THE ROLE OF AFFECTIVE, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL FACTORS
IN THE MAINTENANCE OF READING DISABILITIES:
A QUALITATIVE MULTI-CASE STUDY
OF 4 READING DISABLED ADOLESCENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1989

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To David and Alexander
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Literacy acquisition may be considered the foundation of school achievement. The primary role of schools is to provide students with opportunities to develop literacy skills. For most students, the process of learning to read and write is accomplished without difficulty. However, a surprising number of students do not progress well in their attempts to learn to read. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1985) survey of reading scores indicated that 35% to 40% of the nation's school-age students are below their expected achievement levels in reading. Approximately 3% of these students may have severe problems with reading (S. McCormick, 1987).

Students with reading disabilities often are unable to function adequately in daily school situations. Their failure to progress may result in lowered self-esteem and stress (Gentile & McMillan, 1987). The stress related to reading failure may foster disengagement from school tasks and inappropriate behaviors, which can be costly to schools in terms of time and effort expended attempting to alter these behaviors (Laurita, 1985; Lecky, 1951). In addition,
poor reading achievement is a major contributor to school dropout rate (Hahn, 1987; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Therefore, it is important for schools to attend to the problem of reading disabled students.

For the most part, school responses have been directed toward groups of students with reading disabilities. While such responses may be beneficial to students with mild reading problems, students with more severe problems may be unable to benefit from group-oriented instruction. Finding ways to better assist these students is a complex problem for schools. The possibility exists that educational policymakers under pressure to come up with solutions to the growing numbers of students with reading problems may try to categorize these students into groups and formulate broad program responses, thereby losing sight of the complexity of the problem as well as the individual needs of these students.

Intent of the Present Study

The intent of the present study was to show that, while sharing some similar characteristics with other students with reading disabilities, students with reading disabilities may have unique problems, and therefore, broad responses to the problem of educational disadvantage may be ineffective. To do this, the present researcher studied 4 adolescent students who are moderately to severely reading disabled and the educational responses to these students.
In the present study, students with moderate to severe reading disabilities are defined as those students who are performing significantly below their potential in the area of reading and may be considered functionally illiterate by most definitions. The study attempts to show that, although these students appear to have the same problem, there are unique aspects present in each case. Reading disabilities are a manifestation of many intermeshing factors, and the factors themselves, or the causative power of various factors, are different for each student studied. The students of this study vary in their approach to reading as well as in their levels of success, as is shown through multiple analyses of each students’ reading. In addition, the voices of the students are an integral part of the study in that they explain the students’ approaches to literacy and their evaluations of educational responses made in their behalf.

It appears that for some of these students educational responses designed to fit groups of students in general may not have been effective. Furthermore, in these cases the schools did not appear to have alternative responses to offer. A review of the educational responses in terms of their probable origin, their effectiveness, and their correspondence to the students’ perceptions of their own needs—-in combination with the perceptions of some of the students’ teachers—-suggests the narrowness and
conventionality of responses available for reading disabled students.

**Literacy**

Literacy is viewed in many ways depending on a person's assumptions concerning the definition and purpose of literacy. The researcher holds the following assumptions about literacy in American society:

1. Literacy is an important means of knowledge acquisition, as well as a tool for developing critical thinking skills.

2. Literacy acquisition is essential for success in American schools.

3. Literacy acquisition may be essential for attaining employment that will provide a moderate standard of living.

4. Literacy has, unfortunately, come to denote intelligence, which may result in those who have not acquired literacy being treated with disdain.

5. All children in American schools are capable of some degree of literacy acquisition.

If these assumptions are valid, then it is important to study more closely those children who are not acquiring literacy so that effective solutions may be found. Social and educational factors need to be considered, as well as the differing needs of individual students.
Definitions of Literacy

While literacy or illiteracy is difficult to determine since it is often dependent on the situation, Chall, Heron, and Hilferty (1987) have outlined three levels of literacy which provide one perspective on the problem. The levels are as follows:

1. below fourth-grade reading level, or the ability to read only simple texts and signs;
2. approximately an eighth-grade reading level, often considered functional literacy; and
3. a high school reading level with which a person can read technical manuals and publications such as Newsweek or Time.

Another perspective was provided by Taber (1987) who reviewed several current definitions of literacy. She found that literacy was generally defined in two ways: relative literacy and absolute literacy. Relative literacy refers to the ability to function in specific situations such as on the job or in daily life without difficulty. Absolute literacy sets a specific level at which people must be able to read to be considered literate. In the definitions reviewed by Taber, levels of reading ability considered commensurate with literacy varied from fourth grade to high school reading; however, none of the definitions found a lower than fourth-grade reading level acceptable.
**Functional Literacy**

Historically literacy has had three primary purposes which are the development and continuance of government, religion, and commerce (Graff, 1987). However, the present study is concerned with individual purposes for literacy. The ability to read materials encountered in daily living is an important aspect of individual literacy. Individual purposes also may include personal improvement, entertainment, the study of abstract ideas, and communication.

Functional literacy is often thought of in terms of survival reading skills, that is, reading a person is required to do to perform daily activities that may or may not be job-related (Harris & Hodges, 1981). This might include recognition of words on necessary informational signs, identification of products when shopping, or the ability to read simple instructions. Also of importance is the ability to read materials necessary to gain or maintain employment.

Concerns about the declining quality of the American worker have led to the suggestion that the purpose of education should be to prepare laborers for the workforce (Callahan, 1962). Considering the opportunities forecast by the Hudson Institute report, *Workforce 2000*, for low-skilled entrants into the workforce in the next decade (W. B. Johnston, 1987), policymakers and educators have begun to reevaluate the programs that are now producing dropout rates
of 50% or higher in some urban districts (Barber & McClellan, 1987).

Workforce 2000 presents a projection of the United States’ economic, demographic, and labor needs beginning in the 1990’s. Trends suggest that the job market will change drastically with most new jobs emerging from the quickly expanding service industries. Contrary to many current service industry jobs, most new jobs will demand much higher levels of skill in reading, reasoning, and mathematics. Very few jobs will be created for low-skilled workers, resulting in higher unemployment for this already generally impoverished group. Minority groups will be particularly hard hit.

While there will be a demand for young adaptable workers, the skill levels required will nevertheless be higher. The Hudson report categorized jobs according to levels of skill required to perform the job as low, median, and high. They reported that those jobs currently requiring low-level skills (i.e., skills commensurate with an eighth-grade education) are likely to require median level skills (i.e., skills commensurate with a high school education) by the year 2000. Therefore, while it appears that a new service industry could accommodate young workforce entrants, it may not be able to do so unless a higher percentage of youth attain greater levels of skills.
While achieving greater levels of skills may include math and technical skills, they also include more proficiency in reading. The Hudson Institute forecast suggests a need for immediate concern for those students who are failing to become functionally literate. In view of this, the success of our schools in producing an acceptable level of relative literacy, considering the functional needs of our citizens, comes under question.

**Literacy Acquisition and Individual Needs**

When considering the problems of reading disabled students, the challenges for the schools at the program or policy level are complex. Students who are unable to read proficiently are under a disadvantage while in school, and possibly when they become adults. Because of the complexity of the problems of reading disabled students, particularly those who are severely reading disabled, there is a need to address literacy development at the individual level. Programs that are directed toward groups, even if that group consists of reading disabled students, may not prove to be effective for many students.

Adolescent disabled readers whose reading difficulties have persisted for many years tend to present additional challenges, especially for teachers, since these students are likely to develop and maintain inappropriate classroom behaviors in response to their feelings of frustration in school. These behaviors tend to alienate the teacher from
the student, effectively reducing chances of improving the students' reading skills (Carbo, 1987; Kos, 1989). In this respect, it may be that the students inadvertently contribute to their own failure (McDermott, 1987). Furthermore, the burden of perceiving oneself as or being perceived by others as disabled in an area as culturally charged as literacy may tend to produce other dysfunctional behaviors (Gentile & McMillan, 1987; Rueda & Mehan, 1986). These and other affective responses to reading failure need to be considered along with educational and social factors when implementing policies or programs for these students.

Statement of the Problem

An aspect of the problem of reading disability that has not been thoroughly explored is students' perceptions of their reading difficulties in relation to their individual needs and to educational responses. This study intends to explore, through the development of individual cases, the affective, social, and educational factors related to each student's reading disability, as well as the perceptions of the students. Such a holistic view may further understanding as to why certain students experience difficulty in obtaining reading proficiency.

Research Questions

The major research question addressed in this qualitative study is:
What are the affective, social, and educational factors that may have affected the literacy acquisition of the students under study? Subquestions were explored as a means of focusing the study. There are two sets of subquestions, Set A which was directed to each of the student respondents and Set B which was aimed at obtaining information from other sources including educational records, teachers, parents, and researcher observations.

**Set A**

1. How do the students define reading?
2. How do the students perceive their ability to read?
3. What roles do the students think reading plays in their lives, past, present, and future?
4. What factors do students perceive as having affected their reading development?
5. What perceptions and suggestions can students provide concerning reading instruction?

**Set B**

1. What is the personal history of the student?
2. What are the reading behaviors exhibited by the student?
3. What is the educational history of the student?
4. What perceptions do teachers have concerning the student?

5. How have the schools responded to the student's needs, and how effective have these responses been?

These questions were explored through open-ended interviews, document research, classroom observation, and participant observation.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Reading disabled students present a difficult challenge for the nation's schools. There have been various theories concerning causes of reading disabilities and appropriate instruction for these students. The research into reading disabilities has been influenced by research in the fields of medicine, psychology, anthropology, education, and reading. There have been theoretical shifts across the decades concerning possible etiologies and appropriate ways to provide remedial instruction. The following review of the literature briefly discusses the historical search for causation which has lent much to our knowledge of reading disabilities. The review then focuses on specific factors which may be of importance to the present study of reading disabled adolescents. In the final section, studies which have found student perceptions to be a valuable data source are presented.

Views on Causation

Proposed etiologies of reading disabilities have generally been divided into those which are believed to exist "within" the reader and those factors which are
"outside" the reader. Sometimes these categories seem to overlap as will be seen in the following discussion of prominent theories on etiology.

Some Traditional Perspectives

Initial research into reading disabilities occurred in the medical field in the late 1800's. One of the earliest proposed etiologies was that of word blindness (Kussmaul, 1877). While word blindness is often used as a term to describe aphasia, a temporary loss of reading brought on by stroke, for a time it was used to describe individuals whose reading disabilities were believed to be the result of the inability to see words. Furthermore, some researchers began to consider word blindness to be a congenital defect (Hinshelwood, 1917; Morgan, 1896).

Perinatal difficulties came under consideration as a cause of reading difficulties in the early 1900's (Bronner, 1917). Researchers proposed that trauma during or immediately after birth could cause neurological damage which might affect aspects of language development, including the ability to read.

In the 1920's lack of cerebral dominance was considered a possible etiology (Orton, 1928). Lack of cerebral dominance was hypothesized to cause readers to sporadically see letters or words in their mirror images and therefore to read them in reversed form. Orton's theory has since been discredited. During this decade slow eye
movements and inappropriate eye fixations were also considered to possibly interfere with reading.

Emotional disturbance was suggested as an etiological factor in the 1930’s (Blanchard, 1935) and continued to be of considerable interest to researchers for the next two decades. Within the 1930’s came the introduction of the multiple causation view of reading disabilities (Witty & Kopel, 1936). This view proposed that reading disabilities were the result of a combination of interacting factors, including emotional disturbance, Instructional practices, readers’ interests, among others. In the 1940’s, eye defects, such as astigmatism and exotropia, were proposed as etiological factors. Also, the view of multiple causation proposed by Witty and Kopel 10 years earlier became more prominent as a result of the classic study, Why Pupils Fail in Reading (Robinson, 1946). Robinson presented case studies of students with reading disabilities, focusing on factors that may have affected the reading development of these students.

In the 1950’s, emotional disturbance and multiple causation were the two prominent views concerning reading disabilities. Neurological impairment and processing deficiencies also began to be proposed as causal factors. During the 1960’s interest in brain damage as a causal factor continued. Multiple causation continued to be the most widely held view in the 1960’s.
By the 1970's interest in brain damage as an etiological factor was waning. Multiple causation continued to be a widely accepted view. An interest in defective memory processes developed and continued into the 1980's (Daneman & Carpenter, 1980).

**Additional Current Perspectives**

The concept of multiple causation has become the most widely accepted etiological view. This view proposes that reading disabilities are the result of the interaction of several factors. In addition to causes proposed earlier, interest has recently focused on possible factors stemming from readers' attributions, motivation, poor metacognitive skills, and sociocultural background (Johnston & Winograd, 1985; Lipson & Wixson, 1986).

**Attribution Theory**

Attribution theory considers the phenomenon of locus of control. This theory proposes that people can attribute success or failure to themselves (internal locus of control) or to other factors (external locus of control) (Weiner, 1979; Weiner, B., Nierenberg, R., & Goldstein, M., 1976). Studies of this phenomenon have found that able readers appear to attribute success or failure to their own efforts, thereby enabling themselves to make changes which will influence future chances of success. However, disabled readers frequently feel that success or failure are the result of luck, the teacher's actions, or other factors
beyond their control (Butkowsky & Willows, 1980). These negative feelings often result in a state of learned helplessness, in which such students assume they will fail before they encounter the task, and may engage in behaviors which will ensure their failure (Dweck, 1975; Seligman, 1975).

A related phenomenon which has been studied by Rueda and Mehan (1986) suggests that once students perceive themselves as less able at a task, such as reading, the students may spend more effort developing strategies which allow them to "pass" as good readers than they do trying to improve their reading. Rueda and Mehan describe the "passing strategies" of reading disabled students, including getting others to finish the task for them or finding ways to avoid the task altogether.

Motivation

Motivation relates to attribution theory in that an external locus of control results in students feeling it is futile to put much effort into their reading development (Johnston & Winograd, 1985). But motivation may also be related to a sense of purpose or relevance to the task. If students do not understand why they need to read, do not foresee a situation in which lack of reading will have a significant effect on their lives, then they may not see any immediate importance in the task (Adelman, 1978). This is an important notion since some adult illiterates, as shown
in Fingeret's (1982) study, did not feel a need to become literate, and in fact found advantages in illiteracy. While such views are probably limited to a small number of people, they are important to consider since literacy can have the effect of forcing major changes on a person. For instance, others might expect the former illiterate to take on more responsibilities or be more independent (Johnston, 1985).

Lack of motivation may also have to do with the student's perceptions of the role of literacy in the lives of adults in their home and community. If they do not see adults actively engaged in reading, they may believe that adults do not need to read to maintain their jobs or positions in the community.

Some types of materials students are required to read in the course of their schooling may also contribute to lack of motivation. Recent studies have shown that students who are able to choose materials related to their own interests may read more frequently and develop better skills (Baldwin, Peleg-Bruckner, & McClintock, 1985; Holdaway, 1979). However, many school curricula do not allow much time for this type of reading, partially because it makes the task of assessment more difficult.

**Metacognition**

Metacognition refers to three types of activities: (a) knowledge about and reflection about cognition, (b) self-monitoring of strategies used during active learning
situations, and (c) development and use of compensatory strategies (Baker & Brown, 1984). P. Johnston (1985) has proposed that poor metacognitive abilities may contribute to reading disability. This might occur in several ways. Students may have a lack of understanding of what reading entails. That is, they may not realize that reading involves more than just word recognition, but also involves a process in which readers must call into play numerous understandings and make connections between these understandings. In addition, they may not be aware of what possible outcomes may be achieved through this process, such as learning new information from text. Furthermore, if readers are unaware that they are not deriving necessary meaning from text, then they may not perceive a need to develop further strategies and may not search their schema for help in creating connections to known ideas. Students further need not only to be aware that strategies can be used in a compensatory manner, but also need to know how to select strategies appropriately.

Metacognition is an active process that requires the involvement of the reader in the task. Johnston and Winograd (1985) suggest that many disabled readers may fail because of their passive approach to reading. These readers do not efficiently and flexibly use strategies that would allow them to obtain successful reading outcomes. Johnston and Winograd further propose that passive failure in reading
is developed as the result of several factors. As previously discussed, the reader's attribution of success and failure to internal or external factors may be a contributing factor. Teachers may also play a part through differential responses and behaviors toward students deemed as less able. Furthermore, competitive classroom environments that produce additional stress for an already low-achieving student, and the frequent assignment of tasks that are too difficult may affect student's feelings of competence. These interacting factors may promote a passive attitude toward reading which limits the student's willingness to develop and use active metacognitive strategies.

**Sociocultural Background**

There have been several studies which suggest that cultural, ethnic, social, or language differences between teacher and student may cause less productive classroom interactions (Heath, 1982; Kozol, 1967; Rist, 1970). Aspects of these areas will be discussed below.

**Sociolinguistic interference.** Certain research in the field of reading disability is based on the concept of sociolinguistic interference (Cazden, 1988). Sociolinguistic interference occurs when people do not possess an understanding of each other's culturally learned ways of communicating, including speech patterns and paralinguistics, resulting in misperceptions about the other's meanings, intentions, and possibly intelligence.
McDermott (1987) has argued that a great many reading difficulties may be the result of such communication code conflicts between teacher and student. Certain culturally different children may respond to seemingly senseless messages by displaying behaviors of inattention during teacher directed tasks such as reading. For instance, social adaptation skills, such as type and amount of eye contact during communication, may work for the child outside of the school environment; however, when such communication codes are not understood by both teacher and child, the result may be confusion and failure for the child, and a sense of the child being less able by the teacher. It is possible that once a teacher treats a child as less able, the child will view the teacher as oppressive and begin resisting by becoming passive or behaving in ways not acceptable to the teacher, causing further subjugation of the child.

**Social reproduction.** Social reproduction refers to the way a social or educational system tends to develop expectations in the children of members of a specific social class for future roles at the same social class level as their parents. For example, Willis (1977) described how working class youth in London are educated in such a way as to perpetuate their class standing. Teachers' expectations and the 'lads' own resistance of the school culture were important factors contributing to this phenomenon. Ogbu
(1987) has proposed that a similar system exists in the public schools in the United States, particularly affecting those minorities which he terms "caste-like" (i.e., those involuntarily incorporated into the United States through conquest or slavery). Ogbu states that there is a job ceiling for these groups which prevent them from participating in the status mobility system in effect in this country, of which education is a part. He characterizes schools as training institutes which prepare people for the workforce. If there are barriers such as racism which prevent a group from benefiting from this training, then they will tend to adopt different theories about what it takes to be successful—theories which may be directly in opposition to accepted theories put forth by schools. However, Trueba (1988) has taken issue with Ogbu’s stance as it does not address those individuals from Ogbu’s caste-like groups that do successfully achieve in school. Nevertheless, considering the high percentage of minority and/or working class students categorized as reading disabled, it appears that tracking into differential educational opportunities may be occurring.

Hegemonic practices. Erickson (1987) has criticized the above explanations because they do not fully address the basic issue of why the necessity initially arose for resistance to education or for the development of alternative theories of success. Erickson proposes that
hegemonic practices, that is, those routine beliefs and actions that make sense within a certain cultural structure, can, without malevolence perhaps, constrain the actions of a stigmatized group, are at the root of the problem. This view takes the burden of the problem off minority or working class students who are failing in school and off of the labor market and puts it directly back on the schools. Erickson justifies this by his belief that the schools may be one of the few existing arenas where productive changes can be made. He proposes that schools can begin to practice culturally responsive pedagogy, which adapts instruction to the cultural style of the student, thereby encouraging the learner's cooperation in the learning process. Successful examples of culturally responsive pedagogy have been presented in the studies by Au and Jordan (1981) and Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987), working with Hawaiian and Navajo children respectively.

Student Perceptions

In recent years, there has emerged an increasing concern with the lack of what Erickson (1984) terms civility in our schools, that is, "a sense of a social contract that involves assent by the learner" (p. 534). Freire (1970) wrote of a liberating education, and Glasser (1986) called for the empowerment of students. While the terms used are different, the underlying theory is essentially the same. All of these educators support the idea that students, in
any learning situation, need to share in the structure, design, and evaluation of the learning task if learning is to be effectively accomplished. Several studies have emerged which have illustrated the lack of civility in our schools (Callahan, 1962; Goodlad, 1984; McNeil, 1988; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). These writings have prompted more intense examinations of policies and practices which might provide students with learning environments that are more hospitable.

The theory of personal constructs also has applicability to the development of policies and practices for educationally at-risk students, including students who have reading disabilities. Kelly (1955) proposed that people construct their own realities by observing, building hypotheses based on their own experiences, and then testing these hypotheses. Individuals interpret events and create patterns into which they attempt to fit future events, thereby creating their own unique perspective. Furthermore, Kelly stated that understanding human actions requires consideration of emotions and motivations. To establish constructive relationships between individuals or groups, the participants not only need to share similar ways of construing events, but also to attempt to understand each other's perspective. Based on this understanding, they may anticipate the other's actions. If behaviors are similar to those anticipated, the relationship is likely to continue.
However, if the behaviors do not fit the anticipated patterns, confusion, misunderstandings, and mistrust may result. Policies and programs developed without any attempt to understand students perspectives may have such results.

Before incorporating changes into any system, it is prudent to go to the people involved to see if the changes being planned will be acceptable. In education, it is important to take into account the perceptions and opinions of those most involved, the students. In answer to this need, a growing number of researchers have become interested in collecting qualitative data from students of all ages concerning the students’ learning processes, their evaluations of schools and instruction, and their insights into problems associated with learning. Some of these studies are briefly reviewed below.

**Student Perceptions**

**Concerning Schools and Instruction**

Several studies have explored the perceptions of students in the school environment. Miller, Leinhardt, and Zigmund (1988) used student perceptions to explore the accommodations made in high schools to keep students academically engaged and lower the dropout rate. Students described how they received full credit for completed papers whether the answers were correct or not. They also knew which classes they could pass just by being in attendance and which teachers would give them multiple chances to
complete homework assignments or tests. The study revealed that these accommodations may indeed keep more students in school longer. However, the students' remarks suggested that academic engagement was negatively affected; the students came to expect such accommodations. Students also expressed apathy and boredom since they did not see any need to do more than go through the motions in many classes. This study revealed that the increased number of student retentions was misleading if it was assumed that staying in school produced increased learning.

Studies have revealed that teachers tend to have expectations for students and treat students differently according to those expectations. A study on children's perceptions of teacher's expectations found that children in grades 3, 4, 5, and 7 were aware that teachers treated students differently (Brattesani, Weinstein, & Marshall, 1984). Students for whom teachers had low expectations reported more frequent negative feedback from the teachers and less direction from the teacher. When students were aware of differential treatment, they often modified their behavior to remain in line with teacher expectations. Another study has confirmed these results with students as young as first grade (Weinstein & Marshall, 1984).

A collaborative effort between a university researcher and three high school students resulted in an ethnographic study of students at risk of dropping out of school.
(Farrell, Peguero, Lindsey, & White, 1988). The student collaborators were considered potential dropouts themselves. They were paid to conduct interviews with a variety of high school students and with friends who had already dropped out of school. They were to gather information about why students did or might dropout. The student researchers were trained in conducting and recording open-ended interviews. These interviews, which were more like dialogues, were fully transcribed and cooperatively analyzed by the university researcher and the student researchers. Three categories which impacted on dropouts emerged: social pressure, school pressure, and school boredom. Social pressure consisted of pressures and conflicts concerning sex, family, peer cultures, and future occupational roles. School pressures often centered on grades and credits. Students believed that, even if they worked harder, there were only so many good grades to go around, and they were unlikely to receive them. Also, students who were low achievers perceived negative judgments from teachers. Students found teachers’ value systems, which included the valuing of education, as unrealistic in light of the social realities the students faced. Students frequently stated they were bored in school and offered examples of situations which were boring. Interestingly, classes which the university researcher observed and judged as exciting and interesting were frequently described as boring by the students.
Analysis suggested that students viewed classes as boring or interesting based not on class content, but on the process or structure of the class. Passing back papers, making assignments, or announcing test dates at the beginning of the class were often interpreted by poorer students as negative judgments against them, the ones who normally did poorly on these class requirements. This preclass housekeeping could then set the whole tone of the class, keeping some students from becoming academically engaged.

Student Perceptions Concerning Literacy Events

A number of studies have been conducted that have dealt with students' perceptions of literacy (Fishman, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988). These studies and others have provided insights into the way educators structure literacy learning for students. For example, Rasinski (1988) observed his son, Mikey, changing from a confident, enthusiastic beginning reader in kindergarten to a disillusioned, poorly performing reader in first grade. Rasinski explored these changes by setting up recorded dialogues with his son. Mikey reported that in kindergarten he had more choices. He could choose where, how, and with whom he could work. He and the teacher jointly constructed the reading tasks. In first grade, however, he had to do the assigned textbook passages and workbook pages, both of which held little interest for him. Mikey now judged himself as a not very good reader and his self-concept was
suffering. Rasinski concluded that children need to set their own purposes for reading so that they will maintain the initial enthusiasm literacy learning can foster.

After his daughter told him she read no stories in school, Cairney (1988) confronted her with a story in her basal reader. In disgust, the daughter replied, "That's not a story, that's my reader" (p. 420). She was differentiating between the type of reading she chose to engage in frequently at home and school reading which apparently had little purpose for her. As a result, Cairney conducted an interview study with 178 primary school children. He found that when asked the most important reason for reading the basal, many children indicated that it was so the teacher could assess how good they were. When asked how they knew they were good readers, many children suggested nonreading criteria, such as neatness, completion of answers, and writing answers in sentences. Very few children mentioned gaining meaning as a purpose of reading the basals. The author concluded that, because of the built in instructional practices in basal programs, children are given dysfunctional notions of literacy. They are given no clear reason for reading the basal, other than to complete the assignments, nor are there clear ways for the child to judge his/her own progress.

Boljonis and Hinchman (1988) explored the perceptions of three groups of children receiving different types of
reading instruction. All children could give adult-type uses for reading and writing, such as signing checks, being a teacher, or writing a letter. Students were also able to describe how reading was done in their classroom, and the type of instruction they received had an impact on how they perceived the reading and writing processes. The authors suggested that these perceptions were important for teachers to examine especially when evaluating their own instruction. If what the teacher intends for the children to understand about reading and writing is not evident in the children's comments about reading and writing, then that would be a strong indication that the instruction is failing in some way.

Borko and Eisenhart (1986) focused on the conceptions of reading held by second grade high- and low-reading group students in relation to those students' experiences in their reading groups. Open-ended interviews were conducted with 8 children. Clear differences were found in high- and low-group children's responses to the question, "What would you tell a new boy/girl who wants to know the kinds of things you do in your class that help you learn to read?" The high-group children's responses were as follows: 50% of the responses dealt with reading skills, such as letters, syllables, and sounding out words; 27% suggested the new child should read books and see what the other children were reading; and 21% dealt with reading group activities, such
as reading charts or giving and receiving help. In contrast, the low-group children's responses were as follows: 50% gave nonspecific responses concerning materials or procedure, such as "he can be in a group" or "he can use the reading book"; 17% dealt with reading skills, particularly sounding the words out; 10% suggested having a new child read the basal; and 14% mentioned student behaviors such as raising hands. None of the low-group students mentioned books besides the basal. While there were some similarities in responses, the children's responses showed that low-group readers were spending more time concerned with how to get through reading group and less time involved with holistic reading tasks. The authors suggested that such perceptions could lead to a widening of the gap between good and poor readers, and that such perceptions were an inherent product of differentiated reading instruction.

Specific Perceptions of Disabled Readers

Most studies with disabled readers have focused on older students and adults, primarily because these groups are better able to articulate the complexities of having reading disabilities. The information gained from these studies has provided useful knowledge about the development of reading disabilities, about more effective instructional programs for older disabled readers, and about the complexity of affective factors associated with reading
disabilities.

Studies such as those by Gambrell and Heathington (1981) have shown that adult disabled readers tend to view reading as a process of decoding words. Furthermore, the adult poor readers were unable to use or describe any independent strategies for figuring out an unknown word in a text. This lack of knowledge of various reading strategies appeared to be a major contributing factor to reading disabilities and also acted to perpetuate the reading problem as the adults were dependent upon others for help--help which they were reluctant to request.

Johnston (1985) tutored and interviewed 3 adults with reading disabilities to examine the psychological and social factors involved in reading failure. Johnston discovered that in the early grades two of the men had memorized as many of the stories read in class as possible. They assumed that the other children did also. One man had not learned the concept of letter/sound correspondences and reported being baffled when the other children knew the words on flashcards. To cover their confusion and embarrassment, the men early on developed strategies to keep from being exposed as nonreaders. As adults, holding responsible jobs, they had developed many complicated strategies for avoiding exposure. As the study progressed, the men talked of the anxiety inherent in reading tasks. One man reported skimming the page for unknown words and then being so
anxious about the hard words coming up that he could not think about the words he was reading. The men had each developed certain maladaptive strategies that kept them from developing more useful strategies. For instance, one man reported trying to distinguish words by the number of letters, not by the letters themselves. It as apparent from their comments, that while all three men were able to support their families and live relatively normal lives, lack of reading ability was a constant worry affecting self-confidence, job promotions, and self-esteem.

A similar study was conducted by Charnley and Jones (1979). Adult illiterates enrolled in a government funded tutoring clinic were interviewed concerning their educational experiences, perceptions of tutors, and affective, social, and economic achievements as they related to literacy growth. An important finding in this study was the adults’ continuous reference to the embarrassment of not being able to read. Further probing indicated that the term embarrassment stood for a range of emotions ranging from panic and dread to depression and defensiveness. The students also felt that many tutors had no concept of the difficulties students faced in even deciding to seek tutoring, much less risking possible failure at every session. As one man stated angrily, "You do not know what it means to have this problem. How can you? You can do it [read]." It should be noted that many of the tutors in this
clinic were volunteers with little training in reading instruction. For some students the dread was so great that they could not return for tutoring. However, those who remained and began to experience some success exhibited positive changes in attitudes. Their self-confidence grew and they became more active participants in their learning process. One necessary factor in this success seemed to be a tutor who shared the same criteria for success as the student. Otherwise, students reported that the tutor expected too much of them, which the students interpreted as negative judgments on their abilities.

Nicholson (1982, 1984) interviewed both good and poor high school readers concerning their content area classes. The poor readers expressed great difficulty in keeping up with their classmates during class reading. It was easier for them to listen rather than follow along in the book, indicating that the class materials were often at these students' reading frustration level. The good readers said they read frequently outside of class, whereas the poor readers said they had not read more than one or two books in their lives. Furthermore, peer pressure often made poor readers uncomfortable about being seen in the school library. Errors made by the poor readers on assignments were usually a combination of difficult materials and a lack of understanding of the concepts the teacher was expecting to be learned. Students tended to develop complicated
strategies to overcome their difficulties, and often substituted their own world knowledge when the information in the text was confusing. This resulted in some interesting, but erroneous, answers. It was also found that teachers rarely responded to these errors, so that while the students would know the answer was wrong, they were given no guidance for correcting their misperceptions. Nicholson suggested that teachers are hesitant to deal with errors as errors are viewed as a negative reflection on their teaching. This view tends to produce classes where on the surface learning seems to be occurring, although actually some students are becoming more confused.

Summary

Many etiologies for reading disabilities have been proposed over the decades. Instead of finding one definitive cause, researchers have discovered that reading disabilities are the result of multiple factors and each reading disabled person may have a unique combination of factors which are inhibiting his/her reading development. Contributing factors may include attributions of the reader, motivation, poor metacognitive skills, or sociocultural background, among others. One of the means of gaining better understanding of reading disabilities has been through exploring the perceptions of people who have reading disabilities. Through such studies, insights have been gained into the importance of acknowledging the many
affective pressures which affect these people. Also, much has been learned about the initial misunderstandings about the reading process developed by some children, which, if left uncorrected, could start the child on the road to dysfunctional reading. Furthermore, listening to older reading disabled students has begun to help educators understand how to better structure learning events and to better train teachers to provide less threatening environments for these already anxious students.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to explore the literacy acquisition of reading disabled adolescents in relation to affective, social and educational factors which may have impinged on their reading development, the students' perceptions concerning reading and reading instruction, and educational responses directed toward the students. Data were used to develop hypotheses concerning these adolescents' continuing inability to improve their reading proficiency. Qualitative research methodology was used to develop multiple case studies which were analyzed individually and across cases.

Rationale of Research Methodology

Questions dealing with the meanings people ascribe to actions and events, such as the research questions in the present study, lend themselves to investigation through qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is based on methods developed in the fields of anthropology, history, and sociology, where researchers have been interested in the behaviors and communication of individuals with the hope of developing understandings of these events.
Qualitative researchers explore the meanings of others by using themselves as research instruments, observing and interacting with the individuals of interest. Techniques such as observation, participant observation, open-ended interviewing, and document or artifact review are used to generate thick descriptions of the events, behaviors, and communications of individuals (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). A constant-comparative method of data collection and analysis allows for the development of a grounded theory concerning the meanings of the actions observed (Glaser, 1978). Some of the strengths associated with the use of qualitative research are the development of a holistic view of individuals, including consideration of cultural, social, and ethnic influences; an equalitarian relationship between the researcher and the individual under study in which the researcher becomes the learner; and the opportunity to observe individuals in natural settings.

Qualitative research in education has been controversial since the basic premises are in opposition to those on which some established quantitative research methodologies are based (e.g., constructed realities versus cause and effect). While Howe (1988) suggests that the time has come for the controversy to end and for each paradigm to be accepted on its own merits, it does appear that qualitative researchers in training spend considerable time not only learning how to apply the methodology, but also
learning how to defend it. Some differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods may include ongoing versus concluding data analysis, description of multiple realities versus statistical descriptions, and an evolving, flexible design versus a structured, predetermined design. More controversial aspects of qualitative research include subjectivity issues, reliability, and generalizability. Arguments concerning these issues have been presented in the literature (Cronbach, 1975; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1978). The question of generalizability in qualitative research has fostered discussion into the meaning of generalizability in quantitative research also (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), that is whether generalizability can be an objective phenomenon or whether it is a psychological phenomenon. A discussion of generalizability, as it applies to case studies, follows.

Applicability of Case Study Research

One issue related to use of case studies as research data is that they may present such unique observations that they have little if any generalizability. However, Donmoyer (1988) proposes that the traditional concept of generalizability as used by social scientists may no longer be compatible with contemporary views of the research needs in the applied social sciences such as social work and
education. Furthermore, continuing adherence to a traditional concept of generalizability may limit researchers’ efforts to view problems from new perspectives.

