the data suggest that the availability of print may be a necessary but not sufficient factor which influences reading competency in these families of upper-middle socioeconomic status. Interestingly, however, the
location of printed materials in the home and whether printed materials were used as presents did differentiate between the least competent and most competent readers. This differentiation may reflect the family's attitudes toward print and the priority of reading activities in these homes.

All of these families had manipulative materials available in their homes. Again, in these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, the availability of manipulative materials may be a necessary but not sufficient factor which influences reading competency. The interest in using manipulative materials and the frequency of the use of those materials were not consistently related to these subjects' level of readiness or reading competency, but rather were related to whether the subjects were reported to be "active" or "quiet".

The use of television was not a factor which clearly discriminated between children of different levels of reading competence. All of these subjects and their families watched television a large percentage of the child's waking hours at home.

One crucial factor affecting children's reading competence may be the presence of some interested adult or older sibling who takes the time to respond to the child's interest in reading and to encourage reading. This behavior
was most likely to occur in families where reading was an active priority and where numerous reading activities were evidenced.

All of these parents valued education and were concerned with the total development of their children. However, parental interest in their child's learning to read may be another necessary but not sufficient factor affecting the reading competence of children if it is not demonstrated through parental responses to, and encouragement of, the child's reading interests.

The presence of an adult who frequently reads to children seems to influence a child's development of reading skills and, specifically, a development of visual and language concepts about print. However, parents tend to read to children less frequently as the children develop some independent reading skills. Inasmuch as all the subjects like to have someone read to them, it would seem advantageous that someone continue responding to this interest.

The data suggest that opportunities to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities may be related to the subjects' reading competency. Reading models seem to reflect positive attitudes toward reading and thus may help develop the child's interest in reading.

The frequency and content of the public library visits did not seem to be a factor in these subjects' development
of reading competence. The families of these subjects did not go to the public library frequently or consistently.

Some differences were evidenced in the provisions for reading activities by the parents of competent readers, such as the provision of printed materials in the rooms of some subjects and a daily period set aside for reading activities for some subjects. These provisions, however, may be another reflection of the priority of reading in these homes.

The data suggest that adults modeling reading behaviors and adults reading nonfiction to children may be a positive influence on children's intrinsic motivation to read for information. Furthermore, the data suggest that being read to frequently may be a positive influence on children's interest in reading for pleasure.

The data indicate that the subjects who were choosing to read for information or pleasure evidenced an intrinsic motivation to read. Their attitude was very positive toward reading. Not unexpectedly, the more competent readers vocalized or demonstrated more positive attitudes toward reading. The less-than-competent readers vocalized or demonstrated more negative attitudes toward reading.

The parents' perception of reading was important inasmuch as it ultimately influenced the quantity and quality of the reading activities in the home. Parents who perceived
reading primarily as a skill to be mastered rather than as an informative and enjoyable activity may model more negative attitudes for the child and thus be less of a positive influence on their child's affective dimensions of reading.

The parents' perceptions of some of the factors which influenced their child's interest in reading were discussed. These data suggest that the primary influence which parents perceive as affecting their child's interest in learning to read may be the human interactions in the home involving print.

Data from this study indicate that the language styles of these upper-middle socioeconomic status parents represented both person-oriented control and status-oriented control. Information regarding parental language styles may provide one more link in the effort to understand the influence of the home environment on a child's beginning reading skills. The data suggest that the parents' language style may be either a positive or negative influence on the child's development of cognitive processes. Language styles which fostered rational thought and contemplation may be related to more reflective behaviors in children and more conducive to the demands of the school learning environment. Language styles which fostered compliance without rationale may be related to more impulsive behaviors in children and less conducive to functioning in the school setting.
The results of the subjects' initial assessments of reading readiness and their final assessments of reading competence were presented and discussed in order to describe the rate of reading acquisition for these subjects. A synthesis of the data suggests that home environments which responded to and encouraged reading interests and where reading was a priority may be one variable which influenced children's learning to read at a pace more commensurate to their potential.

Observable learning behaviors in the school environment have been described in order to corroborate the home observations regarding such individual factors as interest in reading, reading competency, work habits and behavioral characteristics. One important aspect of the classroom environment was the teacher's reading to the class every day which motivated some children to want to read more on their own.

