NATIVE CONCEPTIONS

OF GIFTEDNESS

By

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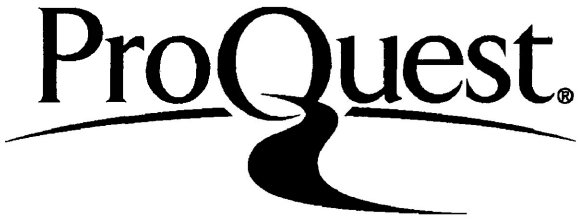

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Dedicated to the Native People

of Canada

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine the relevance of "giftedness" in an isolated north-western Ontario Ojibway community and school. Specifically, Renzulli's (1986) model of "giftedness" is examined.

This study begins with the community as the central element in its design. Qualitative research methods are used and include participant-observation, informally structured interviews, and document analysis. Elders, parents, teachers, and students, represent the participants. Data-collection took place during two, two-week visits to the site. Data analysis and interpretation was ongoing throughout the research process.

The findings suggest that "giftedness" is a Euro-Western construct which is irrelevant and even in conflict with the norms of Sweetgrass community and school. This study does not recommend the use of the Renzulli (1986) model for "giftedness" in Sweetgrass, or in any focus for Native education which reflects the beliefs and perceptions of the participants in this community. Instead, culturally relevant enrichment strategies need to be developed and integrated throughout all aspects of curricula.

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CHAPTER 1

NATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF "GIFTEDNESS"

The Research Problem

Identification of the Problem

The fundamental problems associated with determining the relevance of "giftedness" in a cross-cultural setting, are derived from its origins in an explicit theory of "intelligence". More specifically, "giftedness" has been historically linked to "studies dealing with human abilities. Most of these studies focused on the concept of intelligence..." (Renzulli, 1986, p. 55). "Giftedness" was first determined through the identification of an above-average score on an IQ test (Hoge, 1989; Winzer, Rogow, & David, 1987). The IQ test exemplifies an explicit theory of "intelligence" that is insensitive to the real-world contexts in which cognitive behaviours are manifested (Sternberg, 1985). Although there are several implications resulting from this lack of sensitivity, a major one is the exclusion of minority group children from educational services that are reserved for identified "gifted" students.

Rationale: Formation of and Approach to the Problem

This study examines "giftedness" in a particular Native community and school. The study recognizes that this idea may be irrelevant within a Native context. The purpose of the research is to discover and describe Native conceptions of "giftedness". The study does not assume that the community under observation will reveal a conceptual frame of reference for "giftedness".

Native views of "creativity", "task commitment" and "above-average ability" are examined in keeping with a contemporary belief that it is the interaction among the three ideas that results in "giftedness" (Renzulli, 1986). The research recognizes that these three ideas are linguistic categories and may therefore be culturally irrelevant to the norms of the community under study. Qualitatively different ideas may be discovered for one or all of the three categories.

An "emic" or local approach characterizes the research as it begins "with the culture as an element in the design of the study" (McShane & Berry in Irvine & Berry, 1988, p. 404). The methods are qualitative and ethnographic in seeking to discover cultural constructs through "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss,

1967) rather than to simply apply a set of external criteria. Using informal interviews, formal/informal observations and document analysis, the study will examine Native conceptions of "giftedness", "creativity", "task commitment" and "above-average ability" in an isolated school and community. The interviews are conducted in the Native language through the services of two local translators.

Statement of the Problem

As educators continue to place greater emphasis upon a multi-variable approach to the identification of "giftedness" in a multicultural society, one may begin to question how this idea is conceived in a cross-cultural context. For this investigation, Native conceptions of "giftedness" are described and interpreted through a field study approach to answer the following questions:

1) What are the conceptions of "giftedness" in a Native community and school?
2) Is Renzulli's model of "giftedness" relevant to the norms of a Native community and school? Why?

Definition of Terms

Through the course of this study, several terms that warrant early definition will be used frequently. "Giftedness", "intelligence", "knowledge", "above-average ability", "task commitment" and "creativity" are culturally defined constructs that may or may not have meaning in relation to Native cultural norms. If the categories have significance in the Native cultural context, this will become evident as theory emerges.

"Giftedness", "above-average ability", "task commitment" and "creativity", are defined as Euro-Western constructs from Renzulli's (1986) point of view. "Intelligence" and "knowledge" are concepts with implied significance to the study in that both are involved in an examination of "giftedness", "above-average ability", "task commitment", and "creativity". "Conceptions" refers to "ideas".

Renzulli (1986) suggests that "giftedness" results from an interaction of "above-average ability", "task commitment" and "creativity". He discusses "general ability" and "specific abilities" with reference to "above average ability". He defines the first category in stating that "general ability consists of the

capacity to process information, to integrate experiences that result in appropriate and adaptive responses in new situations, and the capacity to engage in abstract thinking" (p. 66). These abilities are usually measured by standardized tests of achievement including "intelligence" tests. Word fluency, memory, and reasoning ability, are aspects of general ability.

He points out that "specific abilities consist of the capacity to acquire knowledge, skill, or the ability to perform in one or more activities of a specialized kind and within a restricted range" (p. 66). They represent the ways in which people express themselves in non-test or real-life situations. In cases where there is a strong relationship between a specific ability and general ability, standardized tests of achievement, including intelligence tests, may be used to measure potential. Abilities such as the those fostered by the arts are difficult to measure with tests and may depend upon performance-based assessment strategies.

Renzulli (1986) defines "task commitment" as "the capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm, fascination, and involvement in a particular problem,

area of study, or form of human expression" (p. 75). He emphasizes the need for persistence, stamina, self-assuredness, the desire for excellence, and openness to criticism.

"Creativity" is defined as "fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought...receptive to that which is new and different (even irrational) in the thoughts, actions, and products of oneself and others" (p. 75). Curiosity and risk-taking are included in the definition as well as sensitivity to detail and aesthetics.

He believes that there are many forms of "intelligence" and therefore a single definition can not be provided to explain its essence.

The Research Study

Developing this Research: A Personal Ground

My interest in studying "giftedness" in a cross-cultural setting grew out of my experiences as an Anglo Special Education consultant and Special Education resource teacher in an isolated Indian reserve in the sub-arctic region of Canada between 1987 and 1989. For sixteen years before this period, I was a regular class teacher, Special Education resource teacher, learning

resource teacher, and associate/master teacher involving all levels of elementary education in several non-Native southern urban schools. During five of those years I specialized in the education of "gifted" children. The teaching qualifications that I hold include specialist certificates in Primary Education and Special Education with advanced standing in Gifted Education.

My experience on the reserve as a Special Education consultant and resource teacher offered me intensive involvement with the Federal guidelines for Special Education (Ontario Region Special Education Handbook, 1986), the creation and application of locally normed assessment instruments, the development of a rationale and delivery system for Special Education, and finally the adoption and implementation of the new process. Three conflicts arose for me as I undertook my role as consultant. Firstly, I had received my training as both a generalist teacher and as a specialist within the traditions of Euro-Canadian educational beliefs. Not only was I inexperienced in a consulting role, I had received no previous training that would facilitate my work with Native students,

parents and administrators. Furthermore, I was geographically isolated from outside resources that may have assisted me in my role. When I expressed these concerns to the Anglo Director, he simply stated that I was the "expert". Conflicts arose as I found it necessary to rely upon my Euro-Canadian experiences and knowledge to perform my duties as consultant to a Native education authority without any previous understanding of Indian cultural norms and traditions. I had to develop a different philosophical and conceptual frame of reference as I proceeded within this context.

Secondly, my analysis of test results using the locally normed assessment instruments suggested that there were students in the school who would benefit from enrichment programs. I recommended to the Director that the Special Education delivery system include enrichment services within its structure. He advised me that the model would be strictly remedial. His stated reason was that the student body continually displayed poor levels of performance when assessed with commercially-prepared standardized tests of achievement such as the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. The denial

of enrichment services to Indian children based upon poor performance on Euro-Western instruments became an ethical problem for me given the contradictory results of locally normed instruments. This event foreshadowed my concern that Native education may follow a deficit model characterized by programmed retardation.

Thirdly, while attending the "3rd International Conference on Native Education" in Winnipeg during 1989 I heard an impassioned plea for the inclusion of "gifted" services within Native education. My difficulties with implementing enrichment services for Native students at the local level led me to believe that attempted provision of "gifted" education would confront the same types of obstacles. Furthermore, I held the following concerns which foreshadow the research questions for this study:

a) Does the notion of "giftedness" have any cultural relevance for Native peoples?

b) How can the study of "giftedness" be carried out in a Native context in order to determine its cultural relevance?

c) What are the implications of a culture-specific notion of "giftedness"?

The combination of these three conflicts has led me to reflect upon the ways in which educational and psychological theories have guided my practice towards an ethnocentric vision of achievement, knowledge, and ability. I was unable to reconcile these disjunctures in the Native community where I worked as a consultant/resource teacher. I encountered strong opposition from non-Native colleagues on staff regarding my beliefs that enrichment services were warranted in the school. Native administrators and parents were excluded from the controversy. I was deeply disturbed that a model for the delivery of special education services would be strictly of a remedial nature. I felt that this may be an example of institutional racism.

These conflicts represent the foreshadowed problems which ground the purpose of this study in the investigation of culturally relevant constructs for "giftedness" in a Native community and school. Studies of the cultural relevance of "giftedness" in a Native context are noticeably absent in the literature.

The Research Context: The Sweetgrass Community and School

The selection of the site was particularly important in this study. There are many Indian communities in Canada. A major consideration in determining the location was the degree to which the settlement was geographically isolated from the influences of Euro-Canadian culture. In seeking to discover Native conceptions of "giftedness", it is important to reduce the effects of acculturation.

The study takes place in a remote Ojibway community situated in the sub-arctic region of Ontario. "Sweetgrass" is a fictional name assigned to the site in order to maintain confidentiality. There are approximately three hundred people living in Sweetgrass. The homes are log structures heated with wood and without running water.

Negotiations were carried out to gain permission from the Chief and Council, the School Board Chairman, and the School Board Trustees to conduct the study in the community and school of Sweetgrass. Permission was granted with the understanding that the study would be bilingual (Ojibway and English) with the paid services

of translators indigenous to the site.