The traditional view of generalization was based on the assumption that the universe, both physical and social, was a place of causes and effects, continually played out in a regular fashion. However, current thinking contends that human action is not caused, but constructed from human interactions (Kelly, 1955). Furthermore, it is proposed that people act on the basis of what these interactions mean to them. The same interaction could presumably carry different meanings for each participant, and these meanings may change based on new information received by each participant. This can be illustrated by a situation familiar to most people, that of finding oneself in the midst of a conversation that is not understood. Later, when given new information by one of the participants, the listener is able to make connections to the meanings of the participants and suddenly have a sense of understanding about a previously confusing encounter. The original confusion was based upon a priori assumptions about what would occur in that situation. When the reality did not match with the assumptions, confusion resulted. New information allowed for a construction of new meaning.
A priori assumptions affect all human interactions in that they represent each person's interpretation of reality, that is the meanings they have previously constructed. It follows that social scientists also possess a priori assumptions that ineludibly affect their interpretations of their research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that generalizability is a flawed concept, based upon human assumptions which may also be flawed. One questionable assumption is that human activities can be analyzed and reduced to a set of generalizations that will hold true across time and space, in other words that they will be context free.

The decontextualization of human activities can be particularly problematic for social scientists since much of their work involves observing and analyzing people's talk and interactions. Many linguists would argue that human talk cannot be decontextualized and still be easily understood (Akmaian, Demers, & Harnish, 1984). Communication takes place within the context of defined social situations, and the participants rely on each other to make their meanings clear. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1982), in a discussion of communicative competence, state that there are folk communicative conventions and that what is deemed as "persuasive, what is appropriate or what is even grammatical speech, are always context bound" (p. 15). Trudgill (1974) points out that language will vary depending
upon the social context, and therefore the social context must be understood before meaning can be shared. This applies to case studies in that they provide for a rich description of the context in which talk and interactions occur, providing the reader with as much information as possible to interpret the meanings of the people involved. This interpretation will also be an interaction since the readers will be required to draw upon their own experiential knowledge, apply it to the context described in the text, and assign the meanings which make sense to them.

Donmoyer (1988) uses experiential knowledge as a basis for proposing an alternative conception of generalization which draws on Piagetian principles of assimilation and accommodation and on schema theory. He proposes that much of our experiential knowledge is tacit, and that this knowledge is expanded through interactions where new meanings are constructed. Also, experiential knowledge is frequently affective knowledge. Novel experiences stimulate accommodation, resulting in more integrated and differentiated cognitive structures which allow the person to "perceive more richly and, hopefully, act more intelligently" (Donmoyer, 1988, p. 23). Donmoyer further proposes that case studies provide vicarious experiences just as do captivating stories or films, which can create a reality "within our imaginations" (p. 24), allowing us to experience people, places, and situations otherwise
unavailable or not yet experienced. The purpose of case studies then becomes, not one of generalization, but one of expanding the experiences and possible interpretations available to the reader. This further implies that uniqueness can be viewed as a positive aspect of case studies since unique aspects of an experience have the potential to expand a person's cognitive structures more than do the typical aspects of an experience.

Spiro's (1988) arguments for an expanded view of schema theory have implications for this discussion. Spiro states that knowledge acquisition must address the integration and transfer of knowledge. He suggests that examination of multiple situations and multiple perspectives may help individuals develop cognitive flexibility. For instance, a problem dealing with chemical waste presented from the perspectives of environmentalists, chemical producers, workers in the chemical industry, and the government would provide individuals with an awareness of complexities in problems and require individuals to think beyond simplistic solutions. Spiro proposes that such learning situations could be provided through the presentation of complex cases.

Spiro's views apply to the present study at several levels. Teachers may benefit from the information gained from case studies concerning students with reading difficulties. They could apply this vicariously obtained knowledge to their students when appropriate and thereby
enrich their teaching practices. To develop successful programs for reading disabled students, program planners need to be aware of those aspects of instruction and school environment considered beneficial by the students themselves. Finally, policymakers need to be able to consider the human element when formulating policies that will impact on schools, teachers, and students. Case studies, such as those to be developed from this study, may be an ideal way to help policymakers and education professionals expand their knowledge of students, transfer this knowledge to their own endeavors, and develop promising solutions to the complex problem of reading disabled students.

Respondents

Respondents in this study were 4 reading disabled adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15. Participating students were selected because of their inability to read, with comprehension, materials above the 3rd grade level, as determined by informal reading testing. While there is little consensus on how literacy may be defined (Taber, 1987), this reading level restriction was applied for the present study because no definition sets its acceptable standard below the fourth-grade level.

The present multi-case study research included 4 students who were purposively selected to provide a diversity of experience, race, and sociocultural background.
A description of the students' backgrounds may be seen in Table 1. Two of the students were obtained from a university reading clinic, and 2 were obtained through recommendations from the instructional leader at their school. The parents of the students were contacted and the research project was explained. When they indicated interest in having their son or daughter participate, an appointment was made to give the student the Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1989), an informal assessment based on oral reading errors and on oral and silent reading comprehension. Since all of the students obtained an instructional reading level ranging from preprimer through second grade, they were considered for inclusion. The student's willingness to participate in the study was assessed through an informal conversation with the student during which the researcher explained the study and the student's role. When both the parent(s) and the student agreed to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form which outlined the study and made clear their option of withdrawing from the study at any time. The researcher explained that in return for participating in the study, the students would receive reading tutoring provided by the researcher, a qualified, experienced reading and learning disabilities specialist. While the present study was not an intervention study, the researcher anticipated that reading improvement might result.
Table 1

Description of Students' Backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEX</strong></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RACE</strong></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND</strong></td>
<td>poverty/middle&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>middle</td>
<td>working</td>
<td>working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARENTS IN HOME</strong></td>
<td>foster/father&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOTHER'S EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>high school</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT</strong></td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>Regular class</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPROXIMATE READING LEVEL</strong></td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Primer</td>
<td>Preprimer</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Ben was born into poverty conditions, placed into foster care at an early age, and adopted by a single father at the age of 13.
Scheduled student participation in the study was flexible to take into account family and school schedules. A projected range for student participation in the study was a minimum of 6 sessions and a maximum of 20 sessions. Data collection was not kept to a strict schedule since factors such as development of mutual trust between students and researcher, as well as differences in students' loquacity and thoughtfulness affected the amount and quality of data collected within any given time period. There were a total of 44 sessions in which data was collected from the students. Each session was between 45 minutes and 1 hour long. Ben, Karen, and Will were seen 14, 12, and 11 times, respectively. Missie was seen only 7 times because at the end of the school year her family moved. Students were seen individually. Termination of data collection was based on data saturation, discussed below.

Data Sources

The case studies resulting from this research were developed by combining several qualitative approaches to data collection. These included participant observation, open-ended interviewing, field observations, and document research. Multiple sources were necessary to provide for the richest description possible of the students' environments, behaviors, interactions, and meanings, as they related to reading. The sources were tapped in an constant-
comparative process of collection, analysis, focusing.

**Participant Observation**

In this study, participant observation occurred during the time the researcher was tutoring the students. This was an essential part of the study, providing an opportunity to build a trusting relationship in which the student was able to speak freely. It also provided a context for exploring reading and an opportunity for confirmation of some data obtained from the student concerning reading. The tutoring sessions entailed both oral and silent reading, with emphasis on comprehension of the text. Students were helped to gain awareness and use of various reading strategies. Practice in using the strategies was gained through reading a wide variety of good children’s literature, both fiction and nonfiction, chosen to suit each student’s interests and needs. Tutoring sessions were held twice weekly for 45 to 60 minutes, either in the researcher’s office or in a room set aside for student consultations in a local middle school. The present study was not an intervention study, and while for some students improvement in reading may have occurred, reading improvement was not the focus of the study.

Data were collected in three ways: audiotaping, compiling field notes, and videotaping. All sessions were audiotaped with the exception of two sessions during which the tape recorder was inoperable. All tapes were
transcribed verbatim (see Appendix A for a sample transcription).

Field notes were written immediately following each session and before the subsequent session. In the field notes, the researcher attempted to be as descriptive as possible. Abstract words were avoided in favor of rich detailed accounts of activities, environments, and dialogues. Descriptions of respondents were written which included physical appearance and mannerisms. Dialogue that was not recorded was reconstructed as closely as possible with quotes being used to indicate either a literal account of dialogue or a close approximation of what was said (see Appendix B for a sample from the field notes).

Videotapes were made of 3 of the students during at least one of their tutoring sessions. The fourth student requested that he not be videotaped. Videotapes were viewed by the researcher and field notes taken from the videotapes to provide a record of nonverbal behaviors which aided in the interpretation of student actions and meanings. While videotaping was useful to the researcher for the first case study since the tapes helped the researcher refine her observation skills, the usefulness of the videotapes appeared to lessen in the final case studies. It was more useful to make notes on behaviors as they occurred.
Open-ended Interviews

Interviews in the form of a semi-structured dialogue were conducted with each student and at least one of their teachers, these teachers being selected because reading was an integral part of their classes (e.g., reading, language arts, or social studies). Although there were certain broad questions which were asked of all students and other broad questions asked of all teachers, most interview questions were dependent upon information obtained from a previous question or from a previous session. A list of common questions asked of all students and teachers is provided in Table 2.

The researcher's interview strategies were based primarily on guidelines proposed by Spradley (1979) for ethnographic studies. Spradley views interviews as a speech event in which the interview situation shares many of the characteristics of a friendly conversation. There may be lapses into irrelevant talk, the pace is casual and nonthreatening, and the interviewer maintains rapport by slowly introducing new elements for discussion in a naturally occurring manner.

The three major elements of an ethnographic interview are its explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic questions. The explicit purpose is informally agreed on at the beginning of the interview when both participants acknowledge that there is a purpose to the
Table 2

Common Questions Asked of All Students and Teachers

Student Questions

1. How will reading better help you?
2. How does reading poorly affect you?
3. What do you do when you read?
4. How hard do you try when you read?
5. When do you first remember being read to as a child?
6. What do teachers do to help you read better?
7. What could the school do to give you more help?

Teacher Questions

1. Why do you think this student is not reading better?
2. What are this student’s strengths?
3. What are this student’s weaknesses?
4. Do you make any modifications for this student in your class? If so, what kind?
5. Describe this student’s behaviors in your classroom?
6. What do you think the school could do to help this student?
7. What are your recommendations for instruction?
talk. The interviewer establishes this purpose by introducing the question, usually in a loosely defined manner. Too much detail may result in restricting the informants' responses.

*Ethnographic explanations* are explanations provided to the informant by the interviewer concerning what the research entails, why the research is being conducted, and what the researcher expects from the informant. This helps to promote cooperation and a sense of shared purpose between the two.

There are two categories of *ethnographic questions*. Grand tour questions are those questions asked, particularly at the beginning of the study, that generate broad responses and basically move around the research question. These questions are often expressed as, "Tell me all you can about..." or "Can you describe...?" Grand tour questions in the present study were comprised of the research subquestions (see Chapter I). From the responses to these questions, the researcher generated mini-tour questions that gathered information about smaller aspects of an experience. These questions were more specific and drew from a previous response of the informant about which the researcher sought more information. An example of such a question was, "Yesterday you told me what your reading class was like. Can you tell me about the last story you read in that class?" These questions, in turn, were
followed by more questions that focused on even smaller details or clarified past responses. To generate quality questions, it was necessary for analysis to be an ongoing part of interviewing.

**Student interviews.** Student interviews were conducted throughout the data collection. The first interview was preceded by participant/observation during which the students read from a variety of texts while the researcher observed reading behaviors. The interview was initiated by reminding the students that one of the things to be accomplished in the study was to explore their thoughts and opinions about reading and how they were taught reading. The initial grand tour question elicited information about why students felt they did or did not need to read better. This was to aid the researcher in developing a sense of the student's thoughts on and attitudes toward reading. Interviews were usually 15 to 30 minutes in length. Within tutoring sessions, there arose occasions in which short unplanned interviews occurred in response to a behavior or comment by the student. Prior to ending the students' participation in the study, the grand tour questions were repeated to explore possible changes in thoughts or attitudes concerning reading.

**Teacher interviews.** Interviews were conducted with one or two teachers of each student. Teachers selected were the ones who had the most responsibility for the student's
reading instruction in the school situation. The second teacher was selected based on the content of the class, that is, whether the class provided opportunities for the teacher to observe the student in reading situations. These interviews were conducted in the school with the permission of the administrators and the teacher, and at a time mutually convenient to the teacher and the researcher. Interviews were between 30 and 50 minutes in length.

The researcher explained the nature of the study to the teachers prior to the interviews. During the interview, the teacher was asked semi-structured questions to prompt her/his perceptions of the abilities and difficulties of the student (see Table 2). The researcher attempted to obtain information concerning the teacher's views concerning the student's reading disability and the factors which may have contributed to the maintenance or improvement of the reading problem. The teacher's recommendations for instruction of the student were solicited.

Field Observations

The researcher observed in two classes of three of the four students, including at least one observation in a class in which reading was an integral part. Two of the students, including the one whose classrooms were not observed, were observed during the tutoring sessions at a university reading clinic. The researcher wrote extensive field notes concerning classroom environment, teacher style, lesson
content, student behaviors, peer interactions, and student-teacher interactions. Permission to observe was obtained through official university channels and through the principal and the individual teachers involved.

Document Research

During the course of the study the educational records of each student were examined. Data were collected concerning prior school performance, psychological testing, achievement testing, attendance, pertinent family information, special education placements, and records of behavior patterns. All pertinent comments by school personnel were noted. This information developed a picture of the student's school experiences.

Analysis of Data

There were two stages of data analysis in the present study. The first stage involved analysis of the data from each individual case study. In the second stage a cross-case analysis was undertaken to uncover strands which were interwoven across cases and to provide a framework for the development of a grounded theory concerning the difficulties with literacy acquisition experienced by the students in the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Individual Cases

The analysis of data was an ongoing process beginning with the first set of data collected. Data analysis was
primarily guided by principles set forth in Spradley's (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview* and by Donmoyer's (1985) explanation of ethnographic semantics. Also, a computer program, *The Ethnograph* (Seidel, Kjolseth, & Seymour, 1988), was used to facilitate the analysis of data. However, it should be noted that no computer program can replace the interpretive parts of data analysis. *The Ethnograph* is a tool which researchers have found helpful in managing large amounts of data, including categorizing data in many different ways to determine the best fit, accessing narrative in context, and comparing sections of data for triangulation purposes.

Analysis began with a preliminary search through the transcriptions of responses and the field notes. In doing so, the researcher looked for words that had been used to name, describe, or characterize things, events, or feelings. These terms were coded for further study. This examination was assisted by line-numbered print-outs of the transcripts generated by *The Ethnograph*. Words or phrases that could be characterized by a common descriptive term were marked by beginning and ending line numbers. These numbers and terms were entered into *The Ethnograph* program, and transcripts were printed out once more with the terms printed next to the originating line or segment. These lines or segments were marked with symbols generated by the program and were accessed as needed. Some segments were also coded in
several different ways (see Appendix C for a sample printout). This was an ongoing process which was fashioned by the researcher's analysis needs.

After responses to questions were transcribed and coded, terms gathered were reviewed in context on the code-marked print-outs to determine if there were similarities in use of terms and to determine a range in meanings assigned to terms. For example, one student described reading as fun. By reviewing ways this student expressed enjoyment about reading, it was possible to develop a range of meanings concerning reading as fun. As the researcher continued through the data, hypotheses were developed, modified, or abandoned. Additional interview data continued to be added throughout this process until the researcher decided that sufficient data to answer the research question had been collected. The data was then reduced to terms and short descriptive phrases and displayed on a web or chart (see Appendix D for a sample chart).

While Spradley (1979) has broken the analytic process into discrete steps, no qualitative analysis is completed in a linear or sequential manner. Decisions of researchers, influenced by their theoretical perspective, are a major tool of qualitative analysis. The researcher decides which pieces of data to attend to and what follow-up questions will be asked. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) describe this as internal sampling, referring to the decisions the
researcher must make regarding quality of information obtained, sampling of data sources, need for additional data, interpretation of meanings, and termination of data collection. In the present study, Spradley's suggestions for analysis, described in preceding sections, provided principles which were applied as needed. The Ethnograph was also a tool that responded to the needs of the researcher at various points in the analysis process. However, the most important aspect of analysis was the researcher's careful consideration of interpretations placed on others' meanings.

The decision to end data collection was based upon data saturation. Data saturation occurs when little new information is being obtained and the data being obtained does not contribute usefully to the study. At this point researchers can conclude that they have adequately sampled all chosen data sources and that they have sufficient information to address the questions upon which they have focused.

Cross-case Analysis

A multiple-case study was undertaken because of the potential, through cross-case analysis, for providing greater explanatory power to the findings in the study. The researcher attempts to find explanations that fit each of the cases even though the cases vary in details (Merriam, 1988). The cross-case analysis uses the same constant
comparative method of analysis as is employed in individual cases. However, cross-case analysis uses the reduced data from the individual cases to determine relationships between the cases. Prior to cross-case analysis, the data from each case had been reduced and displayed in a web or chart. These charts were used to compare and group data across cases, explore similarities and differences, and develop relationships. It is through cross-case analysis that the beginnings of a grounded theory may emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Table 3 depicts an approximation of the flow of this analysis.

Establishing Credibility

Credibility is the term used in qualitative research which is equivalent to establishment of internal validity in quantitative methodologies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results of a qualitative study must be credible, that is, they must be able to undergo scrutiny as to how researchers came to their conclusions. Lincoln and Guba suggest several methods, some of which were used in the present study.

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the process of verifying data through multiple sources. In the present study, the researcher accessed multiple data sources (participant
Table 3

Flow of the Analysis of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUAL CASES</th>
<th>ALL CASES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify descriptive terms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Establish range of meanings</td>
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<td>assigned to terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Develop hypotheses</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Reduce data and display</td>
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<td>on chart</td>
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<td>5. Use charts to</td>
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<tr>
<td>compare and group</td>
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<td>data</td>
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<td>6. Establish</td>
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<td>similarities and</td>
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<tr>
<td>differences</td>
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<td>7. Develop relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Develop theory</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
observation, open-ended interviews, field observations, and document research) as a means of providing triangulation.

**Peer Debriefing**

Peer debriefing is an important part of qualitative research, allowing the researcher to present data to other researchers for their critique of methods, data interpretations, and theoretical hypotheses. The peer debriefers in the present study were graduate students who also were engaged in qualitative research. During debriefing meetings portions of the research data (consisting of field notes, audiotapes, videotapes, or transcriptions) were presented. The peer debriefers attended to the data, asked questions of the researcher, and then presented critiques of methods and data interpretations. Theoretical concerns were also discussed. This discussion was followed by suggestions concerning further lines of questioning or focusing of the study. Peer debriefing differs from traditional reliability checks in that agreement concerning interpretations is not always necessary. Qualitative researchers operate under the assumption that differing interpretations may occur due to the varying information each person brings to the task. The importance of peer debriefing rests in the discussion concerning data and theory which aids the researcher in focusing the study. In this study, early peer debriefings were the most productive because they provided the
researcher with new questions, with ways to improve open-ended interviewing techniques, and with suggestions for more efficient means of collecting and managing data. As a result of early peer debriefings, the original research questions, which were limited to student perceptions, were expanded and refined. A sample of notes from a peer debriefing may be seen in Appendix E.

In the present study there were 23 peer debriefings. Early in the study, debriefings were sometimes conducted with students in qualitative research classes, ranging from classes of 5 to approximately 20. More typically, debriefing sessions consisted of the researcher and one or two graduate students who were also engaged in qualitative research. There were 9 debriefing sessions during data collection for the first case study (Ben), 5 of which were with the class groups. For the second case study (Karen), there were 7 debriefings, 1 of which was with a small class group of 5 students. The final two case studies (Will and Missie) were done with individual peer debriefers, with 4 and 3 sessions being conducted respectively. The final peer debriefing occurred when the research began the cross-case analysis.

**Member Checks**

A technique that was used frequently in this study was that of member checking. This involved presenting respondents with data collected from them and asking them to
confirm, add to, or clarify what had been written or recorded. Member checking occurred continuously for all participants throughout the study, and at a minimum on a weekly basis. For example, on several instances after videotaping a session, the researcher asked the student to view the tape and tell the researcher what was happening during particular segments. Any responses by the respondents were included in the transcripts or field notes for that day. These responses also provided means for reanalysis of segments of data, enabling the researcher to bring greater clarity to interpretations of the student's meanings.

**Reflexive Journal**

The reflexive journal aids in the establishment not only of credibility, but also transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this journal, researchers record information about their own thoughts, theories, and methods. In other words, it is the means by which the human instrument used in qualitative research can be known by research consumers. It is, in a sense, a diary in which researchers record such things as anxieties about decisions, reasons for using a particular method, reasons for reexamining a particular data source, and relationships inferred from the data that caused them to categorize the data as they did. The present researcher's reflexive
journal contains: (a) a research schedule, that is, the sequence of events occurring during the study, (b) a methodological log, (c) a section for theoretical reflections, and (d) a section for personal notes. A sample of notes from the reflexive journal may be seen in Appendix F.

Summary

Qualitative research methods were used to develop case studies concerning reading disabled students for the present study. Qualitative research methods provide a means of exploring the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events. Data collection methods consisted of participant observation during which the researcher individually tutored the students, open-ended interviews with students and teachers, field observations in classrooms, and document research. These sources were explored in a constant-comparative process of collection, analysis, and focusing of the study. During data analysis, ranges of meanings students ascribed to events and actions were developed by reviewing words or phrases in the data which could be characterized by a common descriptive term. These assigned terms allowed the data to be reduced and displayed in chart form. The charts were then used to compare and contrast data across cases. The cross-case analysis supplied the foundation for building a grounded theory concerning the affective, social, and educational factors which may have
affected the literacy acquisition of the students under study. The researcher made provisions for establishing credibility through triangulation of data, peer debriefings, member checks, and reflexive journal entries.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS: INDIVIDUAL CASES

The question under consideration in the present study was the identification of affective, social, and educational factors which may have contributed to the development of reading disabilities in 4 students. The effectiveness of educational responses to reading disabled students in light of the similarities and differences in this category of students was also explored. Students were evaluated in terms of their stage of literacy development and in terms of their potential to improve their level of reading. Multiple data sources, including students' perceptions concerning reading and reading instruction, were used to provide an holistic view of each student.

In the course of developing the four cases included in this study, it became clear that multiple factors had impinged on the development of each student's reading disability. While some factors were apparent in varying degrees for more than one case, each case was unique in the way the factors intermeshed. These cases give evidence for the multiple causation view of reading disability as presented by researchers such as Witty and Kopel (1936),
Johnston and Winograd (1985) and Lipson and Wixson (1986). Some of the factors which emerged from the cases in the present study included: (a) low teacher expectations, (b) poor reading-related metacognitive skills, (c) lack of early literacy experiences with books, (d) student disengagement from school, (e) stress-related behaviors, (f) inappropriate instruction, and (g) student reliance on limited strategies when reading.

The first case is taken from pilot study data, and is included because the student represents a somewhat stereotypical conception of a student who experiences difficulties in school. Factors which seemed to affect his literacy development were early environmental conditions, emotional problems, behavior problems, and low teacher expectations. The study of this young man sets the stage for variations found in the cases of the other students.

The second case describes a female middle school student of below average cognitive functioning. While she appears to have qualified for special education placement, she has received little extra help with reading and few modifications in her regular class program. Instruction appears to have reinforced her lack of use of multiple strategies when reading. She is unique among the cases in that she is the only student presented whom teachers judged as being likeable, pleasant, and willing to put forth effort in class. Her personality appeared to be a factor in her
school experiences.

The male middle school student in the third case displayed the most severe reading disability. He became alienated from school at an early age due to his lack of success. Special education placement has not appeared to have helped him, and instruction has been geared toward reinforcing the one strategy that he consistently used when trying to read.

The final case describes a female middle school student who has a high-frequency hearing loss in both ears which retarded her language development as a young child. She does not appear to be receiving sufficient opportunities to further develop her reading skills. She is sensitive about her reading abilities, and her fear of ridicule may have resulted in the development of inappropriate behaviors.

Each case is divided into five sections. These sections are:

- Description of Student
- Description of Student's Reading Behaviors
- Student Perceptions about Reading
- Educational Records
- Classroom Observations/Teacher Perceptions

*Description of students* includes personal, family, and sociocultural information. Factors related to reading development outside of the school, such as early literacy experiences are also provided.
Description of student's reading behaviors are based on fieldnotes and audiotapes taken during the participant observation portion of the study. Strategies used by students are presented as well as examples of student reading.

Student perceptions about reading are taken from interview data. They provide pertinent information obtained during the study in that they offer insights into students' motivations concerning reading and students' interpretations of what has occurred during the course of their schooling. Regardless of perceptions of others, students' views are likely to be the ones they act on (Kelly, 1955).

Educational records are included to provide a view of how the student has been dealt with by the educational system. Testing scores and evidence of special placements are provided.

Classroom observations and teacher perceptions provide information on how the student interacts in the classroom environment and how the teacher perceives the student and his/her reading skills. Evidence of modifications or accommodations in the classroom are provided.

At the end of each case study are the researcher's interpretations of the data, focusing on factors that appear to have affected the literacy growth of the student. This interpretation draws from the literature to establish
possible contributors to the student's reading disability.

While the cases develop a range of unique aspects found in reading disabled students, they also suggest several underlying common themes that have implications for changes in the typical responses schools make toward these students. (These themes will be presented and discussed in Chapter V.)

The names of all students, teachers, and administrators are fictitious to help insure anonymity.

Case Study 1 - Ben

The first case study describes a student who has been disadvantaged both emotionally and environmentally. Records indicate that he appeared to enter school with little knowledge of how school works or how he was expected to behave. Teacher reports indicated that he seemed to have difficulty picking up the rules of the classroom -- rules which may have been explicit or implicit. As a result, teachers perceived Ben as a behavior problems, and began to put their energies into controlling Ben.

Description of Student

When he began in the study, Ben was a 15-year-old Black student in the eighth grade. He was reading at the first-grade level. As an infant and young child, he lived in with a single mother. Reports indicate he may have received less than adequate care. At the age of 5, he was removed from his home and placed in a series of foster homes until
the age of 13. At that time he was adopted by a single Black man. Ben and his new father have established a close relationship, with the father acting as Ben's advocate in educational matters.

Ben is a tall, slender young man who enjoys sports and rap music. He dresses well, enjoying the feeling of looking good and having nice clothes. His father is trying to provide him with some of the things he never had as a child, but Ben is not pampered in the home. The father has established rules which Ben must follow if he wishes to avoid punishments, such as grounding or loss of privileges. Ben's father is consistent in his discipline, and Ben appears to be thriving in that environment.

Due to the conditions of his early childhood, Ben may have had few early literacy experiences, especially experiences connected with books. The first time he can remember being read to was in kindergarten. It was difficult for him to attend to the stories since he was a restless and undirected child. He remembers falling asleep sometimes during the stories because he had to sit still. Ben also remembers enjoying sitting right next to the kindergarten teacher when she read. He said that she put her arm around him, so it may be that he enjoyed the closeness as much as the story. Currently, he has a small collection of books and magazines on his bookshelf. His father takes him to the library and helps Ben find
interesting books.

Ben can be difficult to understand because he speaks quickly and has a tendency to slur his words. While at least one teacher reported that her difficulty in communicating with Ben was due to his Black dialect, the researcher did not find this to be the case, unless he was speaking quickly with his peers.

Ben has few goals for the future. He expects to graduate from high school, and he dreams of being a professional basketball player someday, but believes that he would have to go to college to do so. Graduating from high school may be the hardest goal to achieve. Ben enjoys the social life at school, but appears to have little use for the content of his learning disability classes. The researcher inferred this from his frequent comments about school classes being boring and about problems he frequently had with teachers. Also, Ben's posture and voice often changed when he talked about his classes. He would slump in his chair, speak in a monotone voice, and sometimes find objects to play with that might divert attention away from the conversation. In contrast, he talked enthusiastically about playing basketball before school and at lunch with his friends.

Description of Student's Reading Behaviors

At the beginning of the pilot study with Ben, he had recently been tested at a university reading clinic. A
reading grade equivalent of primer level was obtained from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Form A, Level 1 (MacGinitie, 1978). One tutor reported to the researcher that Ben made little effort during testing, and refused to complete the comprehension section.

Tutor: Throughout the test, he was extremely restless. It seemed as though he was just going through the motions. (Field-notes, #31-B)

Approximately 6 months later, the researcher administered the Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1985) and found that Ben read with ease and understanding at the second-grade level. On the third-grade story of the inventory, Ben was at frustration level, mostly due to his lack of knowledge of some content words which affected his comprehension. It appeared that his previous standardized scores may have been depressed due to his lack of effort during the testing.

Reading strategies. Ben used the following word identification strategies, usually in the sequence shown.

1. Sound out the word using initial and final consonants.
2. Guess at the word. (If the guess made sense at that point in the sentence, even if it was not the text word, he would read on, often losing the meaning.)
3. Break the word into parts.
4. Skip the word.
5. Ask for help.

His strengths were a fairly good knowledge of basic sight word vocabulary and the ability to recognize phonemic and morphemic units in words. His greatest weaknesses were a
deficient knowledge of word meanings and a lack of self-monitoring skills. He frequently would try to figure out a word and then either guess or skip it, without seeming at all concerned about the loss of meaning. It is possible that this approach to hard words was also a way to seem like a good reader, because good readers do not often have to ask for help.

Ben described his approach to reading in the following excerpt from a tutoring session.

R: When you have a book in front of you, how hard do you try?
B: I try hard.
R: Tell me what you do that someone else would be able to observe that shows you try hard.
B: When I get stuck, I don’t ask for help. I try to do it myself.
R: What do you try to do?
B: Try to pronounce them out.
R: How would you - Let’s say I gave you this word right here, um... (Writes word propositional)... How would you go about trying to figure out what that word was?
B: Split it between that.
R: Where would you split it?
B: (point to space between prop and o)
R: What does that say?
B: Prop-o
R: Okay, go on. Now what else would you do?
B: Proposition. Uh, I don’t know that word.
R: You just said all but the last two letters. B: Personal?
R: Proposition...? (points to last letters)
B: Propositional! Still don’t know it.
   (Audiotape - #11-B)

This exercise pointed out a sequence of strategies. Ben first looked at the initial letters, clustering them into a pronounceable segment. He attempted to work through to the end of the word. If the word didn’t make sense, he made a
guess based on initial and sometimes final word features. If the guess was incorrect, he simply continued to read, regardless of loss of meaning. He was able to blend morphemic units together to make a sound that seemed like a word.

Conceptual vocabulary. Ben’s lack of enriching experiences as a child seems to have limited his vocabulary. While he could read adequately at about the second-grade level, above that level, where more difficult meaning vocabulary begins to appear, his reading broke down. As an example, Ben chose to read a book, *The Grey Squirrel* (1982) which was slightly above the second-grade level. He chose this book because he had recently spent time feeding squirrels with the researcher. When reading the book, he missed the meanings of a number of words including *incisor*, *kernel*, and *fungus*. He pronounced these correctly, and read over them with little hesitation. If the researcher had not noticed a puzzled look on his face, she would have assumed he knew the words. For instance, for the word *incisors*, the sentence read:

The squirrel uses his incisors to open the nuts.

The accompanying picture showed a squirrel holding a nut up to his mouth. When asked what the sentence meant, Ben answered:

B: It means he has hands that can open nuts.
R: Do you know what *incisor* means?
B: No. (Fieldnotes, #23-B)
When he answered no, his tone of voice suggested that the researcher should have known he didn’t know that word. Other words from this same selection for which he did not know the meanings even though he could pronounce them were reveal, conceal, badger, and rural. His lack of knowledge of fairly common word meanings for a 15-year-old may indicate why he experienced difficulty with school content area materials.

Effort. During tutoring sessions with the researcher, Ben was able to maintain concentration throughout the 60-minute session, but not without help. Ben had well-developed strategies for avoiding reading. During attendance at a university reading clinic for two quarters, his tutors frequently made such complaints as:

"He falls asleep in the middle of the book!"

"He doesn’t want to do anything."

"He’s not trying!" (personal communications)

Observations of the university tutoring sessions by the researcher showed that Ben’s lack of effort may have been a strategy to get out of reading. He could be actively engaged in a reading-related game, but when a book was placed in front of him, he seemingly lost interest, became tired, or became uncooperative. After about four sentences, his eyes began to droop, his voice became slurred, and soon he looked almost asleep. These behaviors often had the effect of confusing or angering the tutors, who then focused
their efforts on behavior control, not reading instruction. In a sense, Ben took control of the tutoring sessions in this manner. Ben also tried to avoid reading by talking about subjects unrelated to the session, or about something that caught his interest in a book. In the latter case, he would work at extending the talk to avoid getting back to the book. Another strategy Ben used was to try to make the tutor uncertain as to whether the task was suitable for him. For instance, he once said, "Are you going to make me read this whole thing by myself? That's cruel!" (Fieldnotes, #3-B). Then he would look at the tutor with a look of disbelief on his face, and wait for her to modify the assignment. The researcher's observations in the university clinic showed that these strategies were often effective for Ben.

**Passing strategies.** Ben not only knew ways to get out of reading instruction, he also had developed ways to make it look as though he didn't need reading instruction. Ben carried books around with him in his book bag, and frequently showed the books to others, either directly by saying, "This is what I'm reading now," or indirectly by taking the books out and acting like he was reading. This occurred on several occasions when he was waiting for the researcher prior to the tutoring sessions. In many cases, he was acting since the books were far too difficult for him. For instance, once he showed the researcher a
paperback book about Soviet and U.S. defense weapons. He said that he read it during homeroom and on the bus, however it was written at a level approximately between 10th and 12th grade. He would have been unable to recognize enough words to make sense of the text. He also carried sports magazines, such as *Sports Illustrated*, but when asked to read an article, he gave up after the first paragraph. When asked about the content of these materials, he usually turned to the pictures and identified items or people in them.

Another example of a passing strategy came to light when Ben showed the researcher a note he had received from his girlfriend. He read the note, missing several words, but getting a sense of the message. However, he missed enough words that he did not realize that the note was personal and embarrassing to share with an adult. Fortunately his pride at getting such a message quickly overrode his embarrassment. The researcher asked Ben for more information about notes in school:

**R:** Do you get lots of notes?
**B:** Um hmm.
**R:** Do you write her back?
**B:** No (disparaging tone of voice) cause I can’t spell that good.
**R:** Oh, I see. Does she know why you don’t write her back?
**B:** Naw. I just tell her I don’t write notes (macho type gestures)
**R:** Oh, okay.
**B:** And, uh, I ain’t lyin’. I just don’t.
**R:** But if you could spell better...?
B: Yeah, I would.
R: What would you call that... (expansive gesture indicating the note writing situation)
B: A little ... protective.
R: Of yourself.
B: Yeah. (Audiotape, #8-B)

These strategies protected Ben from ridicule, but also allowed him to pretend to himself that his reading difficulties were not that bad.