Observations of the subjects during their independent work assignments, coupled with a synthesis of the data regarding these subjects' reading competence and behavioral characteristics, indicated that the subjects' work behaviors were complexly related to their interest in the task, their behavioral characteristics, and their reading competence. Differences were reported between the behaviors of the subjects during their reading group period. These differences
were related to the level of reading competency, responses from the teacher, and behavioral characteristics of the subjects. However, for these subjects, behavioral characteristics conducive to reading group tasks are not necessarily synonymous with individual reading competency. A synthesis of the data suggests that (a) the home environment may be influential in encouraging the development of reading competence, regardless of the behavioral characteristics of the subjects; and (b) the home environment may be influential in encouraging the development of the behavioral characteristics exhibited by these subjects.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are based on data from six subjects and their families. Within the limitations of this study, the following conclusions have been formulated.

1. The home environment is a definite and ongoing influence on a child's development of reading skills. The subjects who enter first grade the most ready to begin to learn to read are those children who live in homes where someone consistently responds to and encourages the child's reading interests and where reading activities are a priority. After eight months of first grade, subjects from homes where reading is a priority demonstrate more progress in reading than children of similar IQs who live in homes where reading is a low priority.
2. A child's intrinsic interest in learning to read may be encouraged by the human interactions with print in the child's environment. Specifically, this environment might include reading models who seemingly suggest to the child that reading is enjoyable, someone who reads to the child to stimulate new areas of interest, and adults who actively respond to the child's interests in print.

3. In these homes of upper-middle socioeconomic status, an abundance of print and manipulative materials may be necessary but not sufficient factors in the development of reading competency by beginning readers. One is reminded of *Petunia*, Roger Duvoisin's book about the goose who carried a book around to absorb knowledge. It never worked, of course. It seems from this investigation that the mere presence of reading material in the home may not be as significant as what is or is not done with these materials.

4. Children's reading competency and affective dimensions of reading are both positively influenced by being read to frequently. The presence of someone who frequently reads to children seems to influence children's development of reading skills and, specifically, their development of visual and language concepts about print. Furthermore, children's intrinsic motivation to read for information and to read for pleasure seems to be positively influenced by being read to frequently.
5. Children, regardless of their level of readiness or subsequent degree of reading competency, unanimously demonstrate positive responses toward someone reading to them. It seems then, that parents or some other interested person might frequently read to children in order to take advantage of this interest and this opportunity to develop reading concepts and perpetuate reading interests.

6. Opportunities to observe and model family members engaged in reading activities may be related to children's intrinsic motivation to learn to read and their reading competency. Reading models seem to reflect positive attitudes toward reading and thus may help develop children's interest in reading.

7. Parents' perception of reading is important inasmuch as it ultimately influences the quantity and quality of the reading activities in the home. Parents who perceive reading primarily as a skill to be mastered rather than as an informative and enjoyable activity may model more negative attitudes for the child and thus be less of a positive influence on their child's affective dimensions of reading.

8. Regardless of whether parents themselves are active readers, they uniformly endorse the importance of their child learning to read well. However, the adage "actions speak louder than words" may also be valid for the development of reading competency. A child's attainment of optimum
reading competency may be facilitated when (a) parental endorsement of the importance of learning to read is reinforced through positive responses to, and encouragement of, the child's reading interests; and (b) ongoing reading activities, such as reading to the child, are provided in the home.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated in order that the factors, activities, and behaviors in the home environment which were identified in this study may be substantiated with other subjects.

2. An ethnographic investigation of the relation between parental language styles and the behavioral characteristics of children should be initiated to study the implications suggested by the limited prior research and by this study.

3. Data from this study regarding family reading models suggest the need to investigate (a) contrasts in the reading habits among siblings in homes where someone provided a good reading model; and (b) contrasts in the reading habits among male and female adults of upper-middle socioeconomic status.

4. Recollections by mothers regarding their parents as reading models suggest (a) reading models may have long-lasting effects on reading habits; or (b) other
influences may alter reading habits established earlier in life. Thus, the existence or non-existence of long-term effects of reading models is an area for further research.