A positive rapport was developed with the participants by conducting a field-study over a given period of time. Data-collection and analysis over time allows for comprehensive description and interpretation (Irwin, 1988).

Significance of the Study

There is a growing interest in identification procedures for the assessment of "gifted" Native students in Canada. Concomitant with this concern is the need for both researchers and educators to gain an understanding of the relevance of "giftedness" to Native people. Rather than relying upon explicit theory to guide a cross-cultural investigation, it is important to understand how Native people conceive "giftedness". Qualitative research studies may provide insights which can lead to such an understanding.

It is hoped this study will also encourage educators, especially in the field of "gifted" education, to review their practice in relation to Native students. More specifically, the degree to which current practices in "gifted" education discriminate against Indian children, as well as other

culturally-different youngsters, is raised as presenting a serious ethical problem for Canadian educators in a multi-cultural society.

Subsequent chapters of the thesis are organized in the following way. Chapter 2 reviews the literature regarding explicit and implicit theories of "intelligence" and their relationship to conceptions of "giftedness" in providing a theoretical and conceptual context for the study. Chapter 3 introduces field research and provides a description of the conduct of the study. It also offers the reader a discussion of the nature of life in Sweetgrass. Chapter 4 describes and interprets the data collection during the field research. Chapter 5 discusses the research questions in relation to the findings. Chapter 6 reviews the implications of this study for theory, practice and further research, and presents several conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between "giftedness" and "intelligence" was established in an essentially arbitrary sense when Lewis Terman (1926) decided that "gifted" students should be defined as those scoring at or above 140 points as measured by the Stanford-Binet intelligence test or a comparable instrument. Terman's definition identified the IQ test as the single measure of "giftedness" for over three decades (Winzer, Rogow, & David, 1987, p. 155). More recently researchers have expressed the belief that "intelligence" is made up of a diversity of abilities.

The practical significance of a definition of "giftedness" can be seen in the type of assessment procedures chosen for the identification of "gifted" students. Depending upon the nature of the selection criteria prescribed by a definition, certain children may be excluded from programming opportunities that are reserved for "gifted" students (Tonemah and Brittan, 1985).

This review provides an examination of theories of

"intelligence" and their relationship to conceptions of "giftedness". This is meant to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for the study of "giftedness" in a cross-cultural context.

Theories of Intelligence

Historical Foundations

Theories of the nature and development of intelligence begin with Sir Francis Galton. In 1883, he made a distinction between general ability and special abilities. Wissler, working under Cattell, a former student of Galton's, conducted the first methodological study of cognitive abilities using the technique of correlation.

The results obtained from early correlational studies gave rise to the acceptance of an underlying general ability ("g") with highly specific psychological processes. Thorndike (1902) suggested that the intercorrelations between mental tests resulted from an overlapping of relatively independent abilities. It has been claimed that this idea became the foundation of the investigation of intellectual structure in the United States (Bowd, 1971).

Explicit Theories of Intelligence

Explicit theories of "intelligence" are supported by data gathered from people carrying out tasks that are assumed to represent "intelligent" behaviour (Sternberg, 1985). These theories can be further divided into differential and cognitive theorizing.

Differential Theories

Differential theories use factor analysis to identify underlying abilities associated with "intelligence". These types of theories can be further classified by a) the number of factors proposed by the theory and b) the geometrical arrangement of the factors. A discussion of theories distinguished by their geometrical arrangement can be categorized into the following four types. The unordered arrangement assume factors of equal importance. The cubic model identifies factors as logically independent but can be psychologically dependent in that they are intercorrelated. The radix structure proposes a circular design for "intelligence" wherein each test on an "intelligence" test can be situated according to its importance. Those tests that are most central to "intelligent" functioning will be closest to the

center. A hierarchical arrangement suggests that some abilities are global and therefore more important than others (Sternberg, 1985).

Hierarchical models. Spearman (1927) introduced a model for "intelligence" that was made up of a general factor (g) and specific factors. His theory took on a hierarchical arrangement wherein the general factor (g) was of greater importance than the specific factors. Other hierarchical models followed Spearman's theory. Holzinger suggested that there were group factors between the general and specific factors. Burt had developed a five-level hierarchical model by 1940 to describe the human mind. This design was comprised of a "relations level" directly above an "associations level". "Perceptions" followed with "sensation" at the base of the model (Sternberg, 1985).

Vernon determined that "g" could be separated into abilities that "fall into two major types - the verbal-educational (v : ed factor) and the spatial-perceptual-practical (k : m factor) ....these major ability types can readily be broken down into more specialized ones...or...numerous minor group factors..." (Vernon, 1969, pp. 21-22).

Other geometric arrangements. Thurstone's (1938) unordered arrangement of factors recommended that there were seven "primary mental abilities" involved in a theory of "intelligence" with factors of equal importance (Sternberg, 1985). Guttman described a radix structure wherein abilities identified closest to the centre were held to be of increased importance to intelligent functioning. Guilford's (1982) cubic structure illustrated a model of "intelligence" that involved more than 120 factors.

Gardner like Thorndike believes that "intelligence" controls more than cognitive behaviour (Pendarvis, Howley, & Howley, 1990). Gardner proposes seven types of "intelligence" which are classified as linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Gardner is currently working on a four-year research project called "Project Spectrum" in devising approaches for assessing multiple intelligence (Eby and Smutny, 1990).

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive theories attempt to understand "intelligence" in terms of the processes that are involved in mental task performance (Sternberg, 1985).

Views differ regarding the level of cognitive function that is stressed. Speed of information processing and/or reaction time were felt to be significant measures of individual differences in "intelligence" as early as Galton (1883) and Cattel (1890). Correlations between speed and psychometric "intelligence" have proven to be low.

Speed in making choices/decisions was also considered to be significantly correlated to individual differences in "intelligence". This correlation is somewhat higher with choice speed than with pure speed. Pure speed reflects the ability to make a single response as quickly as possible based upon simple reaction time to a stimulus. Choice speed involves the facility to quickly make decisions to stimuli in providing a response. The ability to rapidly access lexical information from long-term memory has also been proposed as an important factor in verbal intelligence. Finally, there are those investigators who have tried to understand "intelligence" in terms of the processes that people use to solve problems and make decisions.

Triarchic theory. Sternberg's "triarchic theory of human intelligence" represents an information-

processing model that focuses upon the ways that individuals learn (Pendarvis, Howley, and Howley, 1990). Three subtheories are guided by a definition of "intelligence" in which "intelligence is the mental activity underlying purposive adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of real-world environments relevant to one's life" (Sternberg in Irvine & Berry, 1988a, p. 69). The subtheories of the model are described as follows:

> ...a contextual subtheory, specifies how intelligent behavior is defined in large part by the sociocultural context in which this behavior takes place....
>
> ...an experiential subtheory, suggests that for a given task or situation, contextually appropriate behavior is not equally "intelligent" at all points along the continuum of experience with that behavior or class of behaviors....
>
> ...a componential subtheory, specifies the structures and mechanisms that underlie intelligent behavior (Sternberg, 1985, pp. xi-xii). Sternberg is currently developing an assessment procedure for "practical intelligence"

(1986) in conjunction with the publisher of the Wechsler IQ test, Psychological Corporation.

Validation of Explicit Theories

In order to clarify the assumptions that are embedded within an explicit theory of "intelligence" it is useful to examine the processes by which such a theory is internally and externally validated.

Internal validation of a theory of "intelligence" determines the range of "intelligence" in terms of that which is described by the theory (Sternberg, 1985). The tasks that are to be studied have therefore specified the foundation for the theory. Approval of the prescribed realm of tasks requires acceptance of the theory. External validation involves calculating the degree to which the scope of a theory accounts for task performance in a field outside of the parameters of the theory but within which achievement should be anticipated.

In reviewing these approaches to theory validation, Sternberg (1985) argues that "one will justify the theory on the basis of the correlations with external criteria, only later to justify the choice of external criteria on the basis of theory" (p.

17).

Explicit Theories in a Cross-Cultural Setting

There are several concerns regarding the cross-cultural study of "intelligence" in relation to explicit theorizing. Explicit theories are primarily "based and tested on kinds of tasks that from any point of view are of dubitable ecological validity..." (Sternberg, 1985, p. 29). Specifically, existing theories need to demonstrate validity in real-world contexts in the selection of tasks which presume to measure "intelligent" functioning. Explicit theories have been indifferent to the "interface between intelligence and the context in which it is exercised" (p. 30).

The classical approach to the investigation of cognitive differences across groups of people has been to apply currently existing tests to various populations (Berry, 1981). Procedures such as this contribute to an ethnocentric and culture-bound view of "intelligence" (Berry, 1988). Specifically, this approach to the cross-cultural study of cognition assumes universal process, direction, and organization with cultural factors only influencing level. There is

an implicit assumption that abilities are organized in a standard fashion and that differences in levels of "intelligence" are due to the fact that some cultures are less "intelligent" than others. Attention is not given to the belief that different cultures may have dissimilar cognitive structures or different purposes for motivating behaviour that may be implicitly understood as "intelligent".

Sternberg (1985) describes "intelligence" as "a concept we invented in order to provide a useful way of evaluating and, occasionally, ordering people in terms of their performance on tasks and in situations that are valued by the culture..." (p. 336). Therefore, "intelligent" behaviour in one circumstance may not be "intelligent" in another. In cross-cultural studies of "intelligence" it can not be assumed that one culture's definition of "intelligence" is comparative to that of another. Given these considerations, explicit theories of "intelligence" may be irrelevant (or even in conflict) with the norms of many culturally different settings. This leads into a discussion of implicit theories of "intelligence".

Implicit Theories of Intelligence

Sternberg (1985) states that implicit theories of "intelligence" are "based, or at least tested, on people's conceptions of what intelligence is: Implicit theories need to be 'discovered' rather than 'invented' because they already exist, in some form, in people's heads" (p. 31). Implicit theories may be derived from "experts" in the field or from lay-members of a cultural group in determining the scope of a theory. Research attempts to discover the construct and meaning of such theories based upon the significance that the people in a particular context give to them.