Later in the study, the researcher observed Ben in a social studies class going through the motions of copying notes from the board. He confirmed the researchers observations by saying that he was not able to get the notes copied.

R: Were you able to get the notes down?
B: No, you see, I'm a slow writer, cause I can't spell that good and you know all these other kids are just lookin' up and they can spell. And I gotta keep lookin' up. (Fieldnotes, #36-B)

Ben was only able to copy about half the notes and they were only partially legible. Yet he conscientiously went through the motions, and when the other students appeared to be getting done, he also acted as though he was finished for the day. It was worth his while to pretend because, as he said:

B: If you read, you're considered smart.

It appeared to the researcher that pretending to be able to read helped him to maintain his self-esteem.

Student Perceptions about Reading

Interviews were conducted with Ben to get a sense of his perceptions about reading. He was asked to define
reading.

R: What do you think reading is?
B: (immediate response) Hard! Hard and fun in some ways. When you’re reading you get the expression (sic-impression) of...like when girls write you notes, you read it and then that will tell you what’s in there.
(Audiotape, #3-B)

Ben had found an excellent reason to read, and this had the potential of being an important literacy event in his life. Unfortunately, because he was not able to answer the notes, the possibility of expanding this event did not work out for Ben.

Ben also used reading as a measure of intelligence. When talking of the reading abilities of the other students in his school, he said:

B: If you read, you’re considered smart.
(Audiotape, #5-B)

He also added:

B: When you get in the real world you can’t be stutterin’ when you read...’cause they’ll make fun of you. (Audiotape, #3-B)
R: Okay. What else will reading do for you?
B: It’d make you smarter around your friends.
(Audiotape, #3-B)

Stuttering was Ben’s way of describing his disfluent reading.

During the course of the study, Ben never openly admitted to the severity of his reading problems. Instead he would hedge a bit.

R: What is your opinion about your reading?
B: It’s good, but not the best. (Audiotape, #11-B)

He told the researcher that a friend named Sean could read
better than him.

R: Why aren’t you reading as well as Sean?
B: ’Cause, he, he got a higher reading level?
R: Are you born with those?
B: Yeah.
R: You mean, he was born and God said he’s going
to read better than him? Is that the way
it happens?
B: Well, sorta. God says whether you’re going
to be learning disabled. (Audiotape, #11-B)

Another way of hedging was expressed frequently.

R: Why do you think you can’t read as well as them?
B: ’Cause I’m lazy.
R: You can’t read well because you’re lazy?
B: Yeah, ’cause I can do it if I put my mind to it.
(Audiotape, #11-B)

This appeared to be an interesting contradiction in his
thinking. Being learning disabled could provide an easy
excuse for poor reading ability, but he was obviously not
convinced of that. His assertion that he could do it if he
tried was a hint that he was still attempting to maintain
some control over a confusing situation.

Ben was generally negative about his school
experiences. His most common comment was that school was
boring. When asked what sort of things he did in his school
reading class to help him read better, he answered:

B: Read dull cards.
R: Cards? What kind of cards?
B: NFL cards and stuff like that. (Reading kit cards)
R: Do you read for the teacher individually or in
groups?
B: By myself.
R: So if you come up against a word you don’t know,
what happens?
B: Nothin’.
R: Nothing? Do you ask?
B: Yeah, but it ain't worth it.
R: Why, what happens when you ask?
B: 'Cause she tells me to figure it out, and
     I'm like, "I can't figure it out."
     (Audiotape, #9-B)

Ben expanded on this description in a later session.

R: What do the teachers do to help you?
B: They put the i, u, stuff like that. Vowels,
     short i, and I don't get that stuff.
R: When you come to that word, you can't make
     sense. What would you do at that point?
B: I'd ask her for help then I can tell you what
     they do. They go, "Put the two dots here," and
     they put a line and I'm like, "What's this?"
     cause I don't understand this. (Audiotape, #11-B)

Ben showed the researcher an example of the use of
diacritical marks. Then he continued:

R: And then do they tell you what the word is?
B: No, they tell you to sound it out.
R: Okay, so you're sitting there trying to sound
     it out. What if you still don't get it?
B: Then they finally give in and tell me the word.
R: How does that appear to you - when they - Is that
     helpful?
B: No, it makes it harder for me.
R: It makes it harder?
B: Yeah.
R: If you could describe how your teachers are
     feeling at that moment, how would you describe...
     if you were the teacher how do you think they are
     feeling right now?
B: Po'd. They'd be mad, 'cause they think that's a
     word I should know or somethin' like that.
R: How do you feel right then?
B: I feel mad! 'Cause all I want them to do is tell
     me the word instead of sittin' there trying to
     help me when I already tried it! (Audiotape, #11-B)

Both voice and body language made Ben's frustration
apparent. According to the researcher's observations, Ben
could sound out the words, however, if he did not know the
meaning of the word, this strategy was not effective. He
apparently was unable to communicate to his teachers that he
needed a different kind of help from them.

**Educational History**

After hearing Ben's description of school reading, the researcher attempted to determine the type of reading instruction Ben had received in school. A review of his educational records revealed a series of special education placements. (All information in the following section was taken from Fieldnotes, #37-B).

**Psychoeducational testing.** Ben is a product of special education placements beginning in the first grade. He was referred to the school psychologist within the first weeks of first grade. The referring teacher reported:

"He is disruptive, hyperactive, and craves attention...He stays in trouble constantly... and is always picking fights with peers. His school work is poor due to his inability to sit still and to follow directions."

Ben was six years old at the time, living in one of a series of foster homes. He was given the following tests by the school psychologist: (a) Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Thorndike, Terman, & Merrill, 1973), (b) Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970), (c) Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test (Connolly, Nachtman, & Pritchett, 1976), Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Doll, 1965), and (e) Bender-Gestalt Visual Motor Test (Pascal & Suttell, 1951). He received the following scores and grade equivalents:
Stanford-Binet  Standard Score Full Scale IQ  75  
Mental Age  5.6  
Chronological Age  6.10  
PIAT  Total Test Grade Equivalent  1.2  
Key Math  Total Test Grade Equivalent  1.3  
Vineland  Age  4.65  
Bender-Gestalt  Age  5.0  

The psychologist noted that Ben’s behavior during testing may have negatively affected the tests results. Ben was placed in a slow-learner class—now called developmentally handicapped (DH) classes. (See Appendix G for state guidelines for placement in developmentally handicapped classes.) The records stated that Ben showed improvements in behavior during this placement. He was retested by the same school psychologist in May of the same first-grade school year with different results. Test results were as follows:

Stanford-Binet  Standard Score Full Scale IQ  90  
Mental Age  6.10  
Chronological Age  7.5

The psychologist wrote in his report:

"EMR placement which was considered therapeutic is no longer necessary."

In other words, with an Full Scale IQ score of 90, Ben did not qualify for the program. In the interim, the school had established a Severe Behavior Handicap (SBH) program. The placement team considered this alternative, but instead decided to place Ben in a learning disabilities (LD)
classroom. Ben remained in LD classes until fifth grade.

In the third grade, Ben was tested again. A reevaluation is required by the state every 3 years. Ben was 9.9 years old at the time. The psychological evaluation report stated that Ben had been receiving Ritalin to control his behavior, but the foster mother was not administering the medication at the time of the evaluation. The psychologist administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974) and found Ben "very inattentive." The psychologist visited the home and prompted the foster mother to recontinue administering the Ritalin as prescribed. After several weeks, he retested Ben. The standard scores of the two test administrations were as follows:

| WISC-R without medication | Verbal  | 72 |
|                           | Performance | 71 |
|                           | Full Scale IQ | 70 |

| WISC-R with medication    | Verbal  | 80 |
|                          | Performance | 78 |
|                          | Full Scale IQ | 78 |

Since Ben was more attentive during the second testing, the psychologist also administered the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) and the Behavior Rating Scale (Elmore & Beggs, 1975). Results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRAT</th>
<th>Standard scores</th>
<th>Grade Equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavior Rating Scale/Teacher Respondent

Standard Score = 7 (Mean = 10, SD = 3)

In his report, the psychologist noted that Ben appeared concerned and discouraged with his behavior. The psychologist stated that Ben only "marginally qualifies for the learning disability class." Ben remained in these classes until fourth grade. (See Appendix H for guidelines for placement in learning disabilities classes.)

At the beginning of Ben's fifth grade year, an evaluation team met to discuss Ben's "severe problems with peer interactions." The team described his behavior as "distrustful/paranoid." The report stated that Ben had "disorganized thought patterns" and was "reluctant to communicate." Ben was placed in a severe behavior handicap program (SBH). (See Appendix I for guidelines for placement in severe behavior handicap classes.) There was no indication that a recommendation was made for counseling for Ben. During this year, results on the Woodcock-Johnson (Woodcock & Johnson, 1978) showed Ben to be between first- and second-grade level on all reading subtests.

In sixth grade, Ben was placed back in the LD program. No reason was found in the records for this change except a note which stated Ben that had done very well in the SBH placement. His sixth-grade LD teacher noted Ben's progress and said he made "great effort" and had "a good attitude in one-to-one situations." She said Ben excelled in computer
class.

Ben's health records during this year noted that Ben had previously taken medication for epilepsy, but was no longer doing so since the seizures had not been substantiated. He was no longer taking Ritalin.

Ben was retained in seventh grade. During the middle of his first year in seventh grade, Ben was adopted and changed school districts. Psychological testing was done at the beginning of his second year in seventh grade. The standard scores were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISC-R</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Scale IQ</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Verbal Subscales
- Information  7
- Similarity  5
- Arithmetic  6
- Vocabulary  8
- Comprehension  6

Performance Subscales
- Picture Composition  9
- Picture Arrangement  7
- Block Design  5
- Object Assembly  3
- Code/Digit Symbols  2

Bender-Gestalt
- Low Average
  - IQ score 77
  - Achievement 53
  - z-score discrepancy 1.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRAT</th>
<th>Standard Score</th>
<th>Grade Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>below 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>below 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The psychologist interpreted the test results to mean that Ben had a "psychological process disorder involving an attention deficit and dysfunction of symbolization," and that he also had an inability to integrate perceptions, memories, and associations. Ben reportedly had problems with general thought processes and difficulty with thought formation for speech. He also had difficulty with visual and auditory analysis. The psychologist judged Ben's oral expression, listening comprehension, and motor abilities to be normal. Under social and emotional development, the psychologist noted an improvement in Ben's behavior.

**Learning disabilities placement.** Included in the records were comments from Ben's seventh-grade LD teachers. One teacher reported that Ben was generally attentive in class, but that he needed more help than the other students. The other teacher reported marked improvement in Ben's self-concept and hygiene due to his adoption. Both LD teachers thought Ben was appropriately placed in learning disability classes. They also noted a problem with sleepiness in class.

Ben was maintained in LD classes on an override. This is a decision made by the placement team to keep a student in a special program even though test scores do not indicate eligibility. The official reasons given for this override decision were "dysfunction of symbolization" and "trouble with thought processes for speech". However, teachers often
have more impact on override decisions than psychologists. The teachers noted that Ben was:

"..in the process of being adopted by a single father. He has been in previous foster care. He has had severe behavior problems and has been in SBH. These problems seem to be improving."

They also said of Ben:

"Does not work up to ability. Behavior problems also interfere with work."

This type of justification for an override is typical for middle and high school students in LD programs. The evaluation team may assume that the student is so far behind that to take them out of special education would serve no purpose.

Ben was placed in the LD resource room for all except nonacademic subjects and health/science. The following objectives were found on his seventh-grade Individualized Educational Program (IEP):

- read with understanding Level 3 and 4 materials
- read aloud fluently
- make fine discriminations between similar sounds
- gain knowledge and use of base words, prefixes and suffixes
- develop sight word vocabulary
- develop meaning vocabulary
- spell correctly 10 words weekly from the level 3 speller
- make regular journal entries using correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization
- know the parts of speech
- use the dictionary to find unknown words
- use proper English when speaking
- maintain eye contact with teachers

There was a note on the IEP emphasizing the need for Ben to develop his sight word vocabulary. Also he was expected to
work "without disturbing others." Ben was retained at the end of this year.

Eighth-grade IEP objectives for reading were that Ben should improve his comprehension skills and phonic/word attack skills. The text to be used was from a basal series. The dictionary was to be used to help Ben with his word identification strategies. Ben was placed in a regular social studies classroom for this year. At the end of this school year, Ben was not doing well in his subjects. His LD teachers reported that they would place him in ninth grade only because he was too old to be retained again. (See Table 4 for an overview of placements and reading progress.)

**Classroom Observations/Teacher Perceptions**

Observations and interviews with Ben's teachers were conducted to further the researcher's understanding of Ben and to confirm or disconfirm information obtained from Ben. Ben gave permission for the researcher to be in his classrooms as long as he did not have to acknowledge her. The researcher agreed to pretend she didn't know him unless he spoke to her first.

**Classroom observations.** Observations in Ben's classrooms were prefaced by a telephone conversation with one of his LD teachers who told the researcher (R):

Z: You won't see anything. He just sits there. He's already failed for the year, but they won't retain him because he's too old. He hasn't done enough to pass.
Table 4

Overview of Placements and Reading Progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Reading Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EMR (DH)*</td>
<td></td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SBH</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>LD</td>
<td>below 3</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aBoth designations indicate placement for a student with mild mental retardation.*
R: I'm also interested in observing his interactions with his peers.
Z: He's been in SBH, you know, and he's got some real behavior problems. For example, today he wiped snot all over a kid's book. That's the sort of thing he does all the time. The other kids get pretty fed up.
R: I imagine so. (Audiotape, Conf-B)

Later in the conversation, the teacher said that Ben was more like a developmentally handicapped student than an LD student.

The first observation was conducted in Ben's social studies classroom. During the class, Ben appeared to be busy copying notes from the board, although he occasionally briefly interacted with the students around him. The class was a lecture class in which students copied notes that were prewritten on the board. The teacher lectured while the students copied the notes. There were few interactions between the teacher and the students, and all but one of these was designed to get a student back on task. Ben was the target of two such teacher comments. At the end of the class the teacher sat by the researcher to talk. He made diffident and depreciating remarks about the lesson:

T: Kind of a lot of stuff today - (Head slightly bowed, leaning forward) to cover in one day, I guess.
R: Oh, it's one of my favorite time periods in American history (smiling)
T: Oh, well - good. (Smiles and relaxes in seat.) (Fieldnotes, #36-B)

When asked to talk about Ben, he said that Ben was not really a discipline problem, but that he shouldn't be in the class. He said that Ben could not handle the work. As an
example, he related that he had given an essay test and after a few minutes of looking at the test, Ben had walked up to him and said, "I can’t do this." The teacher continued, shaking his head:

T: He just doesn’t do anything. (Fieldnotes, #36-B)

The teacher said that he made no special modifications for Ben, although he had occasionally read test questions to him.

A second observation was conducted in Ben’s LD reading class. The teacher had folders laid out for each of the four students (usually seven students, but three were absent). The students picked up their folders as they entered the room and went to their seats. After a few minutes of socializing with each other, the students began to work quietly. The teacher was situated at her desk in the front of the room for the entire class. Ben was working on a ditto sheet concerning letter writing. The following is an excerpt from fieldnotes:

Ben sighs loudly, gets up to get dictionary from the shelf. Returns to seat. Trying to find word so he can check spelling or meaning. His lips move a bit, saying the sounds of the first letter of the word which appears to be a p. Forehead is wrinkled. Suddenly slouches back in chair and sticks legs out in aisle with loud sigh. With a look of disgust (?), Ben puts paper in dictionary and closes book loudly. Pulls himself out of chair as if it is an effort. Shuffles up to teacher’s desk, body language expressing apathy or perhaps reluctance? Allen gets up from chair by teacher and brushes past Ben. Ben says, "Don’t be hittin’ me," with a challenging stance, shoulders forward,
chin down. Allen says he didn’t, he was just getting by. Rick has walked to front of teacher’s desk also. Teacher tells Rick to sit beside her. Ben has to move so Rick can sit in the chair. Rick gives Ben a little grin. Ben murmurs something, then smiles. He stands to the side until teacher is done with Rick. Then Ben takes the chair and puts the dictionary on the desk, opening it to his paper. Teacher moves her chair back from the desk so she is further from Ben. Ben says he can’t find the word. She asks him how it sounds. He says he knows he is in the right section, but he can’t find it. He sits back in his chair, away from the book. Teacher tells him something, and he flips a couple of pages. It appears as though he has sounded out the word and matched the vowel sound with the wrong letter. Teacher tells him the vowel. He flips the pages and begins to run his finger down a page. She points to a word and tells him to find out what it means. He gives her a quick look of disgust, turning his face away quickly. She looks at him expressionlessly, then pulls her chair back to her desk and picks up a paper. Ben goes back to his desk and mumbles some uncomplimentary words about school. After he sits down, he looks at dictionary for few minutes. Then he says to teacher, “Which one do I put down?” She answers, “Which one do you think would be closest?” He responds with a grunt and concentrates on this. Then with a loud sigh, he writes something on his sheet. The room becomes quiet. (Fieldnotes, #38-B)

Later Ben told the researcher that he did not know what the word was and just guessed at the answer. As the class progressed, Ben went to the next assignment which was one of the reading kit cards he had previously described. He concentrated on a story about a young pilot and then answered the multiple-choice questions. The assignment was placed on the teacher’s desk when done. She made no comment on them at that time, except to ask if he had checked his work. At one point, when Ben and Rick were talking, the teacher asked:
Z: Do you need me to read with you?
B: No. (He turned around in chair and quit talking.)
(Fieldnotes, #38-B)

Ben interacted with Rick several times during the class. They spoke quickly and with enthusiasm in Black dialect, making it difficult for the researcher to follow the conversation. However, it was apparent that the boys understood each other well. Ben also interrupted his work to get out his money and count it, take things in and out of his book bag, and comb his hair. During this observation, Ben initiated most of the interactions in the class and drew most of the teacher’s behavior control comments. It was also apparent that he did not have enough work to keep him occupied for the entire period.

Teacher perceptions. Following the observation in the LD reading class, the researcher conducted a 40-minute open-ended interview with both LD teachers, designated as X and Z. Information in this section was taken from an audiotape (Fieldnotes, Conf-B). The researcher had not anticipated both teachers being present, but that was the way the teachers had decided to structure the situation. It was their lunch hour, and they took turns going to get their lunches during the interview, bringing their food back with them. The interview was illuminating in that it raised the possibility that teacher expectations were having a great effect on Ben’s ability or motivation to learn.
The teachers both felt that Ben made very little effort in school and their talk was frequently punctuated with statements such as the following:

\[
\begin{align*}
X: & \text{ He just sits and does nothing.} \\
Z: & \text{ It's just simple, he won't figure out or take that time at home.} \\
X: & \text{ It depends on whether or not he wants to.}
\end{align*}
\]

Another teacher concern was Ben's poor behavior and lack of social skills, much of which they attributed to hyperactivity.

\[
\begin{align*}
X: & \text{ He's so disruptive and his attention deficit syndrome is just real handicapping...And, uh, being hyper, which he is, uh, it was difficult. He would, he'd leave his seat to go do his, uh, sharpen a pencil, pick up a piece of paper or any excuse at all to get out of his seat. And he would bump into people and disturb everyone else. And then they would yell, "Ben!", and that's the way it went.}
\end{align*}
\]

The teachers' understanding of hyperactivity or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) appeared to leave them feeling somewhat powerless to deal with Ben's behaviors.

\[
\begin{align*}
X: & \text{ You know, I went to this workshop a couple of years ago, and this attention deficit syndrome, no matter how much you train them, they don't improve that. It just doesn't improve.}
\end{align*}
\]

The other teacher (Z) expressed her agreement with this statement.

The teachers described Ben's lack of skills when Ben first entered their classroom in seventh grade, suggesting an impoverished elementary education, regardless of special education:
X: He couldn’t write, he couldn’t - uh, no cursive at all. He could print his name... He was almost a total nonreader when he got here.

One teacher also had strong feelings about Ben’s speech.

Z: His speech is very bad. And he even said something that you (R), we both didn’t even understand and I said (gesturing to R), "What is he talking about?"

This occurred during the classroom observation when Ben and Rick were engaged in conversation using Black dialect. The teachers continued by saying:

X: There’s no feed-in to his brain through his ears, so to speak. He doesn’t recall, um, things. That’s why I always figured he needed so much visual support in everything he does and that’s why he doesn’t understand what he’s reading. He doesn’t retain reading concepts and ideas and has a difficult time with it - sequencing of stories and things cause he just doesn’t take the comprehension of the whole story in. It just doesn’t feed into his brain.

R: Do you have any theories on that? Why it’s happening?

X: Well, I think auditory disabilities are a severe handicap to intelligence, I really do...

Z: (speaking about Ben’s lack of success in the social studies class) Evidently he has no auditory abilities. He just can’t listen.

Teacher X later said that Ben not only had an Attention Deficit Disorder and poor auditory perception, but also he had visual perception problems and a perceptual processing difficulty.

While the researcher tried to guide the conversation back to reading and reading instruction, the teachers did not seem to want to address these issues. Neither teacher made positive comments about Ben, except that X said that Ben was "really a kind boy". However, it appeared that she
was stretching to find something good to say since she immediately began talking about LD students in general as not being "bad or mean kids". The consensus seemed to be that Ben couldn't help his lack of academic achievement, but that he should be able to control his behaviors better.

**Researcher's Interpretations**

The information derived from this pilot study indicates that there are many factors which may have affected Ben's reading development. These include: (a) early environmental factors, (b) emotional problems, (c) behavior problems, (d) low teacher expectations, (e) perceptions of sociolinguistic competence, (f) conceptual factors, and (g) instructional factors.

**Early environmental factors.** Ben spent his first 5 years in an unstable home situation. Even if not abused physically, there is evidence that he was abused psychologically. It is unlikely, in this environment, that he was able to develop many of the concepts or skills that would have prepared him for school. (Further information regarding Ben's childhood has been withheld due to an agreement between the researcher and Ben and his father.)

**Emotional problems.** It is likely that Ben suffered emotional problems as a result of his early experiences. These emotional problems may have resulted in the disruptive behaviors he displayed at school. Many of his behaviors appear to be designed to draw attention to himself. As his
first grade teacher said, even as she was trying to get him removed from her room, "He craves attention." As a young man, he still exhibits behaviors that act to draw attention to himself, or to draw sympathy or warmth from adults. It is the researcher's opinion based on a year of observations and interactions with Ben, that he has a great need to be accepted and liked by others. He has apparently only received this from a few teachers or other adults in his life.

Behavior problems. Both educational records and teacher reports indicate that Ben had a problem with peer interactions throughout his school career. He was suspended several times for fighting. The researcher observed him acting aggressively toward peers on several occasions. These behaviors may have resulted in more disciplinary controls being put on him, which could have created further distance between himself and teachers or caretakers.

Teacher expectations. Teachers' comments in the educational records indicate that teachers were inclined to judge Ben poorly as early as kindergarten. Throughout his school years, these judgments appear to be based on Ben's behaviors and his appearance. Until he was adopted, there were indications that Ben was frequently dirty and disheveled upon arriving at school. More recently, one teacher's comments about his previous SBH placement seemed to indicate that she had low behavior expectations for Ben.
Since Ben was tested so early in his school career, teachers likely knew the results of his test scores. This knowledge may have affected their perceptions of his ability. It also appears that teachers thought that Ben's learning problems were caused by innate deficiencies within Ben, such as poor auditory and visual perception and some sort of brain dysfunction that causes hyperactivity. His middle school LD teachers appeared to think that because the problem lay within Ben, there was little they could do about it. Their job was one of controlling his behaviors enough that he could remain in school.

There are indications in the records, classroom observations, and teacher interviews that Ben's use of Black dialect may have been the cause of conflict between himself and some teachers. The records indicate that Ben's teachers judged him to have poor speech patterns, and, in one IEP, an objective stated that Ben would speak properly so as to be understood. Furthermore, the classroom observation and interview with teacher X suggested a lack of tolerance on her part with his use of nonstandard English. She said that the other students might use dialect occasionally, but that they could speak clearly when they needed to. In other words, they were able to switch registers when appropriate. The researcher observed this ability in Rick, Ben's fellow student in the class. Rick spoke dialect with Ben, but spoke a more standard form with the teacher. The teacher
appeared to believe that Ben's less standard form of English was another sign of his deficient abilities.

**Conceptual factors.** Observations revealed that Ben needed to know what words meant. His conceptual vocabulary was far behind what might be expected for a student of his age. Smith (1982) and others have stated that a knowledge of meanings of words encountered in text is of vital importance to comprehension. Also knowledge of word meanings supports inference of more meanings from context. In Ben's case, his vocabulary deficiencies hindered him from independently engaging with more difficult texts from which he could then learn new words. This has the effect of making him somewhat teacher-dependent until there are a wide enough variety of books that he can read on his own. Then reading could become a "systematic tool for acquiring and developing language" (p. 95).

**Instructional factors.** Ben's description of reading instruction seemed to indicate that teachers may not have considered what Ben specifically needed to become a better reader. Instead they were providing him with instruction based on what they thought poor readers in general needed. Included in this instruction was an emphasis on letter/sound correspondences and on dictionary pronunciation guides. Unfortunately, for a reader of Ben's current ability level, diacritical marks are likely to be just another set of confusing symbols.
Furthermore, the LD reading class observed by the researcher appeared to provide little, if any, opportunity for remediation. There was no structured time set aside for teacher/student reading. The offer the teacher made to read with Ben appeared to be directed more at behavioral control than reading instruction. In talking with the teachers, they did not seem to have much knowledge about reading instruction. The researcher inferred that they chose materials that were advertised as being good for LD classes and presented those to the students. This is possibly not atypical, since many special education teachers receive little training in reading instruction.

**Summary**

Ben represents students who come to school with a multitude of emotional and environmental problems which may affect their ability to cope with school. Since the school may have few structures in place to deal with these children, they are tagged as behavior problems and perceived negatively by school personnel. Referral to the special education system may occur as a means of taking these problem children out of the mainstream of schooling. In Ben's case, he was placed in three different special education programs, indicating the school's uncertainty about what to do with him. While placement in Developmentally Handicapped and Severe Behavior Handicap classes appeared to make his behavior more acceptable, it
does not appear that he received the individualized instruction he needed to improve his academic skills, particularly his reading. Furthermore, Ben was perceived as not being able to learn because of innate brain processing deficiencies.

The researcher had the opportunity to work with Ben for a year. During this year, Ben progressed from reading at the first/second-grade level to reading at the fifth-grade level. Evidence of this gain was taken from a second administration of the Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1989) and from observations of Ben's performance while reading books with an approximate readability level of fifth grade. It appeared that he needed intense one-to-one work to unleash his abilities. Unfortunately, that is something our schools often do not offer to students such as Ben.

Case Study 2 - Karen

A group of students may be found in most schools who have serious learning problems but, for various reasons, receive little or no substantial help from the schools. Some of these students are passed along year after year until they reach their high school graduation even though teachers may be aware of serious academic deficiencies. Karen is an example of how this may occur.
Description of Subject

Karen is a 14-year-old Black girl who is considered a slow learner due to her measured intelligence score of 78. She lives with her mother in a single-family home in an urban working class neighborhood. Karen's mother is a business woman who works at a large insurance firm. Karen and her mother frequently spend their evening time together engaging in typical mother-daughter activities. Karen sees her father frequently. She also has other family members with whom she has close relationships. Document research revealed that Karen's father may have experienced reading problems.

Books and magazines are available in the home, and Karen has her own bookshelves filled with books. She also receives her own magazines concerning fashions and musical groups. Karen was reportedly read to as a child, except during the period when she was 3 to 5 years of age. At this time, her parents were having difficulties which resulted in divorce. Once a new home life had been established, the mother again began to read to Karen and bring books into the home. Karen has her own library card and reported going to the library occasionally.

The researcher found Karen to be a pleasant and likeable young woman with excellent social skills. She always greeted the researcher with a smile and engaged in pleasant conversations about school and home. The
researcher has heard her described frequently as being 'nice'. New hairstyles, nicely chosen clothes, and a positive approach to life indicate a healthy self-concept. Karen seems to feel good about herself and, in spite of her problems, she describes herself as "just like other people" (Audiotape, #2-K).

Karen is not afraid of challenges. This was made apparent when she surprised her mother by trying out for the girls' basketball team. Despite her weight problem which might have discouraged many young women, Karen worked hard during practices and was chosen for the team. When asked what made her decide to try out, she said, "Well, I thought it would be good exercise -- and it'd be fun!" This is indicative of her enthusiasm for many new experiences, including learning experiences.

Karen has enjoyed good health throughout childhood. She began to wear glasses in the third grade and continues to wear them regularly. She has normal speech and hearing. Her school attendance has always been good, although in her most recent school year she missed 10 days due to illness.

Description of Student's Reading Behaviors

Karen was included in the study because she was unable to read materials above the second-grade level. Karen defined reading as "words you can read." While she found books interesting, reading itself was difficult. Karen described her difficulties with reading:
K: When it's like a big word and I get frustrated and I can't get it out." (Audiotape, #2-K)

Reading strategies. Karen primarily used three word identification strategies when reading. First, she attempted to read difficult words by sounding the words out, using beginning sounds and, occasionally, ending sounds. Her next strategy was to go back to the beginning of the sentence to start again. If there were pictures in the book, she might also try to obtain clues about a difficult word from the pictures. While to varying degrees, the combination of these three strategies can be facilitative, the manner in which she used them slowed her rate, which may have contributed to her loss of the sense of the text as she progressed through a paragraph or page. An example of her use of these strategies is illustrated in the following example taken from the book Cherries and Cherry Pits (Williams, 1986). Karen was trying to read the sentence:

His striped shirt was blue and white.

On the page was a picture of a boy wearing a blue and white striped shirt. Karen read:

K: His st--stir-- (stopped reading)
R: Go on to the next word.
K: Sh -- (looks at picture) shoulder, shoulder was blue (stops and looks at picture) -- shirt was blue and white. Oh! His striped shirt was blue and white. (Fieldnotes, #9-K)

In this case her strategies, while slow, were effective for her. Her strength was her ability to use her knowledge of language to determine if what she read sounded right.
She also said that when she read she tried to "Make up words to make it sound better to me." (Audiotape, #2-K)

K: Sometimes, if it's like real, real hard, sometimes, I try, I try to get it and sometimes I might just make up a word or something.
R: Is that because it's real hard?
K: Yes...there would be like a big word that I can't get, it would get hard. I'll try and all, but then I'll maybe make up something. It'll sound the same, but won't be the same. (Audiotape, #4-K)

She was describing her habit of guessing at a word and then changing the following words in an attempt to make the sentence make sense. While this can be a facilitative strategy, Karen did not check her understanding of the sentence to see if it was reasonable in light of the preceding text. She then lost the sense of the text. For instance, in the book My Mom Can't Read (Stanek, 1986), a section of text read:

Mom said I deserved a treat. "Do we have enough money," I asked. "Yes," she replied. So we stopped for lunch in a little restaurant next door.

Karen read:

K: My Mother said I day, Mom said I daid--
R: Go on.
K: Okay. Mom said I --- a tr-tr--- Ohhh (showing frustration - lips pursed, frowning)
R: Treat.
K: Mom said I de --? (looked up for help)
R: Deserved.
K: Mom said I deserved a treat. "Do we have any more?" I asked. "Yes," said-- "yes," she replied. So we stopped off lunch. (Audiotape, #1-K)

At this point, Karen appeared confused so the researcher stopped Karen and had her look back at what she
had read. For the sentence that read, "Do we have enough money, I asked", she guessed at the word *enough*, calling it *any*, and then changed the word *money* to *more* because "any more" was a phrase that sounded familiar to her. Also the sounds matched with the beginning letters of the words in the sentence. However, in lieu of the preceding sentence, "Mom said I deserved a treat", her sentence did not make sense. In the same book Karen read:

K: It was a big boo -- bundle with my door--and envelope. (Audiotape, #1-K)

The sentence actually read:

*It was a big building with many doors and elevators.*

Karen read most of the text in this book with comparative ease. However, when she came to a difficult section, she did not have reading strategies that allowed her to get herself back into the text without help. It appeared to the researcher that Karen had more reading ability than she was perceived to have, but she needed close supervision to help her practice the use of strategies necessary to get past difficult sections of text.

Karen knew all of the letter/sound correspondences. However, since Karen did not use word parts, she tended to try to sound out words letter by letter, which produced distortions in her pronunciation of words. Since they did not sound like words she knew, she was unable to decipher what the words said. Occasionally Karen saw small words within words she was trying to decipher. However, this was
not usually helpful to her. For instance, for the word allow she saw the word all and pronounced it. Then she added the 'ow' sound as in the word cow. When combining the two parts, she placed the stress on the first syllable - all'ow. She was unable to make sense of the word until prompted to use the context.

Effort. Sometimes poor achievers like Karen are thought to be making little effort, but that did not seem to be the case with Karen. One indication of this was that she had been coming to a university reading clinic for a year, 3 days a week after school, and she usually had to take a 1/2 hour bus trip to get there. When asked why she went to all that trouble, she replied:

K: I hope that I will at least read up to my grade, read up to my skills where I'm supposed to be at. (Audiotape, #2-K)

On many occasions Karen showed a dogged determination to get the right word despite conflicting help from adults. She described such a situation when she was reading with her mother at home.

K: (Mom) knows that I struggle reading, and um, and so, she, if I like read, she'll just help me on it. But sometimes Mom's not patient sometimes, her patience, she, she gets mad sometimes. (Laughs) When I'll be reading and I'll miss a word, she'll think it's an easy word and I should get it and I don't. And sometimes she gets mad.

R: What does she say when she gets mad?

K: She just say, say, "Oh, Karen! Try again!" She just tell me to try again. And sometimes she, she just go ahead and tell me. Where sometimes I be reading and I try to pronounce it out and
she'll tell me, and I don't want her to tell me. And she'll say, "Why not?" Because I say I want to try it on my own, try to pronounce it out on my own. So she gets mad sometimes when I don't get it, but I finally get it. (Audiotape, #4-K)

While some poor readers might become frustrated or angry when an adult expressed such impatience, Karen narrated this story in a humorous fashion, ending up with a smile. In a sense, because she is such a nice person, she seemed to forgive the adults that tried to help her when they were less than patient with her or when they did not provide appropriate help.

Another indication of Karen's forgiving nature may be seen from Karen's description of a teacher giving her the words too quickly and not letting her have a chance to work them out. Since she was trying to crack the puzzle of reading through letter/sound correspondences, she thought that not having ample time to sound out the words was not teaching her anything. However, she attributes to the teacher a good reason for acting as she does.