5. The data from this study suggest the value of increased employment of ethnographic techniques when investigating learning behaviors of children.

Implications of the Study

Although no cause and effect has been established, the data have demonstrated that a relationship exists between specific home environmental factors, identified reading behaviors, and success in beginning reading. The following implications may be considered.

1. Reading to children appears to be an amazingly simple and effective strategy for positively influencing children's reading competency and affective dimensions of reading. The effectiveness of this strategy should be stressed to both parents and educators in order that more children may benefit from this reading experience.

2. Researchers frequently have considered the differences in the experiences of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet, it is possible that differences within a given socioeconomic level are considerably greater than these studies could reveal because of their needs to deal with the most common characteristics
within each socioeconomic level. Results from this study imply the need for greater caution regarding generalizing characteristics of families of a given socioeconomic status. Characteristics considered typical for a given socioeconomic class may not be equally valid when individual families are considered. Specifically, upper-middle socioeconomic status does not suggest that all children will be provided the same or equally valuable prereading experiences. It does not suggest that all parents of this status are especially endowed to provide meaningful teaching experiences for their children.

3. Some parents who are not responding to a child's interests in print may not consciously recognize the importance of those interests when they occur. These parents may benefit from information describing the behaviors of children at various stages of readiness and learning to read. Similarly, these parents may benefit from information describing home prereading and reading activities which may be conducive to the development of readiness and reading skills.

4. Specific information regarding the home reading environment, e.g., presence of reading models and priority of home reading activities, may enable a child's classroom teacher to more effectively provide school reading experiences which might more appropriately meet the developmental
reading needs of that child. Teachers need some method of finding out this specific information for each member of their class.

5. Grandparents would seem to be excellent candidates for encouraging a child's reading inasmuch as they are more likely to have time to spare to interact with the child.

**Methodological Implications**

**Involvement of All Family Members**

This researcher strongly felt that the investigation would be more valid and informative if every family member could be actively involved in the study. In the case of siblings, this involvement proceeded naturally. The researcher knew the names and ages of the siblings from the initial interviews with the parents, and an attempt was made by the researcher to greet siblings by name whenever they were seen at home or school. In every family, the siblings became interested in the researcher's presence and curious about the time and activities which the researcher and the subject completed. At every appropriate opportunity, and in particular during the second situational test, the siblings were involved in the study. Their behaviors and interactions with the subject and parent(s) afforded many insights and corroborated other data regarding the family control system and the priority and nature of reading activities in the home.
Involving the fathers in the study required much effort but was also most rewarding. The researcher requested that both parents be present and participate in the parents' perceptions interview (Appendix). The families were cooperative, but realistically concerned about the problem of scheduling times when the researcher could meet with both parents, without the children, for at least an hour. Three fathers travel regularly in their profession. One family was moving to a new city several hundred miles away and those parents were not frequently available as they were involved in house hunting at their new location. Much rescheduling was involved and some interviews had to be conducted on Friday and Saturday nights. However, the parents' perceptions interviews were completed for each subject with both parents present and participating. In each occasion, the father's behaviors, interactions with the mother and children, as well as the information he offered, provided numerous insights. The presence of both parents added dimension to the interview inasmuch as each could corroborate, expand, or dispute the information provided by the other parent. Thus, the researcher reaffirms the importance of the involvement of the entire family in a study of this nature.

Use of Structural Corroboration

Throughout the data collection, the researcher employed the strategy of structural corroboration to validate the
propositions formulated during the study and the conclusions of the study. The intent was to continually combine the multiple data sources to determine convergence of the data and to cross-check the different data sources.

This strategy proved beneficial, especially with the use of interviews. Durkin (1966), based on her experiences in family interviews, admonishes that the interviewer's responses may be clouded by forgetting, exaggeration, confusion or even deliberate concealment. Hence, the responses equal what the parent(s) is willing and able to report. However, the use of structural corroboration in this study greatly decreased the likelihood of that kind of contamination. Responses which might have been motivated by a need to say what is right, ideal, or even what parents thought the researcher wants to hear, were corroborated or rejected by the other data sources. Thus the use of structural corroboration is reaffirmed by this researcher as an important strategy in research employing interview and observation techniques.