Validation of Implicit Theory

Studies aiming to discover implicit theory require that external information is cross-validated or substantiated with internal data (Berry, 1988). Sternberg (1985) argues that implicit theories "...have been subjected to a minimum of internal validation and no external validation" (p. 34-35). The relevance of Sternberg's statement is dependent upon his definitions for internal and external validation within a research context that seeks to describe and interpret implicit theory.

Implicit Theory in a Cross-Cultural Setting

One may investigate the conceptions of "intelligence" that may be held by people in another culture. Studies conducted in Africa have uncovered indigenous conceptions that are qualitatively different from Euro-Western notions of "intelligence" (Sternberg, 1985). Differences in views have also been noted both inter- and intra-tribally.

An implicit-theoretical approach to the cross-cultural study of "intelligence" is sensitive to the cultural context because it emerges directly from the field in which it is studied (Sternberg, 1985). An implicit theory is therefore an articulation of what "intelligence" is according to the setting in which it is manifested. Furthermore, an implicit theory can be falsified if it does not illustrate the manner in which the population conceives "intelligence".

Cultural Relativism and the Study of Intelligence

A position of "cultural relativism" may be advisable when working cross-culturally (Berry, 1981). It is important to avoid interpretations of a different cultural group based upon the norms and standards of the researcher's culture. In order to gain a

culturally relevant understanding of indigenous beliefs, investigation guided by the "emic" tradition is recommended by Berry (1988). This tradition represents an approach in which the perceptions of the participants in a study are critical to the interpretation of data. A cultural relativist approach invites the members of a culture under investigation to share their own culturally relevant understanding of phenomena.

The contextual subtheory in the "triarchic theory of intelligence" (Sternberg, 1985) is relativistic in that "intelligent" behaviour is viewed as culture-specific and therefore valued according to the standards of a particular culture. What may be valued as "intelligent" functioning in one culture may not be appraised with the same significance in another. The experiential subtheory is relativistic "only with respect to the points at which novelty and automatization are relevant for a given individual" (p. xiii). Novelty and automatization are believed to be universal in their relevance to "intelligence". The componential subtheory is strictly universal in that certain groups of processes which are governed by

"intelligence" are believed to be identical across individuals and socio-cultural populations. The "triarchic theory" reflects a "cultural relativist" position in the contextual subtheory, a combination of relativistic and universalistic beliefs in the experiential subtheory, and a strictly universalistic perspective in the componential subtheory.

Theories of "Giftedness"

Historical Foundations

Galton's major work, Hereditary Genius (1869), a study of the hereditary links of prominent men of his time, led to the notion that a person's "intelligence" is genetically determined. He initiated the idea that superior performance is rare among individuals, and that the greater it deviates from the norm, the more rare it becomes (Pendarvis, Howley, and Howley, 1990). This notion is significant in that it promotes the view that "intelligence" is a trait that is normally distributed within a population. IQ tests are structured to encompass only those items that furnish a normal distribution of scores in a stratified population sample.

Alfred Binet, a French psychologist, countered

hereditarian beliefs with his notion that an individual's intelligence was not at a fixed level and could change especially through educational opportunities (Eby & Smutny, 1990). However, regardless of his developmental approach his scale has been widely used as a measure of a kind of "intelligence" that is both fixed and genetically determined.

The Identification of "Giftedness"

The theory of hereditary and fixed intelligence gained widespread recognition with Lewis Terman's study in the early 1920's regarding the nature of "giftedness" (Eby & Smutny, 1990). In conjunction with Stanford University, Terman, an American educator, adapted the Binet scale to incorporate an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and to fit American subjects. He believed that the newer Stanford-Binet test measured an innate and unchanging ability.

Terman's study of the nature of "giftedness" involved a group of students that were initially referred by their teachers and subsequently tested with the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test (Pendarvis, Howley, & Howley, 1990). He identified "gifted"

children as those who scored in the uppermost one percent level of the test (Terman, 1926). This represented a score of approximately 140 points on the scale.

As a result of his longitudinal studies of "gifted" individuals, Terman decided that there were certain personality factors associated with "giftedness" (Eby & Smutny, 1990). These included positive self-image and perseverance in task completion. Terman's conclusions promoted special education for the "gifted" for another thirty years and instituted the IQ test as the single measure of "giftedness" (Winzer, Rogow, & David, 1987).

Guilford criticized Terman's study because it was merely a functional modification of Binet's scale and was not directed by scientific theory (Eby & Smutny, 1990). He believed instead that his model, the "Structure of the Intellect" which offered in excess of 120 factors would be more comprehensive in its treatment of individual differences than the more generalized IQ score. Guilford's multi-dimensional theory of intelligence has contributed to a growing emphasis upon multi-dimensional approaches to

understanding "giftedness".

The Stanford-Binet Scale and the Weschler Scale are the two measures of "intelligence" that are most commonly used to determine "intellectual giftedness" (Pendarvis, Howley, & Howley, 1990). Whereas the Binet Scale associates "intelligence" with scholastic aptitude, the Wechsler Scale "samples two broad domains of cognitive functioning, the verbal domain and the performance domain" (p. 75). Anastasi (1988) points out that the weakest feature of the Weschler scales are is the lack of empirical data regarding validity:

> The factor-analytic studies contribute to a clarification of the constructs in terms of which performance on the Weschler scales may be described; but these studies would have been more informative if they had included more indices of behavior external to the scales themselves (p. 263).

There are other scales of "intelligence" that have been developed for use with special populations. For example, the Kaufman (K-ABC) was created to assist in the identification of culturally different "gifted" students (Eby & Smutny, 1990). However, it has not

proven to be as useful as had been hoped.

Renzulli's model for "giftedness". Renzulli (1986) proposes that there are two types of "giftedness". These are "schoolhouse giftedness" and "creative productive giftedness". He believes that the two interact and therefore both should be encouraged. "Schoolhouse giftedness" reflects a student's ability to excel in lesson-learning experiences in the classroom and on standardized measures of achievement and aptitude. Instruments of this nature have proven to be accurate predictors of school success. Renzulli acknowledges that standardized measures of cognitive ability fail to identify all of the factors presumed to be involved in school achievement.

Renzulli (1986) claims that "creative-productive" people "possess a relatively well-defined set of three interlocking clusters of traits. These clusters consist of above-average, though not necessarily superior, ability, task commitment, and creativity" (p. 55). It is the interaction of these three clusters which contribute to "creative productive giftedness" (Figure 2.1). No one domain is the foundation for "giftedness". Factors related to personality and

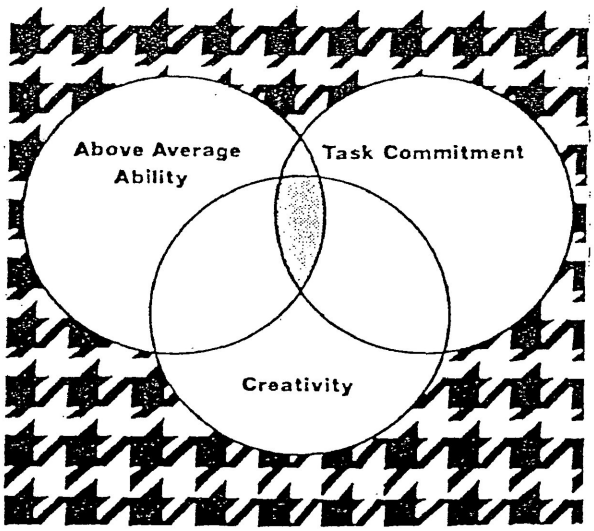

Figure 2.1. What makes giftedness.

From: Renzulli, J.S. (1986). Three-ring conception of giftedness: A developmental model for creative productivity. In Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds.), Conceptions of giftededness (pp. 53-92). New York: Cambridge University Press.

environment are also considered to be important in the production of "gifted" behaviors (Figure 2,2). These are indicated by the checkered pattern in Figure 2,1. Renzulli claims that the "above-average ability" ring is the most constant since it "represents a generally stable or constant set of characteristics" and can therefore be measured "reliably and objectively" using tests (p. 84). Specifically, he suggests that general and specific abilities such as those involved in mathematics represent skills and aptitudes which are mastered and maintained over time.

Above-average ability is the prime factor in determining which students will become part of a "talent pool" (Renzulli, 1986) wherein they will have access to a program of enrichment. These students represent the top 15-20% of a school population in general ability and other performance areas which are priorities in the school.

Although "task commitment" and "creativity" are important to the manifestation of "creative productive giftedness", these rings are not constant (Renzulli, 1986). Unlike the ability ring where skills are fixed, "task commitment" and "creativity" will "'come and go'

Personality factors	Environmental factors
Perception of self	Socioeconomic status
Courage	Parental personalities
Character	Education of parents
Intuition	Stimulation of childhood interests
Charm or charisma	Family position
Need for achievement	Formal education
Ego strength	Role model availability
Energy	Physical illness and/or well-being
Sense of destiny	Chance factors (financial inheritance, death,
Personal attractiveness[a]	living near an art museum, divorce, etc.)
	Zeitgeist

[a]Although personal attractiveness is undoubtedly a physical characteristic, the ways in which others react to one's physical being are quite obviously important determinants in the development of personality.

Figure 2.2. Personality and environmental factors influencing giftedness

From: Renzulli, J. S. (1986). Three-ring conception of giftedness: A developmental model for creative productivity. In Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds.), Conceptions of giftedness (pp. 53-92). New York: Cambridge University Press.

as a function of the various types of situations in which certain individuals become involved" (p. 86). Because of the variable nature of these rings, they cannot be measured "by the highly objective and quantifiable means that characterize test score assessment of traditional cognitive abilities" (p. 86). Furthermore, these domains interact making assessment even more complex. Although "task commitment" and "creativity" can be developed through appropriate training, it is difficult to assess the results of these types of learning experiences. Each person will react according to his or her level of "interest and receptivity" (p. 86).

Renzulli (1986) maintains that since the "task commitment" and "creativity" rings cannot be quantified, empirical verification of the impact that these two domains may have upon the ability ring cannot be verified. There is therefore no proof that the rings may vary in size. For this reason the ability ring is emphasized in the identification of students for the "talent pool".