R: Do you have to read very much in school?
K: No, not a lot.
R: Do you read as much as the other kids do in class?
K: Sometimes, sometimes she'll pick other people and out of a whole day I don't read. Except she'll give us a page and we have to, each person has to do it on their own. And I'll read then.
R: Why do you think she doesn't always pick you to read?
K: Because she, she knows that I'm slow and, I guess she doesn't want the kids to make fun of me or anything. (Audiotape, #4-K)

The way Karen explains it, not giving her a chance to read is a kindness on the part of the teacher.
Her effort was also apparent by her enthusiastic attitude during tutoring sessions. Karen would frequently pick up new books and try to read the pages. When asked how much effort she put into her reading, she said:

K: Sometimes I don’t try as hard as I can. And some days I do try.
R: What does it mean to try hard and to not try hard?
K: When you’re not trying hard, you’re like sometimes maybe making up a word that’s not really that word and you don’t try to pronounce it out. And then when you are trying, you pronounce it out, and you keep trying, and you finally get it.
R: So it’s hard to try.
K: Yeah, sometimes!
R: Do you ever quit?
K: Sometimes I do. When it gets too hard, I’ll turn the other page. (Audiotape, #4-K)

Conceptual factors. The difficulty of the text or her familiarity with the information in the text also influenced how often or how quickly Karen resorted to the strategy of substituting one word for another. For instance, Karen was presented with two books during consecutive tutoring sessions that were of comparable difficulty. The first book, Jumping Bean (Miller, 1979), was a narrative tale about the growth of a jumping bean. The second book, The Spider’s Dance (Ryder, 1981), was also a narrative, but with considerably more text, about the life of a spider. Prior to reading each book, the researcher conducted a prereading exercise with Karen during which she participated in making a conceptual map containing everything she knew about the topic of the book. As a
result, the researcher learned that Karen knew virtually nothing about jumping beans. In fact, she thought they were only made of plastic. Wanting to surprise her with the real origin of the jumping bean, the researcher gave Karen no further information except to cue her that she would find out where the bean really got its name. Karen performed very poorly on this book. As she progressed through the pages, she began to use the strategy of making up words with greater frequency. When it was apparent that she had totally lost the sense of the book and was fatigued from reading (moving restlessly in her chair and rubbing her eyes beneath her glasses), the researcher finished reading the book to her. The spider book produced a different experience. Karen knew quite a bit about spiders, including how they build webs, what they look like, how young are produced, and where they can be found. Karen showed much more enthusiasm for this book. She added comments as she was reading and related experiences she had had with spiders. While she made miscues on each page, she infrequently made up words and then kept reading (Fieldnotes, #9-K).

**Student Perceptions about Reading**

Karen was concerned about her lack of reading ability. When asked how she felt about reading, she responded:

K: I feel that it's very difficult for me.
R: Mm hmm.
K: And sometimes I can read a book and some books are kind of difficult. And um, my mom said that you have to read or... or you won’t get nowhere.
R: What do you think about that?
K: Um, I think, I think it’s sad. And um, like Mom says, that you, you might be having a night job picking up trash and sweeping.
R: Mm hmm.
K: And you wouldn’t have a regular job like my mom and make some money.
R: Mmm. But somebody has to pick up the trash.
K: Yeah, somebody. But I don’t know who!
(Audiotape, #2-K)

Karen had aspirations to be a Sunday school teacher and perhaps a nurse someday, but she knew that she would need more schooling and that would mean improving her reading.

Karen expressed other reasons for improving her reading. She wrote a list of problems associated with poor reading ability. She said of people who are poor readers:

K: They can’t read a menu. They are sad. They feel dumb. They worry about someone telling others they can’t read. They make up excuses. They feel uncomfortable. They get lost sometime. (Writing Sample, #1-K)

Karen’s writing of the list may be seen in Appendix J.)

This list revealed that to Karen the psychological stress associated with lack of reading ability was as important as the lack of functional skills such as ordering from a menu or reading street signs. She said that when she couldn’t read a menu either her mother helped her or she just ordered a hamburger. She also described how, when she first entered her current school, she was unable to read street signs on the way to school and was afraid she would go down
the wrong street. She said that when she asked her mother the name of the streets she could then remember how the words looked. However, lack of such skills made her dependent on others, and therefore increased the chances that she would look stupid to others.

In a later session, Karen talked further about reasons why reading better could help her.

K: You don't feel down like when a teacher, like a teacher tells you to read a sentence or a part of a play or something.
R: It helps you feel better?
K: Maybe, um, no one will make fun of you... and um, maybe when you're not so mad at yourself when you get puzzled sometime. You just know it just like that.
R: You said, "No one will make fun of you" cause you can't read. Can you think of any time in your life when someone has made fun of you because you can't read well?
K: No, not really.
R: Does it worry you?
K: Yeah, sometimes. Then if somebody did make fun of you they would like tell their friend and their friend would tell everybody and it makes you feel sad. (Audiotape, #4-K)

Even though she said no one has made fun of her, she expressed this worry several times throughout the study.

Self-esteem may suffer when a person is reading disabled (Gentile & McMillan, 1987; P. Johnston, 1985). As Karen wrote in her list, people who cannot read well may worry about looking "dumb" or about others knowing they can't read. She said about herself:

K: I'm different because some kids can read real, real good and some can't. Like me.
R: How come you say some kids can read real, real good?
K: Because they might be just reading a book, you
know, maybe to themselves or something, and they
seem like they don't get puzzled. (Audiotape, #2-K)

Karen had noticed the ease with which others read, realizing
that it all made sense to those people, but wondering why it
didn't make sense to her. When asked if she ever wondered
why she didn't read better, she responded:

K: Sometimes I say, 'Why?' But then I just try
to ignore it, why I'm mad and sad. I just
try to block it out.
R: Mm hmm.
K: Out of my mind. (Audiotape, #2-K)

She said the last phrase with a firm voice as though
reminding herself that her situation was not going to defeat
her.

In the study by P. Johnston (1985), the adults
interviewed also worried about others thinking they were
stupid. As one adult told Johnston (P.J.):

"Jack: I worry that people will think I'm stupid.
P.J.: Do you think to yourself, maybe I am?
Jack: Yes." (p.170)

While Karen was certainly worried about looking stupid, so
far she has been able to separate the feeling of incapacity
over not being able to read well from a feeling that she is
completely incapable.

Additional perceptions Karen had about reading
concerned reading in school. She described how difficult it
was for her to be required to do work from a class textbook.
She said that they had big words in them and often she could
not pronounce the words. She also did not always know what
words meant. When asked what teachers did that helped her, she replied:

K: Um..maybe..maybe because if I be reading and, I can’t get a word, they’ll like pronounce it out, they’ll probably like tell me to pronounce out the word. And then they’ll, and if I can’t get it, but I don’t get all of it, they’ll like try to give me hints to get the whole word.

At a later time, she added:

K: Or they like, like tell me to divide it or keep on telling me to pronounce it out. And then if I can’t get it, they’ll probably tell you. (Audiotape, #4-K)

It appeared that the teachers were reinforcing Karen’s reliance on the single strategy of sounding words out.

Educational History

A review of Karen’s educational history revealed that Karen’s reading instruction consisted primarily of phonics instruction. Her mother reported that she received a phonics-based program throughout elementary school, as well as from some private tutors. Karen attended a full-day private kindergarten where she seemed to be progressing normally. Reading aloud to the children was a normal part of the daily routine. Karen’s reading difficulties were initially noted during the early months of the first grade. Karen was in the lowest reading group in the first grade, and her mother reported being dissatisfied with the amount of attention Karen received from the teacher. As an explanation for Karen’s poor achievement, the teacher reportedly told the mother that Karen did not hear letter
sounds like everyone else. The mother enrolled Karen in a private reading clinic for additional help; phonics instruction was provided there also. Karen received no special help from the school until fourth grade when she was placed in a Title I reading program. Karen reported that her teachers provided her with books she found interesting, and that they told her to sound out the words. She remained in this program until the sixth grade. Future tests scores do not indicate that significant progress was made from this placement. (Information in this section is taken primarily from Fieldnotes, #14-K and #15-K)

**Psychoeducational testing.** At the end of the first grade, the mother had Karen tested by a private psychologist to determine if she had a learning disability. The psychologist administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974) and the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery (Woodcock & Johnson, 1978). Standard scores obtained from the testing were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WISC-R:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Scale</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Woodcock-Johnson:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Language</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Knowledge</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These scores indicated that Karen was performing below her ability level in reading. However, the difference in ability and achievement was not great enough to qualify
Karen for placement in a learning disability program. (See Appendix G for state guidelines for learning disability placement.) The mother reported that the psychologist told her Karen was functioning in the average range, but that there was a "'short' someplace in Karen's brain that kept messages from getting where they were supposed to go" (Fieldnotes, #15-K).

For reasons not given, Karen was retested by the school district 5 months later at the beginning of the next school year. Tests given were the WISC-R and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) (Dunn & Markwardt, 1970). These standard scores showed a slightly different profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISC-R:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Scale</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIAT:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Recognition</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Information</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scores indicated that Karen was working at her ability level in all academic areas, but that her ability level was in the range for possible placement in a developmentally handicapped (DH) program. (See Appendix F for state guidelines for placement in a developmentally handicapped program.) The psychologist noted that Karen was functioning in the DH range and that she should be retested the next year to determine if she qualified for placement in an DH program. This testing was not performed. The mother said
she was contacted by the school at this time and told that Karen did not qualify for the program.

At the beginning of sixth grade, Karen transferred school districts and was referred by her teachers to an educational consultation team due to poor class achievement. The team reported that Karen was functioning at the same level as other students in her grade in the areas of oral expression and listening comprehension. She had comparatively lower skills in written expression, basic reading skills, and reading comprehension. Karen was described as being able to answer orally, but not in writing, and as not being able to follow written directions. It was noted that Karen had been given individual attention, had been allowed to turn in late assignments, and had been allowed to work on classroom assignments outside of class.

As part of the consultation, Karen was again tested. The standard scores obtained on the WISC-R were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISC-R:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Scale</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Karen obtained the following scores and grade equivalents on the achievement test:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodcock-Johnson:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Language</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The psychologist noted that Karen was of "borderline" intelligence according to her verbal and full scale scores, and low-average according to her performance scale. The
psychologist also noted that Karen was functioning normally in terms of oral expression, listening comprehension, motor abilities, and emotional status, including social skills.

After reviewing the accumulated information, the consultation team recommended that Karen be discussed by the DH evaluation team to determine if she qualified for DH placement. There was no record of this occurring and Karen continued in all regular classes. The mother reported that she was again told that Karen did not qualify for the program because she was not functioning at a low enough level. It could be that Karen was deemed unqualified since she exhibited no signs of maladaptive behaviors in terms of social or living skills; for DH placement, deficits in two areas of adaptive behavior must be exhibited.

In April of her sixth-grade year, Karen participated in the school district's standardized academic achievement testing. Although she was in sixth grade, her scores indicated that she was functioning at the early second-grade level in reading and at the middle third-grade level in language-related skills. While these scores clearly showed less than functional skills in reading, there were no modifications planned for Karen's educational program. According to the mother, the school did suggest that Karen be tracked into an occupational work adjustment (OWA) program. However, Karen's mother stated that, as the program was explained to her, this would mean there would
be no further effort to improve Karen’s academic skills; according to her understanding, students in the program were considered unlikely to progress academically and their learning experiences were focused on adaptive employment-related skills. Karen’s mother was unwilling to accept the premise that Karen could not improve her skills in reading, and therefore did not permit Karen’s placement in an OWA program. The mother reported that this was the only proposal offered by the school (Fieldnotes, #i4-K).

Teacher Perceptions

A conference was conducted with Karen’s language arts teacher, Ms. Michael, at the end of Karen’s seventh-grade year. (Information in this section was taken from Fieldnotes, Conf-K.) After expressing her fear that what she said would reflect poorly on her as a teacher, Ms. Michael began by saying that Karen was never a discipline problem in class, and she confirmed that Karen did little reading in class. She described Karen as always willing to try and to work. She said that while Karen made good use of the volunteer aides and of any supplemental materials in the room, she "simply cannot read and write." Ms. Michael said that Karen had told her she was unable to distinguish letter sounds, and in her opinion, this was a major factor in Karen’s reading difficulties. She stated that Karen was "incapable of sounding out words."
The conference with Ms. Michaels made apparent the importance of Karen's 'niceness' in the school environment. Ms. Michaels said that Karen passed from grade to grade because she was nice.

MM: The reason she has passed and made it to the 7th grade is because she is so congenial. She's nice, willing to work, and cooperative." (Fieldnotes, Conf-K)

Ms. Michael further stated that Karen did not stick out in the class because she was so pleasant, indicating that she never bothered anyone, caused trouble, or gave anyone any reason to notice her. When asked what modifications she made for Karen in her classroom, Ms. Michael said she made none because, "There's not time." She said this was mostly because she had several difficult discipline problems in her class.

MM: What you do in class is try to control them.

Later she added:

MM: If I have six kids who are behavior problems, then my attention has to be on control, not on teaching. (Fieldnotes, Conf-K)

She added that her opportunity to give individual attention in the class was virtually nonexistent because she had to constantly monitor behaviors. Ms. Michael expressed considerable frustration with this state of affairs and felt that the effectiveness of her teaching was greatly limited by the situation. A sense of sadness was apparent when she said:
MM: I wish I could help Karen more, but there just isn’t time. These are intelligent kids and they are getting a mediocre education. I don’t know what I can do about it. I feel bad that as a teacher I can’t do more, but the problems are so complex. (Fieldnotes, Conf-K)

She further reported that during silent reading time Karen sat quietly looking at the book. Ms. Michael did not think Karen was making an attempt to read. During oral reading, Ms. Michael avoided calling on Karen to keep from putting Karen in the spotlight:

MM: I probably don’t call on her, but I know she can’t do it. Why should I make her uncomfortable? (Fieldnotes, Conf-K)

This seemed to confirm Karen’s perception that the teacher was being kind by passing her over during reading.

When asked what she thought would happen to Karen, Ms. Michael said Karen would probably graduate from high school "because she is such a nice person". She speculated that Karen will probably get married and have a family.

MM: She will never be able to hold any kind of job — besides very minimal jobs, unless she learns to read and write.

MM: Public schools are not going to help her read and write....Well, they could if she had one-to-one help, but I don’t think that is available. (Fieldnotes, Conf-K)

Researcher’s Interpretations

Several factors may have hindered Karen’s reading development including (a) cognitive ability, (b) meta-cognitive factors, (c) teacher expectations, (d) passivity, and (e) instructional factors.
Cognitive ability. During Karen's initial experiences with reading, cognitive ability may have played a role in her lack of success. Children with below average intelligence may need more exposures to a strategy or concept before learning occurs (McCormick, 1987). It may be that Karen was not given ample opportunities to practice reading in the early grades, affecting the growth of her word recognition and her development of multiple reading strategies. While Karen may not be considered as severely reading disabled as the other students in the present study because her potential for reading growth may not be as high, she nevertheless exhibits the ability to improve her reading. It does not appear that the school has made many efforts to help Karen develop the potential she has.

Metacognitive factors. Karen possessed poor reading-related metacognitive skills. While she did have an understanding that reading involved making meaning from her own knowledge and from the information in the text, she was not always aware of whether she understood the text. Karen did not seem to be aware that she needed to use different strategies when reading, nor did she realize that she could efficiently select from strategies instead of using them in a set order.

Teacher expectations. It is likely that teacher expectations played a large part in determining Karen's role as a nonachiever in the classroom. Teachers would have been
made aware of Karen's below average intelligence test scores as early as the second grade. This knowledge may have led them to expect less from Karen and to accept Karen's low achievement as a natural occurrence. Therefore, they may not have felt there was a reason to spend additional time with Karen or to push her too hard. In the case of Karen's present teacher, Karen was not considered a priority compared to some of the other more aggressive students in the class.

Passive failure. A passive approach to reading may also have hindered Karen's reading development. As discussed by Johnston and Winograd (1985), passiveness toward learning may result from teachers' responses that have made the student feel less able and from a cumulation of tasks that have been too difficult for the student to perform successfully. Karen most likely experienced both of these circumstances. In addition, Karen's niceness may be viewed as a type of passivity that helped keep her comfortable in the school situation, but also kept teachers from confronting her problem. It is possible that maintaining a pleasant, amiable demeanor has been Karen's most successful way to avoid the conflicts which could arise in school due to her reading disability. As long as she behaves well, she will not be put in the spotlight and she can appear to be functioning normally in the class. Teachers who are beset by many students with behavior
problems may tend to accommodate her in this strategy by pretending as though her academic performance is relatively normal. In the case of her present teacher, Karen's passive behavior appeared to be valued because of the teacher's difficulties with other students' behaviors.

**Instructional factors.** Karen's reading instruction appears to have been based almost exclusively on phonics. The repetition involved in phonics instruction could have been beneficial in helping Karen understand use of letter/sound correspondences. However, it may also have acted to reinforce Karen in her excessive use of the strategy of sounding words out and limiting her development of multiple strategies necessary for proficient reading.

In addition, the educational system has not been effective for Karen. Despite her obvious need for special attention, Karen was not provided with any additional help except enrollment in a Title I program. Under a strict interpretation of the state guidelines for placement into special programs, it appears that Karen should have been placed in a DH program, a placement which her mother would have supported. It is possible that factors such as money, space, or need for teachers may have influenced the placement decision. Regardless of the reason, the result is that a child who could have been better served by the educational system has been allowed to move through the grades in such a way that it appears that her needs have
been virtually ignored. Unless substantial changes are made in her educational program, Karen will probably graduate from high school a functional illiterate.

Summary

Karen is representative of a group of students for whom the schools are not effective. However, it appears that her passive personality has helped her cope with the experience of schooling. She has maintained her self-esteem and a positive attitude in spite of years of failure in her classes. When asked if she was afraid she was not ever going to learn how to read, she responded with a smile:

K: Sometimes I think that. And sometimes I just try to block it out of my mind, cause I know that one of these days I’m going to learn how to read. (Audiotape, #4-K)

Case Study 3 - Will

While the literature on students who are educationally at-risk tends to emphasize social, economic, and ethnic characteristics of students who are achieving poorly in school, Will is a reminder that students who appear to be part of mainstream society also may be at-risk due to poor literacy achievement (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989). He also provides another example of students who have been provided with special services, but for whom these services have been ineffective.
Description of Student

Will is a 15-year-old student with average intelligence in the eighth grade. He has been in learning disabilities classes since the second grade. He came to the researcher's attention as a possible subject as a result of a referral from the instructional leader in his school who had known Will since he was in first grade. She indicated that he needed more help than he was receiving in the school and hoped that the university could provide some assistance. Her evaluation of Will's needs was accurate. When Will was given the Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Moe, 1989) at the beginning of the study, he was at his frustration level on the primer passage. (Information in the following section was taken primarily from Fieldnotes, #2-W.)

Will lives in a typical working class community in the Midwest. His father is a tradesman and his mother cares for children in her home. Will has one older sister who is doing well in school. Will's mother reported that she graduated from high school in the top 15% of her class. Will's father dropped out of high school, but later attended night classes and received his Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED). He said that he has always had problems with reading, and his wife helped him obtain his GED by reading the textbooks to him.

Both parents seemed concerned about Will's difficulties in school. They expressed frustration with the schools,
saying that Will had not received any reading instruction during the current school year. The mother said that Will was able to understand things read to him, but he could not read by himself. The parents were quick to stress Will’s other abilities. They reported that he was mechanically minded and began at a young age to take apart motors and put them back together. He recently traded several remote control cars for a motorcycle that had been in a collision. He tore the motorcycle down several times, learning all he could about it, then put it together in working condition. He has also repaired an old car of his mother’s. The parents would like Will to go a vocational school for training in auto mechanics or welding. Will later expressed this same hope for himself. However, when asked when he would graduate from high school, he was not sure.

R: How long are you going to stay in school?
W: ’Til I graduate.
R: Are you going to graduate?
W: Well, I’d like to. My parents want me to.
R: You know, as an LD student you can stay in school until you’re 21. Would you do that?
W: No.
R: What would be your cut-off age?
W: Nineteen. I’d stay in ’til then if I could graduate. But I don’t want to be in school longer than that.

(Fieldnotes, #14-W)

The mother reported that Will had disliked school since kindergarten. She believed Will’s dislike of school stemmed from other students picking on him. She said when she spoke to teachers about the problem, she received little cooperation. The mother and father both stated that Will
had a bad temper and that he had been in trouble frequently in school because of it. Will stated:

W: I get mad too easily. (Audiotape, #5-W)

He also gave accounts of recent incidences that had resulted in disciplinary action or school suspension. When asked how he got into trouble with his teachers lately, he replied:

W: Threw stuff at them.
R: What did you throw at them?
W: Well, I threw a chair at Mrs. Jefferson, and my desk.
R: Well, that would certainly get my attention.
W: And I just walked out of class with Mrs. Jefferson and walked home. And Mrs. Hower, I told her I'd blow up her car and walked down here (office).
R: Did you mean it?
W: Naw. But I got kicked out of school for 3 days for saying it.
R: Did you get kicked out of school for throwing something at Mrs. Jefferson?
W: No, 'cause she couldn't say she wasn't yelling at us for no reason. (Audiotape, #5-W)

The researcher was able to confirm the incident with the car bomb threat, but not the incident involving throwing the chair. It became apparent in the course of the study that Will had developed a reputation for his temper that was well-known among the school staff. However, in the presence of the researcher, Will's behavior was exemplary. When the researcher first visited Will's school, the Instructional Leader described Will as having behavior problems, but added that he was a pleasant student to work with individually. For the researcher, Will was always friendly, cooperative, and interested. He also revealed a sense of humor that made
him a pleasure to work with.

In addition to Will's mechanical abilities, he is also an avid hunter and fisherman. Unfortunately, sometimes he gives these favored activities precedence over school. Once Will missed a planned session with the researcher. When she saw him two days later, she noticed that he was sunburned.

R: Did you have a nice time outside all day Wednesday?
W: (Looking surprised, and then grinning) Yeah, it was too nice a day, sunny and everything. I went out and rode my motorcycle on the paths.

Will does not remember being read to as a child, but he remembered having children's books around the house.

R: When you were little, did your mother read you stories?
B: No.
R: Did you have children's books in the house?
B: Yeah. (Audiotape, #3-W)

On another occasion Will said he thought books were read to him around Christmas time, and that sometimes his sister read to him when he was younger. However, the mother reported reading frequently to Will, and also having him watch Sesame Street on television.

The parents hope that someone will take an interest in Will and help him with his reading so he will graduate from high school. The mother paid for a private tutor over the summer to work with Will on his reading, and she hopes she can find someone to continue helping him when he enters ninth grade.
Description of Student’s Reading Behaviors

Will has not yet achieved any independent success with reading. He has a small basic sight word vocabulary, but is not always consistent in his recognition of these words. On the 50-word passage of the informal reading inventory administered at the beginning of the study, he made nine miscues, seven of which were substitutions for basic sight words. For example, he read ‘said’ for sat, ‘mine’ for me, and ‘but’ for by. However, in subsequent readings during the same session, he recognized said and me. He self-corrected twice during the reading and had an average speed of 16 words per minute.

Will analyzed his reading of the passage as follows:

R: Was this hard for you to read?
W: Some words.
R: Which words were hard?
W: I get stuck on some of the small words, like this one here. (Points to the word by.)
R: When you came to this word, which was in the story three times, what did you do to try to figure it out?
W: Put like by...
R: Is that the word?
W: Yeah, I guess.
R: Yeah, but you said the word but. Were you just looking at the b?
W: Yeah, and I was getting lost.
R: Okay, what’s this word right here. (Points to want.)
W: Went...was...
R: What are you looking at when you think it might be went or was?
W: The w.
R: Okay, so you see the w first.
   What else do you see in the word?
W: ‘Ant’.
R: Yes, there is the word ant there. What happens when you put them together?
W: Went?
R: It’s want. So it looks as though, when you get to a letter... what’s the first thing you look at?
W: The first letter.
R: The second thing?
W: The second letter.
R: Third thing?
W: Third letter.
R: You go straight across the word?
W: Yeah.
R: When you read this sentence, you said, “Pat sat but the tree.”
W: Yeah, I thought it said but.
R: But when you read that did that make sense to you?
W: (Shakes head no.)
R: In your mind did you correct it or keep going?
W: I keep going.
R: Has anyone ever told you that if it doesn’t make sense, you can go back?
W: No. You just keep going. That’s the way you accomplish it.
R: So if somebody tells you to read a story in school, what does that mean to you?
W: Getting it done. (Audiotape, #1-W)

While Will does use the context of the sentence sporadically, as is apparent when he self-correction, his primary strategy is to use letter/sound correspondence in a left to right progression across the word. He often makes a guess at the word after identifying the initial sound, but if that is not successful, he will proceed across the word. Sometimes he continues to try to decode a word because he notices that the other features don’t match with the word he has initially chosen. For instance, during the instructional preparation for reading the text, The Teeny, Tiny Woman (Bennet & de Paolo, 1986), the researcher read
the text several times to Will, and asked him to find words she had just read on each page. When asked to find the word *some*, he scanned the page, briefly pointed at *soup*, but went on, appearing to reject that as the correct word.

R: How do you know that’s not *some*?
   (Pointing at *soup*)
W: Because it’s got a *p* in it. (Audiotape, #6-W)

However, his strategy for finding the word *had* was:

B: Looking for a word with *h* in it. (Audiotape, #6-W)

Will also tries to spell words by attending to the letter sounds. In some instances, he retains many of the characteristics of a speller in the letter/name stage (Henderson, 1985). For example, he wrote *wadr* for *water*, *b* for *be*, *wate* for *want*, *thak* for *thank*, and *slep* for *sleep*. On the other hand, his exposure to written print has made him aware of some letter patterns in words, resulting in the use of the *e* as a marker in words with long vowels such as *bote* for *boat*. It is possible for Will to read his own writing, and he is aware that his spellings are often incorrect. Will wrote the following story about a fishing tournament he was going to enter.

_We eru going on a fisking trip to win mune._
_Catfisk. We eru going to rint a bote. Will B out 12 our._ (Writing sample, #6-W)

While writing this sample, he wrote the letter *B* for the word *be* and then stopped.

B: I know there’s got to be something else.
R: What does it sound like?
B: *B*, it sounds like a *B*. 
He crossed out the word in frustration. *Rent* was a difficult word for him. He knew it started with an *r*. The researcher prompted him to think of the last sound, and he wrote a *t*. Then he tried to visualize how the word looked on the FOR RENT sign he had recently put up for his grandmother. He ended up with the spelling, *rint*. Appendix K contains several samples of Will's writing.

Will was not consistent in his recognition of letters. He frequently made the following letter confusions: *b/d*, *w/v/u*, and *w/m*. He also had difficulty with several letter/sound correspondences, including *v* as a consonant, *a* in the initial position, *g, sh, ch, w, kn*. For instance, once when he encountered the word *we*, he tried to pronounce it as "oo-eh". He made additional letter recognition errors when a book was written in sansserif print. For example, he tried to pronounce the word *I'll* as "ul-ul". On several occasions, he halted his reading when he came to the word *I* written without serifs.

While Will often appeared to need help identifying words, he did not frequently ask for the word to be given to him. Instead he would ask for evaluative comments, saying, "That's not right, is it?" He was then satisfied if he was given a prompt to use a different strategy. In fact, he appeared to find it intriguing that there were different strategies to use when identifying words, and he was quick to use these when suggested. He became more enthusiastic
about reading books as these strategies began to work for him. He told the researcher that he had learned a lot from working with her. When asked what was different about this reading instruction, he replied:

W: Well, you tell me what to do....
R: What have I told you to do?
W: Well, like read past the word and then figure it out.
R: Does that help?
W: Yeah! (Fieldnotes, #14-W)

He was referring to the researcher's prompts to use the context when he had difficulty with a word. This strategy made him attend more to meaning, and he was able to use his knowledge of language to monitor himself as he read. By the end of the study, he was self-correcting with much greater frequency.

Student Perceptions about Reading

When asked what it was like in first grade when he was trying to learn to read, Will replied:

W: It was rough. It was hard. And I kept getting mixed up. (Fieldnotes, #17-W)

Reading is still rough and hard for Will. When he first met with the researcher, he appeared nervous although he was trying not to appear that way. He slouched casually in his chair, but when he spoke his voice wavered. When he had to sit forward to read a piece of text, his voice cracked occasionally and his knuckles were white as he held the book. However, when the researcher changed the topic to motorcycles, which she knew were a favorite interest of his,
his voice became natural and spontaneous, indicating that
the reading was probably the cause of his stress
(Fieldnotes, #3-W). When the researcher asked if he was
nervous about reading to her, he quickly answered:

W: No.
R: Oh, you seemed to tense up a bit...
W: Well, it depends on when the words
are difficult... (Audiotape, #1-W)

For Will the words were always difficult.

Will had difficulty talking about reading, so the
researcher set up a format where Will described how he would
teach a young child to read.

R: What would you do if a little kid came
to you and said, "Would you tell me how
I can learn to read?" What would you tell
him?
W: Well, basically, I'd read what they read.
I'd tell him you gotta know your ABC's and
you gotta learn how to write and stuff like
that. You gotta stay in school. And stay
in school.
R: What else would he have to do to learn to
read?
W: He'd have to listen in class. And you
just have to be in school all the time.
(Audiotape, #3-W)

This was an interesting response because it obliquely
referred to later information gathered by the researcher
indicating that Will often was absent from school. It
appeared that at this time and in later conversations
(reported below) that he regretted some of his past
behaviors.

The conversation continued:
R: Okay, now the kid says, "Well, would you teach me to read?" What are you going to do from there?
W: I could teach him how to read some words.
R: How would you go about doing that?
W: Well, teach him some of the words I couldn't figure out a long time ago. Teach him all the things not to do.
R: Such as.
W: Like listen in class and don’t mess around like I did. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Will appears to feel that his lack of reading progress has been his own fault. He remembers not attending to the teacher and getting into trouble, but apparently does not attribute these behaviors to his inability to understand much of what occurred in the class. When prompted further on how to teach a child to read, he described his own reading behaviors of sounding out words letter by letter. To Will reading was a process of blending sounds together.

Will’s attitude toward his own reading was one of embarrassment and frustration. When asked how his reading difficulties affected him, he replied:

W: Not much. I mean it bothers me not reading, being able to read. It ‘barrasses me sometimes.
R: Would you give me an example of a situation where you’ve been embarrassed because you couldn’t read?
W: Like the teacher asks you to read the rules, and you can’t.
R: So...there’s a lot of people watching...
W: Um hmmm.
R: So it’s embarrassing sometimes.
W: Yeah.
R: Anything else about not being able to read?
W: It’s frustration. When you’re trying to figure out a word or kind of figure out what size parts to buy. You gotta look them up. Or signing your license, filling them out. It’s hard.
R: When you get frustrated, what would be the next emotion you would feel?
W: Mostly I get mad.
R: Who are you mad at?
W: I don’t know. Anything, everything.
R: Just the world in general?
W: Yeah (laughs). I get mad real easy. I got a short fuse. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Will’s feelings of frustration and embarrassment began resulting in aggressive behavior early in his schooling. He reported that he was the target of considerable teasing as a youngster. When asked why, he responded:

W: Probably ‘cause I wasn’t smart.
R: When was the first time that you had a feeling that people thought that you might not be as smart as other people in school?
W: ‘Cause they was always smarter than me in reading in class.
R: When was that?
W: Oh, that was my first and second grade. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Although during the present data collection, the researcher pointed out to Will ways in which he was smart, Will had associated reading with intelligence at an early age. Furthermore, it appeared that once he decided he was not smart enough to read, and this may have seemed confirmed by his placement in a special class with other poor readers, his school career seemed to have disintegrated into years of confusion and inappropriate behaviors which resulted in disengagement with school. At first this disengagement
consisted of noncompliance with teachers and disinterest in his classwork. However, by the sixth grade, Will was ready to completely disassociate himself from school. This is when he began skipping school.

R: When did you start skipping school, or deciding that skipping school was a better choice than being in school?
W: Sixth grade.
R: Why?
W: Well, I just wanted to go hunting or something, hang out with friends. And it was boring in school.
R: How was that?
W: Well, I’d go to class and they’d tell me to do something, I couldn’t do it. But I had to do it anyway. So I figured they didn’t need me here.
R: If they gave you things you couldn’t do, how did that go?
W: Well, I’d just mark down answers. It didn’t matter.
R: Did they give you help?
W: No.
R: So you felt it didn’t matter if you were in school?
W: Yeah, ’cause I wasn’t learning anything. (Fieldnotes, #14-W)

Will shared some of his thoughts about the reading instruction he had received. He recalls kindergarten as being a time to do seatwork.

R: Did your kindergarten teacher read books to the class?
W: No. She just sat us down and made us do our work.
R: What kind of work?
W: Mostly math, like 1 + 2, and stuff. (Audiotape, #5-W)

In first and second grade, Will remembered flashcards of words and letters and being told to sound out the words. His mother, on the advice of the teachers, also used letter
flashcards at home to help Will with his letter/sound
correspondences. He recalled being frustrated with these
activities.

R: What did you think when the teacher
was up at the board writing words, or
holding up flashcards. What would go
through your mind?
W: "I want to go home!" That's what would
go through my mind. (Audiotape, #5-W)

He was also frustrated with the books he had at school.

R: What kinds of books have you had?
W: Reading books.
R: Can you read them?
W: No.
R: Your reading hasn't improved since
first grade. Have you been given
a new reading textbook each year?
W: Yeah, and I can't read them. I mean
I can read, but not very much. I
need to read better. I can recognize
some words, but it's hard. (Fieldnotes, #14-W)

Will was unable to understand the reasons for some of the
instruction he received.

W: There was this one teacher, Mrs. White,
and she was really goofy. Really goofy!
She kept giving me the same homework
assignment every night, over and over.
So that's why I didn't learn anything
that year. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Will's mother confirmed this, saying it had occurred during
Will's fourth-grade year. During his seventh-grade year,
Will was taken out of LD classes and placed with a tutor for
one period a day as a means of providing him with individual
attention.

R: Tell me about seventh grade.
W: Well, I wasn't in LD class then. I
just had a tutor. They thought the tutor would help me. And I couldn't read the stuff. I mean, I just couldn't keep up on the homework. I could only do a couple of pages of homework a night...

R: When you were with the tutor, what was she tutoring you in?
W: Well, she was supposed to tutor me in reading, but she helped me mostly with my homework so we didn't get much reading. She tried to tutor me in reading, but that didn't help much.
R: When she tried to work with reading, when you came to a word you didn't know, what would she tell you to do?
W: She'd tell me to figure it out, then if I couldn't figure it out, she'd tell me. Then she made me say it about a hundred times.
R: Just look at it and say it?
W: Yeah.
R: So basically she was telling you to sound it out?
W: Yeah.
R: What kinds of books were you reading with her?
W: We only got around to reading once. That's how much homework I had. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Will did have one teacher who he thought was helpful.

