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A movement and dance residency at a Lakota Indian Reservation School: An action research study

Weisman, Eleanor Frances, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1994

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A MOVEMENT AND DANCE RESIDENCY AT A LAKOTA INDIAN RESERVATION SCHOOL: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

DISSERTATION

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

By

Eleanor Frances Weisman, B.F.A., M.A.L.S.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1994

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I
A MOVEMENT AND DANCE RESIDENCY AT A LAKOTA INDIAN SCHOOL

Currently American Indians are becoming more involved in the creation of the programs of their children's education. This is quite significant relative to the fact that it has been over 500 years since the arrival of the white European culture to the Americas and the subsequent domination of indigenous people. From early contact, the attitude of the Euro-American society towards the American Indian population was that assimilation was the preferred policy; extermination being the alternative (Senese, 1991). However, even in the face of assimilation, American Indians have maintained strong ties to their heritages and still possess many of their original values.

In 1994 there are many aspects to the complex problem of the schooling of American Indian children. The dominant Euro-American education system is finding it necessary to accommodate and adapt to the values of the American Indian population as that population becomes more active in determining the policies of their children's education. As one of the main transmitters of cultural knowledge in the schools, arts education must bear a large share of this burden of change in order to increase the relevancy of education for the indigenous community.

Researching Cultural Interaction
Arts Education in Cultural Contexts

In referring to arts education, I include visual art, music, drama, and dance. Visual art and music are fairly well-established in most school systems. Drama or theatre education is less common, and dance is seldom a permanent subject in public schools. However, all four arts areas have the potential to provide meaningful learning experiences for students of various cultures, especially if there is a relationship between community traditions and the art form presented in the school. The current public school situation demonstrates a need for school experiences in the arts to represent community norms and to
meet the needs of specific populations (Blandy & Congdon, 1988). Because dance has played a role in the ritual communal activities of many traditional populations, perhaps it can also play a pivotal role in contemporary ethnic school communities as well.

In regard to American Indian communities, research has found that many American Indians feel that non-Indians who work in education with the indigenous students are insensitive and have little respect for native culture (Campanelli, Stuhr, Barger-Cottrill, 1990). Along with the need to provide opportunities for American Indians to decide the educational policy of their local communities, there is a need for educators from the Euro-American society to respect and honor the values of those communities.

This study focuses on the challenges that faced me in my residency as a movement and dance educator working in a Lakota Sioux reservation school. I employed action research techniques as I studied my own teaching and learning while collaborating with teachers in the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program and the cultural program at the Takini School on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota.

**Purpose of the Study**

Research reveals only one study on the use of movement and dance with an indigenous population (Deer Skye, Christensen, & England, 1989). My purpose was to integrate my work in movement and modern dance with the values of the Lakota culture. I did not intend to impose values and techniques from my background in Euro-American dance performance onto the students. Neither did I purport to be able to teach them American Indian dance or spirituality. Instead, I learned from the Lakota community as I collaborated with Takini faculty. The objective of this research was to determine a useful and appropriate role for myself as a movement and dance educator within the context of the reservation school.

**Research Questions**

The questions for this study grew out of my personal experiences with teaching movement and dance to students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. My research questions addressed my participation in cultural interaction. Thus, the overarching question was: What is my role as a movement and dance educator teaching in the context of a reservation school? Specifically for the Lakota population at Takini, I asked myself:

1. How does my teaching adapt to the goals of the Lakota community?
2. What can I do to accommodate to the learning styles of the Lakota children?
3. In what ways do the spiritual and philosophical values of the Lakota people affect my work?
4. How is my role as a movement and dance educator affected by working with students who have a strong ethnic dance tradition that differs from my own experience?

Related to my methodology and the significance of the study, I asked myself:

1. What am I learning from my experience at Takini that may be valuable for other teachers in similar situations?
2. How is action research useful in a practical situation dealing with cultural interaction?

These questions faded in and out of focus as my research progressed. I found the topic of cultural interaction to be less obvious as major themes concerning teacher-teacher collaboration and teacher-student relationships emerged during the residency. My final data analysis answered some of these questions directly; other questions were responded to with more questions.

Background and Interests in American Indian Culture

The background for this study encompassed many areas. One area was the history of the educational policy of the federal government towards the American Indian. Historian Guy Senese (1991) refers to that policy as one of assimilation. I use assimilation to mean the process, imposed by the federal government, through which the American Indians were to adopt the characteristics of the Euro-American culture. As the Euro-American population grew, they influenced what became the dominant society in the United States, a society which repressed the traditional lifestyle and values of the indigenous populations. For that reason, it was also important for me to investigate the spiritual and philosophical values of the American Indian in order to understand their influences on contemporary American Indians and the learning styles of their children. Recent developments in movement and dance education provided another area of background for this study. In addition, my personal history brought an integrating theme to the background of the research.

My Personal Story

My personal experience with this problem began with the fact that my father grew up on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota, just to the north of the Cheyenne River Reservation. My Russian, Jewish immigrant grandparents ran a general store where the local Lakota Indians traded. I grew up with a sense of respect for the American Indian, engendered by the stories my father told.
After receiving a B.F.A. in modern dance, I spent the 1976-77 school year teaching English, math, and geography on the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. I became concerned for the deteriorating condition of the lifestyle of this reservation population and for what appeared to me to be shortsightedness on the part of the school system in its failure to address the sociocultural needs of the Chippewa people. I became interested in American Indian issues, philosophy, and spirituality; most of my knowledge and information came from books.

This interest in native spirituality and culture affected my work with dance. I became more interested in the expressive, healing, and ritual aspects of dance and movement. I spent the next ten years studying and working with Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), Bartenieff Fundamentals of Movement™ (BF), Body-Mind Centering™ (BMC), and movement for actors.

In 1989 I moved to Vermillion, South Dakota to teach modern dance and movement for actors at the University of South Dakota. Shortly after arriving there, I met a Lakota Indian counselor, Gene Thin Elk. He is the director of Medicine Wheel, a consulting agency for the treatment of alcohol and drug abuse, specializing in American Indian populations. Medicine Wheel was in need of a movement and dance therapist.

Through my work with Thin Elk and the Medicine Wheel, I realized the severity of the lifestyle problems facing American Indians affected by alcoholism, and drug, physical, or emotional abuse. Thin Elk's work is based on traditional Lakota spirituality and incorporates the healing aspects of the expressive arts. He requested that I assist him in developing a movement and dance component for his Healing Through Feeling work with adults and for the Heart Room Curriculum he has developed for children. The work we created included movement, relaxation, visualizations, touch, and drawing. These techniques, together with vocalization and dialogue, are used to heal the memories held in the body, sometimes at an unconscious level.

In addition to this practical experience with Thin Elk, I was fortunate to attend Sun Dances that he led on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the summers of 1991, 1992, and 1993. Through my relationship with Thin Elk, I also participated in several inipi, sweat lodge rituals, and one lowanpi, healing ceremony. This contact with the Lakota culture reinforced my understanding of the importance of anthropological and cultural knowledge when working with students of another culture. All of this work with Thin Elk helped build the foundation for my research.
Background from Literary Sources

Scholarship from several areas was especially useful for me in this study. Anthropological, sociological, and historical works provided me with information on Lakota spirituality and the history of American Indian education. It was also important for me to examine scholarship on the learning styles of American Indians. Equally valuable was an investigation of movement and dance studies that have formed my teaching values, strategies, and assumptions. Following is a brief overview of these areas of study.

On cultural background and relationships. It is important for anyone practicing research concerning cultural exchange to have a basic understanding of various cultural attitudes. In undertaking this particular study concerning Lakota Indian education, I found it useful to have an overview of traditional Lakota values in order to understand the current situation. To that end, a survey of anthropological literature included Eastman (1911) who speaks of the American Indian as primarily a spiritual being. He says it is through spirituality that one may truly learn to know the soul of the Indian. Eastman also describes the American Indian as being "intensely poetical" (p. 5). Art was part of daily activities; spirituality and art were closely intertwined. In fact, in many native languages there was no separate word for art (Dissanayake, 1988; Highwater, 1984; Taylor & Swentzel, 1979; Walters, 1989). Dakota anthropologist Ella Deloria (1944) further discusses this integration of art and spirituality into the daily life of traditional Siouan people (including the Lakota). Thin Elk's (1991b) teachings provide a valuable link from the traditional spirituality by applying it to contemporary life. His work is instructive not only for non-Indians, but also for the Lakota whose upbringing reflects the suppression of traditional beliefs by the United States government.

More recent anthropological writings augment the more historical works in addition to describing educational settings. Murray Wax, Rosemary Wax, and Robert Dumont, Jr. (1964) wrote an ethnographic description of education on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, which is helpful in setting the stage for the present day situation. They pay considerable attention to the wide diversity in the degrees of enculturation experienced by the reservation population. This variety in lifestyle, religious affiliation, and philosophical values is further described by Elizabeth Grobsmith in her 1981 ethnographic account of the Lakota people on the Rosebud Reservation. Furthermore, writings on the history of federal educational policy for American Indians (Fuchs & Havighurst, 1972; Senese, 1991; Szasz, 1974) helped to create a background picture of the students with whom I worked. Further research provided information on the learning styles of American Indian children.
**On American Indian learning style.** In order to appropriately interact with the Lakota students, it was useful for me to review literature concerning American Indian learning styles. In general, research (More, 1984, 1989; Kaufman & Kaufman, 1983) shows that American Indian children learn globally or simultaneously, rather than analytically or sequentially. Other research (Foreman, 1991; Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988; More, 1989; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989) points to the affinity of American Indian youth for learning through cooperative group projects, initiated by students as well as by teachers. The arts have been shown to be effective as learning processes for American Indians, especially those arts areas that are active, such as drama (Courtney, 1986; Foreman, 1991).

**On learning through movement and dance.** From the beginning of this research, it was necessary for me to recognize movement and dance teaching methodology in the context of diversity in the population of the United States. Dance teachers are faced with classrooms of students from various cultural backgrounds (LaPointe-Crump, 1989; Maletic, 1989). Vera Maletic (1989) questions how movement and dance educators can be prepared to best approach students with diverse cultural heritages. She explores Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and Rudolf Laban’s system of movement analysis and suggests, “that both frameworks can contribute to a potential structure for a multidimensional dance education” (p. 29). Gardner (1985) also asks about the extent to which “theories of learning and teaching travel readily across national boundaries, or must be continually refashioned in light of the particularities of each culture” (p. 10). My research was in response to this necessity for movement and dance education to answer to the needs of the diverse groups within our population.

My investigation included adapting dance and movement education to the needs of the Lakota population. I drew on my resources of LMA, BMC, and BF in my work with the students at Takini. The theories of Rudolf Laban (1971, 1974), Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1990a, 1990b, 1993), and Irmgard Bartenieff (Bartenieff & Lewis, 1980) all contributed to my development of teaching strategies that include self-exploration and collaborative group work. This style of teaching was useful in working with Lakota students because of the characteristic unacceptance of competitive teaching strategies by American Indian students (Wax, Wax, & Dumont, 1964).

Conducting literary research in the areas of the history of the education of the American Indian, anthropological and sociological studies of American Indian spirituality, educational research on learning styles of indigenous students, and writings on movement and dance education that has influenced my teaching, all helped to prepare me for my
research at Takini. These topics are further discussed in Chapter II. The following sections of this chapter present a brief overview of my research methodology, including a preliminary description of Takini and a summary of the significance of the research.

On Researching Teaching

Action Research

Because this study addresses questions concerning my own teaching practice, action research informed my research procedures. My objective was to examine my own choices in working with the Lakota students and their teachers. In order to observe and reflect upon my teaching, it was appropriate to employ action research techniques.

Action research had its roots in the 1930s when the academic social sciences assumed research responsibilities created by sociological and political influences (Oja & Smulan, 1989). With the depression of the 1930s and WWII in the 1940s, social scientists realized that learning through doing was a reality, that collaboration in research was valuable, and that different populations had different needs. Now in the 1990s, action research reappears as a logical choice for research concerning the education of American Indians.

Action research opens up the possibilities of examining social power and change (May, 1993), issues relevant to my research context. My personal educational background recognizes the dance teacher as the authority who controls the class. However, my current development is toward alternative classroom power structures. Prior to my research at Takini, I had little experience with developing this type of teacher-student relationship with American Indian children. I attempted to create learning situations that were appropriate for the Lakota students. Action research provided me with a research format for studying my teaching development. Chapter III expands the discussion of my research methods.

Data Collection

Research site—Takini School. My firsthand observations of Takini, its programs, and the population it serves were a significant portion of my data collection. However, before arriving at Takini in August 1993, I learned about the school from printed materials publicizing its uniqueness. As a research site, Takini School was indeed specific and unique. Takini has an educational policy designed with some input from its Lakota constituency (Gropper, 1992; Higbee, 1992). The facility is a modern campus, which opened in 1989. Students are bussed to school, whereas most faculty live on campus. The school has over 250 students, grades K-12, who come from the western part of the
Cheyenne River Reservation. Almost one third of the teachers are American Indian. The school has an American Indian school board directed by a non-Indian superintendent.

Takini has a very innovative structure. School meets only four days per week. Fridays are reserved for teachers to network, plan, and participate in in-service training. The school day is arranged into flexible, large blocks of time. The final block of the day, from 3:50 to 5:20 p.m., provides the children an opportunity to choose activities, such as sports, choir, counseling, Lakota language, or traditional dance. There are no failing grades; a student may earn an A, B, I (incomplete), or NC (no credit). Students are placed into learning circles rather than grades. The four learning circles are: the primary (roughly equivalent to grades K-3), the intermediate (4-6), the junior high (7-9), and the senior high (10-12). Within this structure, students may tutor each other, participate in group learning, and have contact with other children of various ages. The school is founded on an Outcome-Based Education program, which allows for more community developed goals and curriculum.

The publicity packet sent to me in November 1992 discussed one of the more relevant programs incorporated in the Takini School, the Heart Room designed by Gene Thin Elk. As previously discussed, I was trained in Heart Room strategies by Thin Elk. The Heart Room follows Thin Elk's Red Road approach for preventing and treating alcohol and drug abuse. The Red Road is where one walks in balance, making decisions as choices arise (sometimes concerning temptations, such as alcohol), and living with a strong center based in spiritual self-esteem. Thin Elk describes the approach in this manner:

This process is about finding a balance that is spiritually motivated and physically carried out. The student is guided to examine the balance and linkages between the physical world and the traditional cultural world. This will maximize the individual student's strengths and enhance viable opportunities to address the problems that place them at risk. (1992, p. 6)

Thin Elk invites students to participate in sweat lodges as well as in therapeutic dialogue sessions and arts activities.

It was Thin Elk who first recommended Takini to me as an ideal location for my research. Having been trained in the Heart Room theory and having worked with Thin Elk to incorporate movement and dance into the Heart Room approach, I was eager to pursue my research at Takini. However, during my preliminary work preparing for the residency, I learned that the Heart Room program had been dropped from the curriculum at Takini. I was disappointed that I would not be able to continue my work in the Heart Room, but also
was reassured that Takini still had a place for me. The superintendent put me in contact with Wendy Mendoza, coordinator of the TAG program, with whom I did work closely throughout the residency. Wendy and I had one indepth phone conversation before I arrived at Takini. Other than that, I knew little about the TAG program.

Journal writing. The keeping of a daily journal constituted the bulk of my data collection. My arrival at Takini coincided with the in-service week before school started, in late August 1993. At this time I met Wendy and the other faculty with whom I worked, and we made initial plans for my residency. My impressions of the faculty and school structure were important elements of the Takini environment that I recorded in my journal. I observed and studied both the school community and my own developing role within that community. My journal was similar to the field notes of the type of ethnography James P. Spradley (1980) describes as participant observation and to data collection strategies of action researchers.

Action research is quite frequently a collaborative activity (Hunsaker & Johnston, 1992; Johnston, 1990; May, 1993). Because I worked with other members of the Takini faculty, my work was collaborative. However, the research itself was not collaborative. Though the opinions and thoughts of both students and teachers were important to my data, it was I who gathered the data and wrote the final study.

As previously mentioned, my data collection also can be described in part as ethnographic participant observation. I observed not only myself, but also the Takini School community. I interviewed students and colleagues in informal discussions, and some students kept journals as well. These methods of gathering information helped me to develop my role at Takini.

In fact, during the study I played the role of teacher as a daily researcher who investigated the mental states of students and faculty colleagues as I adapted curriculum for the specific day. The daily challenge of creating lessons has been described as curriculum development being a phenomenological event (King, 1986; Zaret, 1986). Within this perspective, teaching and learning is viewed as a dialogue between teacher and student. The curriculum plan or lesson emerges as the teacher and student ask questions and respond to each other. My journal notes recorded my responses to students and faculty colleagues as well as my observations of their responses to me.

My action research at Takini was an experience of total immersion. Because I lived on campus and because of the isolation of the site, I spent all of my time either in the classroom in dialogue with members of the school community or in recording those
experiences. The level of intensity of the research was reflected by the amount of material I
gathered. Chapter IV summarizes the data I collected.

Data Analysis

Hermeneutic philosophy emphasizes the importance of understanding one’s own
interpretation of events (Gadamer, 1977). I used a hermeneutic perspective in the analysis
of my data. In other words, I interpreted my data even though it included the thoughts of
others. Johnston (1990) comments on the value of this approach for the researcher who is
faced with emerging understandings. Through this process, I discovered my personal and
cultural assumptions about teaching and learning as well as examined the values of the
Takini community. By looking at my interactions with both colleagues and students,
research themes emerged. Students and faculty collaborators were also asked to assess my
work with them. Their responses are included in my data analysis. Finally, I examined
my data relative to the sociocultural questions posed at the beginning of this study. An
extensive analysis of the data is presented in Chapter V.

Significance of the Study

Although on the surface this study may appear to be highly personal, it actually
bears much in common with many situations in which movement and dance educators find
themselves. Because few schools have permanent full-time movement and dance
educators, the dance teacher is frequently an artist-in-residence or consultant who is in a
school for a relatively short, intense time period. Even in schools with regularly scheduled
dance programs, each group of students may be with the dance teacher for only one term so
that more classes can participate in the dance offerings. For that reason alone, this research
will be applicable to the work of many movement and dance educators.

Possibly more significant is the growing need for arts educators to have experiences
dealing with diverse ethnic populations. It is important that teachers have skills and tools
for interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds, including American
Indians. This study of my work with the Lakota students has significant value for teachers
who work with American Indian populations.

Corresponding to the oral tradition of the American Indians as a means of
transmitting knowledge, this research is the telling of my story. This traditional method,
which demands the listener reflect on the story and apply it to his or her own knowledge,
places emphasis on the individual’s unique learning process. As such, it is an appropriate
manner for me, a white teacher, to present information about my American Indian students.
I have learned from my Lakota friends that when I tell my story, I am accepting responsibility for my actions, and I can learn from my listeners' interpretations of my storytelling. My research is significant in that it relies on ancient wisdom for its method of constructing a story and for its presentation.
CHAPTER II
A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In preparation for the research residency, I studied literary sources from anthropology and sociology for background on Lakota spirituality and traditional life. Other ethnographic and historical scholarship provided me with information on the history of American Indian education. Because I needed further information on the role of arts education within American Indian education, I also examined literature from arts education. Additional resources concerning the learning styles of American Indian students proved useful to me. Scholarship on movement and dance education helped me to apply my experience and knowledge from years of study and teaching in the field to teaching American Indian students. This chapter explores the literary sources that I examined before conducting the actual research. I have attempted to demonstrate where the ideas presented from these various fields overlap to create a unified background for the study.

Traditional Lakota Values

In most traditional American Indian cultures, art and spirituality played integral roles in the daily lives of the people, shaping their values and lifestyles. Along with the vast number of different tribes, there existed a wide variety of artistic expressions and spiritual heritages. For this study, it was important for me to gain an understanding of the American Indian heritage in general as well as to concentrate on the traditions specific to the Lakota people with whom I worked. The following sections present both an overview of indigenous heritage and Lakota traditional values in particular as expressed through art and spirituality.

The Arts in Traditional American Indian Culture

Before contact with Europeans, American Indian languages in general had no word for art (Dissanayake, 1988; Highwater, 1984; Taylor & Sventzel, 1979; Walters, 1989). The Lakota were no exception; art was part of life as was spirituality. Visual decoration was part of dress and shelter; objects of daily use were made with individual expression.
within traditional and ritualized methods (Nabakov & Easton, 1989). Dance and music celebrations were social events as well as spiritual rites. Human experiences as well as the cycles of nature were ritualized through communal events involving dance, drama, music, and the visual effects of costumes, masks, or ceremonial objects. Anthropological writing describes the importance of these artistic rites in the lives of tribal people (Turner, 1988).

Besides anthropological scholarship, many other writers have described the integration of the arts into the lives of various American Indian tribes. According to Suzan Shown Harjo (1993), art was the manifestation of the philosophies of the American Indian people. The following is a description of indigenous dance from The National Museum of the American Indian:

Native Americans dance for many reasons. They dance to mark particular times in their seasonal calendar; they dance in recognition of an accomplishment. They dance to give thanks to the spirit world. They dance to fulfill family obligations, to identify with a group, to feel the sheer joy of movement. In all cases, dance is deeply integrated in Indian cultures. Rooted in tradition, history, and lifeways, the dance is inseparable from music, language, clothing, food, architecture, and religious beliefs—all the elements that uniquely identify each native culture group. (1992, p. 1)

In dance and other art forms, the American Indian aesthetic can be described as including spiritual experiences. Anna Walters (1989) discusses the relationship of spiritual tradition with the construction and decoration of many items of both ceremonial and daily use, including moccasins, clothing, and pipes. Because of the connection of art and spirituality in the lives of American Indians, it was important for me to develop an understanding of Lakota spirituality.

Lakota Traditional Spirituality

The oral tradition of the Lakota people contains a mythology that centers around Wakan Tanka, or the “Great Mystery,” often likened to the Judeo-Christian concept of God, although probably very dissimilar in its nonpaternalistic sense. Wakan Tanka is sometimes characterized in stories as the most powerful of the spiritual forces, which also include animistic deities such as Maka, “Earth,” and Skan, “Sky” (Grobsmith, 1981; Dooling, 1984). Because these forces are all viewed as being part of Wakan Tanka, as are all things, the concept of Mitakuye Oyasin, “we are all related” or “all my relations,” emerges as the foundation of traditional Lakota spirituality. Natural elements, such as plants, rocks, and animals, are considered to be relatives of the human family. Value is
placed on the caretaking of nature as part of spiritual life. For example, dances and prayers are offered to the buffalo in thanks for the animal's sacrifice of its life and body to feed the people. The phrase *Mitakuye Oyasin* continues to be said in contemporary settings at the end of prayers, upon entering or leaving sacred sites, and sometimes as a farewell. The Lakota place much importance on environmental relationships, or how human beings interact with nature. Deloria's (1944) writings describe the emphasis the Lakota people placed on kinship codes of behavior. These kinship codes provided clear roles for relating to family, friends, and strangers. Family ties included the "extended family" or *tiyospaye*, a relationship that is still valued today and affects the social structure of American Indian schools (Wax, Wax, & Dumont, 1964).