Renzulli (1986) suggests that the nature of measurement in relation to "creativity" is highly

subjective. He therefore recommends that the focus for assessment should be on products instead of traits.

Sternberg (1986) refers to Renzulli's model as an implicit-theoretical approach to understanding "giftedness" that defines "giftedness" from the position of the individual as opposed to society. He refers to his own "triarchic theory of intellectual giftedness" as an explicit-theoretical approach that is broader in scope than Renzulli's model (Sternberg, 1986).

Implicit and Explicit Theories of "Giftedness"

Implicit theories are ideas that are developed and defined by a particular theorist according to his or her beliefs (Sternberg, 1985). Although implications of such theories may be articulated by the theorist, they can not be tested by empirical means other than to demonstrate agreement with other people's implicit theories.

Explicit theories presuppose definitions and attempt to integrate their meaning with existing theory and information (Sternberg, 1985). Although the theories can be falsified through empirical testing, the definitions upon which the theories are founded can

not be falsified. It is therefore important when evaluating explicit theories to understand the conceptions of "giftedness" that have produced the theory.

"Giftedness" and Cultural Context

Although to be "gifted" means to exhibit exceptional ability in one or more domains, the particular meaning of this "giftedness" may change from one group of people to another (Sternberg, 1988). In order to recognize "giftedness" one must be aware of the criteria that a cultural context has ascribed to the concept.

The "triarchic theory of intellectual giftedness" emphasizes the cultural dependence of "giftedness". Specifically, the contexualist subtheory defines intelligent behaviour as the "purposive adaptation to, sharing of, and selection of real-world environments relevant to one's own life" (Sternberg, 1988, p. 43). Researchers endeavouring to understand intellectual "giftedness" need to extend their methodology beyond the limitations of experimental environments and standardized measures of "intelligence".

This study represents an investigation of

"giftedness" within the cultural context of a Native community. It seeks to discover and describe indigenous conceptions of "giftedness" through "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) without the use of standardized tests. The conceptual and theoretical position for this study is framed by Sternberg's (1986) pronouncement that:

> Giftedness is something we invent, not something we discover: It is what one society or another wants it to be, and hence its conceptualization can change over place and time....It is thus important to us all to understand just what it is we, and others, mean by the concept of giftedness" (p. 3-4).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Introduction to Field Research

This chapter provides a discussion of field methods which are used in this study. Theoretical foundations are examined followed by a review of the major characteristics of field research. A description of the research setting leads into an overview of the events which occurred during access negotiations. The approaches used in the study to collect and analyze data are explained. The chapter ends with a summary which connects the research methodology with the process of data collection.

Theoretical Foundations

Field research originates from a broad scope of ideas established within the fields of philosophy, anthropology and sociology. Phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and ethnography are key concepts.

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena and the meanings that are ascribed to things based upon the point of view of the participants. Phenomenologists do not assume that they know what behaviours and events

mean to the people they are studying. Instead, they endeavour to understand the conceptual frame of reference within which the subjects construct their practical reality and interpret their "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990).

Symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1967) complements the phenomenological perspective. It begins with the assumption that things, people, and events are without significance until meaning has been given to them. People arrive at meaningful interpretations for their social realities through interaction and shared experience. Although a society may incorporate norms and belief systems, it is important to appreciate the ways in which people understand and implement these in specific situations. In order to comprehend the meanings of these behaviours, one must become a part of the defining process through such strategies as participant observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This approach contributed to the development of the "grounded theory method" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Ethnography seeks to describe culture. This includes the ways in which behaviour is guided by the practical knowledge of people within the socio-cultural

parameters of their community. Although ethnography is not a research strategy, some ethnographic techniques are: participant-observation, documentary evidence, and formal and informal interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Overview of Field Research

Essentially, the term field research reflects the fact that data is collected in the field as opposed to a laboratory or researcher-controlled setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Field research is one term used in a family of research strategies that fall under the general term of qualitative research. Whereas field research is the terminology commonly used by anthropologists and sociologists, it is often called naturalistic by educators, in that behaviours and events are studied in settings where they naturally occur. Ethnography is also used to describe this approach from a purely anthropological perspective and seeks to describe the beliefs, values, conceptions, behaviours, and motivations of a race or group of people foreign to the researcher (Woods, 1986). It emphasizes the importance of gaining understanding and description from the insider's point of view. In

education, ethnographic research techniques are used to describe and understand a culture from the insider's point of view. This is a critical distinction since the educational milieu is not foreign to the researcher.

Naturalistic or field research terms can be contrasted with those which are identified with positivism. Irwin (1988) points out that "in positivistic research the logic of the experiment is used to establish through universal laws regular relationships between variables under certain conditions" (p. 49). Theories are to be confirmed through testing procedures that will give evidence of their generalizability and therefore their reliability to the degree that they allow for replication. In contrast to the positivistic orientation the field research orientation employs research questions which are not shaped through the operationalization of concrete variables, but rather are developed to discover and describe behavior and beliefs from the point of view of the participant.

Field research begins with a problem or "foreshadowed problems" as referred to by Malinowski

(cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 28). The foreshadowed problems for this study were discussed earlier when I described the conflicts that developed for me while I was a consultant and special education resource teacher on the Native reserve. In conjunction with investigating the elements and implications of the foreshadowed problems, the study is grounded in the literature of theories of "intelligence" and "giftedness".

Two data collection techniques which are central to the goals of field research are participant-observation and the informally structured interview. As participant-observer the researcher "enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know, be known and trusted by them, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 2). This type of data is supported with documents from the field that may include such material as school memos, various types of records, and photographs. Informal interviews are conversations as opposed to interrogations. They invite the participant to share conceptions and feelings of phenomena based upon personal context.

Characteristics of Field Research

There are five features that are characteristic of field research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Firstly, the natural setting is the data base for the study and the researcher is the principal instrument. The researcher goes to the actual site as a participant-observer because of a concern for meaning that is contextually relevant and therefore significant. The second characteristic follows: that meaning is of primary interest. Researchers are engaged in discovering the ways that different people create meaning within the life experience of their daily lives. The word "meaning" implies beliefs, values, and cultural assumptions.

Thirdly, the process by which people negotiate meaning through social action and interaction is emphasized. The way in which social behaviours and events under study have evolved is understood through the interpretations from the insider's point of view.

Fourth, field research is descriptive or anecdotal in nature. Data is represented by written accounts of events and conversations in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, unofficial and official

documents, video-tapes and photographs. The researcher cannot take for granted the meaning and importance of any aspect of the context under study.

Finally, the researcher is inclined to analyze data in an inductive manner. Data is not gathered for the purpose of proving or disproving a hypothesis before entering the study. Abstractions are constructed as the particulars have been collected and categorized. Theory emerges from "the bottom" up from many dissimilar pieces of data that are interrelated. This type of emergent theory is also known as "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Description of the Research

The Setting

Sweetgrass is an Ojibway Native community without reserve status. It is situated on the southern shores of a lake in the sub-arctic region of Ontario. It can be reached by float plane only when the lakes are free of ice and ski-plane or ski-doo in the winter.

Sweetgrass was established in 1975 when ninety people broke away from a neighbouring community to create a settlement free of problems associated with alcoholism, vandalism, and violence. The founding

families built the first homes with logs cut from the surrounding bush. Today there are approximately three hundred inhabitants living in Sweetgrass. Alcohol and narcotic drugs are banned from the community. All of the buildings in the community continue to be made with indigenous labour and local materials. These include private homes and public buildings such as the school, Band office, store, post office, radio station, community hall, church, saw-mill and others. Water is hauled manually and heat is provided by commercially manufactured wood stoves or stoves fashioned out of discarded oil drums. A gas generator situated outside of the community provides electricity.

Employment is provided by local services such as the school, Band office, store, post office, and nursing station. Although some families continue to trap, fish, and hunt, there are high levels of unemployment with many families dependent upon social assistance. The cost of living is high with the isolation factor making items such as food and clothing very expensive. In one of my interviews (Inter 14, 21-22) a Native mother with a husband and two children under the age of ten, describes the economic hardships

born by the inhabitants of Sweetgrass.

> ...we're paying hydro and telephone now and will be paying if we have a water system in our houses....the food that we get from out of town is really expensive. For instance when I buy food, groceries, it goes up to $500.00 for a week....even gas too....$7.00 per litre....it's really hard on the people who don't have a skidoo because they have to pay the wood....it's $80.00 for dry wood per cord and I think $70.00 for green wood per cord....the guy who was sending in the welfare...said that the only reason why Indians get the welfare is for them to start a small business....you can't start a business on welfare because the food is so expensive....there's a lot of families like that....the only place they put their welfare is on the food bill (Inter 14, 21-22).

There are three school buildings with a student population of approximately one hundred. These buildings house six classrooms from Junior Kindergarten to grade ten. This is a provincial school and therefore follows the curriculum set down by the

Ontario Ministry of Education. The staff consists of four Anglo and English-speaking (first language) teachers including the principal, and five Native teachers. The special education teacher who is Ojibway is also the vice-principal. Support staff such as teacher-aides, secretaries, and caretakers, are Native. The School Board has as its members a Chairman and two trustees who are elected from the community. The school is funded through transfer payments from the federal Department of Indian Affairs.

I initiated negotiations for entry to Sweetgrass in May, 1990, five months before data collection began. There are two distinct socio-cultural groups requiring recognition in gaining access to a "First Nations" community with a provincial school. These two groups are represented by several Native and non-Native administrative bodies.

The Native governing bodies in Sweetgrass are the Chief and Council and the local District School Area Board. The non-Native administrative bodies are the larger umbrella board, the "Northern Board of Education", and the Ministry of Education represented in Sweetgrass by the Principal and the teachers. Each

organization carries within its infrastructure a hierarchy of authority and power including appropriate protocol for communications and decision-making. It is important that the researcher becomes sensitized to the similarities and differences between these two groups in order to conduct successful negotiations for gaining entry with both Native and non-Native administrators.