R: The teacher who was helping you learn to read, what was she doing?
W: She was making me do my spelling words.
R: And that helped with your reading?
W: Yeah.
R: Why do you think that helps your reading?
W: Well, it's just, she had enough time. She only had five or six kids every day, time to sit down and teach me how to. She put us in groups, and she'd sit two of us down, 'cause there was only two in my group. The rest of them could read fairly well. I was getting fairly decent reading, 'cause I went through five or six books that year. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Now that Will is old enough to evaluate his own learning, he expresses displeasure with the learning disability classes he has had.
W: Going into this LD class now, I don’t do much reading. (Audiotape, #3-W)

Later he added in exasperation:

W: I’m not even in a reading class now! (Fieldnotes, #14-W)

When asked what he needed from the school to help him learn to read, he replied:

W: Well, I need someone to help me, to show me what to do.
R: What else do you need?
W: Well, just someone to help me every day.
R: What if they put you in with a teacher every day and she had five other kids who needed help with reading?
W: It wouldn’t work.
R: Why?
W: ’Cause, see the other kids would get more of the help than me. I just don’t, I wouldn’t....
R: You aren’t aggressive about asking for help?
W: No, I don’t like to... (Shrugs) (Fieldnotes, #14-W)

Will revealed his despair over being unable to read in a conversation that began with a review of how he would teach a young child to read.

R: Let’s go back to how you would teach a kid to read.
W: Well, you can’t teach a kid how to read. (Disparaging voice) You gotta, he’s gotta teach himself how to read.
R: Oh, why do you say that?
W: ’Cause he won’t sit there and listen to you. Like flashcards and stuff. He’s gotta want to read before, ... no one can teach him. You just gotta put him down there and tell him how to do the work. He won’t sit there and listen. He’ll just sit there an’... (Makes a goofy face) “Really? That’s nice.” They won’t listen, they’ll just sit there an’.... (Another goofy face)
"What am I doin' here?"... That's all you can do.
R: So how do kids learn how to read?
W: They just listen. But they gotta want to learn first.
R: Where do you fall here?
W: Well, I didn't ever want to read, or go to school. Or math or homework or anything like that. I always hated that stuff. But now I sorta want to read 'cause I gotta get, make it through life.
R: When did you start coming to this realization?
W: This year. 'Bout the middle of the year when I was getting switched (from 7th to 8th grade). I was like, "Jesus!" I'm going into high school now. No. I'll never make it." (Audiotape, #5-W)

Will was completely serious at this point. His forehead was wrinkled in concentration and his hands were tensed.

R: Not kids' stuff anymore.
W: I know (Slumps back in his chair and sighs) So I quit messing around and try to stay out of trouble. But that's hard. (Audiotape, #5-W)

Educational History

Will was enrolled in kindergarten at the age of 5.

(Information in the following section was taken from Fieldnotes, #6-W.) Records indicate Will knew only two capital letters and one lowercase letter. He was working on writing his name. The teacher stated that Will had "messy work habits" and that he "needed to work on fine motor development." She further stated:

I am very concerned that Will cannot follow directions to complete papers correctly.

At the end of that year, he was able to recognize 7 capital letters and 10 lowercase letters. He had shown improvement
in listening and following directions to complete papers. He was referred for psychoeducational testing at the end of that school year. Tests administered were the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Thorndike, Terman, & Merrill, 1973), the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (Woodcock & Johnson, 1978), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981), and the Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale (Spivack & Swift, 1967). The results of the tests administered are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Standard Score</th>
<th>Full Scale IQ</th>
<th>Mental Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanford-Binet</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcock-Johnson</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test</td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Devereux Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale
(Standard scores of 90 or below are considered indicators of below average performance.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom disturbance</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatience</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Reliance</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inattentive/Withdrawn</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school psychologist noted that Will had severe discrepancies in all academic areas. Further observations were also noted in the records:

Language/Communication Skills
Articulate/understands speech patterns
Used complete sentences.
Responds directly.
Initiates conversations frequently.
Responses reality oriented.

Behavioral Observations
Rapport attained quickly.
Easy interactions, friendly.
Elevated activity level.  
Some difficulty selectively attending to assessment task for extended period of time.  
Tended to withdraw from frustration situation.  
Responded to positive praise.  
No physical/neurological problems.

The psychologist interpreted the assessment results to mean that Will's academic discrepancies were not due to physical handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, environment, or cultural or economic disadvantage. However, the psychologist did note:

"When considering Will's age, in conjunction with a generalizable difficulty in the area of selective attention, one might conclude his difficulties may be fairly directly related to immaturity."

The psychologist considered placement in the learning disabilities program, but due to Will's immaturity instead recommended retention in kindergarten for another year. He also recommended:

"an approach to discipline that utilizes natural and logical consequences. If this fails, a more highly structured behavior plan and/or cognitive training should be considered."

Will repeated kindergarten. His teacher reported at the end of the year that Will knew 33 capital and lowercase letters. He was able to print his full name without a model. He could count to 15 and knew colors and shapes. The teacher reported that Will enjoyed science. She also said that Will had improved his relationships with his peers, although he preferred to be with specific friends.
Absences were a problem from the beginning of Will’s schooling. In his first year in kindergarten, Will was absent 30 out of 176 days. The next year he was absent 40 days. His mother reported that Will had asthma and allergies. The health records also indicate he had scarlet fever as a child and spinal meningitis during his fourth grade year. While all of Will’s absences were excused, throughout his school career he averaged 32 absences per year.

At the end of his second year in kindergarten, Will was placed in a second-grade learning disabilities classroom. During this year, the teacher noted a lack of studying at home, especially practice on the word cards and math facts. At the end of the year, Will’s report card indicated he needed improvement in all areas of reading. He received a D, with little effort noted. His spelling progress was also poor. He was assigned to third grade.

The third-grade LD teacher noted the Will was falling further behind due to absences, and that he was still having trouble with letter/sound correspondences. He was retained in third grade.

Will had a different LD teacher the second year he spent in third grade. While she noted he still needed improvement in all areas, he received a B+ in reading. The teacher expressed concern with Will’s tendency to disrupt group discussions. He was promoted to fourth grade with the
same teacher. During this year, Will received a psychological reevaluation, during which the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974) and the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) (Jastak & Jastak, 1978) were administered. The standard scores received on these tests are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISC-R</th>
<th>Verbal IQ</th>
<th>101</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance IQ</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Scale IQ</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRAT</th>
<th>Grade Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The psychologist noted that Will was cooperative and tried hard. He also stated that Will was "very discouraged about his academic skills." Will was maintained in the LD classrooms.

In fourth grade, Will was mainstreamed for science, social studies, and health. He did poorly in all of these subjects. Will was given an A in reading with satisfactory progress noted. His spelling was still poor. The teacher indicated that Will was exhibiting better work habits and self-control, except in art class. She stated:

"Will is still in the same book he was in last year. He is relearning the information well and has good comprehension skills. He needs more decoding ability."

She further noted that Will played roughly, but enjoyed being around the other children. He was promoted to fifth grade with the same teacher.
During the fifth grade, the teacher stated that Will needed work on sight words. He received a B in reading, but was performing below grade level in all subjects. He had difficulties with punctuation and sentence structure. The teacher also noted a need for Will to improve his self-discipline.

Will received his second psychoeducational reevaluation during his sixth-grade year. The same tests were administered with the resulting standard scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Verbal IQ</th>
<th>Performance IQ</th>
<th>Full Scale IQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WISC-R</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRAT</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>66</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The psychologist noted that Will did not seem anxious about taking the tests. However, his "responses to tasks were fairly slow. Demonstrated impulsivity and a deficit with verbal expressive skills."

As Will had reported, educational records confirmed that at the beginning of his seventh-grade year, he was provided with an LD tutor instead of LD classes. The rationale was that he was "experiencing extreme difficulty with the standard curriculum and needs more extensive service for the rest of the year." The psychologist wrote a strong recommendation for more services and for school personnel to "make every effort to provide special needs programming in all areas where the prognosis for successful
academic achievement remains guarded." He noted that Will needed individual academic programming in "those areas where special class placement is not provided." Furthermore, if this was not sufficient, the psychologist recommended that "more extensive special services should be considered."

The school district in which Will was enrolled used the California Achievement Test (1970) yearly to determine achievement levels on all students. A summary of Will's reading achievement, given in grade equivalents, is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of Will's Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) included phonic analysis as the primary reading objective.

Although Will was placed with a tutor at the beginning of seventh grade, no progress was noted. He was unable to do the work in the regular curriculum classes, and his inappropriate behaviors were increasing. In the middle of the school year, a consultation team decided to place Will back in the LD classes for language arts, science, and math and to give him eighth-grade status. They rationalized this move due to Will's age and to their perceptions that there was little the middle school could offer a student such as Will. They thought that it would be best to move him into
high school as soon as possible where he might be able to enroll in vocational classes. At the end of this unusual seventh/eighth grade year, Will was placed in ninth grade. While this may infer a lack of concern among the staff at the school, the instructional leader, the principal, and Will's teachers expressed much concern about Will and were supportive of his participation in the present study since he would be receiving extra help in reading.

Classroom Observations/Teacher Perceptions

Will was observed in two classrooms and the teachers of these classes were subsequently interviewed. Will was not required to do any independent reading in either class. In one class he could get help from another student when reading was necessary, and in the other class, the teacher had structured the class so that reading was not required for Will. The first observation took place in Will's social studies class during a review of materials previously taught. The teacher, Mr. Burns, was providing a fast-paced question and answer review in which almost all students in the class were actively involved. There were 26 students in the classroom, all of whom were seated at individual desks except for Will and a girl who were at a round table at the side of the room. Several times during the class, the girl seated by Will was observed helping Will find maps and charts in the textbook that were referred to during the review discussion. Will held up his hand to answer
questions twice. At the end of the class, Mr. Burns assigned the questions at the end of the chapter and also handed out a worksheet. Fieldnotes concerning Will's response to the assignment are included below:

Students begin to work as they get their papers. Will gets up and sharpens his pencil. Talks briefly to girl next to him. He takes a quick look around at me (researcher), but doesn’t acknowledge me. Will looks at handout. (The handout is a published accompaniment to the text. Will probably can’t read it. Example: 1. Either of the two times of the year when the sun’s most direct rays are as far north or south of the Equator as they will ever be.) Will is writing on sheet. Where is he getting answers? Teacher walks past and asks Will where his book is. Will says he lost it. They talk quietly for a minute. Teacher has Will throw out gum. Will complies easily. Girl next to Will helps him with a couple of answers, showing him things in the text. Does she know he can’t read it? Class is very quiet. Will is noticeably copying from the girl’s paper. She appears to be a willing participant in this. It is very obvious, does teacher know? Students work until bell rings. Will has made no apparent eye contact with anyone in the class except the teacher and the girl.

(Fieldnotes, Obs1-W)

Later, when the researcher asked about Will’s copying from a classmate’s paper, both the teacher and Will acknowledged that it was a common practice. Will stated:

W: We were just helpin’ each other out.
R: Well, actually you were copying the answers from her. Do you do that a lot?
W: Yeah.
R: Mr. Burns seems to know this. Does he mind?
W: No, ’cause that’s how...He knows I can’t read the paper. (Fieldnotes, Obs1-W)
Mr. Burns confirmed Will's perceptions, saying that he knew Will couldn't read the text or the worksheets.

B: If the kids are talking about social studies, then they can work together - help each other out. (Fieldnotes, Conf2-W)

When asked about accommodations or modifications he made for Will in the class, Mr. Burns said that he did very little. He said that he and Will had an arrangement that he would read tests if Will asked him. Mr. Burns said that Will needed to have answers read several times, and then he did well if he had some familiarity with the topic. Mr. Burns further stated:

B: I am not doing anything above and beyond (for Will). The things I am doing are not costly - they are easy, cheap, natural. I don't know if I would do costly things, not because Will is not worth it, but because the time is not there. We don't have it." (Fieldnotes, Conf2-W)

By costly, Mr. Burns was referring to actions that would require extra preparation, special materials, or restructuring his class.

Mr. Burns appeared to have put much thought into Will's difficulties. When asked what Will's strengths were, he replied:

B: He can think. He can remember experiences and relate those to similar but unlike situations. He has good reasoning ability. His Piagetian stage is reasonably high. He gives good answers, when he's not being a smart aleck - he doesn't do that too often. He's not a behavior problem. He can give excellent answers. (Fieldnotes, Conf2-W)

Mr. Burns then related an example of Will's abilities in
state history class. The class was discussing life on the frontier. Will, who had experience curing skins, brought in a deer and skunk hide he had cured, and explained the process to the class. Mr. Burns said Will had done very well with this presentation. Mr. Burns concluded his list of Will’s strengths by saying:

B: He is able to learn. (Fieldnotes, Conf2-W)

Mr. Burns qualified this by saying that Will learned best through listening and that he sometimes included lectures in the class primarily for Will’s benefit. Mr. Burns was also asked to discuss Will’s weaknesses.

B: He’s not able to function in school. Everything we do in the current educational program at this grade level, he is not capable of. If we had machine shop, or if we could send him out to Ferris Vocational School, he could learn out there. He needs hands-on. In schools, where we concentrate on reading, lectures, and not on experience, he’s lost. This is not a place where he looks good and feels good. He’s aware he looks stupid here. (Fieldnotes, Conf2-W)

The second observation was conducted in Will’s LD science classroom. Excerpts from the fieldnotes follow:

Will sits toward the back, middle of the room. He has a notebook and a pencil. Quiet both during class change and beginning of class. Teacher tells class to get the science text from the shelves. Students get up and go to a bookshelf which is filled with a variety of books. As they get their copy, they return to their seats. There is some talking, but not excessive. Will returns to his table without talking. Teacher asks for volunteers to read from text. A boy near front volunteers. Will turns to
appropriate page, but does not appear to look directly at the page. A boy front diagonal from Will turns around. He and Will gesture and mouth words at each other. They both grin. Discussion concerning book throughout lesson. Teacher reiterates what student has read and asks questions. Talks mostly to students in front. Will responds voluntarily to one question, correctly. He attends to teacher talk, and classmate talk, but does not attend to book. Another boy volunteers to read. Will is not following print at all. Looking toward friend. Nonverbal gesturing between Will and other boy continue. Teacher tells boy to turn around. This boy appears to find ways to distract class frequently. Will is his cohort. Will makes an irrelevant comment intended to be funny (whales having chicken pox?). Several of the boys laugh. (Fieldnotes, Obs2-W)

Because the researcher was sitting to the side and facing Will, she was able to see where Will was looking. When the teacher began writing the answers to questions on the board, Will copied laboriously, letter by letter. The teacher continued with the questions, giving the students the answers and then writing them on the board for the students to copy on their papers. These papers were turned in at the end of class for grading. Will rapidly fell behind the rest of the class in copying the answers. He was still working from the first section of board when the teacher began writing on the second section of board. She moved to stand in front of the first board, blocking Will's view. Will did not skip over to the answers that were visible, but waited until he could see the answers on the first board again. Will was the last person to complete this task. There was miscellaneous talk between the
teachers and the students while Will was still writing. It was not clear whether the teacher structured this talk to give time for Will to finish the task. During the remainder of the class, the students were engaged in doing a word-find worksheet. Will did not complete this task (Fieldnotes, Obs2-W).

The LD teacher in this classroom, Ms. Jefferson, later told the researcher that she wrote the answers on the board primarily because she knew Will could not write them on his own as could the other students in the class. She was mostly interested in talking about Will's social behaviors, although she admitted that he gave her no problems in her classroom. When asked about Will's reading, she said:

J: He won't try to sound out words when reading. Basically, he has no skills at all. (Fieldnotes, Conf1-W)

She did qualify this statement by saying that if Will did have skills, he might be too embarrassed to use them. She stated that she had seen signs of Will's embarrassment concerning his reading, but that Will:

J: ...plays it off as if he doesn't care. (Fieldnotes, Conf1-W)

In her opinion, Will's behaviors were not related to his poor reading achievement. Ms. Jefferson mentioned having heard that Will had skills with engines, but was unable to think of any other strengths Will possessed. She indicated that Will would be passed on to ninth grade because he was too old to remain in the middle school. Will was also in
Ms. Jefferson's LD language arts class, however, she said that Will was not provided with individual reading instruction in any of his classes. Will later told the researcher that reading in his LD classes was usually done orally by those students who could read well. The teacher also read from books sometimes.

**Researcher's Interpretations**

Will is a 15-year-old nonreader, that is, a person who recognizes less than 50 words despite substantial instruction (Harris & Hodges, 1981; McCormick, 1987). Will appears to have had few opportunities for success during his years in school, and because of the severity of his reading disability, he may not be able to benefit from instruction which would be suitable for other students. In fact, he may require specialized instruction to learn. Among the many complex factors that may have contributed to his reading disability are: (a) failure to benefit from early literacy experiences, (b) inappropriate instruction, (c) behavior problems, (d) teacher expectations, and (e) disengagement with school.

**Failure to benefit from early literacy experiences.**

While Will remembers having books in the home, even after several probing questions on separate occasions, he could not remember book-reading as a frequent occurrence during his early childhood. This does not necessarily mean that such reading did not occur, in fact, his mother does report
reading to Will frequently. Furthermore, the researcher has seen the mother sharing books with the young children she cares for in her home, indicating that this is an activity she would likely have engaged in with her own children. However, even if the reading did occur, it does not appear that Will was able to benefit from early experiences with books, knowledge which would have aided him upon entering school. Many of the benefits of early book experiences, such as knowledge of letter names and sounds, and concept of word were not apparent when Will entered kindergarten. According to records, Will knew only one lowercase and two capital letters at the beginning of his first year in kindergarten. During the tutoring sessions in the present study, the researcher observed that Will still is unsure of some letters, confusing u, v, and w, and confusing b and d. He not only confuses letters, but he frequently assigns the wrong sound correspondences to several letters. Furthermore, Will is unable to assign sounds to digraphs, such as ch or sh. It seems reasonable to assume that if Will does not recognize all of the letters now, and is unable to assign sounds to several letters and letter combinations, that he also did not know them during early instruction. This would have put him at a great disadvantage in a classroom where the instructional emphasis was on phonic analysis, as it was in Will's classes.
Will also watched Sesame Street regularly because his mother believed the concepts presented in the show would be beneficial to him. She told the researcher that prior to school entrance Will appeared to be progressing normally and "knew that A was for apple." She also reported being bewildered when he performed so poorly in school. While being able to recite "A is for apple", does not indicate a knowledge of concepts needed for reading, the question to be raised is why Will was unable to benefit from his experiences.

A possible explanation for Will's seeming inability to use in the school setting information gained in early literacy experiences may be his reported immaturity upon entering school. He may not have been developmentally ready to handle the abstract task of associating sounds with alphabetic symbols which may have prevented him from seeing relevance in the tasks (Clay, 1979). Furthermore, if the teacher was unaware of Will's inability to understand the abstract task of associating sounds with symbols, she may not have been aware that she needed to make the instruction more explicit for Will, or that Will might have needed to have more experiences with print in context before he was able to benefit from instruction.

Goodman and Altwerger (1981) state that prior to schooling children develop an awareness of print that is context dependent. A child may know that a stop sign says
"stop", but not recognize the word *stop* printed out of context on a card. Goodman indicated that the children in her studies appeared unable to bring meaning to a word isolated from context and that inability caused them to see such words as nonsense strings of letters. This may have applicability to Will, who could recite along with Big Bird, "A is for apple", because *apple* was in the expected context. However, he was not required to notice anything about the word *apple*, except perhaps for the first letter. Without a realization that the letters *a-p-p-l-e* have the same meaning in any context, and without a sense of the role of the other letters in making *apple* different from *ape*, Will may have been unready to assimilate additional concepts concerning print.

**Inappropriate instruction.** For a child such as Will, who had difficulty understanding the relationships between graphemes and phonemes, to be placed into a classroom where reading was approached through phonics likely would have been confusing. Since he may not have had a sense of what he could accomplish with reading, he may not have been able to associate the learning of letters and letter sounds with any meaningful task. Furthermore, even though it was apparent that he was failing to learn many reading skills, the instruction given to Will was not altered. He continued to receive instruction in sounding out words.

Individualized Education Plans indicated that objectives for
Will throughout his schooling focused on letter/sound correspondences and phonic analysis. The idea that multiple strategies could be used to identify words was unknown to Will prior to his participation in this study.

Will’s lack of success in the early stages of schooling appear to indicate a breakdown in the support systems of the school. While the parent was willing to take the suggestions of the school and work with Will on letter flashcards and letter/sound correspondences, the school appeared not to respond to Will’s obvious failure to achieve by offering alternative teaching strategies. Such strategies may have included increased exposure to books, rather than decontextualized words and letters, and more opportunities to hear book language, particularly book language which emphasizes the rhythmical qualities of language. Books such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear (Martin, 1970) or Fire! Fire! Said Mrs. McGuire (Martin, 1970) may have provided Will with a more natural means of learning the relationship between sounds and symbols.

Behavior problems. Behavior problems began to be noted by teachers during Will’s second year in kindergarten. He was said to be aggressive with peers, and Will admits to frequently being involved in fights during recess. He attributes these problems to his bad temper and to other children teasing him. In the third grade, reports began to surface concerning Will’s problems with teachers, problems
which intensified as he got older. Since Will's parents appear to have a good relationship with him and indicate that there has been only normal sibling squabbling at home, his unacceptable behaviors appear to occur only at school. However, there is no indication that anyone connected poor behavior to his failure in school. It is possible that the stress of being unable to participate in school activities and of feeling inadequate in comparison to his peers led Will to express his frustration through both verbal and physical aggressive behavior (Gentile & McMillan, 1987).

Also related to stress, was Will statement that being given reading instruction in a classroom with several other students has been difficult for him because he was uncomfortable vying for a teacher's attention. Merritt (1982) has proposed that dual processing is required of students and teachers to ensure that students receive the attention they need. According to Merritt's research, when students need the teacher's help, there are rules (often implicit) that require students to wait until the teacher is free and to do something else while waiting. Conversely, the students are expected not just to wait. There appears to be implicit in these rules a sense of aggressiveness on the part of the student in seeking the teacher's attention. For Will, this may have been a difficult, and perhaps stressful, situation, not only because he had to bring attention to himself, but because he may not have known what
to ask when he had the teacher’s attention. It is also possible that his teacher was less than helpful when she did try to help Will, not realizing the extent of his difficulties.

Teacher expectations. While Will still does exhibit inappropriate behaviors, it appears that early on teachers tagged Will as a behavior problem, and this reputation has stayed with him. This was particularly apparent in the interview with Will’s LD science teacher who was a half-year substitute. She had only known Will for a few months, but she was able to tell the researcher details about Will’s inappropriate behaviors from years past. It is quite likely that as Will moves to a new school for ninth grade these teacher reports will precede him.

Furthermore, it was apparent that neither of the teachers interviewed had any expectations that Will would improve his reading skills in the future. Both were quick to suggest vocational training as an alternative. While vocational training may be a good choice for Will, it should not necessarily preclude continued reading instruction, as seems to have been implied by the teachers. Neither teacher appears to have taken into account what Will might want included in his future school experiences. Placing Will in vocational training without reading instruction may have the result of restricting Will to unnecessarily limited future opportunities.
Disengagement. Will appears to illustrate what can happen to a child who is unable to find any relevance in his schooling. Without any sense of achievement or purpose, Will became disengaged or alienated from school at an early age. While the school frowned on Will's many absences, they were in a sense understandable in view of the difficulties he was having in the school setting. If viewed through his perspective, school provided few, if any, positive experiences. It is also likely that his mother's frustration with the school tempered her ability to be firm with Will when he wanted to stay home. The school's negative responses to Will's mother's ability to keep her child in school may have deepened the rift between home and school. As Will grew older and was able to see the futility in participating in many reading-related activities, he began to develop nonfunctional strategies such as filling in answers randomly and getting through assigned work as quickly as possible. He became less likely to tolerate criticism from teachers concerning his effort of performance. In response to their "yelling", as Will calls it, he may have become even more alienated.

Summary

Will is another student for whom the educational system has failed. That is not to say that efforts have not been made by the schools; however, because of the severity of his problem, the instruction provided may have been
inappropriate. The failure to achieve any independent level of literacy restricted Will to only marginal participation in the process of schooling. Special education placements have not been effective, possibly due to lack of appropriate reading instruction. There appear to be no plans by the school to address Will's need for more appropriate reading instruction. Instead, he will be directed toward a vocational training course where it is hoped he will be able to manage by relying on his abilities with mechanical tasks. The likelihood of Will remaining in school may be determined by whether he is admitted to vocational training, and when there, whether he perceives that training to be beneficial. However, even if Will does stay in school, once he graduates he may be unable to obtain employment because of his inability to read. Unless strong action is taken, it appears that Will will remain illiterate.

Case Study 4 - Missie

The final case study describes a student for whom literacy acquisition may have been hampered due to delayed language development. However, instructional factors, reading-related metacognitive skills, and student stress also appear to have impinged upon this student's success in school.

Description of Student

Missie is a 15-year-old student in the seventh grade.
She is currently reading at approximately the second-grade level. She is a mature-looking young woman who favors the somewhat radical fashions and hairstyles currently popular with many teenagers. Missie was born with a clubfoot and a mild palatal speech impediment. The clubfoot required several surgeries when she was a young child and during her early school years. During early childhood, Missie suffered through continual ear infections which resulted in a high frequency hearing loss in both ears. It is projected that her hearing will deteriorate as she grows older.

The researcher first met Missie in her home when the research project was explained to her and her mother. Missie seemed shy at first, sitting away from the table where her mother and the researcher were seated. When comments began to be directed toward her more frequently, she moved to the table and actively entered the conversation. She watched each speaker intently as they spoke, a mannerism that proved typical throughout the study, and may have been related to her hearing loss.

The mother stated that Missie’s hearing problems were responsible for Missie’s reading difficulties. However, in the course of the conversation, additional possibilities emerged. Missie’s mother dropped out of high school at the age of 15 due to pregnancy. The mother stated that she could read fairly well, but Missie’s father had reading difficulties. When Missie was in second grade, her parents
divorced, and she lived in another state for a year with her mother. When the mother was financially able, she moved back to the area and Missie was reenrolled in her original school. Missie's mother remarried, and the home appears to provide a stable environment for Missie. The mother stated that she was concerned about Missie dropping out of high school as she did. She hoped that Missie would stay in school and get a diploma because it would help her get a better job later (Fieldnotes, #1-M).

Missie had the following remembrances about being read to as a child:

R: When you were really little, did your mom have books in the house for you?
M: Yeah, little ones. Little baby kinds.
R: Did she read them to you?
M: No. She like, well maybe once a year, you know.
R: Okay, when was the first time you can recall someone sitting down and reading books to you?
M: Oh, I remember that here at school.
R: Kindergarten?
M: Yeah.
R: Did you like that?
M: No.
R: How come?
M: I just don't like that, stories, you listen to stories, and it's just, it's boring. It's still boring to me, listening to stories and stuff. But you watch a movie and that's okay. What the movie's about. But if you were just listening....(Shakes head.) (Audiotape, #2-M)

There was reading material in evidence in the home including a newspaper and some magazines. When asked if her mother read at home, Missie replied:
M: Just the newspaper.
R: Do you try to read the newspaper?
M: Yeah.
R: What parts do you read?
M: I read the weather or the movies.
R: Television guide?
M: Yeah.
R: Do you have any problem figuring it out?
M: Sometimes, when I get the words mixed up. I mean, the big ones. (Audiotape, #2-M)

The mother said that she encouraged Missie to read and would help her with the words. Missie confirmed this in a subsequent session:

M: Next year, when I get to high school, I won't have any reading class. I'll just have to get my mom to help me. 'Cause my mom does help me, like, and I say, like, like when I read this, she tell me to, you know, like ra-di-o. Like there's three things. So she tell me to break it down. (Audiotape, #6-M)

Description of Student's Reading Behaviors

At the beginning of the study, the Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods & Hoe, 1989) was administered to Missie. After reading the primer level passage with only two miscues (98% words correct), one of which was self-corrected, she said, "That don't make sense!" She was unable to answer three of the six questions at the end of the story (factual, terminology, and inferential). This passage was read at the rate of 84 words per minute. On the first grade level passage, Missie read all of the words correctly and answered five of the six comprehension questions adequately. On the second-grade level passage,
94% of the words were read correctly. She made one self-correction. Her rate on this passage was 53 words per minute, and she answered 50% of the comprehension questions. On the level three passage, Missie was at her frustration level, reading at a rate of 46 words per minute. Her frequent substitutions, while usually grammatically correct, changed the meaning of the text. It was not surprising that she was unable to answer half of the comprehension questions.

Missie had a good basic sight word vocabulary, but often missed high-frequency words either because she was trying to read quickly or because she was making incorrect predictions based on the previous words. For instance, she made the following substitutions while reading a short passage:

Text: On New Year’s Eve,
M: In New York Eve, (corrected)

Text: Rick went for a drive.
M: Rick went to a drive.

Text: "I didn’t give myself time to think about that."
M: "I didn’t give myself time to (pause) think about what... (She ignored the punctuation and continued into the next sentence.) (Audiotape, #3-M)

Missie’s word identification strategies primarily consisted of briefly trying to sound the word out and then making up a word.

M: You see, like, if I don’t know the word, I try to say it or make it up.
I make it up or try to say it.

R: What makes you think a word would be a good word to make up?
M: I try to think what a good word...
R: Not just any word would do?
M: Like, like I don’t know what ball means, and it says, "Throw a ...." And I don’t know what that’s saying, "....right across a field." I go, well, you throw a cup across the field. I make it up.
R: Okay, let’s say you guessed the word frisbee in that sentence. "Throw a frisbee across the field." That makes sense, doesn’t it?
M: Yeah.
R: (Writes the sentence, He throws the ball across the field, and points to ball.) How would you know it’s not frisbee? I’d...go like this, ‘buh’, ‘buh-aw’, the vowels and consonants, or whatever. (Audiotape, #3-M)

Later Missie said she didn’t sound out words much, but usually skipped the words.

The researcher asked Missie to try to identify several multisyllabic words to get a sense of what strategies she might use when faced with long words. For the word transcription, she read, "trans-su-la-tion", correctly identifying the prefix and suffix. For the word encouraged, she read, "in’cor-aj’ded", again correctly identifying the prefix and suffix, and making close approximations of the medial portions of the word. Missie frequently pronounced ed endings as ‘ded’, as in ‘chasded’ for chased and ‘stopded’ for stopped. (Audiotape, #1-M)

Missie exhibited little curiosity toward the books provided by the researcher. When asked to choose among a few books, she would make a response such as "I don’t mind,"
or "I'll do whatever..." She was always cooperative and friendly, but did not appear to be particularly involved in the tasks. She frequently diverted from reading to talk about matters which appeared to be of more interest to her, usually matters concerning her boyfriend and her friends.

While Missie did have a hearing loss, it did not appear to have affected her ability to distinguish letter/sound correspondences. During one session, she was trying to explain to the researcher how her hearing loss affected her.

M: Um, the hearing. When I look at people, far away, when I look at people and they say something, I don't hear every word, like they say, like, *infection*, I hear like, *infec*-shh...
R: You don't hear the whole word?
M: That's it. I don't hear all the rest. Even every details, I don't hear. Like right now I have a problem with *ch*, *k*’s, and all those things. See I can hear, I can't hear the...’shair’, I say ‘shair’, when I say *chair*. That's how I say it, 'shair’. They both sound the same. Do you know what I mean? (Audiotape, #1-M)

It was interesting that in this conversation Missie was able to pronounce the *ch* and *sh* sounds correctly, however, it did appear that she had to concentrate a little harder to pronounce the *ch* clearly. While she may have experienced difficulty in pronunciation, she had no difficulty discriminating between these digraphs visually.

Missie did not overly rely on phonetic analysis as a word identification strategy. She used several strategies, such as using the context and structural analysis. However, she did not consistently monitor her reading for sense. When
she miscued in a sentence, she often did not catch her loss of meaning until later in the passage, when, after several miscues, what she was reading sounded like nonsense. Then she did not have strategies to repair her errors. A frequent comment at times like these would be, "That don't make sense!" She would wrinkle her forehead in puzzlement and then either continue or quit reading altogether. Without frequent self-monitoring checks, she was unable to locate where she had made errors and go back to try another strategy on the miscued word. She was dependent on the teacher for the help she needed.

Furthermore, she seemed to think that the purpose of reading was to get through text quickly. This, in conjunction with her lack of compensatory strategies, decreased her comprehension of text. For instance, in a passage from *Scholastic Action* (1988), she was unable to retell the passage correctly. The passage describes a principal who banned the wearing of heavy gold jewelry from the school because it appeared to be the object of numerous thefts. The principal felt the money the thieves received from the stolen jewelry was used to purchase drugs.

Missie's retelling is as follows:

M: He don't like, people they think they're big and bad with these jewelry on and part of this jewelry, for weapons like, they can use that for weapons. So he don't want that in school cause he's afraid something's going to happen there.
R: So, the jewelry was used as weapons?
M: Yeah, I guess. (Audiotape, #3-M)
After the researcher had her reread portions of the text, she was able to correct her retelling. However, without help, Missie would have retained an erroneous interpretation of the text, and perhaps been puzzled by it, but not overly concerned. She appeared to be somewhat passive in her acceptance of lack of meaning when she read.

**Student Perceptions about Reading**

The researcher began exploring Missie's perceptions concerning reading by asking her why people need to read.

M: One is, uh, when you get a job and you look at a paper and you try to read it and it's like, and it says, for real life it says, something like, uh, 'do you like to do this?' And they can't read that part. They go up to people who works there and they won't like 'em because you don't know how to read.

R: Okay, so that's almost two reasons there. First is that it helps you get a job, and second is that.

M: It helps you read.

R: Okay.

M: To know what's going on, like in a paper. You don't know what's going on. Or you have to go to the store and they have a new things, like Jello, they have these new pop things?

R: Jello pops?

M: Yeah, and you say, "How d'you say that?" And you don't know what's going on, you don't know what it is. And you just, you know, you gotta know the words to know what it, the word is. You know what I mean.