Many other aspects of traditional spirituality are also continued in modern times. Traditionally, there were seven sacred rites of the Lakota (Grobsmith, 1981; Mails, 1988). These rituals include the Sun Dance, the Sweat Lodge, the Vision Quest, the Making of Relatives, the Keeping of the Soul, the Girls’ Puberty Ritual, and the Throwing of the Ball. Of these seven, the last two are nearly extinct, but the others are still practiced by many Lakota people.

It is important to remember the diversity that exists within the spiritual and religious practices of contemporary Lakota people (Wax, Wax, & Dumont, 1964; Grobsmith, 1981). Christianity has been a major influence in the assimilation of the American Indian into Euro-American society. While many Lakota people follow traditional practices and spiritual beliefs, many others have accepted some form of Christianity and know little about the ancient Lakota traditions. Still others have incorporated both traditional native and Christian beliefs into a permutation of the two. This is a result of the enculturation policies of the federal government towards the indigenous population and must be acknowledged within the context of this discussion.

Historical Overview of American Indian Education and the Role of the Arts

It is clear that the attitude of the federal government of the United States towards American Indian tribes has had a strong affect on the national policies concerning the education of these people. At times, a dominant culture education has been imposed upon American Indians. At other times, education provided for the indigenous people has included elements of their own culture and traditional arts. This section presents a brief overview of the history of American Indian education, including policy towards arts education. Current trends in arts education are discussed for their effects relative to
American Indian education. Arts education has the potential to serve as a link between traditional American Indian lifestyles and contemporary social settings.

History of American Indian Education

Sources for this historical account of American Indian education include the works of Robert Havighurst and Estelle Fuchs (1972), Margaret Szasz (1974), and Guy Senese (1991). In this section I draw upon their works to construct a brief history. These scholars agree that the history of American Indian education in the United States from the 19th century to the present has been based predominantly on the suppression of the indigenous culture in order to facilitate acculturation into dominant society. Senese (1991) reports that beginning in the 1800s, the federal government promoted assimilation as the solution to the alleged “Indian problem.” This necessitated the exclusion of traditional languages, arts, and culture from schooling, with students usually separated from their families in order to be fully integrated in the dominant society. Senese concludes that the government instituted paternalistic attitudes towards the American Indians, attitudes which pervaded future policies.

In 1928 a government research project known as the Meriam Report included a section on American Indian schools. The report acknowledged the failures of the educational policies of the federal government. It heralded a new era known as the Indian New Deal with John Collier as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Under Collier and with the influence of progressive educators, Willard Beatty was in charge of the education programs of the BIA. He created summer training sessions on native cultures for BIA teachers and placed a new emphasis on the inclusion of traditional culture, arts, and crafts for the American Indian student. Although this was definitely a more liberal and generous attitude, Senese (1991) points out that the ultimate goal remained to educate the American Indian to become a contributing member of the dominant society. This step towards reconciliation placed a value on the native arts in education, but the teaching style was most likely not structured in a traditional context. Schooling undoubtedly continued to be practiced within the dominant teaching methods, with little emphasis on values inherent in the native heritage.

By 1934, the public schools had become increasingly involved in the education of indigenous children, especially in urban areas. The Johnson O'Malley Act was passed to provide federal funds to public schools that did not have the tax base to cover the costs of educating American Indian students. Collier was concerned that the responsibility of
educating the American Indian would fall to the public schools and that programs he considered essential, including art and music, would be cut.

The trend towards integrating American Indian children into public institutions was hastened after World War II. The government advocated assimilation of the American Indian with renewed vigor, wanting to tap the resources of reservation lands and labor as it rebuilt the postwar economy. Economics greatly influenced the objectives for American Indian education. At this time, the inclusion of traditional arts and crafts was part of a hidden agenda to train the indigenous population for the manual dexterity needed in many factory jobs. The termination policy would also free the government from its responsibility of protecting the indigenous people. By the 1960s, the American Indian population attending public schools had further increased.

However, the civil rights atmosphere of the 1960s resulted in actions that on the surface seemed to give the American Indians more voice in determining their education. This time period saw the birth of a few experimental schools controlled by American Indians (most notable were the Rough Rock Demonstration School and the Ramah School of the Navajos). These schools sought to include more elements of traditional American Indian culture, but in order to win approval and funding from the BIA, were structured along the models of dominant society schools.

As part of this movement, the Institute of American Indian Art was established in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1962. The Institute was also based on a dominant society education structure; it used traditional American Indian art as content to influence Indian-made contemporary artworld expressions. Again, this can be seen as an institution practicing acculturation, while capitalizing on traditional aesthetics. At its nascency, the Institute was regulated by the BIA. Now, in 1994, it is controlled by the Pueblo Council, an all American Indian board. The program offerings have been expanded now to include dance and the performing arts. At times the curriculum of the school has also been criticized for being too traditional and for stifling creativity. Just as there is a vast range in religious and spiritual practices of American Indians, there are also many opinions concerning the teaching of the arts.

This historical perspective reveals repeated swings along a continuum between termination and self-determination. The extremes reflect more or less repressive attitudes in the acculturation of the American Indian. Termination meant the government would end financial support of American Indians. More recent policies of self-determination have provided American Indians with some freedom of choice in decisions concerning the
education of their children. However, self-determination can be viewed as yet another stage of the assimilationist agenda of the federal government (Senese, 1991). This perspective on self-determination was important for me to recognize as I prepared myself for the research residency. I needed to know how current trends in education, such as self-determination and multicultural education, affect the Takini School.

**Arts Education and its Implications for American Indian Education**

After the civil rights activity of the 1960s, multiculturalism became a popular term in educational research and scholarship for the 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s. Multicultural education represents an attempt by educators to face the demands and responsibilities of educating a pluralistic and ethnically diverse population. Educators in the arts have naturally assumed a certain amount of leadership in multicultural scholarship simply because cultures tend to reveal themselves through their arts. In my opinion, one may turn to the arts of a culture in order to better understand that culture.

One recurring theme in arts education scholarship on multiculturalism, is that education can lead to social change (Chalmers, 1981; Wasson, Stuhr, & Petovich-Mwaniki, 1990). These scholars are developing a new paradigm of education with implications that students can be researchers, resources from within the community are valuable for a school, learning is a reflective process, and teachers can serve as guides rather than authorities. Arthur Salz (1990) describes these trends as leading towards a revolution in education, a shift from a mechanistic, Newtonian scientific model of learning to a more organic, integrated method of teaching and learning. This new paradigm may be more suited to the traditional values and spirituality of the American Indian.

Richard Courtney (1986) describes six American Indian perspectives that demand a similar shift in learning and teaching strategies for American Indian students and that point to the value of the arts in education programs for indigenous populations:

- Life is seen whole rather than in parts.
- Human beings in mundane life are seen as highly active in spiritual life and not as passive.
- Arts are expressions of the spiritual world rather than personal expressions.
- Time is spatial rather than linear.
- Learning occurs in natural social settings rather than in schools.
- Religious beliefs, attitudes, and mores, result in a world-view that is fundamentally different from that of the white culture. (p. 47)
This world view has direct implications for educational policy concerning American Indians. Spiritual beliefs as well as cultural modes of interaction, including the use of time structures, must be accounted for within the goals, values, and strategies employed in American Indian schools.

Both Richard Courtney (1986) and Kathleen Foreman (1991) advocate the use of drama as process rather than as performance in American Indian education. Ritual dance and drama is part of the cultural heritage of the indigenous people. By employing drama as a communal exploration of academic concepts or social and psychological growth, American Indian students can experience a more traditional style of learning without the competition usually fostered in the dominant culture's education system and performance training.

The concepts of community and collaboration in education are also ones that coincide with traditional American Indian values and lifestyles (as will be discussed later in this chapter). The arts can contribute to collaborative work. The Albuquerque Indian School is an example of a community based effort to involve students, parents, teachers, staff, community elders, and an architectural artist to design and renovate their school campus (Taylor & Swentzel, 1979). This community involvement allowed the people themselves to make the choices about their learning environment and to work together to make it happen.

The therapeutic aspects of the arts can also be applicable towards solving some of the psychological and emotional problems faced by American Indian students, either in dominant culture institutions or simply within the reality of their lives. Ferial Deer Skye, Orla J. Christensen, and Joan T. England (1989) demonstrated the use of dance therapy to help young American Indian (mainly Lakota) women adjust to the stresses of university life. This type of program employed dance in a manner reminiscent of ritual dances performed by warriors after battle to assist them in their readjustment to daily life. Dance and drama therapy could be interpreted as having roots in tribal ritual. Through dance and drama ritual, American Indian culture traditionally dealt with matters of life and death passages (Highwater, 1984). In short, arts education can be designed with traditional spiritual values and cultural attributes in mind.

American Indian Teaching and Learning Styles

A study of American Indian culture and values led me towards a better understanding of the American Indian teaching and learning styles because it seems to me
that values determine the manner of human interaction and the transfer of knowledge in a specific culture. In effect, the learning styles of contemporary American Indian students reflect their cultural heritage. Drawing from literary sources, I have summarized the most important aspects of American Indian learning style.

The Role of the Teacher

Because I was taking on a teaching role at Takini, I looked at the role of the teacher in traditional American Indian cultures as well as the learning styles of contemporary American Indian students. As the interaction between the teacher and student is of utmost importance in education, I needed to become familiar with American Indian teacher and student roles in the transfer of knowledge and their respective styles in order to be more effective as a movement and dance teacher with the Lakota students.

Paul Marashio (1982) describes the traditional American Indian teacher and the importance of the teaching role to the community, thusly:

Teachers helped the learner to perceive and to clarify the natural and spiritual worlds and to bring those two worlds into harmonious relationship. A major purpose for learning was survival within an unpredictable environment; accordingly, the teacher taught the learner about various ways for obtaining powers to mediate and to appease the disrupting forces. (p. 2)

The codes of kinship in American Indian societies meant that parents were important teachers as were grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Other honored teachers included ceremonial leaders, such as medicine people or shamans. Personal growth through ritual processes (e.g., the vision quest, the girl’s puberty rite) were frequently guided by these ceremonial leaders. They also helped to interpret dreams or visions. One learned from a vision, just as one could also learn from sources in nature, such as animals or plants. The spirit forces were also teachers; they taught the people universal truths and oftentimes embodied these truths in rites. From this definition of teacher and the teaching role, it is apparent how closely integrated spirituality and nature are in the lives of the American Indians.

Culturally Relevant Education

The education of the child in a traditional American Indian society was vital in the continuation of cultural heritage. It is also evident that the educational policy of the federal government historically has served to repress the traditional culture of American Indians. Margot LeBrasseur (1982) maintains that forced acculturation does not work and that successful schools for American Indian students must be culturally relevant. Making
education relevant to the lives of contemporary American Indians involves two aspects: teaching content that has a cultural base, and teaching methods that relate to the cultural ways of learning. Content and method are integrally related; oftentimes, the means become the ends.

**Educational content.** Hap Gilliland and Jon Reyhner (1988) discuss the importance of curriculum choices for American Indian students. These include the history of indigenous populations and the knowledge they had of the natural elements, knowledge that today is called science. They advocate that curricular subjects embrace the cultural values of the people. The list of values includes: the human connection to nature, the use of humor, family ties, respect for elders, and the spiritual aspects of being human.

Marashio (1982) examines the subject matter of traditional education in times past when self-questioning was the source of inquiry. He suggests that through the pursuit of self-knowledge, the American Indian learned his or her role in society and how to live according to the rules of harmony in nature. By suffering through pain and developing self-discipline, the learner also gained awareness of the natural world and the connections between all things. He writes:

> The learner perceived the truth of the interrelationship of themselves with the parts and the whole of the Universe. They had an understanding of the invisible powers to mediate and appease the Spirit world, and of the limits of their powers, knowing further they could not live comfortably without the coordination of all aspects of the life forces within the universe. (p. 8)

I think that academic subjects can reflect these cultural values in forming a bridge of relevancy for the American Indian living in the 1990s. The traditional lessons have special importance for contemporary American Indian students seeking their place in society.

**Teaching methods for cultural learning styles.** Canadian educator Arthur J. More (1989) discusses the origins of the term *learning style* as part of the search to understand why and how individual children learn in different ways. Later research concerned the application of the idea of learning style to ethnic or socioeconomic groups. In his definition of learning style, More emphasizes the internal cognitive processes by which students learn. He defines learning style as, "the characteristic or usual strategies of acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding by an individual" (1989, p. 17). He continues to explain that learning styles are specific to the individual, although a cultural group may have prevalent tendencies. This idea is the basis for all scholarship on American Indian
learning style: the learning styles of the students influence the teaching methods that will best suit the students.

Educational content that teaches the moral values of cooperation and sharing requires that those values be practiced in teaching strategies. Teaching methodology using small groups or cooperative learning, student decision making, holistic approaches to subject matter, learning by watching, and reflective practice constitutes teaching that addresses the cultural learning styles of American Indian students (Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988; More, 1989; Swisher, 1990; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989).

Karen Swisher (1990) discusses at length the American Indian attitudes towards cooperation and competition in general and in the academic environment in particular. She states, “the literature indicates that many Indian children are raised in an atmosphere that stresses cooperation and de-emphasizes competition” (p. 36). Children are raised at home to be responsible for family members and to be modest about their accomplishments. American Indian educator Paula Smith (personal communication, April 29, 1993) remembers being admonished by her mother not to show off and to learn by listening. This translates in the schoolroom as a shyness when being praised, a dislike for being singled out, and a responsibility to help other children to be successful that would not be considered cheating. An appropriate classroom setting would provide students opportunities to work together noncompetitively and to work cooperatively on projects or themes.

On the other hand, competition does exist in American Indian culture but with a focus on competing with oneself in the pursuit of self-improvement or on competition between groups, as in team sports (Swisher, 1990). When working in a team, students are eager to support peers through sharing, rather than claiming the limelight for themselves as individuals. They exhibit pride when achieving success as a group.

Another topic is the appropriate use of praise with American Indian students. It is important to recognize the accomplishments of students in order to build healthy self-esteem, but not by singling out individuals. Instead, Gilliland and Reyhner (1988) suggest quiet praise given in private. Similarly, it has been noted that American Indian students do not respond well to questioning in front of large groups. They do, however, actively participate in small group discussions, especially with student generated topics. To American Indian students, privately honoring the individual is appreciated more than open praise.
Other teaching and learning methods seemingly preferred by American Indians are learning by watching and approaching subjects holistically (Gilliland & Reyhner, 1988; More, 1989; Rhodes, 1988; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989). Dominant society schools employ trial and error learning techniques; students are encouraged to experiment and to learn from mistakes. American Indian children, on the other hand, are traditionally told to watch and learn from their elders. They are admonished not to try anything until they are sure they will be successful. More (1989) describes this process as taking on the aspects of “watch-then-do,” “listen-then-do,” and “think-then-do” (p. 19). American Indian students may try new skills privately before exhibiting them publicly.

In terms of cognitive processes, More (1989) finds that American Indians tend to integrate ideas holistically, or simultaneously, rather than sequentially. For example, in learning to read, an American Indian student will recognize the entire word, but may be unable to decipher it phonetically. From experiences with Hopi and Navajo people, educator Robert Rhodes (1988) finds that this attribute of simultaneous cognition reveals a discrepancy between the preferred American Indian learning style and that most often carried out in dominant society schooling.

In this holistic way of thinking, everything becomes a part of everything, with fewer discrete categories for observation or segregation of either ideas or people. This may lend itself to a more holistic observational technique where the Anglo process of categorization lends itself to a more linear approach. Thus the Native American sees little or no differentiation between religion and daily life, has little trouble with the anthropomorphism of inanimate objects, practices holistic medicine, and follows numerous other practices indicating that his categorizations or segregations of ideas are fewer and different. The Anglo, on the other hand, sees medicine as separate from nutrition and reading as separate from science or social studies or math, as examples. The Anglo compartmentalizes by subject rather than seeing them all as a part of the relation to the person. (p. 24)

For the American Indian student, ideas are grasped holistically instead of as separate topics. This tendency implies that a curriculum based on themes and taught with interdisciplinary experiences would be appropriate for American Indian populations. Rhodes (1988) suggests that boundaries between subjects should be abolished in American Indian schools. Basic concepts could form the foundation for the learning process, a process that includes many ways of knowing. Swisher and Deyhle (1989) summarize research that indicates that schools for American Indian students employ multisensory instruction and use “all modes
(visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) when teaching concepts and skills” (p. 10). Similarly, Reyhner (1992) describes the “use of interactive/experiential teaching methods that emphasize an active role for students” (p. 34). These studies suggest that movement and dance might be suitable academic learning tools for American Indians.

More (1989) concludes his analysis of the learning styles of American Indian populations with warnings against stereotyping students. Not only does each American Indian tribe exhibit cultural differences, but each student is also a unique combination of personal preferences. Furthermore, each student is affected by a variety of influences, including a range of assimilation into the dominant culture. More states, “No, there is not a uniquely Indian Learning Style. However, similarities among Indian student learning styles are found consistently enough to warrant careful attention by researchers and teachers” (p. 25).

Accordingly, it is valuable for teachers of American Indian students to be aware of cultural values and interaction styles for their influence on student learning. It is equally important that each student be regarded as an individual who must be given opportunities for fulfilling his or her potential. My residency included work with special needs students, both those labeled with learning disabilities and those in the TAG program. I extended my literature search on learning styles to include the Lakota perspective of each child as special with individual needs.

A Lakota Attitude Towards the Individual Child

Traditional Lakota attitudes towards children, child-rearing, and the education of children are based on the idea that all children are sacred (Deloria, 1944/1992; Thin Elk, 1990). In the past, each person was encouraged to develop his or her talents and personal potential as part of the fulfillment of social responsibility. Children were taught to behave generously, with the well-being of the community in mind, as well as to follow their own personal vision. Deloria described the *Hunka* ceremony as:

the happy occasion of blessing little children. The small candidate was honored by a feast and presents were made to many people in his or her name. The recipients asked singers to laud the child’s name in song; and all that was very agreeable. But the core of the whole matter was that, by the child’s very presence as the center of attention and acclaim, he or she was henceforth a “child-beloved,” and was committed as a matter of honor to the practice of generosity, even if at times it might involve great personal sacrifice. (1944, p. 38)
This manner of teaching children the value of accepting responsibility to the community continues to pervade contemporary Lakota culture, and therefore influences attitudes toward grouping and grading children.

**Implications for special education.** As was noted in the previous section on learning styles, American Indian children do not appreciate being singled out for praise or for the purpose of reprimand. Extending this dislike of attention of this type to student groupings reveals a student and parental aversion to classroom labeling or grouping of children with special needs. Smith (personal communication, April 29, 1993) suggests that teachers learn about the individual child, including his or her physical, mental, and cultural attributes. It is necessary for teachers to develop patience and understanding towards each student and encourage personal growth.

Occasionally, American Indian children who are put in special education programs are diagnosed as having Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE). The Takini community has not escaped the results of mothers who consume alcohol during pregnancy, and I felt it necessary to continue my study of learning styles and cultural values to include FAS and FAE.

**Fetal alcohol syndrome and effects.** It has been only since 1973 that the harmful effects of alcohol consumption during pregnancy have been given a label. Full FAS is caused by heavy drinking by the pregnant mother and results in: retarded growth, facial abnormalities, central nervous system abnormalities, small brain size, and mental retardation. The milder abnormalities of mental deficiencies, behavioral problems, and slight physiological disorders result from less alcohol consumption and are called FAE (California Urban Indian Health Council; Heath, 1991; Little & Wendt, 1991; Masis & May, 1991). Although it is generally thought that American Indian populations are at high risk for FAS, it is not a particularly ethnic problem (Heath, 1991). In fact, some American Indian communities have no evidence of FAS or FAE.

The specific problems of FAS and FAE for American Indians result from the lack of education about drinking alcohol during pregnancy, the growing number of women who drink alcohol, and the difficulties of identifying and treating children with FAS or FAE. The syndrome is preventable (by abstaining from alcohol when pregnant), but it is not curable. It appears that community education concerning the risk of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and identifying high risk women will be the keys for dealing with FAS and FAE. Prevention programs that work with the community, the family, and the individual will probably be the most successful (Masis & May, 1991).
The talented and gifted American Indian student. It was important for me to acknowledge the range of possibilities that existed in my students' abilities. Students with special needs can include cases of FAE and those who exhibit highly developed learning skills. Many times gifted American Indian students face problems at many levels. They may feel the cultural pressure not to excel and stand out above other students. Simultaneously, they may feel pressure from teachers to succeed competitively. A third area of stress may come from their talents neither being recognized nor nurtured by the dominant society's educational standards. Another dilemma faced by talented and gifted programs in American Indian schools comes from funding requirements that may work against cultural norms and values. As the literature demonstrates, the issues facing gifted American Indian students and their teachers are complex indeed.

Wisconsin Chippewa Indian Rosemary Christensen (1991) describes how the American Indian world view creates a different interpretation of what it means to be gifted or talented than that which is accepted by mainstream society. Oftentimes the special abilities honored by American Indian people are not recognized in a Western academic setting. She states that, "Tribal people noted as shamans, holy men, or medicine people are the only persons actually defined or perceived as gifted by Tribal people" (p. 11). Furthermore, people who are recognized as gifted remain humble and acknowledge that their abilities were given to them by higher powers. From the American Indian perspective, gifted persons must use their talents responsibly for the good of all.

Other research (Robbins, 1991; Tonemah, 1991) shows that in order for gifted American Indian students to reach their potential, it is necessary to develop their cultural heritage. Stuart Tonemah (1991) recommends the use of culturally relevant teaching strategies in providing opportunities for gifted American Indian children to be successful. These include cooperative learning and holistic approaches to subject matter. Cherokee Indian Rockey Robbins (1991) states this idea, thusly:

If gifted and talented Indian students are to fully develop their potentials, they must gain a more adequate understanding of what they really like and are capable of achieving. They also need a clearer understanding of their tribal heritage, and how they can function as Indians in the greater American society. (p. 15)

Robbins also describes problems faced by these students, including the desire to conceal their achievements for fear of being ridiculed by other American Indian students. This is related to the cultural value placed on being humble. Another problem arises when a student’s family or friends think that if a student is successful in the dominant competitive
world, the student is selling out, or "going white." An opposite problem is faced by some
students who are interested in pursuing their cultural heritage and whose parents believe
this will be detrimental in the contemporary world.