Gaining Entry

Gaining entry involves more than acquiring permission to establish a physical presence in a research setting. Both the researcher and the research focus must be viewed as credible and valuable by those who have the authority to grant or refuse access. It is important to determine who have these powers, and who are considered by others to have this type of authority (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

I initially met with the principal of Sweetgrass school, "Janet", (May, 1990) as the result of an application for employment that I had made earlier in the year. Although I had informed her that I had decided to continue with graduate studies on a full time basis, she wanted to discuss with me the merits of teaching and conducting my research in Sweetgrass.

Janet pointed out that Sweetgrass was recognized by the Ministry of Education unlike the other schools in the north which were federally or Band operated. This meant that teaching experience was credited by the Ministry. She added that the coming year would be her second year as principal stating that she would therefore be more familiar with operations and personnel. Janet felt that my interest in Special Education would be complemented by the presence of a Native Special Education teacher at Sweetgrass who also acted as the Vice-Principal (Field diary, 1, 4). I indicated that I would be unable to accept a teaching position but that I was interested in the possibility of conducting the study in Sweetgrass. Following a discussion of the nature of the research, Janet recommended that I make a bilingual (Ojibway and English) presentation to Band officials in early September (Field Diary 1, 2).

In the first week of September, Janet requested from me a brief overview of my proposal so that she could make a presentation to the School Board regarding my interest in conducting the study in Sweetgrass. I also asked for permission to make a formal presentation

to the Board. The following week, Janet telephoned me to say that the Board was prepared to see me in mid-September (Field-diary 1, 10-14). A week later I flew to Sweetgrass to present my research proposal to the Board and to discuss any concerns or questions that they may have had. The meeting lasted almost three hours with the Principal, the Vice-Principal/Special Education teacher who was also a Band councillor and former Chief, and two School Board Trustees, in attendance. The Chairman was unable to attend due to illness. I reviewed the purpose of the research, the methodology, the promise of confidentiality, and the process of informed consent including the forms which would be used with all participants in the study.

The Board members expressed a concern regarding the limited time that my data collection periods would involve - two visits of two weeks each. The Vice-Principal felt that a year would be more realistic. I agreed that if it were possible I would stay longer in the field.

The Board members requested that the interviews for the study be conducted in Ojibway through a local interpreter. I agreed that the Native language would

be the primary means of communication. Approximately one year ago, I consulted with a linguist regarding the conduct of my study. I asked if the research would be strengthened if I could speak and understand some Ojibway. He suggested that knowing some of an Indian language could be a liability for a non-Native researcher. Knowledge of Native linguistic codes does not ensure culturally relevant understanding. He suggested that I may be less inclined to make assumptions in interpreting the responses of the participants if I used the services of interpreters indigenous to the research site.

I concluded my presentation by saying that I would pay the costs set by the Band for the services of an interpreter, for accommodation, and any other expenses that my study may incur. In closing, I asked if I could live with a Native person or family during my periods of data collection (Field diary 1, 38-43).

I left Sweetgrass and returned home to wait for the Board's decision. A week passed before I received a telephone call from Janet when she told me that my study had been accepted. She stated that the Trustees had taken the minutes of the meeting to the Chief for

his consideration and approval. The study required the endorsement and support of the Chief and Councillors since the school and community are jointly supervised by the Band Council and the School Board. I was told that my first visit would have to take place before the end of October because "freeze-up" would occur during late October/early November. Once the ice on the lake begins to freeze, and until it is completely frozen, ski-planes cannot land at Sweetgrass. Three to four weeks can pass when there is no access to the community. My second visit would therefore take place in December after "freeze-up" (Field diary 1, 48-52). Throughout both of my visits I adopted the role of participant-observer.

The Researcher as Participant-Observer

The participant-observer continuum offers complete and covert observation of a setting at one extreme, and absolute participation at the other. Although the first strategy may reduce the effects that the presence of the researcher may have on the setting, it rules out the opportunity to cross-examine impressions and feelings with those of the participants. Complete participation can lead to over-participation wherein

the researcher is in danger of "going native". Specifically, the investigator can become so involved with the subjects that the original purpose of the study is lost. Fieldwork endeavours to remain in the middle of these two extremes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) and therefore sees the researcher as participant-observer.

For this study, I assumed the stance of participant-as-observer for the majority of the time that I was in Sweetgrass. I conducted informal interviews, informal and formal observations, and recorded casual conversations and observations in the solitude of the log cabin that I shared with the grade 3/4 teacher. My room-mate, "Deanna", was an Ojibway woman from a reserve in southern Ontario.

I describe my role as participant-as-observer because I shared in the daily activities of the school and community. Some of these activities included helping Deanna with preparing materials for lessons, making costumes for the Christmas concert, putting make-up on the children for the concert, giving student work stickers in mathematics workbooks and journals, and other endeavours that reflected the position of an

interested participant. It was critical that I avoid taking control of any situation. Not only would this unduly contaminate my data with researcher effect, I would create barriers between myself and the participants by assuming a role within the setting that had no contextual validity. Furthermore, it was important that I reduce the potential for being viewed in the stereotypical ways of either the "expert" or the "great white researcher" in the land of the "noble savage". As I lived my role of participant-observer within the school and community during the two visits, I collected data from various sources on an ongoing basis.

Qualitative Data Collection and Ongoing Analysis

This section describes the data collection techniques that are most frequently used in field research, and those that were implemented in this study.

Field notes. Field notes are a chief form of data in this type of study. They are continuous descriptions of social processes and their circumstances. The goal is to create a candid portrayal of their characteristics and properties. The

information that is recorded will in a general manner reflect that which is relevant to the foreshadowed problems of the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Field notes also include the ideas, feelings and reflections of the researcher.

Several types of field notes are kept throughout the course of the study. Substantive field notes are an ongoing account of the circumstances, events and discussions in which the researcher participates. The data for these may be collected with certain categories in mind. Methodological notes are maintained in conjunction with substantive notes. These are comprised of ideas, impressions and difficulties experienced in the field. This type of note-making encourages the observer to be reflective and analytical throughout the research. Analytic notes propose questions and hypotheses in support of the formation of models or theories (Irwin, 1988).

Field notes are acquired through observing subjects in their own socio-cultural context. Descriptive observation strives to describe the (a) setting, (b) participants, (c) things people do as a set of related behaviours (d) objects in the setting,

(e) single acts that people carry out, (f) events, (g) progression of time, (h) goals that people have, (i) feelings that are expressed (Spradley in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Observation becomes more focused as questions are asked regarding the data. Selective observation grows out of detailed accounts where continued analysis is deemed to be important (Irwin, 1988).

The above types of field notes were kept on an ongoing basis in this study. There are 36 entries that represent data collected over a period of 36 days. References to these notes are coded by FD, followed by the number of the account (number of days to date), and the page number. For example, (FD 5, 8), means Field Diary entry #5, page 8.

Formal and informal observations. Formal and informal observations are field notes that have been taken in an overt manner by the researcher. Formal observations are generally gathered over brief periods of time. One is intent upon collecting as much detail as possible. The researcher needs to be placed inconspicuously in the setting in order to reduce the potential for attracting attention from the subjects.

Informal observations are a more casual approach to note-taking of a particular event. Where a formal observation may cover one half hour, an informal observation may take place over a period of two hours or more. For this study, three formal observations were collected during classroom visitations. References to formal observations are signified by FO, followed by the number of the account, and the page number. For example, (FO 2, 7), means Formal Observation #2, page 7.

Four informal observations were gathered during the study. Three were classroom visitations and one was outside of the school during recess. References made to informal observations are signified by IO, followed by the number of the entry, and the page number. For example, (IO 1, 3), means Informal Observation #1, page 3.

Interviews. There are two extremes on an interview continuum. One extreme represents a casual unstructured conversation that is carried out in a dialogical reflexive manner. The other extreme is characteristic of a formal interrogation which is standardized and structured and displays an absence of

reflexivity between the questioner and the informant. Validity and reliability is provided in this study through a balance between these two ethics. Therefore the respondent's perspective is captured from an intense interview employing a list of critical questions to be covered in such a way as to allow for emergent dialogue (Irwin, 1988).

For this study, I had prepared an interview guide with open-ended questions and prompts to ensure the coverage of certain topics. I tried to include questions of a descriptive nature which would invite the respondents to talk about past or current activities and experiences. Other questions focused upon how the subjects structured and gave meaning to their personal knowledge. Several questions asked respondents to create comparisons between experiences (Burgess, 1984). The interview guide is presented in the Appendix.

Ethnographic interviews should be guided by questions that serve as "triggers" which endeavour to elicit new and more specific responses from the informants. The researcher begins the interview in an informal manner by creating discussion around an

experience that is common to both in order to stimulate consensus. Theme questions are then broached. The respondent is asked to interpret and clarify what is being said given the critical role that language plays in representing the perceptions and conceptions of the respondent (Irwin, 1988). This study incorporated these techniques during interview sessions.

Sixteen taped interviews were collected during the course of this study. Each of these lasted from one half an hour to two hours in length. The principal and the grade 3/4, grade 5/6, and grade 7/8 teachers suggested the names of several students and their families who would be in the community during my visits. My data collection periods coincided with the trapping and hunting season when various families and family members would be away from the settlement. I randomly selected four youngsters, their parents, grandparents, and Native teachers from both the grade 3/4 and grade 5/6 classes, to take part in informal interviews. Of these, the following Native people agreed to participate: the Vice-Principal/Special Education teacher; two Native Language teachers; the grade 3/4 teacher; the grade 5/6 teacher; one student

each from Kindergarten, grade 2, grade 3, grade 4, grade 5, grade 6, and grade 7; four mothers of school-age children ranging in age from their early twenties to their mid-thirties; one father of two school-age children in his mid-thirties; one grandfather in his fifties; and one grandmother in her sixties. I interviewed the teachers during my first visit without the assistance of an interpreter, and set up a tentative schedule to interview the children and their families during my second visit.

Interpreters were hired to assist in the conduct of the interviews with the students (from Kindergarten to grade 4), parents, and grandparents. The woman who acted as my interpreter with the parents and grandparents was also the school secretary. She advised that it would be proper for her to telephone the parents and grandparents to ask permission for me to conduct the interviews with the students and the families (FD 2, 190).

"Carin", the secretary, translated the covering letter and consent forms for those people whom she was able to contact. She then suggested a day and time when we could visit based upon my schedule. The

meeting timetable however was developed at the convenience of the participants and my interpreter who had a young baby at home.