R: Okay, you were saying that if you had to take your application up to the people that worked there that they wouldn't like you. Talk about that a little bit.
M: They wouldn't like you because... like instruction books. You have to read the thing, or you have to spell the thing to make a house. You know what I mean?
R: Right.
M: So that's why. Like the questions, you have to tell them what to do to make the house and everything.
R: You mean if they can't read it, they can't figure it out?
M: Yeah. (Audiotape, #2-M)

It appeared from this conversation that Missie was worried about how her reading would affect her chances for employment. She also has some concern about functional skills. For instance, when asked what difference it would make if she read better, she replied:

M: Oh, I can, I can read better if I work on it.
R: Would that have any effect on your life?
M: Well, yeah. Like when I read something important like checks and stuff like that. Like when I read the paper it's all confusing. I don't even know the words, I mean. Anyway, I don't even know what the words means, some of the words mean. And I gotta learn more. I gotta get up to at least the fifth grade, sixth grade. (Audiotape, #6-M)

Missie was also concerned about other people's perceptions of her because she could not read well.

M: When I grow up and go in high school they're gonna think I'm weird. They gonna think I come from a second grade class. (Audiotape, 6-M)

She added during another session:

M: When I don't know the word, people start laughing.
R: When does that happen?
M: In school mostly. (Fieldnotes, #10-M)
For Missie, her lack of reading knowledge is even more complicated by her mild speech impediment. She is sensitive to any comment which might imply ridicule of her speech.

M: Everything that's my problem is my speech. I can't say the ch.  
R: Does that really matter, if you know what the word means?  
M: Well, I know. It makes me so mad.  
(Audiotape, #2-M)

When asked, in her experience, how others felt about people who couldn't read well, she misunderstood and thought I had asked how she felt about not reading well. She responded:

M: I feel kind of, I don't feel bad. I can read newspapers sometimes. But when the long words come, I just feel kinda upset. I don't feel sorry for myself. I did a long time ago, but I went through that. So I just don't care. Well, I care. I just feel, I don't feel nothin'. It's just like, wow. I don't know.  
(Audiotape, #2-M)

The researcher inferred from her comments that Missie felt somewhat helpless, especially in light of the instruction she was receiving.

R: So next year you're not going to have a reading class. Does that upset you?  
M: Yeah. That's what the teachers told me, that I wasn't gonna have reading class. And that kind of upset me, 'cause when I don't have reading class, I won't get no better. Plus, when I'm in high school, how can I...I'll be embar... it really embarrass me when I read in front of people. At high school, they're gonna think, "Where'd she come from? She don't belong here! She gonna have to get more help..." You know, all that kind of stuff.  
(Audiotape, #6-M)
Missie described her current reading instruction as doing packets.

M: We just do packets, that's it. We don't go over the words. We just go over the words once a week. We don't look at it.
R: Do you read stories?
M: We don't do no stories. I don't know why.

(Fieldnotes, #10-M)

The researcher asked Missie what the school could do to help her improve her reading. When she answered, she did not appear optimistic that help would be forthcoming.

R: So if you could change that, what would you ask the school to provide for you?
M: The school don't have nothin' to do... You know, they can't.
R: But if they could, what would you ask them for?
M: I need help. I just need it.
R: Describe to me what sort of help would be the most beneficial to you?
M: I need help with the reading and a reading class. I need help in the reading class. I need help with my reading!

(Audiotape, #6-M)

Educational History

Missie entered school one month prior to her fifth birthday. There is an extensive health record included in her school file. She also was tested for placement in special education programs, resulting in enrollment in two programs. (Information in this section was taken from Fieldnotes, #8-M.)

Due to her clubfoot, Missie experiences problems with the foot and her knees which sometimes causes her to walk with a limp. She underwent five surgeries to correct her foot, the first occurring at the age of one, and the last
occurring when she was nine.

Missie was born with esotropia, or crossed eyes. She underwent three eye surgeries at the ages of 5, 7 and 8 to correct this problem. She currently has a slight imbalance in the eyes.

Missie also has a submucosal cleft palate that has not required surgery, but does cause Missie to exhibit difficulties in articulation.

During infancy, Missie suffered from recurring ear infections, possibly related to her blocked sinus passages. A speech therapist who worked with Missie noted that she had not been seen regularly by a doctor for this problem until after she was referred to an audiologist in first grade. As a result of this referral, it was discovered that Missie had suffered a permanent high frequency hearing loss which would likely become worse with age. Currently her hearing acuity is considered acceptable at speech frequencies. She also was found to have allergies and asthma.

It was noted at an early age that Missie had speech articulation and language problems. The mother reported that Missie spoke at the age of 2, saying such words as bye-bye, mom, and dad. She was using small sentences at the age of 4. She was placed in a Headstart program prior to school entry, and records indicated that Missie learned normally when she was free of ear infections. However, when she had bouts of otitis media (inflammation of the middle ear), her
impaired hearing interfered with learning. Tubes were placed in her ear canals frequently. The ear infections became less frequent after the age of 9. Missie also began taking shots for her allergies.

At the end of Missie’s kindergarten year, a staff committee meeting report indicated that Missie was functioning in the slow learning range of abilities. Her language communication skills were judged as relatively weak:

"Verbal skills appear to be less well-developed than nonverbal skills."

Missie was reported to know all of the colors and shapes, and to have satisfactory social skills. There were no records available for Missie’s first- and second-grade years, these possibly being lost due to the change of school districts during Missie’s second-grade year.

When Missie returned to her initial school district in the third grade, she was placed in learning disabilities classes. A report of psychoeducational testing prior to this placement was not available.

At the end of Missie’s fourth-grade year, she was tested by the school psychologist. He administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974), the California Achievement Test (CAT) (1970), and the Bender-Gestalt Visual Motor Test (Pascal & Suttell, 1951). Results were as follows:
WISC-R  Standard Scores  Verbal  64  
               Performance  124  
               Full Scale  90  

CAT  Grade Equivalents  Reading  1.4  
       Language  1.4  
       Arithmetic  2.3  

Bender-Gestalt  Developmental Age  6-10  
               Total Score  6  

The psychologist made the following interpretation of test results:

"Intellectual functioning is at lower end of average range with a highly significant 60 point discrepancy occurring between Verbal scale (IQ 64) and Performance scale (IQ 124) abilities. Academic achievement is below grade level in all academic areas. Perceptual capabilities are underdeveloped in areas of visual-motor integration, auditory memory, and visual memory. Socially adaptive behavior as rated by classroom teacher is generally age appropriate...Missie is sensitive to failure, tends to blame the teacher or external circumstances when things don’t go well and tends to become easily confused [during] discussions or when answering questions."

During the same year, a teacher had completed a Classroom Behavior checklist, noting that Missie had a need for attention, acted without thinking, and exhibited irritability.

Because of the significant discrepancy between verbal and performance scores, the psychologist administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981) and the Test of Language Development (TOLD) (Newcomer & Hammill, 1982). Missie scored 58 and 50, respectively, on these tests. The psychologist also gathered information from the speech therapist. She stated:
"Chronic middle ear problems were not treated medically until she entered school, and as a result, she missed many developmental milestones of language when she was younger."

The psychologist recommended that she be placed in a Severe Communication Disorder program. Missie was placed in the program at the beginning of fifth grade and remained there for two years. She was retained in the fifth grade for the second year.

At the end of her second year in fifth grade, Missie was reevaluated. The school psychologist administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) (Wechsler, 1974), the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (Woodcock & Johnson, 1978), the Bender-Gestalt Visual Motor Test (Pascal & Suttell, 1951), and the Devereux Elementary Behavior Rating Scale (Spivack & Swift, 1967). The results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Standard Score</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Full Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WISC-R</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcock-Johnson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Equivalents</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Language</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bender-Gestalt</td>
<td>Verbal Mental Age</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Devereux Elementary Behavior Rating Scale</td>
<td>Deficient Areas:</td>
<td>External Reliance</td>
<td>Failure Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blaming</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
<td>Negativism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Missie had discrepancies of greater than two standard deviations in reading, math, and spelling, qualifying her for placement in the learning disabilities program. The psychologist made the following remarks:

Missie should be expected to experience considerable difficulty with verbal conceptualization tasks, whereas significant strengths exist in the perceptual organization domain. Her most serious academic deficits are in reading and written expression. Visual-motor integration, auditory memory, visual memory, and intersensory integration skills are likewise underdeveloped. Finally, social adaptive behavior in the classroom, although not blatantly disruptive or aggressive, is at times inappropriate. Missie is frequently confused and as a result, requires considerable reliance on the teacher. She does at times become anxious or negative when frustrated.

The psychologist summed up his report by saying:

Academic achievement is adversely affected by limited verbal conceptualization capabilities and language processing deficits. It is imperative that Missie's curriculum be altered to adequately address her unique learning style and the instruction be offered in a warm and encouraging environment.

It is expected that Missie will remain in learning disabilities classes as long as she remains in school.

Missie’s reading instruction in the primary grades consisted primarily of phonic analysis. During the time she was in the Severe Communication Disorder classroom, the Schmerler Reading Program was used. Missie has received speech therapy at least once a week throughout her school years.
Classroom Observations/Teacher Perceptions

The researcher observed in two of Missie's classrooms and talked with one of her LD teachers and with her speech therapist. In both classrooms, Missie was quiet and attentive. She interacted with peers minimally. She followed directions, although once when the verbal directions involved more than one step, she became confused. The teacher, realizing Missie did not understand, repeated the directions more explicitly. Any questions Missie asked were directly related to the task. Missie appeared to have no difficulty copying information from the board, and she also appeared to be able to follow along in the text.

(Fieldnotes, Obs1-M)

It may be that the researcher's presence altered Missie's usual classroom behavior. On entering one class in which she was the only girl, she was the target of teasing, particularly from one boy. The researcher asked her about being teased in the class.

R: Do the boys tease you a lot, especially Dan?
M: Yeah, I hate that kid. I smack him. See I was gonna hit him in front of you, but no, I wouldn't. I go up to him and I take the retainer (unclear) away and say, "What'd you say?" (Using an aggressive voice) and then I smack him. (Audiotape, #1-M)

When asked if Missie was always quiet in her class, the LD teacher, Ms. Jefferson, responded:

J: Usually. But Missie can be very difficult with some teachers and can hold a grudge.
I don’t really have any problems with Missie. I did at first, but I think we have an understanding now. (Fieldnotes, Conf2-M)

Ms. Jefferson also said that Missie completed her work and was doing well in all of her classes.

Missie was reported to be sensitive about her speech and her limp, frequently lashing out verbally at anyone who mentioned them, regardless of the intent of the comment. In an informal conversation with the LD teacher who has Missie for math, Ms. Patrick said:

P: Missie can be very touchy. Just last week I was walking behind her down the hall and I noticed her limping. I mean, worse than usual. I was real concerned ‘cause I thought she’d hurt herself maybe. So I went up to her, and with the best of intentions, asked her if she was all right. Well, she just had a fit. She started yelling at me, telling me it was none of my business. (Makes facial gesture of surprise.) I was just trying to be kind. (Fieldnotes, Obs2-M)

Ms. Patrick indicated that these types of incidents had occurred several times during the year.

The speech teacher, Ms. Alexander, was the teacher who seemed most knowledgeable about Missie’s reading disability. Ms. Alexander works with Missie on articulation and expressive language. She said that Missie’s delay in language development would have affected her reading development negatively.

R: Could Missie’s hearing loss have resulted in her reading disability?
A: Well, not so much the hearing loss, but
the delay in language development. That would have a negative effect on her reading. (Fieldnotes, Conf1-M)

She further stated that she worried about Missie's future and that high school would be difficult for Missie because the students might not be as tolerant at that age.

Researcher's Interpretation

Missie's reading development may have been affected by a delay in language development. However, in more recent years, instructional factors, teacher expectations, and Missie's own attributions may be impeding maximal development of Missie's reading skills.

Language development. Missie appears to have been unable to make full use of early literacy experiences that would have aided her upon entering school. Because she was not always able to fully understand the conversations of adults around her, she was unable to use these conversations as a means of developing her own verbal language skills. This may also have retarded her development of a sense of the deep structure of language, a sense which is necessary for the development of efficient reading. Especially lacking appears to be her ability to understand the sequence of events in a story and make predictions about what will occur next. These difficulties, in combination with her incomplete mastery (relative to her age) of the production of language may have constrained her ability to efficiently use nonvisual information when attempting to read. It is
possible that more intense exposure to both conversation and print language at an early age may have aided her language development.

**Instructional factors.** The school has been responsive to Missie's primary need, which was for special instruction in language development. However, after Missie's removal due to improvement from the Severe Communication Disorder classroom, only the speech teacher appears to have continued with Missie on language skills. While the modified content of learning disabilities classes may be appropriate for Missie, reading instruction in her LD classes is minimal. Students either listen to other students read or to the teacher. Due to the fear of embarrassment, Missie may be hesitant to take advantage of these opportunities. Furthermore, Missie reported that reading assignments consisted primarily of packets of materials which the students completed independently. For a student with Missie's language development, frequent opportunities to listen to print language, to discuss the contents of books, and to read widely from materials at the student's independent reading level would appear to be vital to continuing reading growth. It may be that Missie needs a secure environment, such as in a one-to-one tutoring situation, in which she can feel free to read and converse about her reading without worry of ridicule.
**Student stress.** Missie remarked several times that she was concerned about ridicule or embarrassment, either because of her reading, her speech, or her limp. This fear may have prompted her to develop protective responses, such as the aggressive verbal response to the teacher who inquired about her leg. The fear of doing poorly in class may also constrain her verbal interactions in instructional situations. While she needs to receive feedback on her language use, her sensitivity to ridicule may make her think that constructive comments are intended as negative criticisms. Furthermore, teachers wishing to avoid Missie’s outbursts may limit their attempts to help Missie with her language. The result is that Missie’s responses become nonfunctional, directing attention away from her difficulties and on to another person.

**Summary**

A retardation of language development appears to have affected Missie’s reading development. Her ability to benefit from early language and literacy experiences may have been decreased because of a hearing impairment, causing her to be less prepared for school than might be expected. While the school did address Missie’s language production deficiencies through a two-year placement in a severe communication disorder class, there were few provisions made to foster her language development when she was reenrolled in LD classes. Increased stress due to her fear of
embarrassment and ridicule may have led Missie to develop nonfunctional behaviors which are limiting her opportunities to make use of instruction. It appears that Missie needs to have a secure environment that will help alleviate her stress before she can benefit fully from instruction.

Summary: Review of Cases

Four case studies were prepared as a means of presenting different and similar facets of reading disabilities in individual students. Data presented included students' personal histories, descriptions of students' reading behaviors, student perceptions about reading, students' educational histories, and fieldnotes from classroom observations and teacher interviews.

In the first case study, factors which appeared to play a role in Ben's reading disability were early environmental factors, emotional problems, behavior problems, teacher expectations, perceptions of Ben's sociolinguistic competence, and instructional factors.

In the case study describing Karen, factors which appeared relevant were Karen's cognitive ability, instructional factors, metacognition during reading, teacher expectations, and Karen's passivity.

For Will, failure to benefit fully from early literacy experiences, limited instructional strategies, behavior problems, teacher expectations, and Will's disengagement
from school may have had an effect on his reading
development.

In the last case study, retarded language development
resulting from impaired hearing appeared to be a factor in
Missie’s reading development. Her impaired hearing may have
limited her opportunities to make use of language learning
opportunities in her home. Instructional factors and
Missie’s feelings of stress may also have impinged on her
reading development as she grew older.

While there appear to be similar strands running across
all cases, such as instructional factors, there are also
unique aspects in each case. The implications for schools
attempting to meet the needs of reading disabled students
are discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

RESULTS: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Following analysis of individual cases, the researcher examined data for all students and selected terms to describe overall concepts that emerged. The terms were organized into charts for ease in comparison of data (see Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). The data were then compared across cases (see Table 5). The researcher considered similarities and differences in the data, and questions were asked as to why these similarities and differences may have existed. The remainder of this chapter addresses the results when viewing the group as a whole. The next chapter addresses the implications of the findings for educational systems.

The following cross-case analysis attempts to make a connection between the experiences of each student and the functional or dysfunctional systems which supported those experiences. Cases are analyzed for similarities and differences in the areas of early literacy experiences, students' reading behaviors, students' perceptions about reading, instruction received, teacher perceptions, and educational responses, and reflect factors that existed as well as the researcher's interpretations.

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Figure 1. Data from case study 1 - Ben.
Figure 2. Data from case study 2 - Karen.
Figure 3. Data from case study 3 - Will.
Figure 4. Data from case study 4 - Missie.
Table 5

Comparison of Data across Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AT-RISK FACTORS</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty living conditions</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with low educational attainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority group membership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor reading achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent read to child frequently</td>
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<td>Apparent failure to fully benefit from early literacy experiences</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Independent reading level</td>
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<td>Strategies used when reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonic analysis</td>
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<td>Awareness of morphemic units</td>
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<td>Use of syllabication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic sight word recognition</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of contextual clues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>within the sentence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of contextual clues from previous text</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metacognition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness of strategies used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring within a sentence</td>
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<td>Awareness that reading was supposed to make sense</td>
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<td>Background knowledge</td>
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<td>Appropriate for age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to explain concepts verbally</td>
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(Table 5 - continued)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and use of vocabulary words specific to a concept</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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**STUDENT PERCEPTIONS**

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<th>Reasons to read</th>
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<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased employment opportunities</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased functional reading skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved self-esteem</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views on instruction received</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sounding out words</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninteresting materials</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials too hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confusing/frustrating</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough help provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of dictionary skills</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few stories read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of ridicule/exposure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tried to appear like a proficient reader</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading avoidance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate behaviors at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive absences/skipping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical manifestations of stress</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**INSTRUCTION RECEIVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonic method</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitious</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate for student’s needs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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(Table 5 - continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some specialized instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of dictionary skills to</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of word parts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' instruction reflected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited knowledge of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading instruction</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEACHER PERCEPTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had low mental ability</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had innate deficits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had bad temper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was a troublemaker</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher had low expectations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for student in future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had physical cause for</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was difficult to have</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was not remediable</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had lack of social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competence</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was liked by teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was aggressive with</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had lack of linguistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competence</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student had other aptitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs to be moved on</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and/or out of school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was lazy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student was easy to pass over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education placement</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized instruction</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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(Table 5 - continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodations</th>
<th>BEN</th>
<th>KAREN</th>
<th>WILL</th>
<th>MISSIE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced number of assignments required</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allowed to do in-class work at home</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required to read in class</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified curriculum</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gives answers in class</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades determined differently from other students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher provides lectures to promote aural learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed to work with other student to find answers</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent behavior management efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently no specialized reading instruction planned for remainder of schooling</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early Literacy Experiences

Frequent early exposures to print through parents reading aloud to children have been shown to have significant positive effects on children's early reading development (Doake, 1986). In addition, Butler and Clay (1979) found, as children learn that groups of letters constitute words and that oral language can match print language, their interest in finding out what print says increases. The sharing of books between parent and child is a powerful literacy event which helps children establish a sense of meaning conveyed by print. This expectation of meaning is what prompts children to pay more attention to details in print, fostering the desire to read and write. Furthermore, wide experiences with book reading also may broaden children's background knowledge and vocabulary associated with specific concepts, both of which aid beginning readers in bringing meaning to a text.

Of the students in the present study, 3 were read to by their parents and had frequent opportunities to develop literacy concepts. However, students benefited from these opportunities differently. Of the cases presented, Ben may have had the fewest early literacy experiences. While this may have limited his opportunities to build background knowledge for reading, he appeared to have minimal difficulties in the earliest stages of school reading instruction. His reading growth appeared to break down
during the second-grade year, possibly when the limited strategies he brought to reading became insufficient for longer and more difficult texts. Also, this was the time when factors, such as Ben’s increasingly inappropriate behaviors and his placement in learning disabilities classes, began to impinge on Ben’s school experiences. Karen, who was provided with book reading throughout most of her early childhood, made few discernible gains in reading after the first half of first grade. Missie and Will reportedly had continuing opportunities in the preschool years to develop literacy concepts, but it appeared they were unable to fully benefit from these experiences. Missie’s hearing impairment seems to have limited her ability to develop syntactic and conceptual language skills, which are essential to proficient reading. Will, who may have had the richest early experiences, apparently did not develop many concepts concerning print, and has remained unable to develop most necessary concepts throughout his schooling.

While research indicates that early literacy experiences are important variables in school achievement, the 3 students in this study known to have had such experiences were still poor readers. It is not uncommon for educators to assume that children who develop reading problems have come from home environments in which early literacy experiences were not provided, especially if the
students possess socioeconomic at-risk characteristics. Educators who make such assumptions are overlooking cases such as those of Karen, Will, or Missie. While Ben may have had few early literacy experiences, this was not the case with Karen, Will, or Missie, regardless of at-risk factors possessed.

Students’ Reading Behaviors

Use of several reading strategies was apparent among the 4 students, however, they often were not proficient with these strategies. Strategies observed by the researcher during the participant/observation portion of the present study were: (a) phonic analysis, (b) sight word recognition, (c) use of contextual clues, (d) metacognitive strategies, and (e) use of background knowledge, especially knowledge of concepts and vocabulary associated with specific concepts.

Phonic analysis

There is a general belief by the public, that appears to have been reflected in the instruction received by the students in the present study, that the teaching of phonics is the best route to word identification and, therefore, to reading proficiency. While the instruction received by all of the students consisted primarily of phonic analysis, none of the students became proficient readers. In fact, they tended to rely on phonic analysis when reading to the point
that it became a dysfunctional strategy.

While all students used phonic analysis, there were differences in how they applied this strategy. The students’ use of phonic analysis ranged from use of letter/sound correspondences, but with incomplete knowledge of these correspondences, to use of letter/sound correspondences in conjunction with syllabication, recognition of some morphemic units, and limited use of contextual clues. Will was the most dependent on phonic analysis, often emphasizing letter sounds to the point of distortion, resulting in his inability to recognize the words he sounded out. Karen also was dependent on phonic analysis. She did not try to work her way across a word letter by letter, as did Will, but relied mostly on the initial consonant(s) and the ending consonant(s). Ben relied on initial letter sounds in a word, but often ignored the orthographic features in the rest of the word. Instead, when he came to a word he could not identify by the first letter(s), if it were a multisyllabic word, he would attempt to identify the word by dividing it into syllables. He was more likely to be unable to pronounce single syllable words he did not know than multisyllabic words. Missie relied the least on phonic analysis, although it was an important strategy for her. She supplemented this strategy with her knowledge of phonemic and morphemic units, syllabication, and contextual clues. Overall, the benefit the students
could obtain from phonic analysis appears to be related to whether they had other strategies to depend on as well.

One of the problems that may be associated with use of the phonic method of instruction is that students may be expected to intuitively pick up other word identification strategies commonly used by proficient readers. While Ben and Missie used other strategies to some degree, none of the students appeared to have developed consistent use of multiple strategies. It is possible that the belief that reading should be accomplished by sounding out words may have hindered their opportunities to use other strategies. For example, if the students were concentrating only on initial letters, they may have deprived themselves of opportunities to look at whole words and develop the ability to recognize many words by sight. Furthermore, concentrating on letter sounds may prevent students from using syntactic and semantic knowledge as they are reading, thus keeping them from using the contextual clues provided by other words in the text. While some children may be able to develop proficiency in reading through instruction in phonic analysis, for the disabled readers in the present study, phonic analysis alone was not only not sufficient, but also may have hampered further reading growth.

Sight Word Recognition

An extensive vocabulary of words that can be recognized on sight is necessary for proficient reading. The more
words readers can recognize instantly, the less they need to depend on other more time-consuming strategies. To foster reading growth past the levels expected of beginning readers, it is necessary to promote the development of students' sight word vocabularies. Many instructional programs provide for introduction of selected words prior to the reading of a text, followed by additional exposure to these words through specific practice and reading. However, for some students, the exposure provided is not sufficient. For the students in the present study, it may be that continued reliance on phonetic analysis is the result of not having enough opportunities to develop sight word vocabularies.

All the students had limited basic word knowledge, but they were different in the number of words they recognized and in the consistency with which they recognized these words. Ben and Missie were relatively proficient with high-frequency basic sight words, however, they frequently made miscues on less frequent words. Karen did not have as much control over basic vocabulary, often confusing orthographically similar words, such as that and what. Will, on the other hand, could recognize fewer than 50 words and he often was not consistent in his recognition of these words. For example, he might read the word said correctly the first three times it appeared in the text, but not recognize it thereafter. It also seemed that his habitual
use of phonic analysis caused him to begin sounding out a word before he gave himself an opportunity to recognize it by sight. He only attended to one letter at a time, ignoring the following orthographic features in the word.

It appears that instructional opportunities to develop word recognition may have been limited for these students. This may have occurred because of the predominance in their classrooms of phonic analysis as a means of identifying words. In addition, lack of frequent opportunities to read and practice recognizing words may have been missing from their instructional experiences.

**Contextual Clues**

The use of contextual clues is generally considered to be the most efficient way to identify words (Smith, 1980, 1985). Contextual clues consist of information provided by surrounding print, in combination with knowledge the reader brings to the text. To use contextual clues proficiently, students need to possess an awareness of the way language sounds and an awareness that reading is supposed to make sense. All of the students in the present study possessed this knowledge. Furthermore, three of the students did attempt to make use of contextual clues in a limited fashion.

All of the students except Will made use of contextual clues to some degree. Ben, Karen and Missie tended to use the initial words in a sentence to predict unknown words.
They combined this contextual information with the initial letters in the word, and made a prediction. While their predictions were usually grammatically correct and semantically sensible to that point in the sentence, the words they guessed frequently made little sense in relation to the previous text or to the text that followed. Karen usually read on, regardless of her prediction, until she had made additional miscues. She became confused, not knowing how or where to repair her reading of the text. Missie frequently ignored her miscues also, although she sometimes used syllabication to further aid identification of the word. Ben usually stopped at an unknown word, using initial letter sounds and syllabication prior to using the previous words in the sentence and the text to make a prediction. Will's labored attempts at sounding out the words took all of his concentration. His short-term memory appeared to be so burdened that he often could not recall words from the sentence that he had just read, thereby preventing him from using contextual clues.

It is often thought that disabled readers do not use contextual clues, and that is one of the factors contributing to their poor reading. However, three of the students in this study exhibited that they are able to use contextual clues to some degree. It appeared that their overreliance on phonic analysis at least partially prevented further development of this strategy. Furthermore, there
was strong suggestion that they needed more explicit information about how they can use their knowledge of language to make predictions of words in the text and then monitor whether their prediction was correct. **Metacognitive Strategies**

Metacognition, in relation to reading, includes knowing what strategies can be used and when they are appropriate, self-monitoring of reading to insure that the sense of the text is being retained, recognizing when meaning has broken down, and knowing and having the ability to apply alternative strategies. Poor metacognitive abilities are thought to be a contributing factor to reading disabilities, and, in the present study, one of the most apparent weaknesses in the students' reading behaviors was their lack of metacognitive strategies.

While the researcher observed some indications of metacognition during the reading of all the students, the knowledge they had available was limited and different for each student. All of the students had an awareness that letter/sound correspondences could be used as a strategy to identify words, and also had a sense that this strategy did not always work for them. Ben and Missie also were aware of other word identification strategies. All of the students had an awareness of when they lost the meaning of the text, although Karen did not seem to recognize this at the initial point where meaning was lost. Three of the students, Ben,
Karen, and Missie, made attempts to self-monitor their reading, however, they often did not have knowledge of another strategy they could use to compensate for the ineffective strategy they had tried. While Ben might try to go back over previous text to regain his sense of the story, Karen and Missie frequently read on with no attempts to seek alternate meanings, and Will often stopped in frustration. While all students expressed dissatisfaction with their reading abilities, none seemed to be aware that there were other strategies they needed to develop. Overall, they were aware of the word identification strategies they used, and appeared to think that was how reading was supposed to be accomplished. They were also aware that the purpose of reading was to make meaning from the text. Their inability to do so added to their sense of frustration or confusion.

There is a general belief that poor readers may need to be directly taught how to self-monitor their reading, and that poor readers cannot be expected to develop self-correcting behaviors intuitively. This seems to be a belief that is justified by the students' behaviors in this study. In addition, as was indicated in the previous section on phonemic analysis, the exclusive use of a single strategy is not facilitative of reading growth. If they had had more word identification strategies at hand, instead of allocating most of their attention to identifying words, they may have had more opportunities to use metacognition
efficiently.

**Background Knowledge**

Background knowledge is the knowledge readers possess prior to reading a text that they can use to understand the concepts presented in the text. All readers have varying amounts of background knowledge to bring to their reading of specific texts, as did the students in the present study. Lack of conceptual knowledge is often reported to be a hindrance to reading, just as possession of background knowledge that is related to the topic presented in the text may aid students' comprehension of the text.

In comparison to students their age, Missie, Karen, and Ben appeared to have limited conceptual knowledge that is valued by schools and helps promote success in school. There were some unique aspects of each student's grasp of conceptual knowledge. Missie's hearing impairment and delay in language development may have played a role in her lack of conceptual knowledge. Since she was of average intelligence, it may be that her seeming lack of age-appropriate background knowledge was partially due to her inability to express those concepts. Karen, however, may have been limited in her knowledge of concepts by her significantly below average level of intellectual functioning. Karen consistently scored nearly two standard deviations below the mean on intelligence tests. The conceptual knowledge she did exhibit, usually concerning
home situations, family relationships, and simple content area concepts, while appropriate for a younger student, may have been a reflection of her intellectual abilities. However, when instructional strategies were used by the researcher prior to reading a text to introduce a concept and to help Karen relate what she already knew about the concept, Karen was able to read the text more proficiently than when these instructional strategies were not used. This indicates that she had the ability to expand her conceptual knowledge, but needed more structured opportunities to do so.

Ben also scored significantly below average on intelligence tests, however, his scores were not consistent, receiving full scale IQ scores of 75, 90, 70, 78, and 71. While his conceptual knowledge appeared to be broader in scope than either Missie’s or Karen’s, he often did not know the vocabulary associated with the concepts. However, when an unknown word was explained to him, he frequently related it verbally to what he already knew of the topic under discussion. He was also quick to grasp new concepts. If the scores he received on the lower end of the scale reflect his intellectual abilities, then it is surprising that he was so quick to grasp new concepts and to relate them to knowledge he already possessed. Will, who scored in the average range on intelligence tests, was proficient at expressing himself verbally. He had a broad
knowledge of concepts, including those presented in academic areas, but did exhibit some need for development of concept-specific words. His lack of ability to read in texts which discussed concepts appropriate to his age level may have hampered his expansion of his speaking vocabulary, as it may have with the other students also (Snider & Tarver, 1987).

Since it is generally believed that background knowledge is beneficial to reading, it is interesting that the student in the present study with the strongest academically-related background knowledge was the poorest reader. Furthermore, students with low intelligence are generally expected to have difficulty grasping concepts, however, Ben grasped concepts quickly; also, Karen, when given more structure, was able to learn and grasp new concepts. It appears that regardless of range of intellectual functioning of these students, they were all able to learn new concepts and apply concepts known to texts they read. However, it is likely, for these disabled readers, that more structured instructional strategies which call the students' attention to what they already know about a topic and help them relate that knowledge to new topics would be beneficial prior to reading a text.

While background knowledge is important to readers' comprehension, it may also be important to word identification. Because print language is context-dependent, not only syntactically, but also semantically,
certain words are more likely to occur in a given place in the text or within a text about a specific concept (Smith, 1982). For instance, if the topic in a text relates to spiders, it is more likely that the word web will appear, than the word weep. Students' background knowledge concerning spiders may facilitate their identification of words by allowing them a sense of what words are likely to occur during reading of the text. In Will's case, comprehension of materials was not at issue. He was unable to process enough text to allow him to use his background knowledge as an aid to comprehension, therefore, allowing him to make predictions which would help him in the identification of words.

Instruction Received

Reading research has shown that proficient readers use multiple strategies and that reading instruction should encourage students in the development and use of multiple strategies (Gillet & Temple, 1986; Clay, 1979). As has been previously established in the sections concerning the students' reading behaviors, the instruction received by students' in the present study did not appear to facilitate the development of multiple strategies. Instead, instruction in phonic analysis was the almost exclusive reading strategy presented throughout the students' school years. As a result, these students seem to have been
hampered in their reading growth.

This is not to say that the instruction provided was not of any benefit to the students. Ben became proficient in the use of letter/sound correspondences, and appeared to gain some knowledge of syllabication, morphemic units, and contextual clues. Instruction in phonic analysis appears to have been both beneficial and necessary for Missie due to her impaired ability to distinguish sounds. She is currently proficient at distinguishing phonemes, even though she may have difficulty pronouncing them. Missie was provided with speech and language therapy, and may have gained her knowledge of syllabication and morphemic units from that instruction. Karen learned the strategy of using beginning and ending sounds when trying to identify a word, a strategy which is useful at times. However, these students’ instruction became inappropriate either when the teachers did not recognize their proficiencies and did not expand instruction to include other reading strategies, or when teachers did not recognize students’ failures to benefit from instruction to a significant degree and did not alter the instruction provided. The latter occurrence applies especially to Will, who appeared to be unable to benefit from instruction in letter/sound correspondences, possibly because the task was too abstract for him during his initial exposure to reading instruction. Instead of altering instruction to build on Will’s strengths, teachers
seemed to feel it was necessary to continue repeating the same instruction until Will had mastered those skills. While this type of instruction is typical of some approaches to the education of learning disabled students, it was not beneficial to Will. Because of the teachers' apparent lack of responses to the students' needs, their failure to provide instruction in multiple strategies congruent with currently accepted reading theory, and their failure to identify specific factors inhibiting students' reading growth, it appeared that the students had received a large amount of their reading instruction from teachers who had limited knowledge of reading and reading instruction.

While on the surface it may appear that teachers were purposely negligent in not responding to their students' needs by altering instruction, this was probably not the case. Instead, teachers, especially the special education teachers, may have been acting with the best of intentions on their incorrect beliefs that reading can best be mastered if broken down into subskills, the first of which might be knowledge of letter/sound correspondences. Other subskills might be syllabication and recognition of morphemic units, such as prefixes and suffixes. This approach to reading instruction assumed that once students had mastered one subskill, they were ready to move on to the next higher subskill. Since it is not uncommon for special education teachers to receive little training in reading instruction,
it would be possible that they would be unaware of the interactive nature of reading and be unable to determine the strengths and weaknesses of poorly achieving readers beyond mastery of specified subskills. They further may not have been able to alter instruction if they did not have knowledge of alternative strategies.

Overall, the instruction received by the students provided minimal benefits and may have hampered the development of further reading growth. While teachers may have been acting in accordance with their beliefs about reading, it appears that their theories about reading and reading instruction may not have been based on current knowledge about the reading process. This implies that teachers who are not well-informed on reading theory and practice may be less able to meet the needs of their students, especially those students who experience difficulty developing proficient reading.