Robbins concludes with three suggestions for working with talented and gifted
American Indian students. Beginning with a poetic appeal, he states:

First, it is crucial to maintain, and in many instances, retrieve tribal ways of
thinking about the underlying mystical assumptions about human beings' relations
to nature. The connectedness to the land and animals that Indians have always
stressed, would not only ensure the survival of the planet if universally accepted, it
would also offer a foundation for sanity which people on the whole have
lost....The mystical view of the structure of the universe gives a larger meaning to
life. Indians must maintain their traditional world views or be severed from the
great symbolic experience. (1991, pp. 22-23)

Along with this grounding in cultural heritage, he urges that gifted American Indian
students be guided in balancing their tribal communal life and responsibilities with
participation in society at large. This step leads naturally to his third recommendation, that
American Indians act politically. In order for society to learn how to meet the needs of
American Indians, their most talented speakers must voice the concerns of the people.
Reaching one's potential for a talented and gifted American Indian may mean working for
social change. A classroom that addresses traditional social responsibilities and
contemporary social issues may provide an environment for American Indian students,
especially those who are gifted, to flourish.

**Movement and Dance Studies**

Movement in and of itself can be seen as a learning style, a way of knowing or of
learning about the world around us that may be appropriate for American Indian students.
The movement and dance classroom may provide an environment in which American
Indian students feel comfortable. Gardner (1985) includes the bodily-kinesthetic
intelligence as one aspect of being human. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (1990b), the founder
of BMC, also discusses how people learn through movement. In her developmental work,
she teaches that the first nerves to myelinate are those for perceiving the body's orientation
in space, the vestibular system. In utero, the infant knows when the mother is standing up
or lying down. Thus, the first human perceptions are those of movement. Irmgard
Bartenieff (1980) writes of movement as a learning tool for increasing one's perceptions
about others and the world. She says that movement is "a key to coping with the environment" (p. x). Movement and dance can be used as tools in the classroom not only for self-expression, but also for new learning. In fact, the physical learning and the developmental movement experiences explored in both BMC and BF may have special impact on those Lakota children affected by FAS or FAE.

It is possible that movement and dance education as practiced through the study of BMC, Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), and BF may easily be applicable to the learning styles preferred by Lakota students. Techniques used in movement sessions might include group work, peer tutoring, and nonjudgemental evaluation. Cohen (1990a) describes the process of studying BMC:

Body-Mind Centering as a process is an on-going, open exploration of journeying within ourselves and sharing with others who are also journeying. BMC as a theoretical field of study is map-making of our journeys. The body is the territory—alive and changing. The explorer is the mind—our thoughts, feelings, soul, and spirit. The maps are the interpretations or translations of our perceived experience shared with others. We are each the study, the student, and the teacher. (p. 2)

Through the BMC process or methodology, student and teacher alike share in the learning experience.

Laban’s Movement Theory and its Relationship to Lakota World View

Having been greatly influenced by the work of Rudolf Laban in my training as a movement and dance educator, it was interesting for me to discover similarities between the traditional Lakota philosophy as taught by Thin Elk and the analysis of movement by Laban in the first half of this century. Laban’s (1971, 1974, 1975a, 1975b) study of movement stems from two main branches of analysis: the study of spatial design and structure referred to as choreutics and the study of the dynamics or qualities that are expressions of the mover’s inner attitudes, known as eukinetics or effort. Laban (1974) writes about how the mover defines the environment, or the space, through movement choices. The movement, in turn, defines or describes the space. Depending on the movement, various crystalline shapes in space are created by the traceforms (the pathways left in the space). One of these crystalline figures, which Laban recognized as occurring in movement, is the octahedron. The octahedron is characterized by the vertical, horizontal, and sagittal dimensions. These three dimensions intersect or cross each other at center. Laban used the term movement scale to describe the practice, by a dancer, of moving in space with an
ordered sequence, much as the practice, by a musician, of musical scales. In the dimensional scale, that creates or takes place within the spatial crystalline form of the octahedron, the mover begins at center, then follows the sequence: up, down, side across, side open, backwards, forwards, and return to center. Center is the place of reference for the beginning and ending; it can be described as the seventh point of the octahedron. Laban designated this order from the study of fencing and the manner in which vulnerable areas of the body are defended. The scale is also known as the defence scale.

The world view of the traditional Northern Plains Lakota Indian seems to place itself in this form of the octahedron. Thin Elk's (1991b) teachings include the Lakota philosophy of the Seven Directions. These spiritual lessons begin with Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, at the center of all things. From the center, the human being orients himself or herself in relation to the sky (up), to the earth (down), and to the four directions (east, west, north, south). The human being, after acknowledging the four directions, returns to him or herself, also at the center. Thus, Wakan Tanka is within the self.

In Lakota thought the four directions also represent many relationships in life. They are metaphors for the human aspects of physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual life. They represent the four seasons in the physical environment, the four ages of a human life, and the four races of humans (Yellow, White, Black, and Red). Fritzhof Schuon (1990) says the metaphysics of the Plains Indians comes “from a viewpoint of geometric symbolism” (p. 14). It seems that this spiritual geometry has much in common with Laban's study of the spatial aspects of movement. Both Laban's dimensional movement scale and the Lakota perception of the world, place the human being in the center of the octahedron.

It is interesting to note that Laban visited North America in 1926 and wrote about his encounters with “Red Indians” (Laban, 1975a) in his autobiography, A Life for Dance. He observed the clarity and simplicity of spatial design in the dances of the American Indians as well as their lack of theatricality. He described the dance of the American Indian, stating:

The basic patterns of human movement are probably never so clearly structured as in the dances of the Red Indians. Therefore, to the casual observer they appear to be very simple, even unvaried and monotonous. Yet, the Indian possesses a high dance culture with definite ethical features. . . . The dances of the Red Indians never lead to frenzy. The postures often remind one of Greek or ancient Egyptian sculpture. Form and direction in space are especially cultivated, and groups move
along lines which make a decorative groundplan of great clarity and beauty. . . .
The art of dance of the Red Indian is, in contrast, simple and almost athletic. There is
nothing theatrical about it, and the magic of its movement becomes effective
through festivals of worship which today, unfortunately, are beginning to die out.
(pp. 126-128)

In these statements, Laban recognizes the mythological and philosophical foundations of
the dance style of the American Indians and the expression of those sources through the
spatial structure of the movement. My study of LMA provided insights that furthered my
understanding of the Lakota world view.

In addition to discovering a relationship between traditional indigenous world views
and the movement philosophies I have studied, literary sources also helped me to
understand prejudices and assumptions I hold concerning movement and dance training.
This highly specific area of movement and dance scholarship that addresses the
assumptions inherent in the Laban theories and related work was important for me to
examine for cultural implications. This investigation helped to prepare me for the cultural
interaction I experienced at Takini in the movement and dance classroom.

Assumptions Inherent in Laban-Based Studies

A literature survey reveals several values that can be traced to Laban, his cultural
background, and the time period in which he lived. Maletic (1987, 1990) provides an
overview of the influences on the development of Laban's theories. Laban based his
philosophy of movement and dance on what he perceived to be a holistic approach. He
believed that movement and dance are natural manifestations of human intellect,
emotionality, and spirituality through human physicality. With this philosophy, he
attempted to embody a dance experience that was not being accomplished by the Western
theatrical dance of his time. Much of his choreography in the 1920s and 1930s
demonstrated a split from the then current performing arts. For example, Martin Green
(1986) describes a performance piece choreographed by Laban and performed outdoors at
Ascona, Switzerland in three acts: one occurring at sunset, another at midnight by
torchlight, and the third at sunrise. In effect, Laban was part of a European avant-garde.

Cultural and intellectual influences on Laban. Laban also studied Greek classical
thought and other cultural forms, such as Sufi dancing, Asian Indian philosophy, and
Confucianism. He employed symbology from other epochs and cultures in his study of the
shapes the human body makes in space. A contemporary influence on his eukinetics, or
effort theory, was the work of psychologist Carl Jung. Laban's analysis of movement
dynamics is based on the constellations of four movement components or factors: flow, weight, space, and time. They correlate to the Jungian aspects of feeling, sensing, thinking, and intuiting in the human consciousness. As Maletic (1990) points out, the implications of such correlations are that we need to become more fully aware of the fact that much of our current observations and interpretations of qualitative components of movement and dance are based on paradigms developed in Central Europe at the turn of the century. (p. 11)

One must remember that Laban, Jung, and other innovators of the time were all products of their period and culture.

Western culture influenced Laban's ideas in other areas as well. His theories of the inherent harmony that could be found in the physicality of human expression was based in Western musical harmonic thought. Other cultures use very different musical tones and forms that may sound strange to the Western ear; Laban's movement scales were based on Western music theory. On the other hand, Laban also emphasized the power of movement to exist without music. This was a radical departure from the balletic tradition with its dependency on music. In fact, Laban centered his dance performance work on "Tanz-Ton-Wort" (Preston-Dunlop, 1989), or dance-sound-word, all expressions of the human body without tools or instruments. Whether applying European thought to movement or reacting to accepted Western assumptions, Laban was a product of his culture.

There are also aspects of movement that seem to be preferred or valued in Laban's work and in that of his students. In general, initiation of movement from the core, or center, of the body is emphasized in many of the training programs that grew out of Laban's theories. However, the teachings of both Bartenieff (1981) and Cohen (1992) also stress the potential of the distal ends of the body (fingertips and toes) for initiating movement and for their relationship to the center of the body. In my personal studies, I gained new strength and centeredness through the emphasis on shifting weight from the pelvis, or center of weight. Presently, I too am exploring the ease and fluidity in movement when leading with the fingertips or toes. The latter experiences are less familiar to me and more difficult to embody after years of concentrating on moving from center.

Related to this emphasis on initiating movement from the core of the body is the value placed on postural, or total body, movement as opposed to gestural movements. This is evidenced in much of the Laban-based work. Warren Lamb's (1979) Action Profiling system analyzes only movements that incorporate both a gesture and a torso shift in order to determine an individual's decision-making style. These movements are called
posture-gesture mergers, with an emphasis placed on the involvement of the entire body. In CMA training at the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, one also finds that performance of movement qualities as postural statements is stressed. Because this training has played an important part in my movement education and subsequent teaching, I am aware that I, too, look for total body involvement in movement and that this tendency may be a teaching prejudice. It is important that I, as a teacher, know why I value certain movement characteristics and that I remain open to the possibility of other movement options.

Through choreutics, or the analysis of the body's movement in space, Laban emphasized off-balance or off-vertical movement forms (Laban, 1974; Maletic, 1987). This is also true for other styles of modern dance and may be an expression of the dilemma faced by contemporary artists in their attempts to express the experiences of an industrialized society. The concept of a human society without a base strengthened and centered in nature is dramatically and metaphorically expressed in off-vertical movement. However, this emphasis on off-balance movement does place a value on the ability to move in unstable relationships to gravity. This aspect of Laban's spatial theory in movement education has led to discussion about the teaching of stable movement forms versus unstable, or mobile, ones (Maletic, 1987; Preston-Dunlop, 1979). It was the stable forms of movement performed in the octahedron that were earlier discussed in relation to the philosophy of the Lakota Indians. For the Lakota, the form emerged from the spiritual viewpoint; for Laban it came from analysis of geometric relationships.

Values from Body-Mind Centering™. The BMC approach of Cohen is a Laban-based body of work that has greatly influenced my own teaching. Although seemingly divergent from traditional Western educational expectations, many of the teaching values that I have learned from Cohen's BMC are culture-bound to a network of movement educators to which I belong.

One aspect of BMC is the study and practice of the movement patterns and reflexes experienced by human beings in the normal progression from in utero to fully functioning adult (Cohen, 1993). Theoretically, an adult can learn to move more efficiently by re-experiencing a particular pattern or movement stage that might have been slighted in infancy. My personal experience of the BMC developmental work has been very useful, and I incorporate it into my teaching. However, I am also aware that different cultures encourage different movement stages through child-rearing practices. For example, some traditional American Indian cultures keep infants swaddled for a period of time. My BMC
training suggests that this practice might inhibit a particular pattern in movement development. However, this perspective may be a cultural bias.

Another important aspect of BMC work is the role of touch, or hands-on work, in learning (Cohen, 1993). As human beings, we also learn through our sensation of being touched. Again, personal experience reveals that this is true for me. I experience both deep and subtle changes through the work of hands-on practitioners (teachers of BMC as well as of other somatic techniques, such as Alexander Technique). As a teacher, I use touch to help students sense their bones or specific bodily relationships. However, again it is important that I respect both individual and cultural attitudes towards being touched. Physical contact through touch is deeply personal, and it may be inappropriate for a teacher to assume that a student will learn through touch. Although I value the use of touch in teaching and learning, I am aware that unsolicited contact can be invasive.

BMC emphasizes different learning experiences through a variety of strategies. Of course, the physical experience of movement is the main focus; and touch as a learning technique was previously discussed. Cohen (1992) uses the term "cortical image" for the cognitive and visual picture of scientific information that one can hold in the mind's eye as one explores a movement. For example, if I study textbook drawings (and even draw my own pictures) of the ligaments guiding the movement of the knee, I can have a fuller experience of motion at my knee joint. This is also useful if I am working hands-on to help facilitate a student's experience of efficient movement of the knee. In fact, it can be important that both practitioner-guide and client-student hold a cortical image of the desired movement for change to happen. This manner of learning places a value on detailed scientific fact and image.

However, other cultures do not necessarily employ scientific knowledge in this way. Healing and learning in American Indian tradition may be just as effective without the scientific image. Instead, emphasis may be placed on spiritual belief and intuition. From reviewing literature in the field of movement and dance studies, I became aware that my personal bias is a combination of the two perspectives: I value scientific fact, and I trust intuition.

**Literature as Background for Action Research**

The process of reviewing the literature in all five areas of study, anthropology, sociology, history, education, and movement and dance education prepared me for my research. In order to examine the cultural interactions implicit in my relationships with
students and faculty at Takini, I required a thorough knowledge of traditional aspects of Lakota life, including the arts and spiritual views. It was equally important for me to have a perspective on how the education provided American Indians has developed over time including recent trends giving more decision-making power to the local communities concerning the education of their children. Related to this history, and of special concern to me as a movement and dance educator, was the role of arts education within American Indian education. Probably most valuable to me as a teaching artist-in-residency was the topic of American Indian learning styles.

In light of my own expertise as a movement and dance educator, it was illuminating for me to examine movement and dance education literature. This examination provided me with insights regarding both my own assumptions and the overlap between movement and the traditional Lakota world view. It was important for me to recognize areas where cultural heritages influence thought and nonverbal experiences in the teaching and learning process.

This literature study began a reflective, intellectual process that I continued throughout my research. It was the initial stage before the next step of action in my pursuit of the action research cycle. The next chapter addresses the research strategies of action research that I employed at Takini.
CHAPTER III
ON COLLECTING, PRESENTING, AND ANALYZING ACTIONS

One of the first challenges confronting me at The Ohio State University was the emphasis on scientific research. The knowledge that comes from such an orientation is quite different from the kind to which I became accustomed in my experiential movement studies. My academic studies revealed the social and political assumptions embedded in different types of research methodology. Just as language is a social construction that forms communication even as it helps in its expression, so do theories of research form the products of research and reflect the perspective of the researcher (Popkewitz, 1984). As the study progressed, I became increasingly aware of the importance of critically examining research methods and of their usefulness when structuring knowledge.

In my research at the Takini School on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota, I employed action research techniques in order to study my own practice of teaching dance and movement. Action research stresses collaboration and reflective thought (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). It was important for me to define my research as action research in order to demonstrate the value of self-reflection during the teaching process. I believe that teachers benefit by participating in their own learning process, and self-reflection is one way to achieve that objective. Self-reflective teaching is especially meaningful in an unfamiliar cultural setting. Because the participants in my study were Lakota Indian students and their teachers, to whom I was an outsider, it was also important for me to consider techniques from ethnography, specifically, informal interviews and participant observation. I chose action research combined with conscious yet informal ethnography to obtain the data for my study.

This chapter will explain my construction of a strategy for teaching and learning through my investigation of self and others working together. The following sections will describe my use of both action research and informal ethnography, as well as how this field work resulted in intensive journal recording. My methods of analysis were also an ongoing part of the journal writing process that culminated in the writing of this
dissertation. In conclusion, I will discuss why this methodology was appropriate for my investigation and participation in the Takini culture.

**Action Research**

**Action Research and Teaching**

The historical roots of action research began in the 1940s with the work of social scientist Kurt Lewin (1946). More recently in the field of education, action research has been defined as: “research that teachers do, either individually or in groups, about their own professional practice in order to understand and improve the nature and specifics of their work and to become more articulate about it” (Oberg & McCutcheon, 1990, p. 142). The breadth of this definition allows action research to serve many purposes and to take many forms. It provides an inroad for teachers to wed theory and practice in their own work and to acknowledge the bridge between researcher and practitioner.

Within the arena of action research, there exists a wide variety of research objectives and strategies. Gail McCutcheon and Burga Jung (1990) point out three types of action research perspectives. Action research can be approached from a positivist standpoint, in which case the research empirically measures the causes and effects of classroom behavior. It also can be used from an interpretivist viewpoint. The researcher in this case scrutinizes the processes of his or her personal practice. The third type of action research is that of critical science and can be used as a tool for developing socially critical understandings and to evoke social change. I began at Takini by focusing upon an interpretivist investigation of my teaching and philosophy. As themes emerged, I thought more critically about my teacher-student relationships with the Lakota students and Lakota teachers, and about how we represented the interaction between individuals from both Lakota and Euro-American cultures.

In this manner, my research questions emerged. Action research of this sort is described as a cyclical process (Johnston, 1990; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Tripp, 1990) based on a chain of preparing, doing, reflecting, analyzing, rethinking, and starting the cycle again. As I observed myself in interaction with both colleagues and students at Takini, my teaching strategies changed. Immediate objectives were altered in order to aim for more long-range goals. My process of reflection through journal writing and discussion with others constituted the bulk of my research. In this manner, data analysis was an on-going part of data collection.
Action research with an emphasis on reflection that leads toward transformation supports the view of teacher as a lifelong learner. Maxine Greene (1986) gives a definition of teaching, as:

an undertaking oriented to empowering persons to become different, to think critically and creatively, to pursue meanings, to make increasing sense of their actually lived worlds. Wholly unlike “selling” or drilling or training, teaching is oriented to provoking persons to care about what they are coming to understand, to attend to their situations with solicitude, to be mindful, to be concerned, to be fully present and alive. (p. 72)

Perhaps the teacher who consciously engages in action research can better fulfill this aspect of teaching. My primary reason for selecting action research as my central research method was to develop my ability to be fully present and alive within a teaching context with students of the Lakota culture. This was an appropriate choice for research at Takini where there is an emphasis on lifelong learning for all members of the school community.

Collaboration in Research

Action research is sometimes defined as collaborative work. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (1988) paint a picture of research being action research only when it is collaborative:

Action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. Groups of participants can be teachers, students, principals, parents and other community members,—any group with a shared concern. The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realize that the action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members.

(p. 5)

According to these parameters, my study was not actually action research. However, my work at Takini was definitely collaborative, and my collaborators were interested in carrying on a dialogue about our work and individual growth as we worked. Although I was the only member of the team whose purpose included that of research, we were definitely collaborating; and the collaboration was integral to my research.

Defining collaboration. As part of this discussion on how collaboration entered into my research, it is valuable to define the term collaboration. Collaboration necessitates that
people working together in any social setting have a mutually positive attitude concerning the collective intention. Collaboration has been defined:

as a relational system in which: 1) individuals in a group share mutual aspirations and a common conceptual framework; 2) the interactions among individuals are characterized by “justice as fairness”; and 3) these aspirations and conceptualizations are characterized by each individual’s consciousness of his/her motives toward the other; by caring or concern for the other; and by commitment to work with the other over time provided that this commitment is a matter of choice.

(Appley and Winder, 1977, p. 281)

Collaboration generally results in something larger than could be achieved by any participant working alone.

A delicate issue that arises in collaborations is that of leadership or decision-making. A collaborative research project demands competent organizational leadership (Oakes, Hare, & Sirotnik, 1986) as does any project; however, there are often political issues affecting such collaborations (Tripp, 1990). I went to Takini intending to offer my skills to enrich the curricula of other teachers; not to force my ideas on them. In my field notes I often questioned how that intention was influenced by personal issues as well as by cultural interaction. I wondered if collaboration with Wendy was an easy matter for me because we came from similar backgrounds or because of our similar personalities. I also pondered how much Stephanie’s assertive personality influenced classroom leadership or how much my deference to her Lakota culture affected my more reticent role in the collaboration.

My collaboration at Takini. My research at Takini School was self-initiated; I approached the superintendent proposing my residency. The research was definitely my personal project. However, I did work collaboratively with three Takini faculty members, including Wendy with whom I developed an especially close working relationship. Much of my research data concerns the development of those collaborations, including problems, solutions, and personal interactions. Takini itself, as a school environment, encourages collaboration among the teaching staff with an emphasis on team teaching. However faculty collaboration did not stand out to me as being very successful. My involvement with three other teachers, especially the close relationship with Wendy, enabled us to experience team-teaching as an activity involving faculty unity and mutual support. Our experience provided a model for other staff at Takini. However, the level of collaboration
we achieved also reflected our personal relationships and interactions from a political perspective.

Because we did achieve a high degree of group support, our relationships were similar to those often described by successful collaborative action research groups. Many researchers (May, 1993; Oja & Smulan, 1989; Sanger, 1990; Tripp, 1990; Wallat, Green, Conlin, & Haramis, 1981) discuss the value of collaboration within the action research process as including both the access to a support group and the capability to gain perspectives on one’s work in addition to one’s personal viewpoint. From this perspective, I recognize that my work at Takini was distinctly collaborative with time for group evaluation and support. As in any collaboration, there were also personal interaction styles that determined our successes and weaknesses in working together. I further acknowledge that the study is mine, and that I alone am responsible for the final analysis and writing up of the research. This analysis comes mainly from my personal journals as they are an integral part of the action research process.

**Action Research Journals**

Keeping a journal is the starting point for data collection in almost any action research project. In a sense, the journal is one’s autobiography for a given time period in one’s life. Madeleine Grumet (1980) discusses the importance of autobiography for the teacher interested in scrutinizing the teaching and learning process. In applying autobiography to the reconceptualization of curriculum, Grumet says, “The method is autobiography” (p. 155). This method has two stages: keeping the journal or autobiography and secondly analyzing it. First, one records events as they have been experienced. Then, one evaluates that record to uncover themes, biases, assumptions, and underlying systems of belief.

On a daily basis, I recorded the occurrences of my participation in the Takini School. During the day I made notes of what I presented to students and of their responses. Lesson plans were kept for comparison with what actually took place in the classroom. All of this record keeping continued for the entire duration of the seven weeks I spent at Takini School. As I participated in the cyclical process of action research, I also analyzed my thoughts to find the emerging themes in my data.