The Length of the Study

The validity of the ethnographic paradigm requires an investigation of some length. This research continued for eight months, which was the maximum amount of time feasible within the constraints of this study.
Data from this study affirm the value of a commitment of some length. By the third visit, informal conversational exchanges increased in all of the homes and typically accounted for ten to forty-five minutes of the home visit. The researcher knew more about the lives and happenings of the families, and past experiences could be drawn upon. Rapport with the subjects was firmly established. Many spontaneous additions to the data resulted.

In the researcher's opinion, the third visit evidenced acceptance of the researcher, and the study, by the families. From that time on, the parents smiled and initiated brief personal inquiries when the researcher arrived, e.g., "How was your Christmas?" The siblings were curious about the situation and appeared close by when the researcher visited. Moreover, there was less evidence of the mothers' concern for the image of a spotless house. At various occasions the researcher noted the washer going, the parents vacuuming, and some livable disarray, as if the household were going about their normal daily routines. It seems that this acceptance could be a positive influence on the validity of the data inasmuch as the family hopefully felt less "on display" and therefore more natural in their behavior.

The length of the study provided one further insight: The behavior of the families must not be assumed to be inalterable. Specifically, one mother exhibited the
beginning of a change in her personal attitude toward reading. It must be accented that this change does not seem to be due to any influence resulting from involvement in the study. Rather it seems to result from reactions to changes in her daily habits. This family had moved from another state and arrived just days before the study began. They were without a television set for some time due to complications with the furniture storage. That event reportedly broke the television habit for her. The mother stated at the beginning of the study that she hated reading. During the fourth home visit she said: "I used to hate reading. But here I don't watch TV and I'm not involved in any groups yet. I've asked Mom to send me a box of books."

In one of the last visits she spontaneously mentioned a book she was reading. Thus, it seems that the behavior of families may not be assumed to be inalterable. Furthermore, an investigation of some length is required in order that relevant changes in the family's patterns of behavior may be observed.
Dear Parents:

I am currently conducting a long-term study to investigate the learning styles of children as they learn to read. Your child's class has been selected by your principal and by [name of school district] to be included in this study.

I will be observing in your child's class throughout the school year as I attempt to identify the factors which positively affect the learning styles of children. Because we recognize the vital role parents have in shaping their child's learning style, some children will be randomly selected to be observed in their home.

Educators are interested in the information this study may provide. However, parents and children are the ones who will potentially benefit most from the research. This information will help parents gain insights into how their child learns. Parents will also be able to learn specifically what they can do, as a part of daily home life, to assist their child's learning.

If your child is one who is randomly selected to be observed at home, I will contact you by telephone to explain the study further and to arrange a home visit at your convenience. (A visit may be arranged in the evening to accommodate working parents.) Your cooperation is highly valued.

If for any reason you do not want your child to be visited in your home, fill out the form at the bottom and return it to [teacher's name] tomorrow, [date].

Sincerely,

Bertie W. Kingore
Ph.D. Candidate, NTSU

Please do not include ______________________ in the random selection of children for observation in their home.

Signed ________________
FORM 2
USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
INFORMED CONSENT

NAME OF SUBJECT: ________________________________

1. I hereby give consent to B. W. Kingore to perform the following investigational procedures:
   Observation in my home;
   Diagnostic and evaluative testing.

2. I have heard a clear explanation and understand the nature and purpose of the procedure; possible appropriate alternative procedures that would be advantageous; and the attendant discomforts or risks involved and the possibility of complications which might arise. I have heard a clear explanation and understand the benefits to be expected. I understand that the procedure to be performed is investigational and that I may withdraw my consent. With my understanding of this, having received this information and satisfactory answers to the questions I have asked, I voluntarily consent to the procedure designated in Paragraph 1 above.

Signed: _______________________________________
       Person Responsible

       __________________________
       Relationship

       __________________________
       Date:
TEACHER RATING SCALE OF PUPIL READING READINESS

NAME: ________________________________

Readiness to read

not ready  somewhat ready  ready  very ready

Expectancy of reading success

poor  fair  good  excellent

Additional comments:
ASSESSMENT OF LETTER, WORD, AND DIRECTIONALITY CONCEPTS

The researcher opened a children's book so that two pages were exposed. Each page had a picture on the top half of the page and several lines of text on the bottom half of the page. The researcher asked: "Which of these pages should you read first so the story will make sense?"