Students' Perceptions about Reading

In the United States, there are strong societal beliefs about the importance of literacy for all citizens. Also, it is apparent that literacy is essential for success in school. There have been some attempts, especially in areas where there are a large number of at-risk students, to use motivational strategies that emphasize the importance of reading to encourage students to improve their reading. This
may be effective for some students. However, the students in the present study made it clear that they were critically aware of the need for reading, but this awareness alone has not allowed them to overcome their problem. Student perceptions about reading addressed the reasons the students gave for needing to improve their reading, their views on the instruction they had received, and stress they experienced because of their reading disabilities.

Reasons to Read

All of the students gave the same reasons for needing to improve their reading. They indicated that improved reading would increase their employment opportunities, and their ability to complete functional tasks, including reading menus, ordering parts, filling out application forms, and reading the newspaper. Furthermore, they reported that good readers appeared smarter, indicating that they would feel better about themselves if they also could appear more capable.

Views on Instruction

All four students stated that their instruction had primarily consisted of teachers telling them to sound out words. Three of the students, Ben, Missie, and Will also mentioned the repetitive nature of their instruction, saying that teachers taught the same skills, usually letter/sound correspondences, from year to year. This repetitious instruction sometimes resulted in frustration and confusion
on the part of the students, because they knew what they were being told to do didn't work for them. Further confusion came from not understanding the meaning of the text, from not understanding how the other students were figuring out what to do, and from not understanding why the teacher was not helping them more. Materials, which were reported to be uninteresting and too difficult, also may have contributed to students' dissatisfaction with their instruction. In addition, Missie and Will stated that they were not receiving enough help with their reading, especially in view of the information that reading instruction was not on their schedule for the next year. In contrast, Karen had few opinions about her reading instruction. She seemed to think the teachers did their best and gave her help when they were able.

With the exception of Karen, all of the students were aware that the reading instruction being provided to them was not adequate. Furthermore, even though they were reading disabled students, they were able to identify what reading authorities would see as lacking in appropriate instruction. Overall, they were not only unhappy that they were not learning, but were also dissatisfied with the way their instruction was approached.

**Stress indicators**

Many reading authorities suggest that there is a relationship between reading failure and stress. It is not
always known which comes first, the failure or the stress, however, a relationship does appear to exist. Students who experience failure in reading may develop stress symptoms which may be obvious or subtle. In many cases, inappropriate behaviors which increase as the severity of the students' reading problems become more obvious, avoidance of reading, and increased inability to undertake the task of reading because of nervousness or fear of failure may develop in students with reading difficulties. All of the students in this study exhibited some degree of stress in relation to their reading disabilities.

All of the students expressed fear of ridicule or fear of feeling stupid when others found out they could not read. These feelings can result in avoiding reading whenever possible to reduce situations in which such embarrassment might occur, or avoiding situations in which they might be asked to read. Will experienced the most stress associated with reading. When he first met with the researcher, his hands shook, his voice wavered, and his fists clenched when he attempted to read. He also exhibited similar manifestations when he talked about his future in relation to his poor reading ability. Will may have avoided reading by complaining of illness so that he could stay home, or deliberately deciding not to attend school on particular days. Inappropriate behaviors were reported for all students except Karen. For Ben and Will, these behaviors
often resulted in suspension from school, a punishment which neither student minded because it removed them from the environment where they were unsuccessful. Other, less severe inappropriate behaviors may have been the students' means of directing attention away from failure-producing academic tasks and on to other, and for these students possibly, more interesting situations. Furthermore, students who are unable to fully engage in classroom tasks can be expected to become bored. Inappropriate behaviors may tend to alleviate this sense of boredom. Karen was the only student who did not exhibit inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. She also appeared to feel less stress due to her reading disability. Since she was the youngest of the four students, and not yet facing imminent entry into high school, it may be that Karen exhibited less stress indicators because she had not considered the consequences of inability to read proficiently as completely as the other students. Also, Karen had the type of pleasant personality that allowed her to accept most things calmly and continue to hope for the best.

It appeared from the students' reports and from the researcher's observations, that reading disabilities can produce stress in students which may result in inappropriate behaviors in the classroom or behaviors that hinder reading growth. It also did not appear that the teachers of the students related such behaviors to the students'
difficulties with reading. It may be that more opportunities for successful experiences in the classroom would result in a reduction in inappropriate behaviors.

Teacher Perceptions

Research has shown that teachers' perceptions of their students can have strong effects, both positive and negative, on the academic development and on the behaviors of students (Rist, 1970). Students who are perceived positively by teachers tend to achieve more highly and are judged to exhibit better social adjustment in the classroom. Students who are perceived negatively, on the other hand, tend to make fewer academic gains and are reported to be less socially competent than their peers. For the students in the present study, teachers seemed to have an overall sense of negativity, both concerning the students' academic abilities and their social competence.

All teachers interviewed in the study expressed low expectations for the students' futures, predicting that the students would either end up in low-paying jobs or, in the case of the girls, would marry and have someone take care of them. Teachers did not think Ben, Karen, or Will would improve their reading. Missie's teachers were more vague, implying that Missie's remediation was not in their hands because it was due to a physical impairment. Furthermore, low expectations sometimes appeared to be based on the
teachers' perceptions of the students' mental abilities. Karen and Ben were perceived as having low mental abilities, which may have been because of teachers' awareness of the significantly below average scores these students had received on some intelligence tests. Karen was thought to be slow in learning concepts, which appeared to be an accurate judgment by her teacher, and not intended negatively. However, Ben's teachers seemed to be confusing low mental ability with Ben's lack of social maturity. One of his teachers, while describing some of Ben's recent inappropriate behaviors, inserted, "He's more like DH" (developmentally handicapped). She did not seem to relate this comment to an inability to learn as much as to an inability to make good decisions concerning his actions.

The teachers as a group also made very few positive comments about the students. Only two teachers, Karen's language arts teacher and Will's social studies teacher, made positive comments. Karen's teacher emphasized Karen's pleasant personality, and Will's teacher commented on Will's intelligence, his ability to learn aurally, and his mechanical aptitude. Interestingly, these two regular education teachers were also the most concerned about their role in the students' education, perhaps indicating that their approach to teaching was more reflective than that of the other teachers.

Teachers also had negative perceptions concerning 3 of
the students' nonacademic behaviors. Ben and Will were thought to be lazy in class, but more importantly, were perceived to be troublemakers. Aggressive behaviors with peers were commented on frequently. While Missie, as well as Will, were thought to have bad tempers, Missie was not reported to have difficulties with peer interactions, only with teacher/student interactions. Karen was not reported to have any problems with peer or teacher relationships. In fact, she was the only student whose teacher reported liking her, although the teacher also found her easy to ignore because she made no demands for attention.

The teachers all seemed to share a sense of not being able to help the students to any degree. Ben's LD teachers attributed Ben's problems to innate deficiencies and appeared to think they could do nothing to further his progress because his multiple deficits were irremediable. Karen's teacher and Will's social studies teacher both cited time restrictions as the reason they were not able to provide additional help to these students, although they would have liked to do so. Will's LD teacher appeared to think that Will's difficulties with reading were too severe for intervention to help. Missie's LD teachers appeared to believe that Missie's hearing problem was the cause of her difficulties, and therefore specialized help needed to come from the speech and hearing teacher. As a group, the LD teachers were more negative toward the students and more
likely to think that they could not do anything to correct the problem. It appeared from the case study data that there was an interaction between the teachers' negative perceptions of the students and their feelings that they could help them. It may be that the teachers' frustrations with the students' continuing failure and increasing inappropriate behaviors, and their lack of understanding of why the students are failing, causes the teachers to distance themselves from a problem that has appears to them to have become unmanageable.

Of interest during the interviews were the teachers' focus on social behaviors. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained that she wished to gather information concerning the students' reading. In every instance, the teachers responded with a comment concerning the students' social behaviors. The researcher often had to redirect the interview back to the topic of reading several times. Karen's teacher, who had only positive things to say about Karen's social behaviors, was anxious to talk about the behaviors of other students in the class. Will's social studies teacher, who initially responded with comments on Will's social behaviors, however, focused his comments during the remainder of the interview on Will's strengths and weaknesses in a learning situation. The other teachers, however, were more inclined to return to the topic of inappropriate school behaviors, even behaviors
that had occurred before the student entered their class. This may reflect the extent to which behavior problems control their classrooms, the degree to which these problems pervade in the schools thus detracting attention from teaching and learning, or may simply indicate their lack of knowledge of the students' reading behaviors.

Educational Responses

For all students, the schools were quick to respond when the students' lack of achievement was brought to their attention either by teachers or by parents. The initial system that existed in these schools to provide information for making decisions concerning the child was that of psychoeducational testing. In all cases the results of this testing determined the schools' responses to the students.

All of the students were tested by psychologists at early ages—Will at the end of kindergarten, Ben at the beginning of first grade, Karen at the end of first grade, and Missie during the second grade. Placements in special education programs followed for all students except Karen. As a result of testing, Will was retained in kindergarten for one year, and then placed in a learning disabilities program, where he has remained. Will has made no discernible progress in reading during his 8 years of schooling. Ben was placed in a developmentally handicapped
(DH) class initially, followed by placement in a learning disabilities (LD) class, a severe behavior handicap (SBH) class, and back to a learning disabilities class. He was reported to do well during the DH and SBH placements, but there are no positive reports on social behavior or academic progress during his LD placements. Karen was not considered qualified for placement in DH classes. She received no special services until fourth grade when she was placed in a Chapter I reading program. Her participation in the program ended in the sixth grade. Missie was initially placed in LD classes during the third grade. However, she was transferred to a severe communication disorder program during the fourth and fifth grades. At the beginning of the sixth-grade year, she was placed back into a learning disabilities class with special services provided by the speech therapist. Overall, the schools' responses were only minimally effective, yet there did not appear to be alternative responses available.

Furthermore, except for further psychoeducational testing to determine students' continued qualification for special services, the only means of evaluating the effectiveness of these programs for specific students was the writing of individualized education programs (IEP). Evidence from educational records indicates that this was not an effective system, because similar objectives were written for the students year after year. Also, some of the
objectives were unrealistic in view of the students' level of performance. For instance, an objective written for Ben during the seventh grade stated that he would read with comprehension from level 3 and level 4 texts (approximate grade levels). When, in fact, Ben's instructional level at that time was at the first- and second-grade level. This conveyed the impression that the objective was not being written based on an evaluation of student performance.

Teacher comments and educational records appeared to indicate that behavior management became the schools' primary function in relation to Ben and Will. Both students developed reputations as troublemakers that were passed to subsequent teachers. The teachers related that much of their energies in relation to Ben and Will were devoted to attempting to gain compliance from them. In Ben's case, many of his inappropriate behaviors were distracting rather than harmful. He was mostly disciplined by the teachers, although he was suspended several times. Will, however, had more instances of aggressive behaviors. He was well-known by the school administration and either sat in the office or was suspended frequently. The teachers seemed to think that as long as this cycle of inappropriate behavior continued, these students would be unable to benefit from instruction. None of the teachers associated poor behaviors with the students' severe reading disabilities. It appeared that the teachers had become Ben and Will's adversaries, each
attempting to maintain control of the students' actions. While both parties seemed to find this situation nonproductive, there seemed to be no understanding on the part of either teachers or students as to how to alleviate these difficult encounters. It should be noted that these behavior problems were not evident during one-to-one tutoring with the researcher.

There appeared to be a consensus among school personnel about the limited possibilities for Karen and Will that resulted in recommendations for tracking of the students into nonacademic programs. The school wished to place Karen in a work program during the eighth grade, however, the mother refused this suggestion. Evidence indicates that Will is headed for vocational training during high school. While Will's parents are supportive of vocational training for him, both sets of parents are worried that no further efforts will be made by the school to provide instruction in reading if their children enter these alternative programs.

Another educational response to these reading disabled students was that of accommodation in the classroom. Accommodations made for the students included: (a) a reduction in the number of assignments required, (b) in-class work could be taken home, (c) oral reading was not required in class, (d) answers to assigned questions were given by the teacher, (e) grades were determined differently, (f) lessons were presented verbally so students
could learn aurally, and (g) students could obtain answers from other students. In addition, the curriculum was simplified in the learning disabilities classes of Ben, Will, and Missie. While these accommodations may make the student more comfortable, except for the verbal presentations and the extension of time to complete classwork at home which were modifications designed to enhance learning, it is unlikely that these accommodations helped the students to progress.

Overall, educational responses made toward the 4 students in the present study appeared to stem from considerations of groups of students. Responses were not individualized to meet the special needs of these specific students. Furthermore, the schools apparently have no plans to provide specialized instruction in reading for the remainder of the students' schooling. In fact, they may not receive any reading instruction at all. While their problems are complex, three of the students exhibited the ability to improve their reading to varying degrees during the tutoring sessions provided by the researcher. By the end of their participation in the study, Ben was reading from fourth- and fifth-grade books, Karen was reading at approximately the second-grade level, and Will was beginning to use additional strategies and was gaining in confidence. Missie's participation in the study was the shortest and lack of evidence of gain should not be construed as lack of
ability to improve. Without specialized instruction in reading, it is not likely that these students will have the opportunity to further their reading growth. However, there do not appear to be alternative systems available, especially at the secondary level, to provide the help these students need.

Summary

Several major conclusions were drawn from the cross-case analysis. They are as follows:

1. Educators sometimes assume that children who experience difficulties with literacy acquisition come from homes that have not provided early literacy experiences, but that is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, early literacy experiences do not always preclude reading disabilities.

2. While phonic analysis is sometimes a useful strategy, if it is the only strategy taught it may hamper reading growth.

3. While research has shown that reading disabled students do not make use of contextual clues present in the text, 3 of the students in the present study were able to do so.

4. It has been thought that metacognitive strategies may need to be taught directly to children with reading disabilities, and the data in this study appears to substantiate this belief.
5. Of the students in the present study, some had adequate school-related background knowledge for tasks presented, but some did not. However, all were able to grasp concepts when instruction concerning these concepts was provided prior to reading the text. Furthermore, it was noted that lapses in background knowledge affected students' word identification as well as comprehension, and therefore, is likely a necessary consideration regardless of the specific reading problem. However, it should be noted that background knowledge is considered a necessary, but not sufficient condition for reading growth (as in indicated in the case of Will).

6. Students were able to perceive deficiencies in their instruction relatively well. Furthermore, despite popular opinion that if students realized the importance of reading in their lives they would try to become better readers, the students in this study had a critical awareness of the importance of reading, but were still unable to progress.

7. It appeared that there was a strong relationship between reading disability and stress in these students, however, teachers did not perceive this relationship.
8. If students with special needs are placed in classrooms where instruction is directed to the group, their needs may not be met. Furthermore, if teachers are not aware of currently accepted reading practices, they may not be able to react to students' needs and alter their instruction accordingly.

9. Teachers' theories about learning may override commonsense evaluations of their students' progress.

10. Negative perceptions by teachers appear to affect not only their relationships with these students, but also their perceived ability to provide help to these students. In addition, concern with inappropriate social behaviors seemed to be pervasive, to the exclusion of attending to academic behaviors.

11. While there appeared to be an efficient system in place to initially respond to students' needs, the resulting educational placement of the students' was not necessarily beneficial. Moreover, once in these placements, there was no effective system to evaluate the students' progress; nor were alternative placements available. Accommodations made for the students also may have circumvented students'
learning by drawing attention away from their reading disabilities.

The similarities and differences described in this chapter indicate that while the 4 students all could be considered severely reading disabled, placing these students together in a program for students with reading disabilities would not necessarily be effective if the teacher was not observant and knowledgeable about reading and reading instruction. Furthermore, Will, in particular, likely needs individual instruction with a supportive teacher who will build his confidence while helping him improve his reading. The reading difficulties of these students also will require long-term instruction. The 4 to 5 years these students have left in school could be beneficial if the schools are able to provide the assistance needed. Chapter VI will address the implications of these findings.
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION

Data gathered during the present study indicate that affective, social, and educational factors play a role in the creation and maintenance of reading disabilities. In addition, there appears to be a lack of effective systems in the schools to meet the needs of severely disabled readers. The discussion in the following chapter addresses how this may occur. Suggestions for changes in educational systems also are discussed. In the final sections, limitations of the current study, as well as recommendations for future research, are provided.

The Development of Reading Disabilities

The data from this study suggest that there are interacting factors that may lend themselves to the development of students with reading disabilities. Most of these factors appear to be situated in the schools, however, there are possible explanations for why certain situations occur. Attention to these explanations may provide further understanding of some of the factors contributing to reading disabilities.
Early Literacy Experiences

Having had early literacy experiences is generally believed to be beneficial to children when they begin to receive instruction in reading. It is believed by educators that the more experiences preschool children have with books, the better prepared they will be for school (McCormick & Mason, 1986). Heath (1982) suggests that children who have had book-reading experiences at home come to school with understandings of school approaches to literacy instruction. Literacy is a developmental process, and not a "succession of accomplishments" (p. 48) (Ferreiro, 1986), but there are certain awarenesses that may better prepare children for school literacy learning. Goodman (1986) describes the following awarenesses as roots of literacy:

1. print awareness in situational contexts.
2. print awareness in connected discourse.
3. functions and forms of writing
4. oral language about written language
5. metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness about written language. (p. 6)

Research has shown that parents, even parents of low socioeconomic status (SES), attempt to provide their children with early literacy experiences that may be helpful to their children when they enter school (Teale, 1986). It may be that they do certain things, such as reading to their
children, based on the folk knowledge that reading to children is a good thing to do, rather than from an understanding of what book reading can teach a child about print. Nevertheless, children often do receive and benefit from these experiences, although in varying amounts depending on the home environment (Chandler, Argyris, Barnes, Goodman, & Snow, 1986). Furthermore, they may benefit from these experiences differently even when they are siblings in the same family sharing the same experiences (Miller, Nemoianu, & Dejong, 1986). Karen, Will, and Missie appear to confirm these findings, apparently benefiting from early literacy experiences to different degrees, despite wide exposure to early literacy experiences. This implies that even children who have had early literacy experiences may enter school with scant knowledge of print or of what instruction in literacy is meant to provide. Teachers who expect broad understandings of print based on average children's understanding, may be setting unrealistic expectations for some children. These expectations may place these children at a disadvantage during reading instruction. However, schools are in a position to provide support to students who either did not have many early literacy experiences, such as Ben, or who failed to benefit from these experiences, such as Will or Missie. This may be accomplished through teachers who are able to recognize what literacy experiences would be
beneficial to their students and who provide classrooms rich in literacy opportunities that may be enjoyed by all students (Larrick, 1987).

**Instruction for Reading Disabled Students**

Teacher knowledge of reading and instructional practices is an important factor in effective reading instruction (Tierney & Pearson, 1985; Beck, 1986). Jacobowitz (1988) explains:

*If teachers present the steps and components of various skills in a rote fashion, without truly understanding why or how they work, they may not be able to help students alter a strategy when it doesn’t work, nor can they modify their instructional methods to meet the specific needs of their students. (p. 126)*

In the present study, it appeared that lack of teacher knowledge was a contributing factor to the ineffective instruction provided to reading disabled students. Data on reading behaviors of students in the present study indicated there were severe constraints on their abilities to engage with print. Furthermore, their reading behaviors appeared to be directly derived from the reading instruction they had received, that is, instruction consisting chiefly of use of a single word identification strategy—phonemic analysis. This finding is supported by Johnson & Baumann (1984) who, after reviewing the research
on students' use of word identification strategies, found that students used the strategies they had been taught. Gough (1984) came to the same conclusion after reviewing studies on students' basic word recognition.

Because students are likely to assume that what the teacher tells them is the right way to approach reading, it is important that instruction reflect current reading theory. This theory proposes that proficient reading is an interactive process requiring flexible use of knowledge and strategies (Rumelhart, 1976; Stanovich, 1980). Reading authorities recommend that students be instructed in multiple approaches to word identification, metacognitive strategies, and word recognition knowledge (Gillet & Temple, 1986; Smith, 1982). Without this more comprehensive instruction, readers may be prevented from maintaining reading growth.

While it has been thought that reading disabled students need intense work in phonics to overcome their difficulties in decoding words, Smith, (1985) refutes this saying:

Phonics is a cumbersome and unreliable system for any child, but especially for children finding it hard to make sense of reading....
Children who find it hard to make sense of reading need more meaningful reading, not less.
Drilling children in a few simple letter-sound
correspondences may seem to help them make progress in learning, but this progress should always be weighed against the degree to which it may persuade children that reading is not in fact a meaningful activity. (p. 148)

It has been assumed by some educators that reading disabled students exhibit differences in the processes they use to identify words. A study by Bruck (1988) indicated that reading disabled students exhibited normal processes for reading when compared to average readers. Bruck found few significant differences between reading disabled students and average readers in their use of word identification strategies when encountering both words and nonsense words. Furthermore, Beck (1981) states that proponents of phonics instruction assume that the basic task of beginning readers is to "learn the structural relationships between written and spoken language" (p. 55). However, this may prevent beginning readers from behaving as do proficient readers. Beck suggests, as does Smith (1985), that asking children to engage in behaviors which are not typical of good readers is unreasonable. The limited scope of the instruction provided for students in this study may imply a lack of knowledge of reading processes and currently advocated instructional procedures on the part of the teachers, or a mistaken belief as to the needs of reading disabled students.
It has also been found that once students have been taught to use a strategy inappropriately (such as the exclusive use of phonic analysis), it is difficult to alter their use if the use of this strategy results in occasional success (Johnston, 1985). For example, Will succeeds in sounding out words frequently enough that it may appear to him that if he just were better at sounding words out he could become a better reader. Clay (1979) also emphasizes the need to recognize students' use of inappropriate strategies early before remediation becomes more difficult.

Inappropriate instruction for reading disabled students is a serious problem, as the consequences may be severe for these students. Teachers need to be supported in their efforts to provide appropriate instruction, which may require changes in their teaching style and classroom management. Teacher training programs, for both regular and special education teachers, should address the development of teacher knowledge concerning reading, reading assessment, and reading instruction. Increased knowledge and understanding of reading disabilities should also be a goal of teacher training programs. Informed teachers with the ability to assess students' reading and make quality instructional decisions could make a great difference in our schools.
The Views of the Students

The exploration of the perceptions of students in this study uncovered powerful insights into the lives of students' with reading disabilities.

Awareness of Difficulties

Despite general beliefs concerning reading disabled students' inability to understand and express themselves, students in this study were painfully aware of their need to improve their reading and provided poignant descriptions of the effects of being reading disabled. Their depth of concern about their future prospects, atypical among middle school children, was a clear indicator of their fear of being trapped in dismal jobs with no means to improve their lives. Furthermore, they tended to equate their inability to read with a lack of intelligence, which not only limited their hopes for the future, but may have lowered their expectations of their ability to change. Dweck (1975) reported that students may internalize a feeling of helplessness when they attribute failure to events beyond their control, such as their lack of intelligence. The literature on the phenomenon of "learned helplessness" suggests that students may, in the face of continual failure which appears to be out of their control, fail to persevere on tasks, therefore appearing as though they are making little effort (Dweck & Reppucci, 1973; Feather, 1966; Weiner, 1986). This may have occurred with Will and Ben.
The students were also aware of being different from others, and knew that others, if not now, then in the future, would likely ridicule them for their lack of reading proficiency. For some students, this fear of exposure to others was the impetus for the development of subtle means of appearing as though they could read, behaviors which Rueda and Mehan (1986) describe as passing strategies. While some people think that motivation to learn is a key factor needed to start students on the path to educational achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 1983), these students are proof that this is not necessarily the case. They were aware of several urgent reasons why they needed to improve their reading, however, this motivation was overridden by other factors in their learning environment. Johnston (1985) encountered a similar situation with a severely reading disabled adult. The man had motivations similar to students in the present study, but he failed to seek help due to his fear of exposure. Therefore, programs that attempt to motivate students to better reading may be unsuccessful with severely disabled readers due to conflicting needs. This is not to say that motivation is not important, but rather than emphasizing why reading will ultimately be important in their lives—a fact of which these students are already critically aware—motivation should be focused on helping these students believe they can learn.
Evaluation of Instruction

Students were able to evaluate their instruction with surprising accuracy, identifying as unhelpful aspects of instruction which informed educators would likely also rate as nonefficacious since these aspects were not congruent with current reading theory. This implies that student evaluations of instruction may need to be taken more seriously and used by teachers to monitor their instructional effectiveness. This finding is similar to that of Nicholson (1984) who, after interviewing middle school students, found that their perceptions about what was happening during instruction was quite different from that of their teachers. While these middle school students were able to express themselves fairly well, research has shown that younger students also have the ability to make judgments about their instruction (Boljonis & Hinchman, 1988). This is an area that if explored might promote more effective schools.

Stress and the Reading Disabled Student

While the relationship between reading disabilities and stress has been extensively covered in the literature (Bryan, Sonnefeld, & Grabowski, 1983; Gann, 1945; Gates, 1941; Jackson, 1944; Robinson, 1946; Swain, 1985), the topic earns mention due to lack of awareness on the parts of teachers, parents, and students in this study as to the role
of stress in the students' behaviors. All students in the study exhibited some signs of stress related to their reading disability. For some students, such as Ben and Will, aggressive behaviors, which increased in number as their school failures mounted, may well be attributed to stress. Furthermore, lack of compliance to teachers' wishes and the appearance of indolence and nonchalance toward their schooling may also have been outlets for stress. For Missie, irritability and unpredictable anger at teachers appeared to be stress-related. For Karen, increased passivity and acceptance of her situation may have been her means of coping with the stress of being "different" than other students, although this also may have been a natural part of her personality. Interestingly, the three students who displayed inappropriate social behaviors tended to blame themselves for their actions, usually citing innately difficult dispositions. Teachers and parents tended to agree with these students' evaluations, although parents noted that these behaviors occurred much more frequently at school than at home.

Gentile and McMillan (1987) proposed that students who have reading difficulties may either retreat from reading situations through avoidance or passivity, or they may direct attention away from reading through confrontation. Manzo (1987) also suggests that when students are under stress they lose much of their ability to think clearly and
deal with the situation in a manner that promotes beneficial solutions. Students engage in these activities as a means of avoiding the threat of exposure, fear of ridicule, or fear of failure that they have learned accompanies reading. Therefore, many of these inappropriate behaviors are quite logical to the student, who has made a choice between two evils. Fear of reprisal from teachers or peers may not seem nearly as daunting as facing another unpleasant experience with reading. Furthermore, after many repetitions, these behaviors become part of the students' repertoires of behaviors, and, not only become easier to resort to, but also become somewhat subconscious reactions to school situations in general. The student develops a reputation for behaving in a certain manner, which is passed from teacher to teacher. Unfortunately, many teachers continue to act on these low expectations, although perhaps in differing ways, sustaining the students' behaviors (Good, 1981). Fortunately, most teachers are receptive to information that may help them reduce behaviors that detract from instructional time, and may attempt to bring about changes in their classrooms that can benefit low-achieving students.

Data from the present study indicates that reading disabled students who are provided with warm, trusting learning environments, may experience a decrease in stress and exhibit an increase in ability to engage with print.
This is similar to the findings of Cooper (1977) who found that if teachers began acting more positively to negatively perceived students, the students would, in turn, begin acting more positively toward the teacher. Will, who at the beginning of the study exhibited distressing stress symptoms, after only a few tutoring sessions in which it was made clear that he was not being judged and in which he was constantly reminded of what he could already do, soon appeared to relaxed and ceased to show any outward signs of stress. It is evident that Will's relationship with the school has a long, unhappy history, and would not likely be changed with the ease that occurred in the tutoring sessions with the researcher. Nevertheless, that Will could control his behaviors and make an effort to improve his reading when his environment was changed should be of vital interest to his teachers. Will's behaviors during tutoring, as well as those of the other students, indicates that reduction of stress may facilitate reading disabled students' progress.

The problem of stress in relation to reading disabilities is complex. First, teachers must be made aware that such stress exists and learn to recognize behaviors that may be stress-related. Secondly, teachers need to know how to handle such behaviors in a nonconfrontative manner so that students will not be reinforced, albeit negatively, for their actions. Finally, teachers should provide nonstressful opportunities for students to engage with
print, allowing the slow process of substituting more suitable behaviors to begin for the students. This need for teacher awareness suggests another area which may need to be addressed during the training of teachers, as well as in the continuing education of teachers in the schools.

The Teacher and Reading Disabled Students

Because they have the most contact with students, teachers necessarily come under examination when students' achievement is discussed. The role of teachers in student learning is not always clear, however, it is likely that the more knowledge teachers have about their students and about what they teach, the more effective they will be. The role of teachers in relation to reading disabled students will be examined in terms of their perceptions of reading disabled students and in terms of the systems that may need to be available in schools to aid them in their tasks.

Teachers' Perceptions of Reading Disabled Students

Teachers usually become teachers because they value education and want children to benefit from education in the same way as themselves. They bring with them to their classrooms remembrances of their own school experiences, which were usually pleasant, and theories about how children should be taught. They also may bring unsophisticated cultural beliefs which color their perceptions of children (Spindler, 1987). Lest it be misunderstood, cultural
beliefs are not limited to topics of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. They also include, among other things, a person's perceptions of how things should be done, who should do what, and what is appropriate and inappropriate. Cultural beliefs may impinge upon a classroom when teachers try to establish their cultural beliefs as the standard for evaluating students in the classroom (Heath, 1982; Spindler, 1987; Wolcott, 1987). Reading disabled students in the present study all may have created a sense of dissonance in their teachers because the students did not fit the teachers' beliefs about how children should achieve in school, or, in some cases, how children should behave in school. Green and Weade (1988) suggest that when dissonance is created it may be accommodated into a person's belief system, thereby expanding the person's knowledge. However, the dissonance may also prompt retreat into existing beliefs, resulting in nonproductive and sometimes negative reactions. While this is a natural reaction to difficult situations, reading disabled students cannot afford to have teachers who react in this manner.

On the other hand, teacher perceptions concerning students may not always be based on teachers' cultural beliefs, but on the behaviors they have observed the students performing. West and Anderson (1976) reviewed studies that indicated that student behaviors were
instrumental in developing teacher perceptions. Therefore, it cannot always be assumed that all teachers act on the basis of hearsay when they react to a student. It is known, however, that teachers' expectations of students' abilities to learn appears to affect the achievement of students, either positively or adversely, depending on the expectations (Brophy & Good, 1974; Cooper, 1979; Dusek, 1975). Furthermore, students tend to more closely conform to teachers' expectations over time. The data in the present study indicate that, with the exception of one teacher, all of the teachers had negative opinions about the students' ability to learn, indicating that the teachers were, albeit unknowingly, likely having negative effects on students' achievement. Furthermore, in the classroom setting, students appeared to behave similarly to teacher descriptions.

The relationship between teacher expectations and student behaviors, both academic and nonacademic, appears to by circular, similar to stress and reading disabilities. In fact, all three are part of the same overall pattern. Whichever comes first, negative teacher perceptions or students behaviors, the resulting situation is frustrating for the student and the teacher. Teachers' frustration may be because of their seeming inability to fulfill their role of teacher to these students with reading difficulties, which, in turn, is possibly the result of their lack of
knowledge of how to assess and develop these students' reading potential.

Whether teachers are successful at teaching likely has an effect on their self-esteem (Blase, 1986; Halpin, Harris, & Halpin, 1985). Teachers who perceive themselves as unsuccessful may develop defensive behaviors, which result in negative reactions to poorly achieving students. This may be especially true of learning disabilities teachers whose students have always been thought to be difficult to teach. The combination of an expectation of difficult students, lack of knowledge about most of those students' primary instructional need—reading, and a theory based on the existence of innate deficiencies that lessens teachers' expectations of student achievement may be the source of the anger and frustration exhibited by one of Ben's LD teachers. Teachers may express these feelings in different ways, but the end results are unproductive student/teacher relationships.

Support Systems for Teachers

What is made obvious in the previous section is that teachers of reading disabled students may need additional support systems. They may not only need more knowledge, but they also may need help in monitoring their expectations when they enter the classroom. Good (1981) suggests that teacher training programs may foster inappropriate expectations. Kinzer (1988), in videotaped interviews with
several fourth-year undergraduate teachers, found that these teachers had somewhat unrealistic expectations of classroom life and their roles as teachers. They envisioned themselves directing the class from the front of the room and imparting knowledge to attentive children. He also found a change in perceptions after these teachers had completed part of their student teaching. Unfortunately, the teachers did not appear to be fully able to accommodate their experiences with their expectations. Teacher-training systems may need to consider their roles in developing expectations in teachers, in providing opportunities for students to broaden their expectations, and in helping teachers develop means of monitoring their expectations.

Development of teacher knowledge concerning both developmental reading and reading disabilities may be the most effective means of decreasing negative teacher perceptions of students. When teachers are knowledgeable about reading, are able to assess students’ strengths and weaknesses, and have instructional strategies that may be used to meet those students’ needs, they will likely experience more satisfaction with their role as teachers. Reduction of their own frustrations, and a decreased need for reliance on cultural beliefs, may free teachers to expend more energy developing supportive student/teacher relationships.
In addition, schools may need to increase their support of teachers who work with reading disabled students. This might include help in assessment, assistance in changing classroom structures to better provide for low-achieving students, aid in developing better classroom management techniques, and, in some cases, provision for aides in the classroom. For students who are severely reading disabled, classroom teachers' instruction needs to be supplemented by special reading instruction. Some supportive systems may require only short-term existence, until teachers feels competent to handle changes in classroom structures on their own. Other supports, such as specialized reading instruction, may need to exist over a long period of time, and the teacher and tutor will need to work to maintain congruence, not in the material content, but in the reading instruction provided.

It is vital that schools consider the well-being of their teachers. Teachers should not be overburdened with concerns about discipline to the detriment of instruction, as were the teachers in the present study. Students with reading disabilities cannot be taught ways to improve their reading if teachers are unable to find time to teach them.

Reading Disabilities and Educational Systems

For decades reading educators have recognized the contributory role of schools in the creation of reading
disabilities (Alm, 1981; Robinson, 1946; Stauffer, Abrams, & Pikulski, 1978; Terman & Walcutt, 1958). While it is easy to focus on teachers' roles, the teacher is only a part of an educational system that is failing to provide equitable education for all students. School responses to students who experience difficulty with literacy acquisition may be the most powerful factor in the maintenance of reading disabilities.

**Special Education Placement**

Data showed that all students in the present study, when found to be having difficulty with reading, were tested for learning disabilities. Three of the students qualified for placement in learning disabilities programs. However, these programs did not appear to be any more effective than regular classroom placement for the students, probably because appropriate reading instruction did not occur.