Another aspect of my journal writing included my responses to reading and literary research. As I conducted my research during the residency, I included responses to philosophical theory stimulated by intellectual input from literature as well as from the experiential learning from the Takini environment. Reflections on my experiences at Takini
comprised the bulk of my research data, and reflective writing on my continued study of research literature provided further material for analysis. In fact, as recommended by field researchers (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973), I kept separate journals with different kinds of notes. My largest journal covered my observations and notes on what actually took place. I used a smaller, more personal, journal as a diary for recording my emotions and reflections. Other researchers (Kleinman & Copp, 1993) also stress the value of keeping track of one’s emotions during the research process. The writing of two journals gave me copious notes. The presentation of my data in Chapter IV and its interpretation in Chapter V represent only a small portion of my field notes.

Art educator and scholar Wanda May (1992) agrees that journal writing is the core of action research data collection. She further states that the action researcher can borrow ethnographic means, including keeping field notes and interviewing. May’s suggestion impelled me to incorporate elements of ethnography into my research with the Lakota population as I developed my methodology. I found the use of ethnography especially important for the teacher working in a cultural context different from his or her accustomed climate.

**Informal Ethnography**

**Why Ethnography?**

Ethnography is defined by James Spradley (1980) as “learning from people” (p. 3). I believed it was my responsibility to learn about the Lakota people at Takini from their perspectives. In fact, I believe that no matter what the cultural background of my students, I must learn who they are in order to teach them effectively. A teaching procedure I often institute in the classroom is beginning each session with a group check-in to find out the questions students may have from the last class or what emotional influences they are experiencing. Occasionally this ritual for starting class has provided me with information that caused me to change my lesson plans. By honoring students enough to ask about their concerns, I can commence a dialogue within the learning process. Because ethnography is learning about people and their cultures from the people themselves, this teaching procedure could be considered to be ethnographic. I think there are many lessons to learn from ethnographic theory that can be incorporated into daily teaching. I made frequent use of this particular procedure with my younger students at Takini. I found that ethnographic research techniques were helpful for gaining information about all my students and the culture in which they and my colleagues at Takini live.

**Ethnographic Techniques**
In promoting ethnography in the classroom and as part of my research methodology, it was useful for me to have a clear description of what an ethnographer does. Spradley (1980) writes about the ethnographic participant observer who studies social situations or cultures by consciously observing the various elements of the event as well as attempting to engage actively and appropriately in the situation. Most people at one time or another find themselves in an unfamiliar setting where they observe others in order to learn appropriate behavior. Bringing this process to conscious awareness is the role of the ethnographic participant observer. Spradley describes the range of diversity in the degrees of involvement a participant observer may employ, from nonparticipation to complete participation “both with people and in the activities they observe” (1980, p. 58).

The activity of the complete participant observer includes asking questions of informants, recording responses, and analyzing the collected information.

As a movement and dance educator investing in an extended residency at the Takini School, I was a complete participant observer in the school community. My data included field notes from informal interviews and discussions with students, faculty, and staff. The interview is an important aspect of ethnographic research, and daily conversations informed my involvement at Takini. On only two occasions did I ask informants to sit with me for a formal interview. One of these interviews was with Rosie, the elementary school cultural coacher. The other was with Eugene, an eighth grade student who has trouble adjusting to school yet is able to dance and sing at powwows, activities that require cooperation and compliance to structure. In both of these cases, I was particularly interested in the informant's involvement with Lakota spirituality and its relationship to school activities and goals. On at least four other occasions I pursued similar questioning but in informal discussions with colleagues. Each day I had many moments when I asked questions about different issues, and I recorded the responses to them as part of my data. Ethnography gave me advice on how to do this successfully.

Spradley (1979) writes about the ethnographic interview used to collect data and the importance of how one asks questions in order to elicit the most information. I tried to ask questions that encouraged descriptive responses. The more information I gained from students and faculty, the better I knew how to participate in the school culture. Another related strategy used by ethnographers is the total involvement, or immersion, in the culture being studied (Spradley, 1980). I shared a trailer on campus with a Takini coacher and her daughter. This enabled me to be more immersed in the school culture as Linda's trailer was a popular place for many visitors from the Takini community. Immersion in the
community plus informal interviewing techniques helped me to gather information about
the Takini culture.

Lessons from Ethnography

Ethnographers distinguish between data that is from the perspective of an outsider
observer (etic) or from the perspective of an insider (emic) (Garbarino, 1977). This
distinction is most important because observations are always bound by the cultural values
of the observer (whether those perspectives are etic or emic). Contemporary cultural
anthropologists (Clifford, 1988, 1991; Spradley & McCurdy, 1971) acknowledge that the
ethnographer must be aware of his or her cultural biases. Observations are always
subjective; the impartial objective observer does not really exist. However, by recognizing
the values one has learned through enculturation, the ethnographer can approach the subject
of study with honesty.

This ethnographic lesson is quite meaningful for me regarding my work with the
Takini community. Though after the seven-week residency I felt integrated into the school
culture, I remained an outsider to the Lakota culture. My observations were recorded from
my own perspective and also from the perspectives of students and faculty. In this manner
I attempted to gather data from both emic and etic perspectives. The group of fourth, fifth,
and sixth grade girls whom I taught was provided an opportunity to keep journals about the
movement and dance sessions. Their journals provided me with additional data; however,
the students probably were aware that the teachers would read them. Thus their entries
may have been somewhat self-censored. Likewise, in conversations with me people might
have been careful about what they said. Throughout my residency at Takini, I attempted to
watch for cultural biases that I carry with me and that form a background for my etic
viewpoint. I tried to observe those of the Lakota also, as well as how our cultural
assumptions interacted. In general, I found that an ethnographic perspective helped create
my action research and the postresearch data analysis, even if only by making me aware of
differences in perspectives. With this awareness, I found more questions to ask myself
about my opinions and impressions.

Feminist ethnography

My ethnographic approach was further informed by other contemporary viewpoints
on the assumptions of ethnography. Feminist ethnographers (Oakley, 1981; Reinhauz,
1992) bring up issues that apply to my work at Takini. Action research acknowledges that
the teacher can also be the researcher; feminist ethnography suggests that both the
interviewer and the interviewee can learn from each other. The relationship between
researcher and informant is quite complex. Traditionally there is a hierarchy with the interviewer on top. Ann Oakley (1981) writes:

> it becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. (p. 41)

The feminist interviewer must walk a careful balance, attempting not to influence the informant's responses, yet creating a trusting atmosphere through being open about one's own experience. I kept this advice in mind as I formed relationships at Takini. My objectives were to be honest, to interact through friendship, and yet to state my opinions carefully or only after my questions were answered.

One aspect of my attempt to be open about myself within this research context revolved around my being in the early stages of pregnancy while at Takini. At first I was not certain that it was appropriate to reveal that I was pregnant, especially because my partner and I are not legally married. (This is not acceptable to all people.) However, from my readings in feminist research, I decided that it was best to talk honestly about it. I also knew from experience that Lakota people love children and honor the life giving power of women. In fact, on other occasions working with Lakota people, I had felt awkward that I was past 40 and childless. At Takini I found it quite valuable to be able to talk about my pregnancy: not only to explain my tiredness or strange appetite, but also in order to get to know people better. Many of the children liked to come up and ask me how I was feeling or how big my belly was getting. Colleagues spoke openly about their personal child bearing and rearing experiences. On my last day at Takini, I was presented with a baby quilt from my collaborators. I was appreciative of the perspectives of feminist researchers for guidance in dealing with my pregnant state.

The feminist perspective carries another implication that relates to my study; namely, in whose voice is the written product. The feminist researcher must ask how involved are the informants in the writing of the study’s findings and who controls the interpretations of the research. In a discussion concerning the product of ethnographic research, Reinhauz (1992) poses several questions to be scrutinized:

> To what extent should the ethnographer utilize her own voice, to what extent should the members of the setting have control over the product, and to what extent should materials be interpreted in ways that diverge from members of the setting? (p. 72)
In writing up my research, I have used only my own voice. I am aware that while this study could have happened only in the context of my relating to others, I alone am responsible for the product. Although I have included as part of my data the evaluations of students and coachers, I take responsibility for the data analysis. Issues raised by feminist ethnography have definitely helped me to be more thoughtful as I engage in ethnographic strategies.

**Data Analysis**

**Metareflection**

As described earlier, much of the analysis of my data occurred while I was involved in the field. As I wrote my daily notes and thought about what I had written the day or week before, I recognized themes and patterns in my interactions. I asked myself old and new questions daily in my journals. Rarely did those questions find concrete answers; my responses usually were new questions. However, these questions frequently centered around two or three themes. I call this kind of thinking about my thoughts *metareflection*.

Action research inherently incorporates metareflection into the spiral of planning-acting-reflecting-new planning, as discussed in the section on action research. Through this process I witnessed my own focus change. I also noted how my relationships with both colleagues and students developed. These observations included both disappointments and satisfying successes. My metareflective process started during my fieldwork and continued through the writing of this dissertation.

Once home from the residency, I reviewed my journal notes that were reflective and concerned the issues that were surfacing for me. Next I referred to my field notes that were objective and described the plans and actual activities of each day. I was able to see how my reflective process influenced my teaching. Examples of these influences and my insights concerning them are presented in Chapter V as data analysis.

**Interactive Analysis**

I also tried to include the interpretations of my collaborators and students whenever possible. This was accomplished mainly by asking questions. With my fellow teachers, it was easy to ask, "How did that warm-up go yesterday? Should I do something similar today?" Other questions required more discussion in response. These more complex questions concerned dealing with difficult problems such as student motivation or discipline. There were several students to whom we devoted much time in discussing our
personal interactions. I recorded all of these conversations as part of data collection and analysis.

It was more difficult to ask students how they felt about classroom interactions, because they were more reticent to talk with me. Some of the most telling remarks came in simple comments made while passing in the hall. These comments told me something about how they were responding to our classroom interactions and were recorded in my journals. At the end of my residency, I made up a simple questionnaire to be used by the junior high group as a self-evaluation as well as class evaluation. They completed the form after their final performance, the last day of my residency. After I left Takini, Wendy asked the intermediate group questions evaluating my work with them. Their responses were useful to me relative to learning about myself as a teacher and will be discussed more fully in the chapter on data analysis.

In general, my reflections and metareflections took place daily as I recorded class activities, observations, thoughts, and emotional responses to all the occurrences of the day. This method of data collection included observations of myself, others, and our interactions. Reflective analysis became an integral aspect of the observations. The analysis was an ongoing process that culminated in the writing of this dissertation.

**Concluding Remarks on Research Methods**

The strengths of the methodology that I developed can also be viewed as its limitations. The study might have been improved if my collaborative colleagues had shared a similar investment in the research aspects of our work together. The analysis and writing of the interpretative results would be more complete if they included the perspectives of others. However, the use of action research with elements of ethnography did enable me to incorporate my role as teacher with that of researcher. I realized the value of this research method in a recent seminar with other Ph.D. students.

After a presentation on my work, a fellow student asked me what action research did that changed my work. I immediately responded that the process of consciously studying myself and my interactions with others increased my awareness of the situation. I became more aware of my assumptions and of the choices and expectations I carry with me. My awareness of the opinions and values of others was also made clearer to me. I cannot say that I was completely able to connect the interactive gaps created by differences in culture, age, or status in my relationships with teachers and students at Takini; but I
definitely became more aware of those gaps in communication. I believe this is the first step in developing awareness and understanding.

Upon later reflection on this question, I realized something further about the process of pursuing research. Ultimately, the research methodology is a tool for learning. Once the tool becomes ingrained in one’s psyche, it is no longer necessary. It is possible to use research methodology to teach oneself a style of perceiving the world.

My choice of action research incorporating elements of informal ethnography, reflects my belief system. It is important to me to better understand myself and my own perceptions. It is equally important to me to understand other people, especially to respect and honor perceptions and experiences that differ from my own. The use of action research and borrowing ethnographic strategies enabled me to interact and communicate more fully with the students and faculty at Takini. I believe that honest interaction and communication are important for learning how to create a better existence in our global community.
CHAPTER IV
THE TAKINI SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE, AND MY PARTICIPATION

This chapter is the presentation of the data from my fieldwork at Takini. It begins with my observations of the Takini School environment and culture, including its context within the Cheyenne River Reservation, the three communities it serves, and the school itself. Next is a description of my participation in the school with overviews of the classes I taught. The observational and factual findings presented here result from my daily record keeping and note-taking; they are subjective. This data sets the stage for the more interpretive reflections constituting my data analysis that will be presented in the following chapter.

Cheyenne River Reservation

Takini School is situated in the extreme southwest corner of the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. The reservation lies in the western half of the state and is about the same size in land area as the state of Connecticut. Its eastern boundary is the Missouri River. Approximately 80 miles to the west is its western border. Its namesake, the Cheyenne River creates its southern edge. On the north is the neighboring Standing Rock Reservation of the Hunkpapa Sioux. The land here is prairie, plains with few trees and mighty winds. The hills roll and curve under the immense horizon. Here and there creeks and rivers run through the land, creating scenes that take one’s breath away. The land is not fertile, and farming is unproductive. Cattle sometimes dot the landscape. Most ranching is done by non-Indians who lease the land from the tribal government.

The Cheyenne River tribe is of the Lakota Sioux language group. Most consider themselves to be Minneconjou Sioux, the direct descendants of the survivors of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. Over 100 years ago, these indigenous people traveled 150 miles, mainly on foot, from their camp on the Cheyenne River south to Wounded Knee where they sought safety, food, and refuge. Their leader, Big Foot, was dying from
pneumonia and hoped his people would be protected by the Oglala Sioux Chief Red Cloud. However, when they reached Wounded Knee, misunderstandings arose between the U.S. governmental forces and the Sioux. Almost 350 unarmed women, children, and men were tragically murdered; their bodies were left to freeze in the cruel winter weather. Those who did manage to escape, traveled back to the Cheyenne River and camped near where the small community of Bridger is today. The Cheyenne River people have endured a difficult history and are proud of their heritage. Takini School is part of their efforts to heal themselves; *takini* is the Lakota word for “survivor.”

The population of the reservation is approximately 7,000 people. Tribal headquarters are located about an hour and a half from Takini in the town of Eagle Butte, a community of just over 400 people, located in the middle of the reservation. Some non-Indians live and work in the small towns on the reservation. However, the populations of the three small communities served by Takini are almost all Lakota people.

**Tour of Takini Communities**

Takini was built in 1989 to serve the three Lakota communities of Cherry Creek, Red Scaffold, and Bridger. However, the school campus is quite isolated, and students must travel an average of 20 miles to get to school. Not only does this make a tiring 40 mile bus journey part of each school day for the students, but also it makes it difficult for most parents to be involved in the school. Transportation is a problem for integrating the school into community life.

The location was chosen because it’s an equal distance from the villages of Bridger, Cherry Creek, and Red Scaffold. It made sense on a map. “No school building plan should be finalized without the input of the community that will use it,” says superintendent Ken Englehardt. The nearest services—gas, and a place to buy a can of pop or mail a letter—are 12 miles away. Many parents have no cars and must be bussed to teacher conferences. (Higbee, 1990, p. 2)

Even with its isolated location, Takini is heavily influenced by the communities it serves. They help to form the attitudes of the students and parents who make up the Takini population.

The first day of the third week of school was a time for me to get a firsthand tour of the three Takini villages. I accompanied Wendy and Pam in a school van as they made home visits. Both Wendy and Pam were collecting parental signatures and permission for
the school to perform student testing: Wendy for the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program, Pam for special education. I went as an observer.

Cherry Creek

We turned to the east, towards Cherry Creek, when we left the school grounds. It was a windy, early autumn day as we drove down the dirt road through the hilly plains. The few cottonwood trees were already turning yellow. As we approached Cherry Creek, the road signs suddenly said, “Slow, Rock Slides, Bump.” The van slowed to a creep for a short distance of the road, which dangerously crumbled under our wheels. However, the view was beautiful—a autumn colors followed the meandering tree-lined creek that cut through the plains. The houses of the village could be seen in the distance.

As we entered the village, we saw a small powwow ground on our right. I began to witness the signs of isolation and disrepair. There were no stores or filling stations; boards on abandoned houses bumped and clanged in the wind. Dogs ambled on the roadway. A few people were walking on the road, probably out to visit neighbors. I saw other people sitting and waiting in cars. Waiting for what?

We passed the Cheyenne River Community College housed in a single yellow trailer. Our first stop was the clinic, a white prefab house, for Pam to check on someone. The clinic is open twice a week for local residents to receive health care. Otherwise, the nearest health facility is a hospital in Eagle Butte, nearly an hour away. A big blue-sided building serves as the gym for community sports and gatherings. I saw one log house. Most homes were obviously built by the federal government, but one stood out with its traditional Lakota shade arbor. The post office seemed to be the most popular place with a gas pump out front and 14 cars parked outside. We stopped there to look for the car of one of the parents Pam needed to see, but it was not there.

We were lucky that many of the parents were at home. Most of them seemed happy enough to have their children tested for the TAG program, but special education was another matter. One mother said, “I don’t want my children pulled out for special ed because the others tease them. I know these kids here at Cherry Creek.” We located another parent as she drove past the van on a side road. Wendy needed her signature for her artistically inclined first grader. Wendy was worried that the meeting might be hostile because the woman had a son who had been sent away to a treatment center by the school. However, she signed willingly. She explained that her signature might not be legal because, although she is raising her son, his father is the legal guardian and does not live
with them. Although this seemed like a strange arrangement to me, I realized it is probably not uncommon.

Our way out of Cherry Creek took us past a natural hot spring. As we drove by, Wendy explained to me that the tub placed there gets filled with water, and in the winter you can take a hot bath in the open air. “It really makes your hair soft,” Pam added.

**Red Scaffold**

Six miles out of Cherry Creek on the rough gravel road to Red Scaffold, we stopped at Pam’s home. Her house can be seen from the roadway, and it overlooks a beautifully scenic view of the Cherry Creek waterway. We stopped at the modest, well-kept home and woke up Pam’s husband to let us in so we could get some refreshments. Earlier, Pam had told me that her husband “hates white people.” I recognized him from his occasional maintenance work at Takini. I had been told he is quite interested in Lakota traditions and leads sweat lodges for the community. Despite the warning, he was friendly to me. Because the landscape around the house was so beautiful, I could not resist taking a few pictures before we left.

Later, back in the van, Pam and Wendy told me a little bit about the rivalry among the communities. Before Takini was built each community had their own school. Now many of the Takini students look down on the Cherry Creek children and consider them to be rougher and less-well behaved than the other students.

Again powwow grounds were the first thing I noticed as we drove into the small village of Red Scaffold. Darkly splotched clouds lowered the sky ceiling and darkened the prairie hills as we drove up the hillside on which Red Scaffold is built. Here the homes looked newer or better kept to me. Maybe there are not as many people living right in the village as is the case in Cherry Creek. I noticed a well-used softball diamond and a big red gym. Without the creek, the land here seemed not quite as scenic; there were fewer trees to turn to autumn colors.

Red Scaffold’s two churches looked well-kept. There was a small store, but Wendy said it was no longer open. Pam said the two communities are actually very similar. She replied to my questioning that one is not any more traditional than the other. She thought that even though a few people talk about traditional ways, most know very little about their heritage.

Wendy and Pam had only a few parents to visit here, so our stay was short. On our way out of Red Scaffold, they drove me by the old school where they had worked before Takini was constructed. They both had fond memories of their school, homes, and
lives here. Pam had been on the Red Scaffold school board and said it was wonderful because the parents were so involved. She said that the lack of parental involvement is a major problem at Takini. From Red Scaffold, we drove back south towards Takini. However, at the crossroads, approximately 15 miles on down, we turned west instead of east in order to head out towards Bridger. (Takini was two miles to the east from this intersection.)

**Bridger**

After the turn to the west, we drove seven miles to State Highway 34 and then turned south again. Bridger is the only one of the three villages to be accessible by a paved road. The community is quite close to the Cheyenne River, the southern border of the reservation. Driving on the highway towards it, one has a breathtaking, panoramic view of a landscape sculpted by the river. As we turned off the highway onto another dirt road to drive to the main settlement of government homes, I noticed several junked vehicles lined up and facing the roadway. On the opposite side of the road was a weathered, abandoned house and a lone tree. These sights gave me a feeling of the starkness of the land and life here. Rounding a bend in the road, I was once more greeted by the sight of powwow grounds.

The community is small, the smallest of the three. There are probably less than two dozen houses. The church is neat and clean with its white paint and quaint steeple. We had only three stops in Bridger, and I was pleased that the two students for whom Wendy was obtaining permission to test for the TAG program were girls I knew from our class.

Later that evening, Sara, the twelve-year-old who lives with her mother in the trailer where I stayed, told me that Bridger is haunted. Perhaps this is true as Pam also told me that after the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890, the survivors came back and camped at Bridger.

**Impressions of Takini**

**Physical Description and Comments**

Traveling on State Highway 34, one sees the green roadsign designating the dirt road to Takini. Turning eastward onto this road, the drive is about six miles before the Takini complex is sighted. The white water tower stands out as a modern marker on the rolling plains and creates an almost surrealistic effect. At night, one can see the flickering lights of the campus almost as soon as the turn is made onto the reservation dirt roadway.
In other words, the school stands out in its isolation amidst the prairie grasses, grazing cattle herds, and gently sweeping hills.

Turning into the campus area, a yellow sign informs the traveler “Alcohol and Drug Free Area.” On the left, one can see the rodeo grounds and powwow arena; to the right is the school building. Straight ahead lie the six houses and fifteen or so trailers for faculty and staff. At the very rear of the complex looms the water tower.

The school building itself is a long, low, blond brick structure; it almost blends into the prairie. Opened in the fall of 1989, it was immediately inadequate for the needs of the people. From offices in New Mexico, the BIA planned for its construction as an elementary school. The local communities took control of the school when it was granted status as a BIA contract school. This meant funding would continue to come from the BIA, but decisions would be made by a local school board. The school board recognized the need for the school to serve students K-12; and in its second year of operation, a large, blue, prefab-type building was erected just to the west of the main building to serve as the high school. To the north of the blue high school building lies a brown and yellow trailer, which houses the Family and Early Childhood Education program. This program functions on yearly grants and is administered separately from Takini, but is fully integrated into the school culture.

Outside the front of the main building is the flagpole. Every Monday morning, before school starts, the Cultural Center (responsible for teaching Lakota traditional heritage) organizes a flag raising as a way to start the week. Members of the Lakota drum group, both students and faculty, play the drum and sing the Lakota flag song for the American flag.