The researcher then placed one index card on the left margin of one page and one index card on the right margin of the same page. The researcher demonstrated to the subjects how the two index cards could be moved over a line of print until they met in the middle of the page. Then the researcher instructed the child:

1. Move these cards together until you can see only one letter;
2. Move these cards together until you can see only one word;
3. Move these cards together until you can see the first letter of the page;
4. Move these cards together until you can see the first letter of a word.

The responses of the subjects were hand recorded by the researcher.
The researcher had two 4 X 5 index cards. One card contained the capital letters of the alphabet randomly typed in four rows of five letters each and one row of six letters. The second card contained the lower-case letters of the alphabet randomly typed in four rows of five letters each and one row of six letters.

The letters were typed so approximately one-half inch of space was between each row of letters.

The subject was shown one card at a time and asked:
1. What is this?
2. Can you name these for me?

The responses of the subjects were hand recorded by the researcher.
INTERVIEW WITH PARENT

Name ___________________________ Date __________

I. Family Background

Father:
Birthplace ___________________________ Age __________________
Education: Elementary school ___ High school ___
College ___ Graduate work ___
Occupation ___________________________

Mother:
Birthplace ___________________________ Age __________________
Education: Elementary school ___ High school ___
College ___ Graduate work ___
Occupation ___________________________
(If housewife, before marriage)

Any adults in home other than parent(s)? Who?

siblings (names and ages)

Who in your family is [child] most like?

How does _____ compare with [siblings] in academic or intellectual ability?

II. Subject Background

Birthplace ___________________________ Birthdate ______
Age when _____ began to walk? Talk in sentences?
Is _____ left-handed or right-handed?

Did _____ attend preschool? How many years? Kindergarten?
Did _____ benefit from these school experiences before first grade? Explain.

Some of the questions were adapted from Almy's (1949) and Durkin's (1966) questionnaires to parents.
Did ______ ever want to stay home? If so, how often?

III. Subject Health

How is ______'s general health?

What illnesses has s/he had? (ages and durations)

Has s/he ever had any trouble with his/her ears? Eyes?

Has ______ seen a doctor because of his/her ears? Eyes?

Is ______ having any problems now with his/her ears? Eyes?

IV. Play Activities

Does ______ prefer quiet or active activities?

With whom does s/he usually play?

When s/he plays with other children, what do they like to do?

If the weather is bad, what does ______ usually do?

What types of activities does s/he do well? Not well?

When no other children are present, what does ______ usually do to occupy his/her time?

V. Other Activities

What does s/he like to do when s/he comes home from school?

Does ______ attend any special classes or activities for recreation or for development of some skill?

Does s/he do any writing activities? Explain.

Did ______ write or try to write before first grade or kindergarten? Explain.

How do you feel about television?

Are you aware of any valuable learnings which ______ has gained from watching television? Explain.
Did ______ watch TV before starting first grade? If so, how often?

When did s/he first begin to enjoy TV programs?

How often does ______ watch TV now? (hours per day)

What program does ______ enjoy most? Does the rest of the family also enjoy this program?

Does ______ go to the library? If so, how often? With whom?

Does anyone in your family check out books from the library? Who? How often?

Does anyone in your family read fairly often? Who? How often? Kinds of reading materials?

Did ______ ever pretend s/he was reading? Explain. If so, what did your family do when s/he pretended to read?

Did anyone read to ______ before first grade? Who? How often? Age of child when started?

Does anyone read to ______ now? Who? How often?

Does ______ read to him/herself at home? How often?

What kinds of reading materials does ______ read?

Does your family have opportunities for outings or activities together? Explain.

What books do you remember reading as a child?