I was escorted to the homes of the participants by skidoo with Carin as my driver. Again, Carin reviewed the consent forms and covering letter in Ojibway with the subjects prior to beginning the interview. Once we had gained consent for the family member and their youngster/s to participate in the study, the forms were signed. Then Carin asked for permission to tape the interview and explained that the conversation would be used in the analysis and writing of the study. Once the individual agreed to these conditions, the interview was initiated. Due to the unavailability of various subjects for the study, others were chosen in their place. Although several individuals were interviewed twice, the majority were interviewed once given the time limitations of the study.

The children and the teachers were interviewed in the school during recess or after classes had ended. Two teachers were interviewed in their homes and one family comprised of the mother, father, son, and

daughter, were interviewed in the cabin where I lived.

References made to interviews will be referred to as Inter, followed by the number of the entry, and the page number. For example, (Inter 4, 10), signifies Interview #4, page 10.

Documents. Ten documents were collected from several teachers and students. These include two sets of classroom rules and codes of behaviour, guidelines for appropriate behaviour during sports activities, three examples of seatwork, stories and cartoons created by students, a time-schedule for a Native Language lesson, and a program for the school Christmas pageant. These were readily accessible. Photographs were taken throughout the course of the study. These documents reflect the social world of the participants. They can provide insights into the beliefs, motivations, experiences, and objectives of individuals.

Content analysis was used to examine this material as I searched for themes and categories. Attention was given to the context within which each document was created, the author's concerns and motives, the effect that it may have on its intended audience, and the

extent to which the purpose of the document was consistent with its content (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

References made to documents will be referred to as Doc, followed by the number of the entry, and the page number. For example, (Doc 7, 3), represents Document #7, page 3.

Triangulation. Triangulation is a form of cross-validation where various types of information are compared in determining their degree of corroboration. Different sources of data were used by themselves or in combination to shape triangulation. Data triangulation involves time, space, or person triangulation as they were associated to the study, whereas methodological triangulation involved one approach used at different times, or different strategies employed with the same participant (Irwin, 1988).

Data analysis. Data analysis took place throughout the process of data collection. I noted any sensitizors or repeated words or ideas that were embedded in the data. For example, the word "respect" was used throughout the research to describe one aspect of behaviour that both teachers and parents wished to

promote with youngsters. As the study progressed the correlation that existed between the notion of "respect" and cultural beliefs in child rearing practices, became a major concern in understanding Native conceptions of "task commitment".

Sensitizors were coded in all of the data according to key words, phrases, concepts, and images. Categories emerged through ongoing triangulation and comparison of the data which finally led to the development of theoretical models to represent the conceptions of the participants. These are compared to Renzulli's definition for "giftedness" to determine the cultural relevance that the "enrichment triad model" has in relation to a Native context.

Validity and reliability. Internal validity is relatively high for field research since the source of data collection is the setting and the researcher acts as the instrument and the measure throughout the process. When there is a strong correlation between what was intended to be measured and what is measured this validity is considered to be sound. The extent to which the findings of one study are generalizable to another will determine the degree of external validity.

In this study, external validity can be established only by other Native teachers, students, and community members who feel that their beliefs are resonant with the descriptions provided in the study. The reliability of a study is determined by the degree to which the documentation of the data gathering and analysis procedures can be replicated by another researcher in determining the same results (Irwin, 1988).

Summary

A field research approach is most appropriate to this type of study as it endeavours to understand the insider's viewpoint. Methods of data collection characterized by participant-observation ensure that the researcher assumes an unobtrusive position in the field thereby reducing researcher-effect. Techniques used in the analysis of data support the development of emergent theory and theoretical models that seek to describe the conceptions, feelings, and beliefs of participants as these are related to the research questions guiding the study.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM DATA COLLECTION

Introduction

In this chapter a summary of the findings from a variety of data collected in the field will be described and interpreted. As is often the case in naturalistic research, the data collection techniques for this study generated more information than was anticipated in response to the research questions. This material included unexpected details regarding various beliefs, feelings, and interpretations of behaviours, by the participants. In reporting the findings of this study, I shall attempt to consider all of the information provided by the data in order to convey a critical understanding of the perceptions of participants living in Sweetgrass.

This chapter provides a summary of the major themes and categories which have emerged from an analysis of the interview transcripts, field notes, formal and informal observations, photographs, and documents. An important approach to data analysis for this study is data-source triangulation. This method

provides a comparison of findings related to the same phenomenon but originating from different stages in the fieldwork, from different times in the chronology of the setting, and from the accounts of different respondents. Data-source triangulation yields links between sensitizors and concepts.

Although the generation of themes and categories through data-source triangulation represents the essence of this chapter, a broader framework within which to encompass these themes is useful. Analysis of the data gives evidence of this framework through the distinction of two groups of beliefs, behaviours, and values, as they are expressed by the participants. These groups are defined as (a) Traditional and neo-Traditional cultural values and beliefs, and (b) Acculturation, in a discussion of the major themes and categories for this study.

Traditional values and beliefs are reflected by the Elders in their descriptions of daily life as it was experienced in their youth. Neo-traditional values and beliefs are represented by those people who are living in a culture in transition, but who endeavour to maintain various aspects of traditional Ojibway

lifestyle despite the influences of acculturation. Acculturation is the gradual process of assimilating Native people into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture through social institutions such as the school. Acculturation is often accompanied by economic change which may promote the deconstruction of traditional ways of life. A blending of dominant and minority traditions may occur with the interface of the two cultural groups.

Traditional and Neo-Traditional Cultural Values and Beliefs

In the context of traditional and neo-traditional cultural values and beliefs this study presents a critical review of the following themes: lifestyle, child-rearing, work, problem solving, and individual differences.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle is described in a brief discussion of traditional and neo-traditional activities, the importance of the Elders, and community relations. Each of these areas will be addressed separately.

Traditional and neo-traditional activities.

Traditional and neo-traditional activities include

trapping, fishing, hunting, rabbit-snaring, the skinning of pelts, the tanning of hides, canoeing, beading, sewing, dye-making from berries and roots, wood-carving, painting, drawing, bannock-making, the smoking of fish and meat, the creation of snow-shoes, canoes, paddles, traps, tikinagans (cradle-boards designed for carrying an infant on the mother's back), and nets for fishing.

"Emily", a woman in her mid-thirties with two school-aged children, recalls a time when she learned about beading from her mother and grandmother.

> Mother: ...my mom said there were small beads, seed beads a long time ago. I don't know where they got them....I think they were plastic. Sometimes I saw my grandmother making beads out of fishbones. They dyed them.
> Interviewer: What did they make the dye from?
> Mother: From the spruce tree nuts and they got them from the ground. I don't know what kind of roots they used. You can get your colours from the roots in the ground. That's where they got their dyes.
> Interviewer: How do you think that Indians found these things out about the dyes in nature and the different things that you can use?
> Mother: ...they passed it on from generation to generation (Interview 14, 23).

Emily enjoys sharing her memories of several activities that she engages in with her husband and children, and when she was a child.

> Mother: Not all the moms, not any women today

> travels alone, but I do. I travel in the night with my kids. When I got back from trapping about 3 weeks ago, I came home during the night.
> Interviewer: How far away were you from the community?
> Mother: About 35 miles, but it's kind of scary travelling alone when there's a lot of wolf tracks. Kind of scary if you meet a wolf along the way, what can you do?....when I was driving my kids on the sleigh, they told me that there were some wolves behind us, 3 wolves, but I never noticed them...."Donald" (husband) was behind but he was about 4 hours behind....We did a lot of travelling when I was a kid. We used to travel about 60 miles...by canoe, usually by dogs and skidoo....It didn't matter who you are. I can even carry a small canoe by myself over the portage....I do tanning of moosehides....putting a fish net on the lake and I usually get the moss for my sisters, for their babies (moss used as a "diaper"). And I usually help Donald when he's building a house in the bush, carrying logs and peeling them (Inter 14, 10-11).

Emily expressed grave concern to me that many of the Native parents today do not take their children to the bush where they may learn traditional skills such as trapping, hunting, and fishing.

Emily translated the following for her seven year old son and nine year old daughter as they discuss several of their favourite activities:

> She (daughter) likes it when she skins fox....He (son) says he likes what his father's doing, what he teaches him, like trapping, rabbit snaring....Those things he likes and his father usually takes him out wood cutting. "Anna" (daughter) says she likes fishing (Inter 14, 1,3).

My interview with "John", a grandfather, was a deeply moving event for me. This was the first Elder with whom I had the honour to speak. "Carin", my translator, drove me to a log cabin where I was introduced to John and another man of John's age. She spoke in Ojibway to John regarding the nature of the interview as well as my wish to tape our discussion. The other man left and for the next five minutes or more John paced inside the cabin while all of us kept silent.

When he finally sat down on a wooden work table he picked up a small box of matches which he proceeded to drop at regular intervals directly in front of me. A few exchanges were made in Ojibway between John and Carin. During this entire period John neither spoke to me nor offered a glance of acknowledgement. I remained silent and kept my eyes lowered having learned that this was a sign of respect in the presence of an Elder. I was concerned that this man may not feel comfortable with my presence and may therefore withdraw from the study. Carin finally looked at me and said "He wants to talk about trapping" (Inter 16, 1).

> A long time ago when he used to go trapping he used to use dogs, not the skidoo. His father went

> with them....He went with his father and brothers. His father taught him how to set the traps. That's how he learned to trap. After going with their father he let them do their own when they were 15 years old. So they know now to do things they have to, after the father taught them and after the father told them not to do bad stuff, like dangerous things with the gun....After learning how to handle the axes and guns and stuff like that he let them go by themselves....there's no problem with them after that, after their father taught them. They get their own food and stuff like that. A long time ago there was no trail radio or anything so they have to tell their father when they are going to be back. For instance, they won't be home for a month or so. That way the family won't worry....It was hard for them a long time ago. They were good at it when they cut the woods. They only used axe and sleigh, toboggan. And they walked when they trapped, they walked with their legs to get their furs home...the animals they trapped....When they go far away, they used to take nets too with them, so they won't carry food or anything. He says he was good at setting the net. That's how they got the food from fish (Inter 16, 1-2).