Directly behind the flagpole is the front door to the school. Upon entering the school, one sees a small complex of offices, including those for: secretaries, the superintendent, the business office, the assistant superintendent, and the elementary principal. To the right of the foyer is a hallway leading first into the cafeteria; that, if it is a school morning, will be busy with both students and adults eating the free breakfast provided by the school. This meal plus the school lunch may be the only hot meals many of these students eat during the day. Younger children are provided a snack at approximately 2:30 p.m. Passing through the cafeteria, one enters a small lobby and then the main gymnasium, equipped with bleachers for assemblies and sport events. On the other side of the gym, one sees the coaches’ offices, two small locker rooms, a utility room with washer and dryer, and a storage room. Beyond this area is a rarely used hallway. At
the beginning of the 1993-94 school year, its plasterboard walls had been vandalized by students. This was repaired by the end of the first month of school, but the possibility of future vandalism lingers in the minds of many of the adults. This hallway leads to an auxiliary gymnasium, known as the Si Tanka Wokisuye Gym in memory of Chief Big Foot and more commonly called the Blue Gym. Directly to the north of this gym is a small, carpeted all-purpose room. It has served as a recreation room with Ping-Pong tables and was recently used as the Alternative Learning Center (ALC). At the beginning of the 1993-94 school year, it was empty, except for a soda pop machine and several cafeteria tables which were stored there. This room was selected to be a space for the dance residency classes, but was not ideal for reasons that will be discussed later.

Retracing the pathway back to the entrance, one can continue around the offices, past several soda pop and juice machines, and left into the main hallway of classrooms. The younger grades are on this wing; one first passes the primary circle rooms that are for students in grades K-l and 2-3. Opposite these classrooms are the nurse’s office and the school store. Next come the three intermediate circle (grades 4-5-6) classrooms and the bathrooms. The library is on the other side of the hall. The cultural center is next to the library; this room also provides an office for the Community Development/Healing Circle program. Back across the hall is another room, which serves as office space for the TAG program as well as for the Chapter I program. Continuing down the hallway, one passes the well-equipped computer center, the science classroom, special education office, and the industrial arts laboratory. Outside the exit at the end of this hallway, one can take a short walkway to the high school building or Family Education trailer.

I was very lucky that Wendy coordinated my residency. Most of my time was spent in the main building; Wendy graciously shared her TAG office with me. Before school started, the two of us selected the all-purpose room off the Blue Gym to be the dance/movement space. However, we found the distance and time it took the younger students to travel there inconvenient. After the first two weeks of classes, we moved this small group of intermediate circle students to the TAG office for their dance sessions. The junior high dance class also met in this room. Once we really began to work on dances, it was too small; thus we moved into the Blue Gym.

Because the intermediate circle dance group was a TAG fine arts project, we often pulled the girls out of their regular classes (this group was all girls; the junior high class had both boys and girls). This meant I came into frequent contact with the intermediate teachers (called “coachers” at Takini) and was a visitor into their classrooms. I also
presented several one-time movement and dance sessions for these classes on special
topics. As a result, I was much more familiar with the main building facility than the high
school.

On any given day, I might be found reading the student work taped on the walls
outside the classrooms. Drawings of family members, cartoons, posters of animals created
out of geometric shapes all caught my eye at various times. Upon entering a classroom, I
might find the students’ desks and chairs in a different arrangement than the day before.
Coachers appeared to use their classroom space in a flexible manner, adjusting to needs of
a particular day or topic. Each classroom had a sink and two walls with blackboards,
windows on the third, and low bookshelves on the fourth. Video players and monitors
were frequently used and stored in the classrooms, however none had cassette players so I
carried Wendy’s with me whenever I visited another classroom. Rooms were carpeted,
which I especially appreciated when I presented a session on relaxation and Yoga for one
intermediate circle class. Interruptions were common in the classrooms, as were changes
in schedules; but it still took me awhile to feel comfortable coming in and asking to talk to a
student or to take her out for a dance session. I found all the coachers to be understanding
and accommodating.

Takini serves approximately 250 students. However, the first week of school in
1993-94 saw under 200 in attendance. This number grew as more and more families
returned from the summer and Labor Day powwows or received first of September checks
to do back-to-school shopping. Takini attempts to provide a safe environment for its
students. Though the students might feel secure at school, their home lives may not be secure
because of an alcoholic family member or other family problems. The school faces many
problems, such as the lack of parental involvement and the affect of alcoholism on the
students' home lives. The administration has tried to develop a structure and vision to
address these issues. The next section will present my impressions of that vision and its
implementation.

Administrative Goals and Vision for Takini School

Before coming to Takini for my residency, I was sent printed materials on the
school and its goals. I was very impressed that Takini seemed to be structured in order to
fit the needs of the reservation community, not to meet requirements or standardized
norms. The four-day school week, with Fridays reserved for teachers to plan, meant the
students did not have to spend time commuting to the school for a fifth day of classes. It
also was ideal for my research because I felt it might provide me with the necessary time for coordinating with other teachers. The longer school days also pleased me because they included larger class periods than would a normal school day. From the literature, I learned that teachers at Takini are called coachers, perhaps an attempt to change institutional language. Despite excitement over Takini's innovative structure, I felt doubtful about how this structure played out in reality.

Arriving at Takini for the in-service week before school started provided me an opportunity to talk with coachers and to witness the way the faculty and administrative teams functioned. It soon became evident to me that the Takini vision of Supt. Engelhardt is in the process of implementation; it is not shared equally by the faculty or even completely understood by all the teaching staff as yet.

Unfortunately, the in-service week opened on a sad note. Supt. Engelhardt announced that he was having heart problems and would be going to Denver for testing. The news was obviously upsetting to him and probably affected his leadership. Before the week was out, I made a date to visit Supt. Engelhardt and his wife Loretta at their home to informally interview them. I was glad I did so because neither was around much once Takini opened to students. His condition was diagnosed as requiring bypass surgery, and they spent most of their time in Denver.

The third evening of the in-service week, I arrived at the Englehardt's house shortly after dinner with a jar of Ohio Amish apple butter to give them. I found Supt. Ken Engelhardt watching sports on television and Loretta ironing. Both the Englehardts have worked together to create a vision for the school. In fact, a coacher once described them to me as "visionaries." From my evening with them, I was left with the impression that they are quite committed to education; one wherein people can learn for themselves, not just the education dictated by state requirements. They recognize that most of the Takini students will not go to college but they need to learn thinking skills to help them to improve life on the reservation. With his greying beard, balding hairline, and pink tinted glasses, Supt. Engelhardt did not look to me like someone who would wish to live on the reservation. As he sat in his recliner and enthusiastically told me his ideas, I realized his concern for and knowledge of his constituency.

My first questions concerned their history with the school. Supt. Engelhardt was hired as the first superintendent at Takini in 1989 and has been there ever since. His background includes administration at other reservation schools on the Cheyenne River Reservation, so he feels he has a good understanding of the problems and concerns of the
people. Prior to coming to Takini, he taught at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, located about two hours from Takini. There he developed an innovative teacher training program and worked with many American Indian students. Larry, the Assistant Superintendent at Takini, also worked with Supt. Engelhardt at Black Hills State; they are close friends. Larry's family is from the reservation. He is married to Wendy, the TAG coordinator, who became more than just a colleague to me.

As our conversation continued, Supt. Engelhardt became more animated and involved in the topics. He and Loretta told me about how they met as college students and their dreams to retire to Arizona to open a healing resort. He answered my question about the problems at Takini by remarking on the lack of consistency in the faculty, the high coacher turnover (which I was to witness even in the first six weeks of school), the lack of understanding by the coaches about correlating expected student outcomes with courses, as well as the coaches' unfamiliarity with thematic instruction. These latter ideas were concepts he had tried to develop in his university courses. I wondered what this said about teacher education elsewhere in this country's universities.

Next I asked him what advice he had for me during my residency. He responded by saying that it was important to empower the students. Teachers were here to serve them. It was also important not to let the children attach to me too much as they can easily get hurt. He stressed that I should try to link modern dance to the real world and to their traditional life. He concluded by saying that we cannot change their home lives, but we can show them other lifestyle choices. Loretta added that she did not believe that Lakota people were as shy as literature often purports. She said that she has found the children love to have fun, to laugh and joke, and to play at theatrical games and dance. The evening's conversation gave me much to ponder as the first week of school approached.

The next day at the teachers' meeting, as I read over a letter Supt. Engelhardt had sent to coaches during July, I realized the challenges that lay ahead for the school. The coaches had one week to work in newly organized teams with many new coaches and to prepare team teaching for large blocks of time. Supt. Engelhardt (1993) also acknowledged these challenges in the closing to that letter:

We are not bound by timelines, we are not bound by outside curricula, we are not bound to teach the curriculum that was taught to "Grandpa." We are able to create a curriculum and structure that is geared to our students and that helps our students be successful. Change and developing a new structure is risk taking and challenging. Ambiguity and frustration are part of the change process and as staff members,
please speak up with concerns, ideas and the need for additional resources, training, etc. We must work together as a team feeling empowered as educators so that our students see us as striving, creative and cooperative models.

However, I was not sure how the school would function once school opened. I had witnessed coaches' blank faces when a new form for reporting a student's progress according to outcomes was handed out. I had sat in on a team building session with the counselors and TAG coordinator and wondered if they would be able to provide peer support for each other that they described as being needed. And yet I was still encouraged by the idea of Takini as a school based on student outcomes and not grades, Takini as a school where students were grouped in multi-aged sections rather than isolated into single age groups. Takini did seem to me to be struggling to develop a meaningful educational system for its community. As Supt. Engelhardt (1993) had written to the coaches in his July letter:

[We] at Takini School have taken one more step in implementing an outcome based education approach to assure that each student has an opportunity to learn, experience and apply knowledge and skills so he or she can be a creative problem solver and perceptive thinker; an effective communicator; a healthy individual, community contributor and environmental caretaker; a cooperative/collaborative worker and creative producer; and a culturally aware individual.

Having this vision of Takini presented to me, I was eager to take part. For the remainder of the week, I carefully observed the coaches and their interaction. I awaited the students' arrival to see how they responded to this school, which aspired to empower them.

Observations of Coachers and Staff

My observations of the teaching staff, or coaches, began that first week of in-service. Right away it was apparent to me that they were a very mixed group with different reasons for being at Takini. At the large group meetings in the library, about one third of the faces were American Indian. However, as I became more familiar with who played different roles and had different responsibilities, I learned that most of the local Lakota employees at Takini were not regular full-time coaches, but aides, Chapter I employees (an auxiliary program for student enrichment), special education specialists, or Lakota culture coordinators.

Although people naturally sat with those they knew, there was an all inclusive atmosphere of friendliness. I was pleased to recognize two people, Stephanie and her
brother-in-law Harold, whom I had met two years earlier at a Heart Room workshop led by Gene Thin Elk.

This brought up a question for me: Why was the Heart Room dropped from the curriculum? Earlier Supt. Engelhardt had told me that Leon, whom I had also met at Heart Room workshops and who had been running the Heart Room, was unable to keep to a regular Takini time schedule. Although the program was having success with the students, he told me it was disbanded because it was difficult to find competent people to run it. Gradually I became aware of the political implications surrounding this decision. After dropping Heart Room, the cultural heritage program was expanded by two full-time positions, for which two competent persons were found. A new program was also instituted called the Community Development Program. Harold, a Cheyenne River native, ran the Community Development Program, which included an area called the Healing Circle to address issues of alcoholism within the school community. It was curious to me that while Takini was one of two American Indian schools to win a national award for working to combat alcohol and drug abuse, the award was granted based on Takini’s Heart Room, which now no longer existed. Throughout the residency, I asked several people their opinions of Heart Room and received various answers. These responses confirmed my awareness that reservation politics exist, which I could not learn about in my brief seven-week stay. In any case, my main reason for being there were the daily interactions at the school. Even if I was not to work in Heart Room as I had planned over a year ago, I found very wonderful colleagues with whom to collaborate.

During this in-service week, I quickly noticed the large percentage of new coachers plus a new elementary principal. Nine coachers, almost one third of the teaching staff, were new to Takini. The new teachers seemed to have backgrounds similar to those of the veteran Takini staff. Most of the coachers were natives of South Dakota, some Lakota and some non-Indian. Many of these people had homes in South Dakota towns anywhere from two to four hours away from Takini. Some coachers lived in Faith, a close 40 miles away. They seemed to appreciate the opportunity to teach in a school not too far away from their homes. Relative to this, I found that people have a different relationship to distance in South Dakota than in the more populated areas of the country. At Takini, people do not think twice about driving two hours for visiting or shopping.

Some of these South Dakotan coachers, Lakota and non-Indians alike, were also rodeo buffs. Many kept horses in the corral by the rodeo grounds at Takini. In the
evenings after school, they practiced roping and calf wrestling. During my last weekend at Takini, the school hosted a small steer roping rodeo.

Other coaches were not part of the rodeo subculture but were unique in various ways. During introductions that first day, two women stood out with their European accents. One had come to the States from Germany in the early 1970s and was married to a Lakota man. The other, Micheline, had come to Takini from Belgium with her husband and son specifically because she wanted to teach American Indians. Micheline was the veteran intermediate circle coach and became an invaluable support to me during my work with the intermediate circle TAG fine arts project. She approached me that first day to ask if I would lead dance sessions for that group and was genuinely concerned that the students have arts experiences. This varied group of coaches included some who were vegetarians like myself, and I felt welcomed by the staff as a whole.

Coachers Responsibilities and Relationships

Over the next weeks, with school actually in session, I observed the reality of the coaches' experiences. In the high school they were asked to devise courses of study around a theme and to assist each other in these classes. Then they were directed to determine performance indicators from the courses and to relate those indicators to student outcomes for the evaluation of each student's progress. An example of this comes from a course on school safety (safety was the theme for the first two weeks of the semester). A student might present a fire drill safety speech, which would be a performance indicator. The speech might be worth one fourth credit towards a standard class on public speaking; this class in turn would fulfill a projected student outcome on being able to express oneself orally. Individual files and records were kept on each student to monitor individual progress. It seemed that many teachers were frustrated with this paperwork and confused by it. Some expressed to me at various times during the residency that they preferred more standard courses within a more customary structure. In a later section I will discuss the course that I participated in developing and teaching with three other coaches.

The situation was slightly different in the elementary school where students were grouped into either the primary circle (K-3) or the intermediate circle (4-6). There were four primary circle classrooms and three for the intermediate circle. A full-time coach was the main teacher all day for each classroom. Chapter I, a special education coach, or an aide provided a second adult in each classroom. Coaches in each elementary school circle spent time planning together. The coaches in the intermediate circle devised a schedule that included a block of time for special courses from which students could
choose an interest group. This provided students with an opportunity to work with coaches who were not regularly in their classroom. It also created opportunities for auxiliary coaches, including counselors and TAG coaches, to offer small group projects. At times the fine arts dance sessions were able to fit into this schedule. Because of the limited length of my residency, these coaches accommodated my need to meet with the TAG students outside of this scheduled time frame as well.

My impression was that the coaches’ interactions with each other were probably similar to those one might find in any school setting. As anywhere else, there were complainers and jokers, people who brought birthday cakes, and people who left work as soon as possible. However, there was one distinction: more confusion concerning responsibilities. It resulted from the shared responsibility structure that requires coacher interdependence. The goal was to have at least two adults in a classroom. Sometimes the second adult was a special education tutor or another coacher; in the primary and intermediate circles, it might be an aide or Chapter I coacher. In the high school, sometimes this arrangement seemed to create resentment and boredom. During the first weeks of school, the news of a fight in a junior high classroom carried with it an air of controversy because one coacher had gone to a meeting, leaving the other coacher alone. Whose responsibility was it that the fight broke out? Would it have happened if both coachers had been there? Concerning the other aspect of this teamwork discussion, I heard comments such as: “Why am I in a science class when I’m an English teacher?”

An incident similar to that in the junior high occurred about the fourth week of school in the intermediate circle of the elementary school. Micheline was severely injured by a kick she received from a student when she tried to break up a fight. She told me in private that she was not angry at the student, but at her coacher colleagues. The incident happened during the horizontal block, the time set aside for coachers to offer special interest classes, from which students were to select one to take. One coacher had not offered a course, thus Micheline’s class was unfairly over enrolled. In fact, out of the approximately 70 intermediate students, more than 40 had signed up for her visual art class.

In some areas it appeared to me that the intermediate circle coaches did work together successfully. Along with Rosie, the elementary school cultural coacher, these coachers had designed an interesting morning ceremony that was performed daily at 8:50 or shortly thereafter. The ritual took place in the main gym. It usually took several minutes to settle the children down and put the basketballs away before the ceremony could begin.
This rite took place with all participants standing in a circle in silence. Someone, usually Rosie, smudged those standing. Smudging is a Lakota ritual of purification. A sacred herb, most often sage, is burned, and the smoke waved over each person. At Takini, the sage was burned in a coffee can. After the smudging, a prayer was said. Rosie usually led the prayer time, but sometimes another coacher would assume that responsibility. Prayers were an interesting mixture of traditional Lakota words and philosophy and Christian ideas. Often Rosie ended the prayer time by asking everyone to join in with the Lord's Prayer.

Following the prayer came repetition of affirmations that were written on a three-sided poster board tripod. This tripod was set in the middle of the circle so all could read it. One coacher would read the affirmations, and the students would repeat them in a call and response fashion. The words were:

Hinhanni Waste. (Translation: Good morning).
Tanyan Yahi (pi/pelo). (Translation: We are glad you are here).
Woonspe Okolakicye. (Translation: A learning place for the success of all).

Leader: Are you smart?
Group: Yes, I am smart.

Leader: How do you walk through life?
Group: I walk with wisdom, respect, generosity, and courage.

Leader: What road are you on?
Group: I walk on the road of learning.

Leader: How do Takini students behave?
Group: Takini students behave in an appropriate way.

Leader: What is your goal?
Group: My goal is to be a lifelong learner. I am a lifelong learner.

I attended these opening circles daily and found them to provide me invaluable observations of coachers' interactions with each other and with students as well as my own interactions with students. My self-observations will be discussed in a later chapter. I noticed that this opening ritual seemed to depend on two or three coachers taking the lead. If they were not around, it fell apart. Frequently Rosie would be late with the sage, and no one else seemed to know where it was kept. The leading of the call and response was not really prearranged and frequently began with hesitation. Once I was told by a nudge and whisper to lead it, which I did. At the beginning of the school year, the students were told that baseball caps were to be removed during the ritual as a sign of respect. As time went on, this was not always enforced. My personal interest in ritual and tradition made these
morning sessions meaningful to me, but I did wonder what messages we adults were actually sending to the students. The disorganization and lack of structure was confusing. I questioned the students’ understanding of what seemed to me to be an important rite.

**Impermanence of Coaches**

One message implicitly sent to the students undoubtedly came from the time commitment coaches made to Takini. As previously mentioned, almost one third of the coaches were new for the 1993-94 school year. I was told that most of the coaches who were replaced had been at Takini only one or two years.

While I was at Takini, I witnessed the frustration and isolation that might convince a coach not to commit to the school. One new coach, Charlie, ended his career at Takini the same day as I. His story demonstrates the disappointment that could lead to a decision to leave Takini. We had several conversations beginning the in-service week because we were both newcomers and vegetarians. Charlie was from Michigan. He had been a sculptor before his decision to become a science teacher. Takini interested him for at least two reasons. He was interested in American Indian culture, and the innovative structure of the outcome-based system intrigued him. Charlie seemed to me to be quite focused on becoming involved in the learning environment at Takini and to be rather idealistic. He lived on campus with two other male coaches. I noticed he spent long hours at the school, even on weekends. Charlie was hired mainly as a high school science coach. However he attempted to enrich the students’ scientific knowledge even during his free time, as is evidenced by the following examples. One clear full-moon evening in September he set up his telescope for anyone around to use for stargazing. I got a phone call from Wendy about it and had a wonderful look at the craters on the moon. Charlie also brought his pet iguana to school for the students to study. One afternoon he set up a tentlike planetarium in the cafeteria. Another time I watched him demonstrate an electricity experiment for the intermediate circle. I was impressed with his ideas and enthusiasm.

However, as time went on, I also saw his frustration. One Sunday afternoon, on a walk with Charlie, he told me how the system was not working in the high school. He felt the large block of time he had with one group was wasted because half of the students left for one hour. He did not know how to cope with this disruption. He also felt that in more advanced science topics, the students needed concentrated time to develop background skills. The short thematic units prevented him from doing this. By the end of September, Charlie turned in his resignation.
There may be many other reasons why Charlie did not stay at Takini. He may have been lonely; there is very little social life for non-Indian coachers. His teacher training may not have prepared him for the outcome-based system at Takini, even though he was interested in it. His short tenure at Takini serves as an example of the impermanency of the teaching staff.

I worried that the students might not trust me because of the short length of my residency. However, I prepared them from the beginning for the brevity of my stay and the reason for it, thus my departure was not unexpected or unexplained. While I did not publicize the fact, I think the students and faculty who knew appreciated the fact that I was not being paid for my time at Takini. The timing worked out so that my last day at Takini was also the performance date for both groups with whom I worked. The excitement of performance and a planned reception meant that my residency culminated in a celebratory mood; Charlie’s experience on his last day must have been quite different. I felt lucky that I had found coachers with whom I could work and that the open structure at Takini allowed me to find a place for the dance and movement sessions.

Coachers with Whom I Collaborated

The topic of collaboration and what I learned from the collaboration experience at Takini became a main theme of my research. At this point, I would like to briefly describe my three main collaborators. Primarily, I worked with Wendy, the TAG coordinator. Wendy is from Spearfish, South Dakota; had her 38th birthday while I was at Takini; is non-Indian; and is married to Larry, the assistant superintendent of Takini. She and Larry have three children: Shannon, 9-years-old; Sam, 4 1/2-years-old; and Nicholas (or Kiko), 3 1/2-years-old. The family has a home both at Takini and in Spearfish. Wendy welcomed me into her family. This gave me more of an insider’s view of Takini. In fact, Linda, in whose trailer I lived, is Larry’s sister; thus I got to know the whole family fairly well. Wendy and I immediately became close friends and found collaboration exciting and fulfilling. Much of my learning at Takini centers around my work with Wendy. We co-taught the intermediate circle fine arts project, and we both participated in the four-part collaboration in the junior high course entitled Lakota Dance/Choreography and Writing.

Stephanie and her sister Valarie were the other coachers in the Dance and Writing course; both were also important collaborators and teachers for me. Stephanie is also about 38, a full-blood Lakota from Cheyenne River, and coordinator of the cultural program at Takini. She is a strong leader with definite ideas and opinions yet willing to compromise. Her heritage is important to her; she is a champion traditional dancer at powwows. She is
divorced and presently shares a trailer at Takini with an intermediate circle coacher. She and I had several important talks on politics and problems at Takini and her dreams and aspirations.