There appears to be contradictory thinking in the placement of these students. While inappropriate behavior may have played a role in the initial referral for testing, it had already been acknowledged prior to testing that students' primary deficient academic area was reading. Regardless of test results, students' difficulties were still in the area of reading after testing. [It should be noted that studies on the placement of students in learning disabilities programs have found that between 70% and 80% of
students were placed due to severe discrepancies in reading achievement (Dangel & Ensminger, 1988; Kavale & Fornesse, 1985). However, students were placed in an environment where teachers had little knowledge about how to improve reading abilities. It may be suggested that psychologists recommended, and administrators approved, this placement because they thought students would benefit from individualized instruction. However, this appears to be a shallow argument, since it implies that those responsible for the placement did not know what the special education teachers were trained to teach or not teach, and how the classrooms of these teachers were operated. That suggests, at the least, a lack of congruence between units in the school, or, at worst, a lack of regard for the education of reading disabled students as long as they were removed from the regular classes. Since special education placement is a frequent response to students with reading disabilities, it further implies that certain educational responses may have become ingrained in the system, which may give credence to the possibility that students are placed in these programs somewhat carelessly.

A combination of factors at the school level may have interacted to make these placements possible. First, there may be a lack of knowledge of reading processes, not only on the part of teachers, but also administrators. Secondly, there may be erroneous theories in operation concerning the
learning potentials of students who are labeled as learning disabled. While the test results of students in the study indicated discrepancies between achievement and ability, there was no hard evidence of lack of potential to learn.

It is not surprising that this is the type of knowledge teachers bring into their LD classrooms in view of the development of the concept of learning disabilities. Originally, a few psychologists and educators assumed that children had learning difficulties because they had suffered brain damage not clinically detectable that disrupted specific brain processes (Cruickshank, 1975; Kephart, 1960; Kirk, 1962; Strauss & Kephart, 1940, 1955; Strauss & Werner, 1943). Therefore, teachers were trained to deal with processing deficiencies by means of special programs that were supposed to remediate processing difficulties (Barsch, 1965; Cruickshank, Bentzen, Ratzeburg, & Tannhauser, 1961; Delacato, 1959; Frostig & Horne, 1973). Partially as a result of the development of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (Kirk, McCarthy, & Kirk, 1958), the focus of learning disabilities instruction changed, although processing deficiencies remained an assumed belief (Carrier, 1986). Special educators began to focus on "aspects of cognition directly relevant to educational performance and susceptible to direct remedial intervention" (Carrier, 1986, p. 46). A skills-oriented approach to instruction developed, such as existed in the learning
disabilities classrooms in the present study. This approach emphasized the processes involved in performing a specific task. For instance, Smith (1987) presented guidelines to teachers for teaching study skills. Skills thought to be subsumed under the process of study skills were presented in a hierarchical manner, mastery of one leading to teaching of the next, until the entire process was mastered. Furthermore, nonacademic behavior continued to be a predominant focus of learning disabilities programs as the concept of hyperactivity became more ingrained (Carrier, 1986).

In addition to lack of knowledge of reading processes and erroneous theories concerning students with learning difficulties, there is not an effective system of evaluation of students' learning after placement in the learning disabilities classroom. If there were, administrators might be prompted to question the suitability of the placement for these students. However, administrators may also be apt to leave these determinations to teachers and psychologists, not feeling comfortable in the arena of special education. Even if these placements were acknowledged to be ineffective for reading disabled students, administrators did not appear to have alternative responses available for these students. Furthermore, McGill-Franzen (1987) suggests that funding formulas that apply money to special education rather than compensatory
education, including reading programs, may be more appealing to school boards for fiscal reasons. Therefore, it becomes more cost-effective to place reading disabled students in a learning disability program.

However, in light of the increasing literature addressing the growing number of reading disabled students referred to special education, responsibility for the ineffectiveness of placements for reading disabled students initially lies with universities that train teachers of students with learning disabilities. Many LD teachers have not been prepared to provide informed intervention for reading disabled students. Furthermore, the preparation of current preservice LD teachers may not be providing substantial or high quality information about the reading process or reading disabilities. While some LD teacher-training programs are beginning to address the issue of reading education, their efforts are often insignificant. It is not enough to incorporate information about reading instruction into the content of an existing course. It is not enough to prepare teachers of reading disabled students by making one reading course part of their training program. It is not enough to have a course in reading instruction taught by an instructor whose background is not in the field of reading. Universities must accept responsibilities for shortsighted-ness in their training of teachers for learning disabilities classrooms, which have become almost synonymous
with reading disability classrooms, and make changes that
will better prepare these teachers to instruct the students
they will encounter.

Educational Accommodations

Lack of alternative responses to meet students' needs
appears to result in students being maintained in
placements that are not suitable for their needs. Teachers,
while encouraged to make modifications for these students,
instead seem to make accommodations to alleviate the impact
of students' reading disabilities on the class. For
purposes of this discussion, the difference between
modification and accommodations needs to be clarified.
Modifications are those changes teachers make in the
individual educational plans of students which are intended
to enhance student learning. These may include providing
reading materials at students' instructional levels, reading
test questions to students, and supplementing reading with
aural presentations. Accommodations, on the other hand,
are those actions taken by schools in an effort to increase
students' engagement with school. Accommodation is defined
by Miller, Leinhardt, and Zigmond (1988) as follows:

"...an environmental responsiveness to the needs
and/or desires of students, as those needs or
desires are perceived by various institutional
actors. It represents an effort to adjust the
demands of school life to bring them more into
correspondence with the realities of adolescent
life, a willingness to compromise on the part of
the school in order to reconcile student needs
and school demands." (p. 472)
One of the ways accommodation can operate is to find alternative ways for students to meet or appear to meet the requirements of school. Accommodations may include providing more courses for which students may earn credit to graduate, and structuring classes to minimize need for student responses.

Many accommodations are well-meant, and initially may be intended as an attempt to keep students from dropping out of school. The reasoning is that if students are doing poorly in school, they likely are frustrated with the work. Therefore, if the workload is reduced and made more enjoyable, students might elect to stay in school. This appears to be a shortsighted educational response, because it does not take into account many of the underlying causes of student disengagement with school, prominent among which is poor reading (Carbo, 1987; Hahn, 1987). Students who cannot read well are unlikely to develop strong feelings concerning the worth of schooling, since schooling becomes the place where they experience the most failure.

Unfortunately, once schools have instituted accommodations, they are difficult to alter. They not only make life easier for students, but also tend to become part of teachers' management systems. Reading disabled students may suffer when accommodations are made instead of modifications. Accommodations tend to mask their difficulties, allowing them to be passed from grade to grade
with no serious instructional intervention being implemented. This may well be what occurred with Karen. However, accommodations were also an everyday part of the other students' classrooms. One of the differences between the regular education teachers and the learning disabilities teachers in the present study was the acknowledgement of the regular education teachers that most of what they did for their reading disabled students were accommodations; learning disabilities teachers did the same things and appeared to think they were making modifications.

Discontinuation of Efforts

The final educational response to the reading disabled students in this study seems likely to be a discontinuation of efforts to provide reading instruction. Will and Missie are not going to have LD reading classes beginning in the ninth grade. Karen has not received reading instruction since the sixth grade. Since the reading instruction they have received has been based upon poor instructional practices, discontinuation of further instruction, if it were the same type of instruction, perhaps would not affect the students to any great degree. They would stay just as they are. However, the implied thought behind discontinuation of instruction is that after a certain age, students are unable to benefit from instruction. Certainly it may be more difficult to bring about change once students have experienced failure for many years (Clay, 1979), but
the present researcher's work with these students indicated that change was not impossible. Secondary schools do not appear to be prepared to meet the challenges of reading disabled students, even in their special education classroom. While it may be more efficient to focus on early prevention of reading disabilities, it may be irresponsible to ignore the needs of those students who have become reading disabled at least partially due to poor instruction.

Summary of Chapter

Data from this study indicate that literacy acquisition is fundamental to school achievement. Societal beliefs concerning the need for literacy are so strong that they permeate the perceptions of even young children. When children do not progress as well as their classmates, they are likely to begin seeing themselves as less capable, as unintelligent, and as failures. That schools appear to expect children to learn to read as a matter of course may intensify the feelings of inadequacy in children who do not meet these expectations. However, in the case of the students in the present study, primarily the inadequacy did not lie in the children, but in the instruction they received.

Early failure in reading appears to lead to a cyclical chain of increasingly inappropriate social behaviors which
may stem from stress and feelings of inadequacy. Unless reading is improved, the social behaviors are likely to continue. Furthermore, as long as the behaviors continue, the school's attention is directed away from instruction and on to behavior control.

Teachers who have been unsuccessful at providing successful learning experiences for reading disabled students, either due to lack of knowledge about reading and reading disabilities, to unrealistic expectations, or to excessive attention to social behaviors, may begin to share in the students' feelings of stress. Confrontations between teachers and students may increase because neither understands the phenomena that are occurring.

While schools recognize their primary goal as promoting literacy acquisition, many teachers in the schools who provide reading instruction appear to have limited knowledge about reading and reading disabilities. Schools should provide ways for inservice teachers to improve their reading instruction, and teacher training programs should insure that reading theory and practice is a major emphasis in their curriculums. This is especially true of those programs who train learning disabilities teachers, because large numbers of reading disabled students are placed in these programs.

Schools should consider the effectiveness of responses made toward students with reading disabilities. Educational
responses failed to help students in the present study, because the responses were not based on assessment of individual needs. Instead, responses were broadly based on knowledge of groups of students with reading disabilities. Furthermore, placement of these students in learning disabilities programs appears illogical since teachers in these programs may be poorly prepared to provide reading instruction. In addition, discontinuation of reading instruction at the secondary level implies a lack of responsibility on the part of schools. Schools need to discourage the idea that older reading disabled students are not remediable, and instead adopt the attitude that it is never too late to intervene.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the present study. First, data were not collected for extended lengths of time. While this did not hinder the researcher's ability to make analyses of students' reading behaviors, it may not have allowed for complete understandings of the classroom interactions between these students and their teachers. Secondly, research of educational records relies on the completeness of the documents. In some cases, information, such as records concerning Missie's initial psychoeducational testing, were not available to the researcher. In addition, the interactions between the
students and the researcher were unique in that they evolved from the specific context of our relationships. It cannot be assumed that similar relationships would necessarily develop with another researcher or teacher in a different setting. Finally, the present study attempted to view the phenomena of reading disabilities through the perspectives of the students' to the extent possible. This may have inadvertently biased the researcher in her perceptions of the teachers of these students. However, the researcher made attempts to fairly explain the actions of the teachers in the analysis portion of this study.

Implications for Future Research

Several findings in this study deserve further research. All students in the present study were severely reading disabled, but none more so than Will. Little research has been conducted on nonreaders such as Will. It would be of interest to longitudinally study several nonreaders in an attempt to determine why these students fail to benefit from instruction. While in this study educational factors seemed to predominate, a longitudinal study might uncover other factors impinging on nonreaders' progress. Studies that provide descriptive data on reading disabled students' reading behaviors across ages, followed by comparison of these behaviors to current models of reading, could extend knowledge concerning the development
of reading disabilities. Student awareness of aspects of their reading disability and reading instruction raised questions as to how such awareness could be used to benefit students and teachers. Further research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of student feedback on teachers' practice. In addition, ways need to be explored to extend students' awareness from the difficulties they face because of their reading disability, to awareness of how their stress reactions may add to these difficulties. Teacher awareness of their role in maintaining inappropriate behaviors in the classroom also deserves attention. Finally, research is needed on the rationale for placing reading disabled students in learning disabilities classrooms, the effectiveness of these placements, the appropriateness of reading instruction provided, and the preparation of the teachers.

Summary of Dissertation

The present qualitative study explored affective, social, and educational factors which may have affected the development or maintenance of reading disabilities. The effectiveness of school responses to reading disabled students was also investigated. Respondents in the study were 4 reading disabled adolescents.

The study was conducted by development of case studies, using qualitative research methods, including participant
observation, open-ended interviews, field observations, and document research. Data were collected by means of audiotaping, videotaping, and the writing of field notes. Analysis of data was a two-part process, involving first the separate analysis of individual cases, followed by an analysis across cases. The cross-case analysis was intended to uncover similarities and differences in the individual cases and to establish factors which appeared to have the most impact on each students' reading achievement. The researcher attempted to establish credibility through triangulation of data, peer debriefing, member checks, and the keeping of a reflexive journal.

The cross-comparative analysis of individual cases was an ongoing process during which the researcher used internal sampling to focus on aspects of data that were significant to the research question. Cross-case analysis was conducted in the same manner, but with the sampled data from the individual cases being used to establish similarities and differences. Results indicated there were six areas that appeared to have implications for the question under study. These included early literacy experiences, students' reading behaviors, student perceptions, instruction received by students, teacher perceptions, and educational responses.

The findings of the study may be summarized as follows:

1. Early literacy experiences were not sufficient for the development of reading proficiency.
2. Students' overreliance on phonic analysis appeared to reflect their reading instruction which had consisted primarily of phonic analysis.

3. Students were aware of the difficulties reading disabilities posed, both in the present and the future.

4. Students were able to evaluate the instruction they received, pointing out deficiencies that would be recognized as such by reading authorities.

5. Reading disabilities may have caused stress-related behaviors that resulted in inappropriate classroom behaviors.

6. Teachers were generally negative in their perceptions of the students in the present study, possibly reflecting their own difficulties in providing appropriate instruction.

7. Teachers appeared to have limited knowledge of reading processes, reading instruction, and reading disabilities.

8. Educational responses to reading disabled students appeared to be ineffective, however alternative responses did not seem to be available.

9. The most common educational response was placement in learning disabilities programs, even though LD teachers are not always provided with training in reading remediation.
These findings implied that educational factors may have played a large part in both the development and maintenance of students' reading disabilities.


Rules for the education of handicapped children. (1982). Ohio Department of Education, Columbus, OH.


APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPTION FROM AUDIOTAPE
Excerpt from Audiotape, #6-M

R: Your mom has no reading problems?
M: No. She quit school, she quit when she was 15.
R: Do you know if she was having difficulty in school?
M: No, she was doing fine. She just got quit. It's just my dad.
REFERRING TO HER DAD HAVING SAME PROBLEMS AS SHE DOES.
R: What difference is it going to make to you if you never read any better than you read now?
M: Oh, I can, I can read better if I work on it. (Leans forward, very earnest.)
R: Would that have any effect on your life?
M: Well, yeah. Like when I read something important, like checks and stuff like that. (Speaking quickly) Like when I read the paper it's all confusing. I don't even know the words, I mean. And I gotta learn more (emphasis on more). I gotta get up to at least 5th grade, 6th grade.
R: That's a good goal. You have that goal and you know that's what you want to do. Do you think you're going to achieve that goal?
M: What do you mean?
R: Are you going to get to read that well?
M: Yeah, I'll try to.
MISSIE SEEMED SOMEWHAT CONFUSED HERE. OR PERHAPS UNCERTAIN?
R: What is going to make that possible?
M: I just have to work on it. Next year when I get to high school, I won't have any reading class. I'll just have to get my mom to help me. 'Cause my mom does help me, like, and I say, like, like when I read this, she tell me to, you know, like ra-di-o. Like there's three things. So she tell me to break it down.
INTERESTING THAT MISSIE DOES NOT APPEAR TO THINK THE SCHOOL IS GOING TO PROVIDE HER WITH ANY HELP, NOR DOES SHE EXPECT IT. ATTRIBUTES SUCCESS TO HER OWN EFFORTS.
R: So next year you're not going to have a reading class. Does that upset you?
I TRIED TO WORD THIS QUESTION WITH NO EXPRESSION IN MY VOICE.
M: Yeah. That’s what the teachers told me, that I wasn’t gonna have reading class. And that kinda upset me, ’cause when I don’t have reading class, I won’t get no better. Plus when I’m in high school, how can I...I’ll be embar...it really embarrass me when I read in front of people. At high school, they’re gonna think, “Where she come from. She don’t belong here. She gonna have to get more help!” You know, all that kind of stuff.
MISSIE WAS SERIOUS, CONCERNED. WHEN FINISHED SPEAKING SHE LOOKED AT ME WITH HER BROWS FURROWED, AS THOUGH LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER. THEN SHE TOSSER HER HAIR BACK, AS THOUGH PUTTING THE THOUGHT OUT OF HER MIND, AND EXAMINED HER NAILS.
R: So if you could change that what would you ask the school to provide for you?
M: The school don’t have nothin’ to do...You know, they can’t...
I’M NOT SURE WHAT SHE THINKS THE SCHOOL CAN’T DO.
R: But if they could, what would you ask them for?
M: I need help. I just need it.
R: Describe to me what sort of help would be most beneficial to you.
M: I need help with the reading and a reading class. I need help in the reading class. I need help with my reading.
R: Do you think you would get enough help if you were in the class with other kids and you had a teacher who would help you, would that be all you’d need?
M: Yeah.
INTERUPTION FROM STUDENT LOOKING FOR THE NURSE.
APPENDIX B
SAMPLE OF FIELDNOTES
TAKEN DURING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION
Fieldnotes, Obs 1-B

I was the first person in the classroom. The beige room was approximately 35' x 35'. It was at the building's lower level. All three windows had beige shades which were pulled closed. There were four sections of blackboard across the front of the room. Each section, approximately 4' wide, was covered with written notes. The door was located at the right-hand corner of this front wall. There were two sections of blackboard at the back of the south wall. There were low bookshelves against the north wall that were tightly packed with National Geographic magazines, history textbooks, newspapers, and miscellaneous other texts. In the back of the room, chairs and desks had been pushed together and piled on top of each other. There were also broken desks, cabinets piles with folders and papers, audiovisual equipment, and carts. Desks in the room were arranged in five rows, seven desks in each row. The aisles between the desks were only two feet wide.

I sat at the back of the room, pushing chairs out of the way to make room for a spare desk. The students began to enter, laughing and jostling. Most glanced at me and then away. One girl asked if I was a sub, to which I replied, "No, Mr. Burns is here today." She turned and went to her desk. The students' high spirits seemed at odds with the serious adages decorating the walls. "Time wasted is lost forever." "Failure is not fatal, failure to change may be."
The walls of the room were sporadically covered with such mottos along with subject related charts and pictures, all of which were faded with age.

The room quickly filled with 25 students, 15 black and 10 white. Each went directly to a specific area or desk. Many students sat down immediately, took out paper and pen, and began copying the notes from the front boards. (These notes were in outline form and concerned presidents in office during the Viet Nam war.) Other students continued to talk, even after the bell rang. The teacher entered and said, "The bell rang people. Let's get started." The students still standing walked to their seats, book bags were noisily opened and closed, and a cal settled over the class, punctuated with low talk, scuffing shoes, and moving chairs.

The teacher made a few introductory remarks about the day's topic.

"We're going to cover four presidencies today."

(Looking at the board.)

"Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford."

(Points to the boards as he says each name.

Voice falls off - pause.)

"Some people think this represents the most eventful era in our history."

(Voice lifts at end - pause.)

"Well...." (Looks at class), "Uh, I'll take attendance while you get on with this."
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE OF CODED PRINTOUT USING ETHNOGRAPH
WPKINZ  k  +  SHE SEEMED GENUINELY PUZZLED AND I
SC: SAD
!-SAD
: k: Ua, I think, I think it's sad. And 10%!
------------------------------------------
WPKINZ  k  +  SHE WAS VERY SERIOUS IN THIS
SC: SAD
!-SAD  #-SUPPRESS
: k: Ua, kinda, kinda sad sometimes. And 137%-!
------------------------------------------
WPKINZ  r  +  SHE WAS VERY SERIOUS IN THIS
SC: SAD
#-SAD
: r: When does it make you feel sad? 141 -#
:
$-FRUSTRATION $-REASON SAD
: r: When it's like a big word and I get 143 -$ 144 #
: frustrated and I can't get it, get out.
: 145 # -$
:
: r: Okay, tell me more about feeling sad. What does this mean when you 147 #
: say you feel sad?
: 149 #
:
$-REASON SAD $-CAN'T READ
: k: That, um sometimes I feel sad that I 151 -#
%CAN READ
: can't read very well. I can read 152 # -$
: but not where I'm supposed to at.
: 153 #
: And um... sometimes, sometimes I 154 #
*LOSE COMP
: read it but it just don't come out 155 # -$
: right.
: 156 -# -$
------------------------------------------
APPENDIX D

SAMPLES OF CHART MADE DURING
ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL CASE
Reading

Aversion
- Limited ability
  - Looks at length
  - Judges difficulty by length of words
  - Forced to come to tutoring
  - Dislikes school
  - Dislikes reading silently
  - Reads a little, then quits

Hard
- Direct
  - When books assigned
  - Why long words assigned

Fun
- Direct
  - When school notes before, and on his own free choice
  - Why entertaining familiar purpose
  - Learning social

Purpose
- Direct
  - Finding a job
  - Making money
  - Independence
  - Self-respect
  - Communication
  - Entertainment
  - Further education

Status
- Direct
  - "Make you smarter around your friends."
  - Peer approval
  - Reading challenge
  - Way to become "bookish"
  - Way to improve skills

Other Strands
Disrupted Childhood
- Many foster homes
- Many different schools
- Court fight over custody
- Adoption at 14

Disruptive behavior
- "Bad" in school
- Hassles with teachers
- Mentions suspensions

System viewed as unfair
- Shouldn't have been put into
- Doesn't feel he reads that poorly
- Defensive about reading ability
- Teachers have unfair rules
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF NOTES TAKEN

FOLLOWING PEER DEBRIEFINGS
May 10.
Peer debriefing session with large group.

While the purpose of this session was to discuss my interview methods, several other issues were raised which have caused me to think about some new things concerning my study. There were two black men in this groups, and they both had very pointed questions which related to the race difference between me and Ben. Of special note was the question of whether Ben became more passive (resistant?), less responsive during interviews than tutoring because he had been programmed over the years to having white authority figures question him. They asked if I didn't think it would be hard for a black child to be comfortable. I explained that I had built up rapport with Ben during the six months before I began any interviewing. There is clearly a special teacher/student relationship between us. However, being white, I doubt that I could ever really know if race was a factor, unless Ben told me so. They also asked if I had tried to move my relationship with Ben to a more personal level. I almost felt I was on trial. Was I just using a black child to further my career? What is his part of the reciprocation? While I know the tutoring is good for him, maybe he doesn't feel an equal partner in this whole set-up. My reflections on this have really made me aware of the race difference for the first time. I didn't pick him because he is black. He's not interesting because he's black. I like the kid, and I think he likes me. I don't know what role I play for him - teacher, friend, authority figure who could get him into trouble with Dad if he doesn't cooperate, or just someone who accepts him as he is. And I think I do that. This has led me to deeper reflections. When do I quit tutoring Ben? Is he done when my research is done? Or do I stick with him after that, if he'll let me? How much closer could I bring him into my world, without offending his father, intruding on Ben himself, or depriving my own son of my time in order to be with Ben? I already spend very little time with Alex. Would he be resentful of this other kid who I frequently mention when I'm home? I think Ben must be emotionally vulnerable - he's only been in a stable home for a bit over a year. There's no mother in the home and he's never mentioned grandparents, etc. Could I become a substitute in this role without realizing it? This is truly not a situation where a researcher can just work with a person and then disappear. It worries me. I don't want a repeat of Lisa. I know I only have so much to give and pretending that I can give more is dangerous.
Peer debriefing with Jill

Jill viewed the section of tape where Ben talks about gang and reading 'challenge.' I asked her to look for 1) whether I was leading Ben with my questions, 2) my interview style, 3) her interpretations of what Ben was saying, and 4) suggestions.

She said my style was fine, that she was impressed with my ability to be totally nonjudgmental toward his responses. She felt his responses were spontaneous and in some cases, self-generated. Jill also felt Ben was describing a reading 'challenge' type of event that directly related to gang leadership. Her suggestions were to further explore what he means by 'reading smart', and have him describe a 'fight'.

We talked about possible race issues, as brought up by the two men in previous debriefing sessions. I felt more comfortable after our talk. It's kind of like I can't change our races - we've done pretty well in our relationship so far - so there's no sense dwelling on it. Talking with Jill is becoming a vital factor in my research. She is very insightful, and an excellent listener!

Suggested I read, The Naked Children by Daniel Fader.
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE OF NOTES FROM REFLEXIVE JOURNAL
I have been thinking quite a bit about how kids like Will are allowed to occur in the schools. With Ben, I called it miseducation and placed the blame on the school, although mostly on the teachers. Will has caused me to rethink that position. First of all both boys were put into a system that didn’t seem to suit them. At very early ages, they were marked as being poor achievers. They weren’t picking things up in a ‘natural’ manner—such as reading. What didn’t happen for them that happens for other kids? Whatever it is, it creates a problem for various people. The teacher is put in a position of making decisions about the child based on time and efficiency. If a child needs x amount of time, and the teacher doesn’t have that time, then the teacher is likely to weigh the good of the many against the good of the one. Also, the teacher may not have the expertise to deal with a child who is so far from the norm. The child is an enigma to the teachers. Some teachers will refer the child for testing, and the child may qualify for special services and get him out of the teacher’s class. It is kind of an out for the teacher, but perhaps understandable in light of the task of having to worry about 25 to 30 other students also. If the child does not qualify, the teacher is left with this enigma—and the time allotment factor will pretty much keep the child at the level where he is. The second group to have a problem is the administrative group. Children who are not achieving
tend to create behavior problems, so administrative time tends to be taken up by discipline rather than teacher/student support. Also, such children lower the school’s claim to accountability. They are, in effect, an embarrassment. Some administrators may be aware of the time and money commitment needed to boost these children up to level, but they must make decisions based on fixed budgets and the needs of the majority of students. It costs as much to hire one teacher to work with a few reading disabled students as it costs to hire a teacher to take care of a full classroom, not to mention the problem of space allocation. Not very cost effective. Special education is exorbitantly expensive. The third group is the special needs educators. State law limits their class size, but classes are still too large to provide effective instruction for many of severely reading disabled kids like Will. These teachers get the poorest achievers but nevertheless end up teaching to the average of that population. Special education is under pressure to provide the regular curriculum to their students. This means that these teachers frequently are forced to worry more about the subject presented than about students' ability to handle the subject. Accommodations are made until, by the time these kids reach middle school, they don’t have to do any reading at all. The special ed. system is full of contradictions.
APPENDIX G

STATE GUIDELINES FOR PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED PROGRAMS
F. PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

1. Eligibility

A child who meets the definition for developmentally handicapped in paragraph N. of rule 3301-51-01 of the Administrative Code and the following requirements shall be eligible for special education programming and related services for developmentally handicapped children.

a. Each child shall have a multifaceted evaluation for initial placement that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, evaluations in the following areas:

(i) General intelligence as determined through a measure of cognitive functioning administered by a qualified psychologist using a test designed for individual administration;

(ii) Academic performance;

(iii) Hearing, vision, and motor abilities;

(iv) Communicative status; and

(v) Adaptive behavior.

b. In addition to the requirements for eligibility mentioned above, personnel shall also draw upon information from a variety of sources, including teacher recommendations, physical condition, and social or cultural background.

c. Each child shall have a measured intelligence quotient of eighty or below.

d. Each child shall exhibit deficits in academic performance.

e. Each child shall exhibit deficits in adaptive behavior which adversely affect the child's educational performance and/or independent daily living skills. Evidence of deficits in a minimum of two areas of adaptive behavior must be documented through the use of individually administered standardized instruments which have been validated for the specific purpose of measuring adaptive behavior.

f. Medical consultation shall be encouraged especially when school authorities feel that there has been a change in a child's behavior or educational functioning or when new symptoms are detected.

g. The required reevaluation includes, but is not necessarily limited to, areas in paragraphs F. 1. a. and F. 1. b. of this rule. (Rules for the Education of Handicapped Children, 1982, p. 66)
APPENDIX H

STATE GUIDELINES FOR PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAMS

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G. PROGRAM FOR SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN

1. Eligibility

A child who meets the definition for specific learning disability according to paragraph FFF. of rule 3301-51-01 of the Administrative Code and the following requirements shall be eligible for special education programming and related services for specific learning disabled children.

a. Each child shall have a multifactored evaluation for initial placement that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, evaluations in the following areas:

(i) General intelligence as determined through a measure of cognitive functioning administered by a qualified psychologist using a test designed for individual administration;

(ii) Academic performance as measured through the use of standardized tests designed for individual administration which must include evaluation in the areas of:
   (a) Basic reading skills,
   (b) Reading comprehension,
   (c) Mathematics calculation, and
   (d) Mathematics reasoning;

(iii) Vision, hearing, and motor abilities;

(iv) Communicative status, which must include assessments in the areas of:
   (a) Oral expression,
   (b) Listening comprehension, and
   (c) Written expression; and

(v) Social and emotional status.

b. Each child shall have a severe discrepancy between achievement and ability which adversely affects his or her educational performance to such a degree that special education and related services are required. The basis for making the determination shall be:

(i) Evidence of a discrepancy score of two or greater than two between intellectual ability and achievement in one or more of the following seven areas:
   (a) Oral expression,
   (b) Listening comprehension,
   (c) Written expression,
   (d) Basic reading skills,
   (e) Reading comprehension,
   (f) Mathematics calculation, or
   (g) Mathematics reasoning.

(ii) The following formula shall be used in computing the discrepancy score:
   
   (a) From:
   
      (i) The score obtained for the measure of intellectual ability,
   
      (ii) Minus the mean of the measure of intellectual ability,
   
      (iii) Divided by the standard deviation of the measure of intellectual ability;

   (b) Subtract:

      (i) Score obtained for the measure of achievement,
      (ii) Minus the mean of the measure of achievement,
      (iii) Divided by the standard deviation of the measure of achievement.
(c) The result of this computation equals the discrepancy score. If the discrepancy score is two or greater than two, a severe discrepancy exists.

(iii) Achievement is not commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the seven areas listed in paragraph G. 1. b. (i) of this rule when there is evidence that the child has been provided learning experiences appropriate for his or her age and ability levels.

(iv) The child's severe discrepancy between achievement and ability is not primarily the result of:
(a) Vision, hearing, or motor handicap;
(b) Mental retardation;
(c) Emotional disturbance; or
(d) Environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

c. The academic performance in the regular classroom setting shall be observed by at least one evaluation team member other than the child's regular teacher. In the case of a child of less than school age or one who is out of school, a team member shall observe the child in an environment appropriate for a child of that age.

d. A written report shall be developed by the evaluation team for each child evaluated for a specific learning disability. Each evaluation team member shall certify in writing whether the report reflects his or her conclusion. If it does not reflect his or her conclusion, the team member must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusion. The report must include a statement of:
(i) Whether or not the child has a specific learning disability;
(ii) The basis for making the determination;
(iii) The relevant behavior noted during the observation of the child;
(iv) The relationship of that behavior to the child's academic functioning;
(v) The educationally relevant medical findings, if any;
(vi) Whether or not there is a severe discrepancy between achievement and ability which is not correctable without special education and related services; and
(vii) The determination of the team concerning the effects of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

e. In the event that the evaluation team determines that a child has a specific learning disability, even though the application of the formula for computing the discrepancy score indicates that the child does not have a discrepancy score of two or greater than two between achievement and ability, the team judgment must prevail. In this event, the team must document in the written report the following additional information:
(i) Data obtained in the evaluation of the seven areas of educational functioning listed in paragraph G. 1. b. (i) of this rule;
(ii) Recommendations and information obtained from the child's regular classroom teachers and parent;
(iii) Evidence of the child's performance in the regular classroom including work samples and group test scores;
(iv) Evidence of possible deficiencies in more than one of the seven areas of educational functioning;
(v) Additional supportive data besides standardized test data; and
(vi) Consideration of the child's age, particularly in the case of young children.

f. Medical consultation shall be encouraged especially when school authorities feel that there has been a change in the child's behavior or educational functioning or when new symptoms are detected.

g. The required reevaluation includes, but is not necessarily limited to, areas in paragraphs G. 1. a to G. 1. e of this rule.

(Rules for the Education of Handicapped Children, 1982, pp. 68-71)
APPENDIX I

STATE GUIDELINES FOR PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS
IN SEVERE BEHAVIOR HANDICAPPED PROGRAMS
E. PROGRAM FOR SEVERE BEHAVIOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

1. Eligibility

A child who meets the definition of severe behavior handicapped in paragraph AAA of rule 3301-51-01 of the Administrative Code and the following requirements shall be eligible for special education programming and related services for severe behavior handicapped children:

a. Each child shall have a multifactored evaluation for initial placement that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, evaluations in the following areas:

   (i) Physical examination completed by a licensed doctor of medicine or doctor of osteopathy;

   (ii) Vision, hearing, and motor abilities;

   (iii) Communicative status;

   (iv) General intelligence as determined through a measure of cognitive functioning administered by a qualified psychologist using a test designed for individual administration;

   (v) Academic performance;

   (vi) Background information inclusive of educational, family and medical history;

   (vii) Informal behavior observation by the child's current teacher and at least one other team member; and

   (viii) Behavior or personality measure.

b. Medical consultation shall be encouraged on a continuing basis, especially when the school authorities feel that there has been a change in the child's behavior or educational functioning or when new symptoms are detected.

c. A written report shall be developed by the evaluation team for each child evaluated for severe behavior handicap. Each team member shall certify in writing whether or not the report reflects his or her conclusion. If it does not reflect his or her conclusion, the team member must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusion. The report must include a statement of:

   (i) Whether or not the child has a severe behavior handicap;

   (ii) The basis for making the determination;

   (iii) The relevant behavior noted during the informal behavior observations of the child including:

      (a) A clear description of the behavior patterns of concern;

      (b) Measure of frequency of occurrence of the behavior in terms of times per minute, hour, day, or other time limit; and

      (c) An indication of the intensity of the behavior pattern, i.e., how extreme the behavior is relative to the peer group;

   (iv) The relationship of the observations to the norm referenced tests;

   (v) How the conditions adversely affect educational performance; and

   (vi) Conclusion that the behavior is not a result of a social maladjustment.

d. The required reevaluation includes, but is not necessarily limited to, areas in paragraphs E. 1. a. (iv) to E. 1. a. (viii) of this rule.

(Rules for the Education of Handicapped Children, 1982, pp. 62-63)
APPENDIX J

ORIGINAL WRITING SAMPLE:

KAREN'S REASONS TO READ
1. They can't read a menu.
2. They are sad.
3. They file dum.
4. They mix tape a findy that they can't read.
5. They make a %$$ above.
6. They file unclouded.
7. They get lost sometime.
8. (Writing Sample, 1-K)
APPENDIX K

ORIGINAL WRITING SAMPLES: WILL
I wish I could go to sleep.
I'm bored.
I'm sad. [Garfield]
I'll sun lasagna.
I'll get up first.
I can't try to walk to the.
I'm lazy.
Now I'm try for bed.

Writing Sample, 2-w

The dog is pulling his dog's bone and they yard.
Bless up the dog.
And his a catnip.

Writing Sample, 5-w

We are going on a fishing trip. We will be out all day.

Writing Sample, 6-w