John appeared to enjoy sharing his memories with us. We exchanged brief glances and the occasional smile while Carin translated his stories. I noticed that she activated the tape recorder only when John had finished speaking and she had begun the English translation.

"Curt" a teacher, Band official, and school administrator, told me that when he was a youngster the people trapped and made snowshoes, toboggans, and mukluks (Inter 1, 2-3).

The importance of the Elders. The Elders are regarded as the great teachers of traditional beliefs, skills, and values (FD 32, 222).

> We consider an Elder at 40...if they've had a good life up to that point. That's the age that they start seeing the person as an Elder (Inter 4, 22).
>
> ...they (the Elders) teach the traditional ways like trapping, how to set traps, fishing (Inter 6, 10).
>
> They're always trapping, they do things in traditional ways (Inter 12, 8).
>
> The one who can teach how to make snowshoes will tell them (children) the Indian ways (Inter 13, 13).

A deep regard for the past and a desire to maintain its traditions parallels a profound respect for the Elders. In contrast to these values, I became more conscious of my own Euro-Canadian upbringing with its emphasis upon change, the future, modernism, and youth.

Community relations. One of the teachers suggests that Sweetgrass is a "caring and close-knit community" (FD 16, 87). She spoke of how the people had worked together to assist in the recovery of a small plane that had crashed during the past winter and the care of its pilot and two passengers.

The principal stated that the "community really

sticks together and cooperates" (FD 26, 185) when there is a crisis. She described the shared efforts of the people this past winter in helping to save the life of a little girl who had been shot in a hunting accident on the family's trap line.

Child Rearing Beliefs

Traditional and neo-traditional child rearing beliefs and practices are described in a discussion of discipline, teaching and learning, and play. Each area is addressed separately.

Discipline. I commented to Deanna, an Ojibway teacher, that I have heard many non-Native people including non-Native teachers suggest that there was little or no discipline in a Native home. She promptly responded with the following view:

> D: I would say that's true....it's fine....it's not a bad thing. Native people are raising their kids...to make their own choices, not only in the community but at home too....
> I: Is that how you were raised?
> D: I think so. I was never told I had to sweep the floor or anything like that, I just knew it. My mother or father or the two ladies that raised me never hounded me to stay in, you have to do the dishes...they left that up to me to make that decision whether I wanted to do the work or not. They never pushed me to do those things. They always sort of did it on their own. Like they did it themselves...if it didn't get done they would do it. But eventually as a kid grows up they take on those responsibilities and do it themselves

(Inter 4, 9-10).

Deanna further emphasized the importance of allowing children the opportunity to experience childhood free of imposed restrictions and responsibilities. She pointed out that during this important period of growth young children require the freedom to be themselves in order to comfortably discover whom they are to become. She stated that many Native families believe that children will assume responsibility as a natural part of getting older. It is therefore unnecessary for parents to prematurely pressure youngsters into taking responsibility for the maintenance of the home or other dimensions of their life experience (Inter 4, 10).

Deanna maintained that youngsters will learn appropriate behaviours as a consequence of their actions. Children express a natural desire to explore their surroundings. They gain experiential knowledge through direct contact with their environment.

> Ever ask a native person if they have a terrible 2-year old? They'll tell you no because they allow that kid to be free and do (Inter 4, 14).

The freedom to learn is an important theme in understanding Ojibway child-rearing practices (FD 33,

229). This freedom represents opportunities for children to make choices, decisions, and judgements, based upon their own experiences. A critical element associated with these factors is timing. Specifically, the child is in control of the timing and nature of his or her reaction/s to a stimulus (Inter 4, 2).

> ...I think it makes them more...independent if they're treated like that. They have the freedom to make their own choices and learn from those choices (Inter 4, 3).

In speaking with several mothers, a father, and a grandmother, I learned that children were not punished when they failed to follow requests made of them by their elders. For example, when a child either refused to carry out a task, or left it incomplete, someone else would do the work. There is the belief that children will eventually do the work in their own time if they are not coerced. Furthermore, the parents expressed their concern for their children's feelings in these matters. They avoided creating confrontations that would upset their youngsters and possibly develop into struggles centred around power and control. Parents and grandparents would quietly talk with a child about a problem only after the youngster was given time to think about the situation and had settled

down. (Inter 6, 6; Inter 11, 6; Inter 12, 4; Inter 14, 5; Inter 15, 5; FD 32, 218, 220).

Obedience is not an important criterion in measuring the degree of respect that an Indian child may have for parents and Elders. The degree to which a behaviour is deemed appropriate or inappropriate will depend upon the nature of its context.

Embedded within a permissive approach to discipline is a belief in the implicit goodness of children. I recall my own experiences with Euro-Canadian child-rearing practices as reflecting a view of childhood wherein adult intervention, otherwise known as discipline, is prescribed to ensure that the child became a responsible and independent adult.

Teaching and learning. Teaching and learning in a traditional lifestyle focuses upon educating the young in Indian cultural, spiritual, moral, and social ways. The identity of the child as a Native person consists of learned behaviours and beliefs that are taught by parents, older siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, Elders, and other community members (Inter 6, 9-10; Inter 11, 1; Inter 11, 4; Inter 12, 8; Inter 13, 5; Inter 13, 8; Inter 14, 24; Inter 15, 3). The child

grows up in a community of teachers where child-rearing becomes a shared responsibility (Inter 4, 11).

I observed three processes through which learning takes place. Firstly, there is learning through watching others (Inter 6, 7; Inter 14, 4; Inter 13, 2; Inter 15, 1; Inter 12, 7; Inter 11, 5; Inter 8, 23; Inter 6, 1; FD 32, 221).

> ...when you take your child to go out trapping there are some things you don't have to tell them...they learn by watching (Inter 13, 7).

"Jordan", a carver and teacher in his mid-thirties, told me how he learned to carve when he was a young boy.

> I used to watch him (father's cousin) all day carve. Just watch to see what he's doing....I just watched and ever since I grew up around 12, 13, I tried to do things on my own, what I see (Inter 5, 9).

Secondly, there is learning through listening and asking questions (Inter 6, 14; Inter 13, 5; Inter 5, 3). Carin describes an experience she shared with her sister while learning how to snare a rabbit from listening to her mother.

> Some people just hear it and they learn. When you want to go snare when you hear your mom saying how to do it and you try to do it. That's what happened to me once....it was really snowing, my mom was talking about rabbit snaring, and we (Carin and sister) were outside playing and

> decided to go rabbit snaring. So we went. My sister was talking about how mom was saying to put the sticks beside it and you cut the log to make the snare....next we went and caught a rabbit (Inter 6, 5).

Jordan continues with the way in which he learned to carve:

> ...one of these guys I asked instructions, what kind of wood to use and what tool to use, so they gave me instructions (Inter 5, 9).

Thirdly, there is experiential learning. (Inter 14, 1; Inter 12, 5; Inter 14, 11; Inter 15, 2). Specifically, children learn new skills through direct participation in activities with their parents and grandparents.

> I (mother) just let them (children) do part of the things that I do, that's how I teach them (Inter 14, 4).

Carin's mother pointed out to her the importance of practical experience in learning new skills.

> That's what my mom always told me. If you don't try what people tell you to do you won't be able to know how to do something like cleaning the dishes, sewing...setting a trap, setting a net....People who can't don't try (Inter 6, 4-5).

Jordan shared with me his experiences in learning how to sew.

> I also saw sewing, mukluks and mitts, vests, moose hide vest. And I always wanted to try that too and I did. I just asked my mother for some materials so that I could try to make myself a

> vest . She just gave me a design and pattern and cut it up. I didn't use the needle, I used the moose puncher and put the moosehide into a string.... (Inter 5, 9).

Learning takes place through observation, listening, asking questions, and practical experience.

During a discussion of the past, Emily related to me the process of mentorship which was used to train children in their chosen fields of interest. The following exchange details this approach to teaching and learning:

> E: ...a long time ago....they (children) chose what they wanted to become, an artist, or medicine man, or somebody else.
> I: So the parents would ask their kids what they wanted to become...?
> E: It's just the same as white people do. Like they ask what they want their kids to become.
> I: Some of those choices were to be an artist, or a medicine man...
> E: or a good hunter....that's what the kid was taught....a legend or story-teller, and then they would be taught by the grandparents or parents....
> I: Were they taught maybe by someone else? If the kid wanted to be a medicine man and there's no one in the family that's a medicine man, do they get taught by a medicine man?
> E: Ya, I know my older sister...was interested in helping sick people...and my parents told her to go with the medicine man and his family and travel with them, and that medicine man told her what kind of plants, herbs to use.
> I: So if the kid wanted to be an artist they might go with an artist for awhile?
> E: Ya....usually a kid tells his parents that he's interested in doing something, like if he wants to make a canoe, he would like to learn canoeing, then you go with someone who knows how

to make one...(Inter 14, 25-26).

Although priority was given to the interests of the child in choosing a vocation, a youngster who displayed a special aptitude or natural ability in a particular area of skill may have been selected for advanced training (Inter 14, 26; Inter 12, 7).

Cooperative learning was emphasized in a traditional lifestyle. Competition among youngsters was neither fostered nor encouraged. A community encouraged all of its members to succeed believing that each individual was special in some way (Inter 3, 10). Although Euro-Canadian schooling practices sometimes encourage cooperative learning experiences, competition among students to succeed remains a dominant aspect of school learning.

Play. Native parents regard children's play as an important aspect of childhood that facilitates learning. During this period children can explore and act out their interests (Inter 9, 4; Inter 15, 5).

Carin recalled fond memories of playing with the dolls that she used to make with her mother. Carin enjoyed making cookies and animals out of mud with her sister even though her mother did not appreciate the

girls becoming covered with dirt. The sisters would make up games whereby they would re-enact the activities of their mother (Inter 6, 7-8):

> We used to play with cones...pine cones. We used to peel them off and put them in a cup or bowl, trying to make oats from them to cook with. We put them in a bag after we peeled them off. We collected leaves for money and for the fishes....We used to see our mother smoking fish in her teepee and eat it. And we used to play that too, pretend we were doing that (Inter 6, 8).