Valarie, about 35-years-old, lives with her 9-year-old daughter Cricket in a trailer next door to the one I shared with Linda and her daughter Sara. Valarie is a special education coacher in the high school. She has a wry sense of humor, which combines well with her soft-spoken manner. Due to her serious demeanor, her jokes often took me by surprise. Coming from a traditional family, she also has a strong sense of her heritage. She used to perform jingle dress dance, but no longer dances due to an injury several years ago. Now Cricket is carrying on the powwow tradition with her Auntie Stephanie.

The extended families of both Wendy’s husband Larry as well as Stephanie and Valarie’s play important roles on the reservation as a whole in addition to Takini. Their elders valued education, and the families are important leaders in education on the reservation. Supt. Engelhardt confided to me that Takini could use more local people like these two families. I was lucky to be welcomed into their circles. Their interaction, including the close friendship of the fourth-grade girls Cricket and Shannon, became part of my daily reality. This participation helped me to establish myself in the Takini campus community.

The people who live at Takini create a community with quite diverse elements. I felt fortunate to find a place to live on campus rather than having to commute from Faith. Takini usually was bustling during the school week with buses and cars coming and going. On the weekends it seemed almost deserted with both Lakota and non-Indian residents leaving for their more permanent homes. Besides the rodeo people who hung out at the corral, there did not seem to be much mixing between the Lakota people and the non-Indian coachers. Wendy was an exception because she fits in with both cultures.

The 25 or so students who lived with their families at Takini helped to create a relaxed, open environment with their activities. Often I came home to find 12-year-old Sara watching television with several of the younger girls, usually her cousin Shannon and Cricket. Children were frequent visitors at the Hunter trailer where I stayed. Dana, a 26-year-old new coacher, had been a close family friend of Linda’s in their hometown of Kyle; she frequently came over with her three young children. Linda’s trailer was always open to friends and family who might be passing by Takini as well as to those who lived there.
Sometimes Scrabble games would go on into the dark. One weekend her 6-month-old granddaughter came to stay with us. Another weekend, she babysat a 5-year-old nephew. I enjoyed the opportunity to witness and participate in Lakota hospitality.

The non-Indian people at Takini also tried to develop a sense of community on the campus. A potluck faculty and staff picnic was planned one evening during the third week of school. Linda and I walked over with Dana and her children for that event. Not too many people attended; people are just too busy, even on the plains, for much planned socializing.

Evening basketball games provided an opportunity for socializing. Takini has no football field, so basketball is the main sports event. The games usually occurred at 6:00 p.m. People bought hotdogs, popcorn, and pickles for a dinner at the game. School was dismissed early on game days to provide students enough time to get home and come back with parents if possible. Basketball games gave the students and parents an opportunity for getting together with friends, although transportation was a problem for many.

**Parental Involvement**

It did seem to me that Takini had a difficult time involving parents in the decision making and policy development of the school. On several occasions I heard this topic discussed. I learned that in the first year or so that the school was open, Takini held meetings open to the parents. However, as previously mentioned, most parents lack transportation for going to the school. One Lakota coacher mentioned to me that she thought the administration should hold parent meetings in each of the three communities. Perhaps this would help the situation. I observed only one school meeting designed for parental involvement.

**Parent and Faculty Meeting**

On the 16th of September, the end of the third week of school, school was dismissed early. All parents were invited to Takini for a 4:30 p.m. gathering to meet faculty and for a 5:30 p.m. dinner provided by the school. I was excited about the meeting because most of the parents I knew were employees of the school. Although the cafeteria was nearly full, I counted only about 50 parents. Later, I was told this attendance was high. Some parents had made a special effort to attend because their attendance was required in order for their children to participate in sports.

During the meeting I was somewhat taken aback at the tone in which topics were presented and discussed. Perhaps this was due at least partially to the fact that Supt.
Engelhardt was not there (he was in a Denver hospital), and the high school principal led the meeting. The principal is part of the rodeo culture at Takini; he might be affectionately described as a “good-ole-boy.”

The first item of business was the reading of the Takini School Student Commitment, a type of individual contract to be signed by each student regarding rules for successful attendance and learning; the Extra Curricular Activities Contract, an alcohol and drug policy for sports participation; and, the Takini Discipline Consequences, a schedule of repercussions concerning behavior offenses. Copies of these had been passed out to each table, and we all followed along silently as the principal read them out loud. The first questions asked at the conclusion of the reading came from a parent: “Do the coachers also have to be alcohol and drug free? How do we know that they are? What will happen to them if they aren’t?” I was struck immediately by the hostility in the questions. The principal did not know how to respond, and there was an awkward moment until Harold spoke. He was able to explain that coachers too had signed contracts and that the school had a program designed to help coachers with alcohol or drug related problems.

Another parent made this inquiry: “What about coachers who give too hard of homework and don’t really work with the students? We should be able to call them, or they should come to our homes.” Again the hostility was evident. The principal’s response was: “If there’s a coacher who won’t do that, you just let me know.” This attitude appalled me, but I could see that it came from an old authoritarian model, a model which Takini is struggling to change. Fortunately, another coacher stood up and explained that the afternoon time from 4:00 to 5:00 was set aside for that kind of one-on-one tutoring. These interactions seemed to indicate that an adversarial relationship existed between parents and coachers.

The final item of business was the introduction of faculty and staff. This was accomplished by each person standing and introducing themselves. The parents were not given the opportunity to do the same. Afterwards the cafeteria workers opened the serving line, and dinner was served.

Personal Impressions

Later that evening, I sat in the trailer and discussed the meeting with Linda. She diagnosed the problem as being the lack of parental and community involvement. Even though the local school board approves policy, the majority of the community is not involved in the formulation of that policy. Either they are not given the opportunity or do not take it upon themselves to give school or the board input relating to their concerns. The
school administration designs rules and regulations. The contracts designed by the Takini administration seemed fair and appropriate to me, but I could understand how parents easily could feel disempowered as they were not involved in the decision making process. Their children are their main concern, and they want to be part of their children's education. I wondered why I did not see any signs of a parent organization and why the parents did not initiate one.

Ultimately the children of these Lakota people are the reason for the existence of Takini. My challenge was to get to know these children and to find out how I could share my work in dance and movement with them. I often wondered how and if my studies and previous experiences had prepared me to work with them. Our interactions formed the core of my research, and it was through those interactions that I came to know them. It is difficult to generalize about the Takini student population. My action research focused on my interactions with individual students as well as with the coachers with whom I collaborated. I will deal with the student population in the final sections through descriptions of our interactions.

**My Activities at Takini**

As previously mentioned, my first step at Takini was to introduce myself to the teachers at the in-service week before classes and to try to get to know my prospective colleagues. From these collegial interactions, I began to develop ideas for movement sessions I could present. Two ideas emerged at this time that evolved into the projects on which I focused.

**Intermediate Circle Classes**

My first idea was the fine arts project in the intermediate circle that I would team teach with Wendy. She had started this project in the spring of 1993 by working with the students in poetry writing on the subject of animals native to South Dakota. Already at that time, she had wanted to culminate the project with dance and music performances of the poems, but was unsure about how to develop those artistic expressions with her students (her area of expertise was creative writing with some experience in theatre). Wendy knew it would take at least a week to reinitiate this project and to develop a schedule because it would involve taking those interested TAG students out of their regular classes. In the meantime, I was eager to find another opportunity to work with the students.

**First two-week session.** At the suggestion of Micheline, an intermediate coacher, I agreed to teach a section during an elective block of time scheduled for the first two weeks
of school. This elective block was designed to give the students a choice in their school day and to allow them to rotate to other activities every two weeks. Wendy and I decided to call our class offering “Storytelling Through Dance and Movement.” We hoped to schedule the fine arts project into this block of time after the first two weeks.

Six girls signed up for this class. The group was quite disparate in attention span and ability; at least one student was identified as having FAE. It was in the context of this class that I was first confronted with the issue of discipline and the question of being an effective and yet understanding guide.

Together, Wendy and I planned the thematic material for this class. The first class was built on the idea of introducing ourselves through our names, telling the story or meaning behind our names, and creating a group dance with a movement for each name. The girls enjoyed this activity so much that we continued to practice the dance at each class meeting.

As part of our effort to include activities that help to foster social skills, I taught a movement game that involves group work in knotting and untying through hand holding. Wendy found an American Indian story (not Lakota) called “Born Tying Knots” that she read to the girls. We incorporated it with the knotting movement game, and added the two to the name game dance, creating a short performance. The girls liked the idea of presenting this short dance to the three intermediate circle homerooms, but were very nervous about performing for their peers.

We decided to videotape the last rehearsals, hoping the girls would learn from watching themselves. Instead, I learned about my own impatience with them. They were very distracted that day, and it was difficult for them to focus. I was tempted to tell them that if they did not behave and concentrate on the rehearsal, the performance the next day would be cancelled. I did not say this because to my relief, Wendy took over the class. The video shows me sitting very straight and still, as if I am barely keeping a lid on my frustration with them. This episode in particular helped me to realize how important it is to look at my values and habits as they relate to class control and discipline. Wendy and I continued to discuss this issue over the next month.

Fine arts project. Only one of the girls from the first session continued with us in the fine arts project. We tried to maintain the group at six students and had four girls who stayed throughout the month. Other girls came and went as their interest or commitment waned. The project was open to both boys and girls, but only girls volunteered. We tried
to meet with the students every day; but frequently changes in the school schedule or special events prohibited this. We also ended most sessions with journal writing.

Our overall goal for the class was to create a performance piece based on the student poetry written the previous spring. Short-term objectives included: introducing basic movement vocabulary, encouraging individual exploration of movement through improvisation, and building teamwork or partnering skills. Wendy and I also wanted to draw on American Indian images for movement motivation as well as to include traditions from other cultures. As part of this last objective, I taught the girls an African Welcome Dance, which they performed for an all school assembly, featuring a guest performance by Lakota singer and dancer Jackie Bird. They also performed the dance for the elementary school at an assembly, which concluded the first month of school.

By the last day of my residency, we had developed a performance to a student's poem *The Flapping Wings of Time* (see Appendix). The poem describes two friends who become separated when one girl moves away. It relates the memory of the friendship and the passage of time to the image of an owl flying away. Wendy and I decided to model the choreographic process as a duet for the students. We found the poem very meaningful because of our own friendship and the inevitable prospect of my departure from Takini. After creating our dance, we showed it to the girls as an example of what they could create. We then coached them in their separate duets. The final performance consisted of four duets performed simultaneously because Wendy and I danced our duet along with the three duets by the six students. The performance began with all four couples in motionless poses. We started and ended our duets simultaneously, moving to a taped recording of Wendy's reading of the poem. Our audience was the three intermediate circle homerooms. This final fine arts performance took place in the library during the morning of my last day at Takini. The girls had developed an interest in performing by this final event, but continued to talk about their shyness and hesitancy to dance in front of others. That day also saw the final performance of the older students to which all the intermediate girls, including those from the first two-week session and those who had only briefly participated in the fine arts project, were invited.

**Lakota Dance/Choreography and Creative Writing Class**

The seeds for this class were planted during the in-service week before school started when Wendy and I sat down with Stephanie to talk about the possibility of our collaborating. Stephanie clearly stated her interest in offering a class in traditional Lakota dance and drumming to the high school students. She thought I could contribute by
helping the students with choreography for formal presentations or demonstrations of powwow dancing. In fact, she seemed quite excited about the prospect of our creating performances based on traditional dance movement. Wendy suggested that she guide the students in poetry writing. The texts could then be used as images for creative movement or stand alone as readings incorporated into performances. At this time we thought the class would fit into the high school elective time slot at the end of the school day and would meet probably only once a week.

By the next week when school started, the project had expanded to include Valarie, Stephanie's sister, as a fourth coacher in our team. Valarie had agreed to serve as sponsor for the Lakota Dance Club, and she was interested in helping the students to design and make powwow dance outfits. From administrative decisions, we learned that we could offer the course as a daily activity during the Human Relations block from 12:40 to 2:15 p.m. The four of us met that Tuesday evening over soda pop and chips to write our class proposal, including student outcomes and performance indicators as required by the outcome based structure. This evening was an important beginning of our collaborative process. I brought jars of Ohio apple butter for each of the three women, and we easily created a friendly atmosphere in which to work.

Courses in the high school did not really start until the next week. Our proposal was accepted and became one of only two choices the junior students had for their Human Relations block. I had apprehensions that students might sign up who did not really want to participate, and to some extent that did happen. The group was large; 26 boys and girls enrolled in the five-week session. Throughout the duration of the class, we coachers faced unruly student behavior, hostility, and resistance. Discipline became a foremost issue for me with this group and was a frequent topic of discussion for me and my collaborators. The students' reluctance to perform in front of others was also a recurring theme for this group and my journal entries.

My participation in the teaching of the class began mainly with leading the students in dance warm-ups and emphasizing the self-discipline necessary for expanding one’s movement range and for maintaining physical well-being. I also presented several group games to help develop social interaction skills, such as the same knotting game taught to the younger students. It was interesting that although the students often appeared reluctant or shy in participating in these group activities, they also seemed to enjoy them and would request to repeat them the next day.
As part of the warm-up, I taught the students the African Welcome Dance (the success of the dance with this group motivated its presentation to the younger girls as well). My reasons for introducing this dance were twofold. I wanted to use the African movement and music to energize the students at the end of the warm-up. I also felt that it was part of my role to demonstrate the use of dance in other cultures, reinforcing the importance of the traditional dance of the Lakota in contrast. It was Stephanie who first suggested to the students that they perform it for the high school Honor Ceremony at the end of September. It surprised me both that she had the idea to include the Welcome Dance in the assembly and that the students showed interest to do so. The purpose of this assembly was to use a Lakota powwow tradition of the Honor Song to recognize those students with perfect attendance and those who had excelled scholastically for the month.

Before the assembly took place, the class had a session with Jackie Bird during her one-day residency at Takini. Stephanie again was the one to suggest that they perform the Welcome Dance for Jackie Bird. Ms. Bird was so impressed that she asked the students to perform it as an introduction for her performance that afternoon. They all agreed, but many were quite hesitant to dance in front of such a large gathering and consequently did not perform.

For the Honor Ceremony assembly, the students were told that they were required to perform, and most of them did participate. Perhaps they had also become more self-confident. We had asked four faculty and staff members to evaluate the performance as part of the grading process for the students. Hearing constructive criticism from audience members proved useful to the improvement of the students’ performance. The Welcome Dance and its music became a topic of conversation throughout the school with its unusual African movement style. Many students then approached me asking if they too could join the dance classes.

The focus of the last three weeks of the class was to be their group routine. (Due to administrative decisions, the session was extended to six weeks.) Wendy worked with several of the students who were interested in creative writing, and they wrote a poem, Welcome to the Flight of the Skyhawk, that accompanied the routine (see Appendix). Many of the ideas and decisions for the routine came from the coachers, especially Stephanie and Valerie. I helped mainly by contributing musical accompaniment, structuring timing for the sections, suggesting movement choices, and coaching for commitment and performance attitude. We invited outside community members, parents, and Takini faculty and staff (as well as the intermediate girls who had participated in dance
classes) to attend the culminating performance. We also planned a reception to follow the performance with the kitchen staff providing refreshments. The performance and festivities created an exciting, celebratory atmosphere for my last day at Takini.

The Stage is Set

As stated in Chapter III, data collection included ongoing reflections and analysis of research themes that were emerging as important issues. At times, the recording of observations and practice began to merge with contemplation and reflection. In the preceding pages of this chapter, I have attempted to distill out and present the descriptive findings of my study. By doing so, I have prepared the way, or set the stage, for the more interpretive analysis of my research at Takini. The content of the following chapter consists of my reflections.
CHAPTER V
REFLECTIVE INTERPRETATION OF COLLABORATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

The practice of data analysis in the action research cycle is a complex process different from that which takes place in many other research methods. In action research, data analysis is a continual part of the research and is the result of reflective, critical thought. In the interpretation of my data, I present the important aspects of what was truly an ongoing practice of reflection. In the following sections I use examples that illustrate my thinking at various stages of the research. As a whole, the examples demonstrate what the research experience taught me.

The critical thinking began with my rumination on my teaching biases before going to Takini. I continued by analyzing my interactions with students and coachers in the contexts of the two classes. End of the course reflections by students and teachers also were included as data analysis. Finally, I related my reflections to my original research questions concerning cultural interaction as a movement and dance teacher in a Lakota Indian school in search of insights about their issues.

Assumptions and Expectations

Before I started on my research at Takini, my literature review motivated me to examine my assumptions about teaching and learning. I also pondered what I expected to occur at Takini and how those assumptions and expectations influenced my approach to the research setting. This process was meaningful to me; and now, in introducing the themes that did emerge for me at Takini, it is useful to reiterate some of the concerns I carried with me.

The Issue of Lakota Spirituality and My Expectations

I expected that my residency would address the ethical issue of how I, a non-Indian interested in Lakota spirituality, might present and deal with spiritual values during interactions with students. However, once at Takini, rarely did opportunities occur for me
to be confronted with this question in practical situations with students. Although not an overt part of my teaching, I was aware of this question at all times. I tried to communicate my respect for Lakota beliefs, and this occurred in subtle ways. It became obvious to me that those responsible for presenting traditional Lakota belief and spirituality at Takini were also quite actively influenced by Christianity. I wondered how the two world views coexisted. Because of my Jewish heritage and the prejudice connected with it, I find it important to remain respectful of systems of belief that I do not share.

Throughout my residency, the issues that emerged centered on interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds within the teaching and learning process rather than on issues concerning spirituality. My research focus included studying my own pedagogy as a movement and dance specialist, and my relationships with faculty and students at Takini.

Teaching Assumptions

Upon review of my teaching assumptions, I realized that I had learned or formed values that could be contrary to cultural movement styles of the Lakota. Many of the healing, self-explorative techniques of the somatic work in which I am trained ask the student to address movement habits that carry psychological or emotional implications. This type of self-exploration can be unsettling even to sophisticated, city dwellers, and I believed might be more so to a reservation population with a variety of life experiences. I wondered if and how I should try to develop new styles of movement experience presentation for the Takini students. By the time my residency began I had decided to rely on teaching strategies that had proved to be successful for me in previous teaching situations. I found these techniques coupled with increased awareness of cultural differences to be effective as I presented movement and dance sessions at Takini.

One example of how important the examination of one’s teaching assumptions can be when working with another culture concerned my use of touch, or hands-on work. As discussed in the literature review, many dance educators use touch as a teaching tool. I was aware that unsolicited contact can be invasive, especially in a culture where there may be unspoken guidelines about when and how to touch another.

With this in mind, I was careful to touch the Takini students only when I knew I had their trust and approval to do so. In fact, with the junior high students I did not use touch techniques until the third week of class. Once for a warm-up, I was sharing techniques from self-shiatsu (a form of Japanese pressure point massage) with the class. I asked them if they would like me to locate a shoulder pressure point on them individually.
As I went around the circle, I was quite surprised that all, the students, even the most resistant, wanted me to touch them. I felt that my gradual approach to using touch with them was worthwhile.

Realities and Real Themes

In general, I approached my residency at Takini with my usual idealism concerning my ability to develop positive relationships within the teacher-student context. I hoped that both my previous experiences with Lakota people and my sense of humor would enable me to establish friendships quickly with the students. In actuality, it took quite a while for me to develop friendly interactions with most of the students. As the residency progressed, the issue of how I balance student self-expression and the maintenance of order in the classroom emerged as a theme. I also found it valuable to assess the effectiveness of my presentation of movement and dance activities. At times the students appeared to be uninterested in my offerings or to make fun of the dance explorations, yet later they would ask to repeat some of those same experiences. In the next section, I discuss the activities that I found to be the most successful. I realized how important it is for me to have at least a minimal amount of control over the class. Not only did I question my own teaching practices, but I also observed the disciplinary styles of my colleagues. My reflections on the use of discipline in teacher-student interactions constitute a large part of my data and its analysis.

Another theme to emerge in my reflective process concerns my teacher-teacher interaction in collaborative contexts at Takini. I learned about myself as a collaborator as well as about the different collaborative preferences of my colleagues. Questions arose for me on this topic, such as: What did we do that supported our successes? and how could we model collaborative interaction for the students to emulate?

Finally, I present the themes of classroom interaction with students and collaborative interaction with colleagues. These themes relate to the questions of cultural interaction and the influence of the individual’s cultural background on his or her style of creating relationships, but in a subtle way. The themes also overlap; collaboration included sharing philosophies, methods, and styles of disciplining and interacting with students. In order to represent that overlap, I analyze each of the two groups separately, the intermediate circle and the junior high circle. The themes of collaboration and discipline are then presented within the context of each group. Descriptions of the movement performances created by the students as well as by myself and my coacher colleagues are included as metaphors for our experience.
Successful Movement and Dance Activities

In general, the movement activities that I found to be the most valuable for the students involved interactive or relationship skills rather than specific dance steps. I believe that it was the manner in which I presented dance movements and explorations that held the most meaning for the Lakota students. Even the warm-up routine was presented as dealing with one’s relationship with oneself. Many of the class sessions were combinations of creative movement explorations, games, dance exercises, as well as relaxation and visualization techniques that I synthesized over the years of studying and teaching movement and dance. I also employed teaching strategies I had acquired from my study of American Indian learning style. My observation of the movement responses of the students was enhanced by use of LMA and BF. Those studies in addition to BMC aided me in the preparation of the students for dance. The assessment of movement activities and of my presentation style might be interesting for anyone working with a similar population.

I presented the same basic warm-up to both groups of students. It began with stretching exercises for the back and legs done while sitting. One of the principles of BF is to move the spine in all three planes (vertical, horizontal, and sagittal) for flexibility and strength; that was part of the rationale for the back exercises. Several other movements from BF were incorporated into the warm-up as well, such as circling the arm and shifting the weight of the body from the pelvis. Throughout the warm-up, I usually emphasized the importance of regular exercise for taking care of one’s physical health. The younger intermediate girls seemed to enjoy the routine and learning about developing flexibility. With the junior high students, I frequently struggled to maintain participation and to keep the group focused on the exercises. I believe it was peer pressure that made it awkward for some of the older students to participate. They were afraid of looking silly or of being the only ones to try. However, sometimes I was surprised by the seriousness with which several of the junior high boys participated in the warm-up. I tried to relate the warm-up to sports and athletic prowess; this helped the boys to understand the reasoning behind the warm-up.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I taught the African Welcome Dance at the end of the junior high warm-up to introduce another cultural style of movement that differed from Lakota traditional dance and to energize the students. The students enjoyed the dance, although many were quite resistant to performing it. I believe it was successful as part of the warm-up. I did not emphasize the performance of it; that idea came from
Stephanie. On the other hand, the performance of the African Welcome Dance was not a failure, even with the reluctance of the students. It gave the school population something very new to discuss and made the dance classes something special.

Many of the other movement sessions included activities that are designed to teach relationship skills, such as how to be an effective leader or how to be a dependable follower. With the intermediate circle girls, we spent time exploring partner games such as the mirror game and making shapes with our bodies that interlock with the shapes of other people. Those activities led to group games of copying shapes, following one another in movement, and movement conversations. These explorations were important for that group and enabled the girls to create their own duets. I wish I could have presented similar experiences to the older students and would do so if given the opportunity in a future residency.