Additional comments:
CHILD'S DAILY SCHEDULE

Name of child _____________________________

Schedule filled out by _______________________

Date ___ School day schedule ___ or Weekend schedule ___

Awoke ____________

Discussion of morning routine and activities:

Discussion of afternoon routine and activities:

Discussion of evening routine and activities:

Bedtime ____________
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L—location of subject
A—activity in which subject is engaged
In—interaction of subject with others
SUBJECT INTERVIEW I

1. What do you like to do best at school? Least?

2. What do you like to do at home after school?

3. Do you ever read or look at books by yourself at home? (Encourage specific information)

4. Does anyone read to you at home? (Encourage specific information)

5. Do you think it is important to learn to read? Why or why not?

6. What do you think a good reader needs to know in order to read well?

7. Do you think anyone at your home is a good reader? Why or why not?

8. Do you think you are going to be or are a good reader? Why or why not?
SUBJECT INTERVIEW II

1. Can you read? How do you know?
2. Do you like to have someone read to you? Who? When?
3. Do they read as much as you like them to?
4. Do you ask them to read to you, or how does it happen?

The researcher then showed four books to the child:
(a) a wordless book—*Changes, Changes* (Hutchins, 1971);
(b) a book which the child was reading at school as part of the classroom reading instruction;
(c) a controlled vocabulary book—*Put Me in the Zoo* (Lopshire, 1960); and
(d) a popular children's book—*The Five Chinese Brothers* (Bishop, 1938). The researcher asked the child:

1. Would you like to read any of these books? Why or why not?
2. Would you like me to read one of these to you? (Encourage reasons)

The researcher then read the book with the child. The child's interest and interaction dictated the amount of the story which the researcher read and the amount of the story which the child read.
SITUATIONAL TESTING

I. Parent(s) reading to the child

The researcher brought three different children’s books and asked the subject to choose one to look at. After the child chose a book, the researcher asked the child why s/he had chosen the book. The researcher then said to the parent(s): "______ has chosen this book. Would you read it to him in your own way." The researcher recorded the session and noted the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the parent and the subject as the book was read.

II. Child, parent(s) and sibling(s) interaction

The researcher brought an activity to encourage parent and child communication and interaction. The activity consisted of a book, *Syd Hoff Shows You How to Draw Cartoons* (Hoff, 1979), plus a supply of paper and pencils. The researcher stated that she had brought a book about drawing cartoons. She asked the subjects, the parent(s), and the siblings to decide what they wanted to do in the book. Then the researcher handed the book to the subject. The researcher recorded the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of the parent, siblings and subject.
PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING

1. How do you think [child] feels about first grade?
2. Is _____ having any particular problem or difficulty at school? Explain.
4. What did you think was the most important thing for _____ to learn in kindergarten?
5. What do you think is the most important thing for _____ to learn in first grade?
6. Are you satisfied with what _____ is learning in first grade?
7. Do you think that parents should help their children at home with reading? Explain.
8. In your opinion, which of these helped to interest _____ in learning to read?
   - kindergarten
   - first grade
   - teachers
   - parents
   - brothers and sisters
   - TV
   - television commercials
   - being read to at home
   - library visits
   - asked about words, letters or numbers
   - learned alphabet at age
   - interest in writing
   - interest in books
   - "Sesame Street" or "Electric Company"
   - pretended to read
   - attention to signs
   - attention to household products
   - books and reading materials available at home
   - other (specify)
9. How does _____'s reading achievement relate to his/her ability, as you see it?
10. What is his/her greatest reading strength? Weakness?

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2Some of the questions were adapted from Durkin's (1966) parent questionnaire.
11. What factors, activities, etc. at school do you think contributed to _____'s current reading achievement?

12. What factors, activities, etc. outside of school do you think contributed to his/her current reading achievement?
INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER

The researcher began the interview by naming the six subjects involved in the study. The interview questions and the discussion were only concerned with the six children who were subjects for the study.

1. How do you see [name] as a developing reader? What is his/her level of reading achievement?

2. How does his/her reading achievement relate to his/her ability, as you see it?

3. What is his/her greatest reading strength? Weakness?

4. How does his/her current reading accomplishments relate to how you saw him/her at the beginning of the year?

5. What factors, activities, etc. at school do you think contributed to his/her current reading achievement?

6. What factors, activities, etc. outside of school do you think contributed to his/her current reading achievement?
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**Tests**