The younger girls also enjoyed the creative improvisations when they explored the movement of various animals. We did not imitate the specific movement of any animal, but tried to expand on the essence of an animal's quality of movement. This was another instance when my study of LMA proved useful for it aided my own understanding of qualities of movement. One of the most successful classes with this group was a combination of group relationship activities and animal movement. From a game of group follow the leader we created a group owl, touching one another in the shape of a wing and moving with the quality of flying. This class led Wendy to choosing the poem about the owl that became the motivation for the duets.

Several times I ended classes for both groups with relaxation. The visualizations I led combined bodily kinesthetic awareness (using principles from both BMC and BF) with Lakota philosophy that I had learned from Thin Elk. The importance of the breath, how it nourishes each cell, and how it connects each person to all other living beings were the main themes of the visualizations. Many of the students had a difficult time concentrating on these meditations. However, they improved as time went on; and I felt these experiences were important for them.

I think that all the above movement and dance activities are ones that were appropriate for the needs and learning styles of the students. The students' evaluations reflected their appreciation of these experiences. The process of taking care of one's physical health, exploring movement qualities, and playing movement games that teach relationship skills was valuable for these students. In future residencies, I would continue to emphasize those processes over products. I believe that the need to satisfy academic
performance outcomes with choreographed dances may have hindered the students' exploration process. The shyness of the students also hampered their enjoyment of performance. Perhaps with more time, they would have gained more confidence and have been more eager to perform. However, some of the performance reluctance undoubtedly developed from a kind of cultural peer pressure, a reservation school culture if not the Lakota culture.

Intermediate Circle

Before arriving at Takini, I had learned of the fine arts project in the intermediate circle through telephone conversations with Wendy. At that time, she sounded quite excited to have someone with expertise in movement and dance involved in the project. I was encouraged in my efforts at collaboration and acceptance by her offers to provide me with an opportunity to participate in the Takini TAG program. As my work at Takini progressed, it soon became clear to me that my relationship with Wendy was one of the most important elements of my residency. This was true not only because she was the coordinator of my residency, but also because of the friendship we developed and our ability to work together. This relationship grew daily as we had opportunities to discuss our questions concerning our interactions with students and with our coacher colleagues.

Early on, we quite easily and naturally found a way to team-teach, giving and taking leadership at appropriate times. Our session with intermediate girls in the two-week storytelling class (prior to the fine arts project) served as a pilot project for us to explore working together. Wendy participated as a model student when I guided movement experiences. I tried to do the same when she presented poetry. Wendy assumed the teacher role when the girls became extremely distracted or unruly, or when questions centered on school schedules or rules. Because this group was difficult to handle, the subject of discipline and teacher control became an important topic for us.

Wendy felt that some of the girls presented discipline problems because they were unaccustomed to the spatial freedom that the movement class provided. I was puzzled about how to maintain enough control to guide the girls, yet not so much as to stifle the free exploration of their own self-expression. We both wanted the girls to be able to share their dances with their classes, and yet feared they would not be prepared to do so. The following series of events are an example of how we addressed these problems collaboratively. They reflect our interaction, the ways we monitored and influenced each
other. This narrative illustrates the reflective process of action research, the act of data analysis combined with the practice of teaching and learning.

**An Example of Our Reflections and Interactions on the Question of Discipline**

It was apparent to us that one of the older girls in the group, Inyan, was also frustrated with the lack of concentration and motivation some of the others demonstrated. One morning, Wendy suggested to me that I go into the Inyan’s classroom and ask her opinion about the matter. This suggestion surprised me; I was not familiar with the open concept of Takini classrooms. I also realized that this suggestion was a way to practice my belief in asking students what they think.

When I entered into her classroom, Inyan momentarily turned away from her desk and was eager to talk with me. Her advice to Wendy and me was that we should make the misbehaving offenders stand for five minutes with their noses against a wall. As I returned to the TAG office, I thought that this conversation proved that we needed to be stricter with the girls. However, again Wendy surprised me. She responded by saying that Inyan’s solution only revealed the disciplinary actions she has experienced.

Our contradictory viewpoints led us into a discussion about the self-discipline necessary to accomplish many goals in life, especially to fulfill the demands of theatrical performance. I felt that we still needed to emphasize a commitment to performance so that the girls would be well-prepared for the showing. Wendy maintained that we needed to give them the chance to learn that lesson themselves, and that our role was to encourage them along the way.

The next day was the last opportunity for rehearsal, with the performances later in the day. We presented a gentle mix of our two philosophies, trying to nurture the girls and to help them recognize the value of being well-prepared. By myself, I might have spent the entire time rehearsing the dance. Wendy, however, felt it important to fan their enthusiasm by allowing them time to put on lipstick. The performances were successful except for minor mishaps. The most disappointing aspect for Wendy and me was that two of the more unruly girls were so inhibited that they both just stood there throughout half of the dance. We were, however, pleased with the responses of the audience.

Once more Wendy surprised me, when the next and last day of the class, she confided that I had influenced her. She thought we needed to finalize the session in a more controlled setting with more structured guidance from the two of us. She hoped that we could use the library, a setting with an atmosphere of containment for the final class meeting. She also suggested that we send one of the more unfocused girls for counseling.
Together we designed a visualization that I would guide, culminating in a group discussion about the movement sessions and what they had learned. This type of exchange might happen in any team-teaching. However, the action research process emphasized and clarified the reflective aspect of our work. The analysis of our actions as we were involved in the practice of teaching deepened my awareness of what I was questioning and learning with Wendy.

Collaborative Reflective Analysis

Afterwards, Wendy and I discussed what we learned as a team. We reflected on our successes and on the questions we still had concerning the facilitation of structured learning within an environment that also nurtured self-exploration and self-expression. We made plans for the next session with intermediate girls, the fine arts project, thus following the action research cycle of planning, acting, reflecting, and planning anew.

We acknowledged our ability to work together as a team, developing lessons that included collective input. We decided to include journal writing as part of the fine arts project, utilizing Wendy’s strength in creative writing. Because we both were comfortable in sharing the leadership of the classes, we decided we would continue to allow that to occur naturally, with little preplanning.

As the fine arts project progressed, our working relationship developed even further. During our frequent discussions concerning the needs of individual students, we recognized the similarities of our teaching philosophies and styles. This reinforced both our friendship and our trust in one another. Eventually, we were writing memos together, finishing or starting each other’s thoughts when one person left the computer to run an errand (Wendy was skilled in maintaining written communication with Takini faculty and staff concerning the TAG projects). Our collaboration was based on mutual philosophies, shared objectives, and an openness to learn from each other.

Personal Reflective Analysis

My personal reflection and self-analysis centered on how I interacted with Wendy. I realized how important our friendship was to my personal learning process. My trust in her allowed me to appear vulnerable, to admit my mistakes, to ask questions, and to learn from her a style of teaching that accepts each child as an individual. In my eyes, Wendy appeared as a capable, nurturing and guiding teacher, who could offer an undisciplined and distracted child another option for learning. At the same time that I envied her ability to guide the learning process and emulated it, she supported me by acknowledging the wisdom in many of my choices.
I also continually reflected on my need for control in my teaching. I recognized how important it was for me to have some sense of order in my classroom; even when students are working on their own projects, I need to know that they are focusing on the task. It is hard for me to provide them with individual motivation if they are not participating in the group process. My interaction with Wendy helped me to perceive my interactions with students from her perspective. Not only was her teaching style slightly more indulging than mine, but she also knew more about each student’s unique background and homelife. I learned to abandon some of my expectations of students through discussions with Wendy. Throughout my residency, Wendy and I continued to discuss our personal styles and temperaments in dealing with students and discipline issues. Discipline, however, was not the only issue to emerge from my reflections.

Although my journal writing during the first two weeks of working with intermediate students centered on discipline, my reflections from the last four weeks with the fine arts project did not. Because the student population had changed to girls who were part of the TAG program, and therefore more independently motivated, I was able to concentrate on other aspects of my teaching practice. The journal writing was another aspect of the sessions that merited analysis. The girls openly enjoyed having time at the end of class to write or draw in their own notebooks. Occasionally, Wendy and I learned something from reading a journal that we might not otherwise have known. For example, one girl wrote that she wanted to know what to expect in future class sessions. After reading that comment, I tried to tell the girls what we were planning for the next day or throughout the week. At other times, I wondered if perhaps the students were writing what they thought we the teachers wanted to read, such as “Wendy and Eleanor are fun,” or “I like dance class.” I think journalizing was a positive experience for these girls, but in the future I would design the journals as a dialogue between student and teacher. In that format, students could be encouraged to ask questions and to give more critical feedback about the class.

Working collaboratively with Wendy and these girls, I was able to develop classes that built on my experience with movement and dance activities and that incorporated a curricular theme of study, animals native to South Dakota. During that process, the girls danced a tornado dance (also native to South Dakota!) and a moon cycle dance. These dances were process oriented—the performances were secondary. I would continue to work with the objective of process over product with these students in the future. However, it was a valuable experience for the girls to have a final product, the Flapping
Wings of Time dance. I believe that performance can give a meaningful closure to an experience.

*Flapping Wings of Time—The Fine Arts Project*

The creation and performance of the final product of the intermediate fine arts project was a metaphoric summary of our interaction. As co-achers, Wendy and I choreographed our own duet to the poem, *Flapping Wings of Time*, modeling the expectations we had for the students’ attempt to create duets for the same piece. We both felt the emotional impact of performing the piece as it related to our own friendship and the fact that I was leaving Takini. We shared a joint pride of ownership in the duet, recognizing the value of our individual contributions to the choreography as well as those of each other. This was similar to our joint pride in the guidance of the class.

The dance had moments when we moved in synchrony, mirroring each other. At one place we stood back to back; at another we held each other by the waist. Later on, we separated and moved in our individual ways. The ending position found us contacting each other through touch, but motionless in different positions. The movement was symbolic of our relationship and the work we had done together throughout the residency.

Of course, we were also concerned with the performances of the students. Because the girls were unsure about their choreographic process, we demonstrated our piece to them. For awhile, especially at the beginning, the girls seemed to imitate our movement. However, with our coaching, each pair of girls came up with their own ideas for the ending pose of the poem, and each duet had its distinctly different movements.

I also taught the girls a choreo-poem (see Appendix) that we performed in unison to end the performance. The movement for this brief sequence came from Laban’s dimensional scale; the words were my adaptation of a Navaho chant and reflected the Lakota philosophy of the seven directions that I had learned from Thin Elk. The choreo-poem has meaning for me personally, because it brings together Lakota thought and Laban theory of spatial design. The girls performed it with respect and concentration, bringing a closure to our final performance.

The performance commitment of the girls definitely developed over the residency; yet in the final performance before an audience, there were several moments of distraction and shy hesitancy. It was obvious that the girls had learned an introductory understanding of expressing oneself through movement, and enjoyed the process of movement exploration; however they were still unsure of themselves in a performance situation.
In my interactions with these girls, I had become more successful in my attempts to combine supportive encouragement with instructional guidance in the area of dance creation and performance. The girls and I were well on our way in the development of an appropriate interactive coacher-student style. I was aware that Wendy’s previously established relationship with these girls enabled me to develop a similar one. The girls had expressed their interests and moods in class, sometimes following my guidance and at other times, demanding that I shift focus to accommodate their needs. I am now even more aware of this challenging balance between teaching and learning.

**OBSERVATIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coacher to Coacher</th>
<th>Students to Coachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valarie and Stephanie are sisters. Wendy and I are recent, but close friends. Valarie and Stephanie are Lakota; Wendy and I are white. There are cultural differences because of these differences in background. Wendy, Valarie, and Stephanie have taught together at Takini for four years. I have been at Takini only two weeks. Wendy and I feel that Stephanie is a strong leader. All share the goals of modeling expected student behavior and supporting each other in the class.</td>
<td>Students know Stephanie, Valarie, and Wendy, but I am new to them. They seem to like the familiar coachers, but at times may treat them disrespectfully. They have no experience with movement or dance training, and seem to not know what to expect from me.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coachers to Students</th>
<th>Student to Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valarie and Stephanie know almost all the students. They are related directly to many of them. Wendy knows almost all the students, at least by name. She encouraged several of them to sign up for the creative writing component of the class. I know only Sara, who lives in the trailer I share with Sara’s mother.</td>
<td>The students all know each other except for a few who are newcomers to Takini. In general they treat each other roughly, with teasing, hitting, and shoving. In several of the first classes, several students suffered slight injuries from another student. For the most part, they are shy about speaking out or performing in front of their peers.</td>
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Figure 1. Initial Assessment of Relationships
Junior High Circle

The themes of collaboration and discipline were intensified in the junior high class, simply because the number of people, both coachers and students, was greater than in the intermediate circle fine arts project. Maintaining communication among four coachers was more difficult than between two. Similarly, motivating and guiding 26 students was also more difficult than with six. In addition, the topic of cultural interaction became more obvious and more important because the subject of the class was the combination of Lakota dance and creative writing to achieve a theatrical performance.

Figure 1 presents an Initial Assessment of Relationships, a portion of my early reflective analysis. The format for the chart was suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) in their guidelines for the action researcher. I found the process of creating the chart helped me to clarify my role in the class. As the class progressed, my emotional response to my participation vacillated between feelings of confusion, distress, and elation. It was necessary for me to constantly re-evaluate, or analyze, my interactive style with students as well as with my colleagues.

Coacher Interaction

Naturally, it was more complex to cooperatively plan and evaluate with four women than it was with only Wendy and myself. I recognized that our different backgrounds influenced our teaching styles and specific objectives. I began to see that individual personality traits determined interactions as much as general characteristics of cultural heritage. Although not Lakota by birth or background, Wendy seemed to exemplify many of the Lakota values I had read about before coming to Takini. On the other hand, I found Stephanie to use more strict discipline that she may have learned from her own experience in non-Indian schools. Our interactions as a collaborative team were complicated by personal issues as well as by cultural ones.

It was evident that as a team we shared general goals; and as time progressed we found ways to communicate and to become friends. Perhaps our greatest success was the development of our friendships. The Sunday evening planning sessions and potluck pizza dinners were also social events for the four of us. The joking and teasing enabled us to get to know each other and to genuinely like one another. It was also important for us to address our cultural differences in this informal setting.

As an example of the cultural component of our interaction, a simple event illustrates how we honestly dealt with questions. One student had written a poetry piece describing a traditional sweat lodge and the smell of smudging sage. Wendy and I had
talked about the poem and thought about incorporating smudging into the dance. When we asked Stephanie and Valarie about this idea, they told us it would be inappropriate to put a sacred act into a performance. It was important for us to acknowledge our ignorance of what might be appropriate and to ask questions. It was equally important for Stephanie and Valarie to be able to share their beliefs about the Lakota culture with us. The sociable environment helped ensure that no one felt awkward asking questions or stating what they thought. At the same time that I acknowledged our ability to discuss our cultural differences and even to joke about them, I also was aware that we were different. I could feel my own slight restraint as a result of my desire not to offend.

We also used the evening meetings to discuss students and their individual problems. Many of our decisions were agreed upon consensually, and we were able to support each other in those decisions concerning students and their class participation. By working as a team, we were better able to present ourselves with consistency to the students.

Interaction of Coachers with Students

Although we did strive towards consistency in our interactions with students, it was also obvious that we were individuals with different teaching styles. My personal reflections helped me to recognize moments when I dropped out of class guidance (allowing another coacher to be in charge), and situations when I was able to reinforce the strategies of a colleague. Several examples in my notes illustrate these issues; following are two.

Student decision-making. One of our original objectives for the class was to guide the students in making their own choreographic decisions for their performance piece. It was soon evident that they were ill-prepared for decision-making. In other circumstances, I might have presented small group modern dance projects to develop their choreographic skills. In the context of this class, with its time constraints and emphasis on Lakota dance heritage, modern dance assignments seemed inappropriate to me.

I also felt uncomfortable making choices for the students, but other coachers were not. Most of the choreography was created by the coachers. The students were also aware of this. One day, when reviewing the dance, a student declared that he had forgotten the movement because it was not a student idea anyway. I realized that I could have been more assertive in presenting ideas for movement experiences to my colleagues and then possibly to the students. I felt this was a result of my hesitancy to overstep my bounds and to remain respectful of the choices of the Lakota coachers.
Classroom control. Another example illustrates how I learned from observing my colleagues in their interactions with students. I am accustomed to being in the classroom before the students. I followed this practice with the junior high class, but found myself quite frustrated at the undisciplined manner in which the students came into the room. It was quite difficult for me to establish control and to start the session before other coaches arrived.

One day it dawned on me that I need not be the first in the room; the other coaches arrived after the students. The first time I tried this strategy, I entered the gym to find the usual chaos and Stephanie sitting and talking with two students, a situation similar to the one I experienced when I arrived first. Stephanie, however, appeared to accept the reality of the situation and not to fight it. I learned that I, too, could relax and use that transition time to interact with the few students who were not unruly. It was important for me to observe my fellow coaches and to accommodate my personal tendencies to the Takini environment.

My Interactive Style with Students

Because this group was so large, I found it difficult to interact with students beyond my classroom role as presenter of movement exercises or as supporter of my coacher colleagues. By the second week of the session, I realized that I felt limited by this role of warm-up leader, with its emphasis on discipline and the rigors of physical training. During the warm-ups, many students were resistant. As a result of my reflections on this situation, I decided to try to interact with them more on an individual basis.

One way I achieved this was to include questions in simple hallway encounters. Misti, a shy girl who often appeared recalcitrant in class and refused to participate in much of the movement, actually began to participate more in class after I approached her in out-of-class exchanges. We began by talking about clothes that were comfortable for movement class and eventually extended our brief discussions to include the content of the group poem and dance. I learned that I needed to approach the students as individuals in a nonthreatening manner outside of the classroom. By putting aside my impressions of them based on classroom behavior and finding moments when the peer group was not an influence, I was able to establish better rapport with the students.

Flight of the Sky Hawk—Performance as Metaphor

Reflective analysis of my work in the junior high circle reveals themes similar to those in the intermediate circle but with different results. Basically, my analysis constitutes the lessons I learned. Because the interactions, with both coaches and students, differed
from the interactions in the intermediate circle and fine arts project, the lessons were also different. The junior high performance, including the presentation by the coachers, further reflects my experience with this group and how it differed from that with the younger students.

**Coacher performance.** From the beginning of our collaboration, Wendy suggested that we four coachers create a performance for the final presentation, modeling the behavior we expected of the students. We all agreed. Stephanie, Wendy, and I were quite enthusiastic about this performance prospect; Valarie was slightly reluctant. The topic of the performance was always the last subject discussed at our meetings.

The final product was actually four solos, reflecting our individual strengths and interests, with a brief group closing. I began the performance by introducing the class objectives and describing the performances of both coachers and students that would follow. I then performed a short choreo-poem based on the sacred seven directions of the Lakota people, demonstrating my respect for Lakota philosophy and my background in abstract movement or modern dance performance. Wendy followed me with a reading of one of her original poems that contained images of nature and family. Next, Stephanie, dressed in her traditional costume, performed a traditional Lakota powwow dance accompanied by a recording of her father singing a family song. Valarie then displayed powwow regalia she had made and spoke about the work the students had completed in the construction of their own outfits. We ended with all four of us performing in unison the choreo-poem that I had earlier demonstrated.

An analysis, or interpretation, of our performance seemed obvious to me immediately. As a team, we cooperated well together, yet we each remained significantly separate in our contributions to the class guidance. Both Wendy and I tried to be respectful of the Lakota culture and to include elements of it in our work (e.g., nature, the sacred directions). Stephanie and Valarie were able to proudly present their heritage as a major element in Takini's curriculum. I had almost insisted on our short finale, needing to experience a mutuality in our work together. Both Wendy and I would have preferred a more collaborative performance because of our emphasis on the communal process. In other words, the performance of the coachers revealed the individuality of each, the differences in our cultural backgrounds, and the existence of a shared mutuality, but not a collaborative whole.

**Student performance.** The final performance of the students further demonstrated the metaphoric meaning inherent in a movement experience. The performance revealed the
attitudes of the students as well as the relationships that were established between the students and the coachers.

With the arrival of guests and the anticipation of the reception to follow, the day of the actual performance was filled with excitement and nervous tension for most of the students. Many students, who had previously been resistant in classes, appeared to be eager to perform. Others came up to me and asked if they were required to perform—they knew they were but felt reluctant. The most telling moment came during the performance when one girl left the group to approach first Stephanie and then me to say she did not want to do her part in the finale. I remember telling her that it was too late; her classmates were depending on her. The performance was a learning experience for these students. They exhibited much of the same resistance and reluctance they had shown in class, but with a major difference—they did uphold their responsibility to perform. Their participation in the dance enabled them to realize at least part of the goal of the class, that of performance.

It was equally revealing to note the relationships of the coachers to the group as exhibited in the performance. During classtime rehearsals, we coachers all danced along with the students, calling out cues and giving suggestions. For the actual performance, only Stephanie danced with the student group. She was especially important as a role model in the Lakota traditional dance section. Valarie sat in the audience, Wendy helped the student videographers (also TAG students), and I ran the cassette player. Again, we were each important in our individual roles, but we did not participate as an integrated whole with the students as Wendy and I did in the intermediate circle.

Perhaps no one else but myself acknowledged how the performance experience summarized the relationships that had developed during the class sessions. Reflective analysis provided me with the opportunity to study our patterns of interaction. Then I re-examined the performances and saw them as concise examples of those patterns of interaction. The next step in this analysis was the consideration of the evaluations of the residency written by students and coachers.

**Reflections by Takini Students and Coachers**

The comments, which were made by the students and coachers with whom I worked, about my research residency were equal in importance to my reflective analysis. Their evaluations focused more on preferences than on lessons learned about interaction and relationships; however, they serve to illuminate my reflections and are useful to include here.
Intermediate Circle Student Evaluations

A month after I left Takini, Wendy gathered together five of the girls who had participated in the fine arts project to reminisce about my residency and to write an evaluation of it. After rereading their journals and reviewing videotapes, they collectively determined 11 components of the workshop: exercise and stretching, relaxation and visualization, movement activities, free dancing, journals, stories, body charts (looking at pictures of anatomy), costuming, learning specific dances (the African Welcome Dance), creating dances, and performing for audiences. Next Wendy conferenced with each girl individually to rate the effectiveness of each component and solicit personal responses to my residency.

The two activities that received unanimously high ratings were movement activities and free dancing. Writing in their journals and creating dances received the second highest ratings. The more structured activities of exercise and stretching plus relaxation and visualization were enjoyed but with less enthusiastic ratings. Reading stories, learning specific dances, and performing for audiences were rated less favorably, followed by body charts and costuming. All of the girls said they would repeat the experience.

These evaluations gave me teacher-researcher issues to consider in the future. How important are the performances? How valuable is it to teach set sequences with structured movements, such as the African Welcome Dance? There are no definite answers to these questions. I realize that as students we sometimes do not enjoy the challenges (such as performing) from which we actually learn the most. I believe that student responses can help provide a teacher with new insights regarding teaching practices.

Junior High Circle Student Evaluations

The evaluations written by the junior high students had a different purpose and mode of presentation, but were also valuable for me to examine as part of the reflective process. On the same day of the final performance, the junior high students were called to the library during the last period of school to answer five questions written collectively by Wendy, Stephanie, Valarie, and myself. These questions served as a self-evaluation of their participation in the class:

1. What did you like best about this class? Try to list at least three things.
2. If you were telling an outsider what you learned in this class, what would you say?
3. What would you change about this class to improve it for next time? Try to list at least three things.
4. How well do you think you did in the class? Describe your attitude.

5. If Takini were to form a touring performing arts group, who would you nominate from this class? You can include yourself.

Twenty students completed this questionnaire as part of the grading process and the evaluation of their work.

The first question asked what they enjoyed the best in the course. The students most frequently responded that it was “fun,” that they liked the teachers, the dances, and the dancing. Several students mentioned that they liked learning new things and exercising. Also noted once or twice were: making outfits, the African Welcome Dance, performing, and the other students.

I found the unusual comments the most interesting. For instance, one girl said that she liked the “communicating.” Another girl expressed a similar idea by saying that she enjoyed the “talking and listening” as well as the “relaxment.” These responses are important to me because they reveal my own personal values. I appreciated that these students acknowledged our objective of establishing open lines of communication between students and coachers.

The second question asked students to describe the class to an outsider. In general this question elicited vague responses about the class as fun or learning dances and new moves. Two students did mention my participation as a dance teacher, and one mentioned learning about a new culture (the African Welcome Dance). One boy who had signed up with an interest in creative writing, wrote, “It is fun once you get the hang of it. But you have to want it to learn it.” One of the simpler, shorter answers said quite a bit to me: “How to keep your heart up.” These last two quotations revealed to me these students’ recognition of the struggle to express oneself before an audience. I thought these two students in particular meant what they wrote and were not trying to win favor with the coachers for a grade.

The third question asked for ideas about improving the class for the future. It received a variety of answers. Six students said that they would change nothing. Several expressed a desire to do more of what we did do (learn more dances, write more poems) and for a greater variety of music. Three students interpreted the question self-critically, referring to what they would change about their own participation. For example, one of the boys responded that he would “listen to the teachers, not mess around, and do my work.” On the other hand, two students replied that they would want the behavior of the other students to change in future sessions.
I find this variety of responses to be intriguing. One interpretation I made is that the students are unaccustomed to thinking critically about content; hence, the answers of nothing and more of the same concerning what to change for improvement. I also find meaning in the fact that five of the students were concerned with behavior issues, much as I was. Was student behavior as disrupting to the class as I often felt it was? Or, is criticism of student behavior an aspect of school life with which the students are familiar? And finally, what were these students learning about attitude and self-confidence and how those attributes are embodied in disciplined performance? These questions are further complicated by the responses to the next question.

The fourth question asked the students to evaluate their personal participation in the class. In reviewing those responses, I found myself determining the degree of honesty of each student. Three students were of the opinion that they had done well and had tried their best; my assessment of their achievement and effort did not concur with theirs. However, I felt that eight students attempted to be honestly self-critical in admitting that they had displayed bad attitudes. Three other students mentioned that shyness had affected their attitudes, and I believed their statements. Six other students, who in the estimation of the coachers were the most committed to the class, acknowledged that they had tried to cooperate and learn. The students have little experience in self-evaluation or self-reflection, and I think this question challenged them.

The last question challenged the students in a similar fashion. It asked them to select those students in the class who performed well. Fourteen students' choices for a touring performance group agreed with the recommendations of the coachers. Of those 14, 5 also named the four coachers. One of these students mentioned only himself and the coachers. Six students replied that all the students should tour, which seemed strange to me. I wondered if this reflects a cultural value not to exclude others, or if some other sort of peer pressure prevented these students from determining who actually did merit selection.

Observing these students as they wrote their evaluations in the library that last day of my residency, I felt they were taking the assignment seriously. However, I wondered if the excitement of the performance and reception earlier that day influenced their impressions of the class. In general, their comments did help me to know what they learned from the experience, and would be helpful to me in planning a follow-up session. I could not help but notice the poor writing skills of most of the students. As part of a continuation of this course, I would include journal writing, much as was done with the
intermediate students. Most probably, these students would progress in reflective and critical thinking if given the opportunity.

Evaluations from Coacher Colleagues

I left short one-page forms with all three of my collaborators and sent follow-up notes requesting their comments. Perhaps representative of our relationship, Wendy was the only coacher to send me her personal evaluation of my residency. Because she and I worked on both classes and spent time together each day discussing our ideas and students’ reactions, her thoughts are quite important to my reflections concerning my residency.

Wendy spoke mainly about her own experience participating and learning along with students. She personally enjoyed the creative movement explorations and has already incorporated movement and dance into her teaching of creative writing. In fact, she continued to work with intermediate circle students in the fine arts project, expanding the group to 16 dancers for a December performance.

Included in her evaluation was an assessment of my strengths and weaknesses. She acknowledged that I was more focussed and assertive in the workshops with the intermediate students than with the junior high students, and that this was probably due to the more complex cultural interactions and coacher relationships in the latter class. She also recognized that I was more successful in dealing with distracted students when I allowed myself to shift gears, from talking to moving. That assessment refers to moments when I realized that explanations or discussions were no longer necessary and that the students were ready to dance.

Wendy and I shared our concerns to act respectfully relative to the Lakota culture as well as to encourage self-expression through a dominant culture perspective on the creative arts. She eloquently expressed that concern in a letter:

We (Eleanor and I) have chose this situation—we have chosen to immerse ourselves in someone else’s culture and to respect (defer?) their values/norms/traditions. On the one hand, dance is so much a part of Lakota culture that we have an easier time of incorporating it into the curriculum at Takini than we might have elsewhere. On the other hand, we’re always walking that balance—teetering sometimes—between what’s appropriate and what’s not in terms of culture—Lakota culture—and we look to others to make that judgement call. But there’s a “culture” of art that we believe to be universal in that it speaks to the human heart regardless of race, financial status, gender roles, etc. We were trying to teach where the circles overlap, I guess. As far as Takini goes, this experience
As I learned to expect from having worked so closely with Wendy, her evaluation served to affirm and confirm my experience. Her words summarized the next and final stage of my data analysis, the topic of cultural interaction and how I answered my original research questions.

**Final Reflections on Initial Questions**

I began this study with questions addressing my situation as a movement and dance teacher, with my own unique background, in residency at a Lakota reservation school. This concluding section of my reflections reviews my data and its analysis in relationship to those initial questions. The questions serve to synthesize the data and bring the analysis into a meaningful whole.

Four of the questions fall under a main question that asked about my role in a reservation school and concern the cultural interaction in which I participated. These questions stimulated me to address teaching adaptation and accommodation to the influence of others' (in this case Lakota) spiritual values and philosophy, and development of movement and dance education within a strong ethnic dance context. I began answering these questions by reviewing the history of assimilation in the educational policy for American Indians as well as researching learning styles and cultural attitudes towards students with special needs. My personal reflections included a literary investigation of assumptions in my movement and dance education background. I expected that my research experiences would continue to directly address the questions. In analyzing the themes that did emerge in my research, teacher-teacher collaboration and teacher-student relationships, I recognized that these themes are part of the cultural interaction questions with which I started the study, but subtly so rather than directly.

As I created my role at Takini, I needed first to discover what the goals of Takini were. Next it was necessary for me to find out how the Takini coaches wanted me to participate with them. The intermediate circle fine arts project was already part of the TAG program, and there was a gap in the project that I could fill. As part of the cultural program for the junior high students, Stephanie knew that she wanted to offer traditional Lakota dance and that I could help in structuring the traditional dance into choreographed performance pieces. However, because another goal for that class was that the students create the dances themselves, I was more hesitant in suggesting my ideas and more
cautious about overstepping my boundaries in guiding the class. I was less successful in this class because of my lack of clarity about how I could best contribute.

I accommodated to the learning styles of the Lakota students by applying many of my previous teaching strategies, which included cooperative learning. I have been accustomed to working in nongraded situations where students are encouraged to work at their own ability. These strategies coincide with ones recommended for American Indians. Because of my previous experiences and already established pedagogy, I did not find the Lakota students difficult to work with, except in the area of motivation and familiarity with movement and dance explorations. These were my biggest challenges and often resulted in my experiencing a lack of control in the classroom, especially with the older students. I found that the students needed to be taught how to participate in group work, how to share their ideas, and how to give or take leadership. Their lack of experience in movement and dance as well as their being unfamiliar with me as a coacher meant that they were not truly committed to the subject matter and the class. In the six weeks that I worked with the students, we only reached a starting point in their understanding of participation in a movement and dance learning situation, a situation that can address the learning styles designated appropriate for American Indian students.

The third question asked in what ways the spiritual and philosophical values of the Lakota people affected my work. As explained earlier in the study, I had much exposure to Lakota ways and spirituality through my work with Gene Thin Elk. Having attended Sun Dances, sweat lodge ceremonies, and a healing ceremony, I was prepared for this question, constituting a major part of my research. However, rarely did I discuss my experiences with students. Instead, I found that I employed Lakota themes, such as respect for the environment, in more general ways. Wendy had already based the intermediate fine arts project on Lakota views of animals. She and I continued to explore traditional Lakota beliefs and how we could incorporate them into our work with the intermediate girls. The traditional values of the indigenous people have influenced my work and belief system for quite some time; and there was not a significant change in this area, except for how I interacted with students to reinforce those values.

With the younger girls in the intermediate circle, the values and spiritual themes were woven into the class topics. For the older students in the junior high class, Wendy, Valarie, Stephanie, and I all used Lakota interactive values when discussing discipline to the group at large. I learned to say that an action was not appropriate behavior privately to a disruptive student. This also implied that the action was not appropriate in terms of
Lakota values because behavior rules at Takini were grounded in traditional philosophy. My examination of my own teaching style and discipline strategies revealed that this was the area most changed relative to Lakota philosophy. I found I had more impact on students in individual communication, and this finding corresponds to both American Indian learning styles and Lakota traditional world views. This subtle lesson had larger implications for my research, because I found that the question of cultural interaction was actually replaced by personal interaction.

Finally, I developed my role as a movement and dance educator at Takini with a sincere appreciation of the importance of traditional dance to the Lakota people. When Stephanie presented powwow dance in the junior high class, Wendy and I both were eager students. At times we practiced the powwow dances while some students sat and watched, too shy or resistant to try. However, we coachers had decided that the class would use movement material from traditional dance and not abstract, modern dance movement; it was difficult for me to guide students in choreography. Perhaps this frustration would not have been so great for me if I had known both the students and the Lakota coachers better. We had not yet established our friendships when I was faced with this dilemma. In hindsight, I recognize that I could have been more assertive in sharing my guidance had I been more comfortable in the situation.

Asking myself these four questions as foundation for research enabled me to observe myself, my interactions with others, my mistakes, and my successes as I taught movement and dance in a context where I was a stranger, that of a reservation school. Two more questions were part of my initial motivation for the research. They will be addressed in the following chapter, which concludes this study. Approaching the research residency with six questions to investigate gave me something real to study, even though the topics were intangible concepts dealing with human interaction and cultural contact. These questions gave me a starting point, but they did not direct the research because subtler issues arose during the practice of teaching at Takini.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The two remaining research questions that I asked prior to my residency at Takini serve as links from the introductory chapter to this concluding one. I asked myself: What am I learning that might be valuable for other teachers in similar situations; and, How is action research useful in a practical situation? From my data analysis, I developed specific points to answer each of the questions. Additionally, I am able to tie the two questions together and give a more conclusive response to both. I learned that action research is a useful tool for increasing awareness about myself as a teacher and as a collaborating member of a teaching team. It is also useful for better understanding my students, especially when I, my collaborators, and my students come from various cultural backgrounds.

This chapter summarizes what I learned about myself as a researching teacher. It demonstrates the significance of my study as one example of action research. Related to this is a discussion of the importance of incorporating informal ethnography when working with people from cultural backgrounds that are different from my own. The study also has its limitations; these are presented as leading to more questions.

The Value of the Teacher as Researcher

One of the main lessons that I learned from conducting this research, which might be valuable for other teachers in similar situations, is the value of integrating thinking and doing. Action research provided me with procedures for incorporating self-reflection while I was in the process of teaching. This put me into a continuous interplay between thinking and doing. Heightening this natural process increased an understanding of myself and my Lakota students. In short, I was able to make more informed daily choices because I was integrating theory with practice.
In writing about both pedagogical practice and action research, van Manen (1990, 1991) coins the terms thoughtfulness and tact as another way to refer to the integration of theory and practice. He chooses these terms because they connote connectedness and interplay over the dualism expressed in the words theory and practice. All too often, theorizing is thought of as an activity separate from practice. Instead, van Manen’s terms suggest that theorizing is giving language to process. The teacher who reflects in thoughtfulness, even momentarily, is able to act with tact. Thoughtfulness prepares one for tactful action. Likewise, tact is the result of being thoughtful. I found that both thoughtfulness and tact were important objectives for me to practice in forming relationships at Takini.

Because action research emphasizes process (which includes the process of reflection) over product, the results of action research such as mine may appear to be somewhat ambiguous. The acceptance of ambiguity is another useful lesson for me to share. Meeting the challenges of the contemporary classroom may require an acceptance of ambiguity. The diversity of student populations from various cultural backgrounds and with individual learning styles may mean that there are no single solutions to problems or techniques of teaching that will work for every student. Teachers may need to feel comfortable with answers that are really questions. The reflection-planning-action-reflection loop of action research provides an opportunity to include ambiguity in the teaching process. I have learned that in order to be a good teacher, I must constantly reflect on how I guide students and interact with colleagues. I must also reflect on the responses of others to find deeper meaning in our exchanges. The central focus of action research that brings heightened awareness to the reflection stages, inherent in good teaching, was very important in my study.

In my process as a reflective, researching teacher, several important points concerning my teaching arose. One issue was the struggle between process and product. Because school situations necessitate product and because many art forms (including dance) naturally result in product or performance, my students were asked to perform. This was very difficult for them. I realized that the peer pressure from such an isolated and close knit school community greatly influenced an aversion to perform. The students themselves expressed their enjoyment of the classes that explored movement experiences and process over the final performances of the dances. From my perspective as a movement and dance teacher, I acknowledge and accept the value of performance as a culminating experience. In fact, my need for classroom control partially develops from my
interest in witnessing the student product. In my struggle to balance process and product with the Lakota students at Takini, I was more successful when concentrating on the process. For future work with this community, I would emphasize process until the students themselves demonstrated an interest in performance as a product. Although this strategy would probably demand more time working with the students than the six weeks I had, I believe the students would eventually want to share their dances with others.

I also have come to the conclusion that questions such as process versus product could be addressed by the teacher directly with students through dialogue journals. The journals with the intermediate girls were a valuable exercise for them, but I could have used the journals more efficaciously. Through my reflective research, I can now surmise that if I had asked specific questions to the students and responded to each girl's journal in writing myself, perhaps I could have developed personal relationships with the students more quickly. I also might have been able to alleviate their performance anxieties or have adjusted my lesson plans as I learned about those fears. Incorporating teacher responses as part of student journalizing is an aspect of teaching that I recommend for populations similar to my students at Takini.

Cross-Cultural Relationships Through Tactful Teaching

While working at Takini, it was equally important for me to ask questions of others as it was for me to reflect on my own actions. The conscious use of informal ethnography gave me added skills for developing relationships. I needed to be able to give my complete attention when listening to my colleagues and to my students in order to best accommodate to their needs and goals. A positive aspect of this type of listening was that I was able to question tactfully their ideas or opinions in the nonjudgemental, descriptive manner, which I learned from ethnography. This may be a key when teaching in situations with people from various cultures.

Two aspects taught by Roberto Chene (1990) for improving cross-cultural relationships demonstrate principles of both ethnography and action research. The first point Chene makes is that one must develop self-awareness: "Strive to understand just how you may have been taught to have biased feelings and attitudes toward others" (p. 2). This is the kind of self-knowledge and understanding promoted by action research. His second point is, "Acquire as much accurate information about other people as you possibly can" (p. 3). Ethnography is a strategy by which one can acquire such information. Chene's work in building healthy cross-cultural relationships reflects the techniques that I learned from both action research and ethnography.
The issue of cross-cultural interaction in an educational setting was central to my research. Through reflective data analysis I realized that personality traits combine with cultural background to form an individual's values and systems of belief. This idea was one I pondered frequently as I reflected on my interactions with my students and my collaborative colleagues. I frequently found Lakota values expressed by non-Indian teachers and witnessed actions of Lakota people that I thought were influenced by the non-Indian culture.

However, I also found it valuable to know general interactive cultural styles of the Lakota people. It was fortunate that I knew to bring gifts to the people with whom I worked at Takini. Gift-giving is an important element of Lakota culture. My Ohio apple butter helped to establish trusting relationships between myself and the Lakota people. The evening I played bingo at a small church in Red Scaffold was a significant time in building trusting relationships with my Lakota colleagues.

I put myself into an unusual situation as a movement and dance teacher in an isolated reservation school. By employing action research and informal ethnography during my residency, I learned about myself, my teaching philosophy, and the culture of the Lakota students and their teachers. The story of my research could be useful for other teachers in similar circumstances, especially if they regard my story as a case study.

The Value of My Case Study

The uniqueness of my research at the Takini School prompts me to describe it as a case study. The specificity of a case study is determined by its particular subject and context. Historically, a case study is in-depth research of one case with the assumption that it is representative of other cases with similar circumstances (Unger, 1982). However, a more contemporary approach values the case study for its differences and uniqueness.

Some feminist researchers have found that social science's emphasis on generalizations has obscured phenomena important to particular groups, including women. Thus, case studies are essential for putting women on the map of social life. The power of the case study to convey vividly the dimensions of a social phenomenon or individual life is power that feminist researchers want to value. (Reinhauz, 1992, p. 174)

Robert Donmoyer (1990) also places value on the uniqueness of a case study. He states that a specific case study that might not be similar to any other cases can inspire learning:

When diversity is dramatic, the knower is confronted by all sorts of novelty, which stimulates accommodation; consequently, the knower's cognitive structures become
more integrated and differentiated; after novelty is confronted and accommodated, he or she can perceive more richly and, one hopes, act more intelligently. (p. 191)

In order to learn from a case study, one must reflect on it in relationship to oneself. There is something to learn from each distinct case study through personal interpretation. As Donmoyer (1990) explains, "the role of the research is not primarily to find the correct interpretation...The purpose of research is simply to expand the range of interpretations available to the research consumer" (p. 194). My study is valuable for providing another case study for readership. The details concerning the players as well as the situation create a rich texture for the story from which the reader can make his or her own interpretations.

**Limitations of the Study and Questions for the Future**

The specificity of my study can, from another viewpoint, be seen as limiting. This research is only one story written from my perspective. Although I included the evaluations and thoughts of others, my interpretations influence the research results.

This research emerged into interpretivist action research; I recognized the importance of my teaching practice and its improvement. A more subtle result was that this was the first step for me toward the larger issue of social change. I began the research with questions about cultural interaction within the practice of teaching. I chose a setting for the research where Lakota people are trying to develop a school that answers their needs after years of cultural repression by the dominant society. I wanted to examine how I could best participate in reforming educational practices so that the culture of the Lakota people and their contemporary desires are honored.

My questions were not completely answered but were replaced with issues that related to them. Perhaps other research methods could better answer my concerns about cultural interaction. An ethnographic study where the researcher is not actively teaching might provide clearer observations of cultural interaction.

I am left with questions from this study that could lead to other research. What do the Lakota people, especially in the Takini community, want for the education of their children? Do they see movement and dance as a useful part in the learning process of their children? How would they design a long-range, permanent role for a movement and dance educator? These questions might be answered best by the Lakota themselves.

Concerning the American Indian population in general, this research serves as one example of a non-Indian teaching a native population. There are many types of people with various backgrounds who may find themselves in similar or dissimilar situations working
with American Indians. Isolated reservation schools, urban schools, and mid-sized communities with mixed ethnic populations are all sites where teachers might work with students of American Indian heritage. The American Indian students may be a majority population in a school or a minority in a larger mix of cultural heritages. Preparing teachers to face classrooms containing students from a broad spectrum of cultures that may include American Indians is an increasing concern for colleges and universities.
APPENDIX
POETRY
Flapping Wings of Time
by Myra

It wasn't quite day, it wasn't quite night; not really dark, not really light.
The owl was sitting in a tree on a high, naked branch, still, like a feathered shadow.
He was still. The twilight was still.
We were still, standing each alone, my cherished friend and I. Time was still.
The owl hooted. I sucked in my breath.
Then he hobbled sideways up the branch, unfolded his wings, fluffed his body, and glided from the tree over our heads.
We watched him flap into the coming night, then turned to gather sticks for a fire.

That night our fire leaped for the sky. It danced in the darkness of the night. It glowed as warm as our friendship.
We slept under a full moon and shining stars; but our friendship shined brighter than the stars, our hearts were fuller than the moon.

Time wouldn't stay still. Like the owl, it flapped away.
A year has passed.
My friend is gone.
Only a few sparks dance between us, and twenty long miles.

The nights that I sleep now are filled with dreams, dreams of a leaping fire, a gliding owl, dreams of my cherished friend. Does she dream the same?
Welcome to the Flight of the Skyhawk
by Tony, Misti, Ronnie, Sherri, Valeda, and Angie

We welcome you
to come on in
to bring your hearts
to be our friends.
We welcome you
without lies.
We have no weapons,
no knives or guns.
We are armed with respect
and love.
You can believe this.
We welcome you without lies.

Here you will feel scared, sometimes—
bored, uncomfortable, sad.
You will cry, you will daydream,
you will twist your hair,
twitch your fingers.

We want you to know
you will not be alone.
We will smile,
We will share,
make offerings to you.
We welcome you.
We want you to know
we're not bad.

We welcome you.
Your heart is back among us.
May it grow healthy and strong.
May it beat in the rhythm of our steps.
Give it powerful wings.
Let it spread its wings with ours.
Hear the screech, the scream of the hawk.
Hollow bones for flight,
solid heart,
shadowed wings,
wing shadows.
Watch the dance.
The hawk is your heart.
It will not lie to you.
Choreo-poem
by Eleanor

Beauty above me.
Beauty below me.
Beauty to the sides of me,
and I open to it.
Beauty behind me,
and I go forward
in Beauty.
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