Curt told me that during the 1950s and 1960s Native people made skates by securing saw-blades to boards and strapping them to the feet with moose-hide. Sometimes a sail was attached to a larger version of one of these boards in creating a "sail-board". These "sail-boards" served as toys as well as a means of transportation across the frozen lakes (FD 28, 188).

On the trapline children also pretend to carry out the activities of their parents and grandparents. For example, they pretend to trap, fish, and cook (Inter 12, 2; Inter 14, 7). Emily describes several of the games that her son and daughter have created while playing on the family trapline:

> He (son) makes a skidoo out of cardboard and they do all kinds of games, which I don't know how to call....they pretend to do some trapping and fishing, those things, frying fish....Then they play pretending games like they pretend to have

> lots of family, like kids. They drag them around by the toboggan like when a long time ago people used to move around a lot. That's what they do in the bush and when they're playing and they make a treehouse (Inter 14, 7).

Activities involving play allow the children to explore their interests and encourage the development of a personal identity.

Work

Work is represented by various chores regarded as "inside" and "outside" housework, work in the bush, and work in the community. The nature of work in Sweetgrass has changed over the past twenty years with the introduction of various technologies. In general, the length of time required to complete a task has been shortened with electrically powered machines replacing manual labour. For example, Emily's husband, "Robert", described the impact that the chain-saw and the skidoo have had upon the traditional approach to obtaining and preparing wood for the home:

> When I was a young boy we didn't have a power saw so I had to use a wood saw, get water using a dog sled, go across the lake and get wood to cut. I did this with my brother or my mother or my grandmother. After that I used to split wood, pile it up, get some water, by walking or by hand. Now there's snowmobiles, chainsaws, everything, so it's pretty hard for kids to do work because they have to be a little older before they can use these things....because the snowmobile it's faster

> to go and cut the wood....my boy won't see me cutting the wood or anything because I'll already be done (Inter 13, 4).

Robert explained that the new technology has reduced the opportunities for work that children once had in the family. Youngsters need to be older to safely learn how to operate power tools and machinery. Furthermore as tasks are completed more quickly with machines than by hand, many of the household chores are finished by the time they return home from school (Inter 13, 4). Finally, work done by hand is labour intensive and allows for the participation of more people than does machine-operated work. For example, a father who is collecting and preparing wood for the family using hand tools and a dog-sled will require the assistance of several family members. However the same task executed with power tools and a ski-doo may require the services of only one person.

Robert's wife, Emily, with the help of their two children bring the wood into the house after it has been cut (Inter 13, 17). The children also carry out such tasks as drying dishes, cleaning the grounds outside, and hauling water. The family usually works together when there are chores to be done (Inter 14, 4;

Inter 13, 4-5). On occasion, "Ann", the daughter, assists the grandparents and helps with the job of washing the clothes (Inter 14, 4).

Although the children will often take the initiative for carrying out various household tasks, their parents may find it necessary to ask them to do the work (Inter 13, 4). The following exchange occurred when I asked Emily what she would do if one or both of them refused to work:

> E: When one of them doesn't want to do something the other does. I tell the one who doesn't want to do something to do something else.
> I: So you don't force them?
> E: No, I don't force them.
> I: Why is it you don't force them?
> E: Well, I just want them to enjoy what they're doing, to enjoy themselves. And if I force them, they wouldn't enjoy it.
> I: Do they eventually come back and do what it was that you wanted them to do?
> E: Ya, usually they tell me they're sorry for not doing it and tell me why they don't want to do it (Inter 14, 5).

Emily does not punish the children if they refuse to take responsibility for their tasks. Instead, she waits until they have calmed down and then she discusses the problem with them during a quiet time. In this way the children rarely ever "get into trouble" (Inter 14, 5). On occasion the children are rewarded for doing their chores with articles that they may

need. Emily gave the example of "Arnold", her son, who is working towards earning his equipment for skating (Inter 14, 8).

I asked Carin if she could tell me about the type of work that she did as a young girl at home. She told me that about fifteen years ago when she was ten years old there were no washing machines (Inter 6, 3).

> There's a whole bunch of laundry bags at home and we went one day, really sunny out, Saturday morning, and I started hauling water with my older brothers and sisters, and my dad built kind of a tub, a wood tub. He carved it. That's where we washed our laundry. It was a really hard job....We scrubbed the pants and everything. We used to have a scrub board and scrub brush, and that's how we did our laundry, with our hands...in the winter too and summer (Inter 6, 3).

"David" a boy in grade 5, "Violet" a girl in grade 3, and "Raymond" a kindergarten student, described through the assistance of a translator the work which they do at home (Inter 9, 3). David makes the fire on occasion and brings the wood and water into the house. Violet washes dishes, cleans the house, and does the washing. Raymond is still too young at age 5 to do heavy work, so he might assist in small tasks such as bringing little pieces of wood into the house. Once a child reaches 8 or 9 years of age he or she is expected to take greater responsibility for the maintenance of

the household (Inter 9, 3-4; Inter 15, 5).

"Charlotte" a grade 7 student told me that she mops and sweeps the floor, washes dishes, does laundry, cooks bannock and moose meat, and at times she builds the fire (Inter 10, 14). "Karl", a grade 6 boy, hauls water, chops wood and carries it into the house for the fire, washes floors and dishes, sweeps and cooks (Inter 8, 18-19). Most of the time Karl doesn't need to be told to work by his elders. He told me that he worked when he saw that there was something that needed to be done. When I asked him how he might know that he should go and get wood, he looked at me in a puzzled fashion and then remarked:

> ...sometimes when you're cold and when there's no wood in the box (Inter 8, 25).

The nature of Karl's tasks change according to the work that needs to be done. There are times when his parents do not allow him to go outside to play if he does not complete his chores (Inter 8, 25).

"Jossie", a woman in her early thirties, explained through translation that her daughter, Violet, helps to get wood and water for the home, and does laundry in the summer (Inter 11, 6). She commented that there have been times when her children have carried out

their tasks independently, while on other occasions she and her husband have asked them to work.

I was reminded of Emily's thoughts regarding children and their tasks (Inter 14, 4-5) when Jossie said that if one of her children refuses to do some work, Jossie lets the incident pass and does not force the youngster. She stated that she did not want to unnecessarily upset the youngster (Inter 11, 7-8). Jossie does not insist that the children work at their chores for extended periods of time. Jossie observed that when the children are at school they have to do their work as an assignment from the teacher, whereas at home, the responsibility of work is treated differently (Inter 9, 3).

"Curt", a father and teacher in his mid-thirties, explained that once children reach the ages of 8 and 9 years they should know what to do regarding their chores without the intervention of their parents. He commented that in many families a child is given a task that he or she will be committed to for the duration of the time that they live with the family.

> You have the wood person, water person, take turns at these things and you shouldn't have to be told what to do. Little shameful that you mom has to tell you or remind you that there's no water

(Inter 9, 3).

When a family goes trapping, hunting, or fishing, the children help with various tasks such as setting traps, skinning, drying, and tanning of hides, washing dishes, collecting wood and starting the fire, hauling water, setting nets, and rabbit-snaring (Inter 8, 24; Inter 12, 3-4; Inter 13, 7; Inter 16, 4).

Work in the home represents the maintenance of primary needs such as heat for warmth and water for cooking and washing. Several community services such as the school, the store, the Band office, and the nursing station, provide part-time and full-time employment in the form of wage labour. However, Emily commented that many of the residents depend upon social assistance to provide wood, clothing, and food for their families (Inter 14, 22).

Solving Problems

Two approaches to solving problems are (a) talking to other people about the problem; and (b) listening to others. A discussion of each of these strategies follows.

Talking with others. Several parents, teachers, and a grandmother, told me that they helped children

solve problems through a process of cooperative discussion (Inter 6, 3; Inter 11, 9; Inter 12, 8; Inter 14, 8). When a parent is unable to offer the assistance a youngster needs, he or she may seek the advice of an Elder. Curt told me that if he is unsuccessful in solving a problem through talking with a peer, he goes to see an Elder (Inter 1, 4). Carin suggested that she may also go to talk to a priest or minister, or a councillor at the Band office, when she is faced with a problem (Inter 7, 1; Inter 7, 7). Problem solving is a cooperative effort among adults and children, and adults and adults.

Listening to others. John recalled through translation that he learned how to set a difficult trap by listening to other people discuss traps. He added that the need to survive motivated his interest in resolving this type of problem (Inter 16, 5).

Jordan said that one gained wisdom through the development of survival and listening skills. He suggested that both areas of skill are acquired in learning about Native culture (Inter 5, 2). He told me the story of a youngster whose behaviour improved after he listened to an Elder tell stories and legends.

> ...somewhere around 1974, there was a student who had a problem in school. We were out in the trapline at that time and that student was sent by his parents to where we were trapping. He really had a problem...behaviour I guess in school. But our Elder was there on our trapline at that time. ...the old man was always telling stories, legends, and we were sitting around beside the stove and listening. Later on, he was just, he began to change, the boy, because he had learned from the Elder, a lot of things. Then he went back to school again (Inter 5, 3).

Problem solving activities continue to be motivated by real-life experiences that reflect the need to survive. Specifically, the need for heat, water, food, and shelter, represent the daily demands of survival in Sweetgrass as opposed to comforts or luxuries in Euro-Canadian society. Family and community members are often involved in cooperative efforts resolving difficulties as they arise. Talking with others, asking questions, and listening, are key problem solving strategies.

Individual differences

Although cooperation and sharing are promoted among adults and children, individual differences in interests and abilities are recognized and valued within the family and community (Inter 5, 2; 11, 3; Inter 2, 6; Inter 1, 2; Inter 8, 22; Inter 6, 6; Inter 12, 7). An appreciation of individual differences is

achieved in the absence of overt comparison and competition among people (Inter 16, 5).

Individual differences may be accepted as resulting from natural talents and abilities which are enhanced through specialized training (Inter 12, 7; Inter 1, 1; Inter 11, 4). For example, the children who are "fast learners" will be more adept at learning trapping skills than those who are "slow learners" (Inter 12, 9). However, the opportunity to learn is extended to a child regardless of his or her perceived level of ability (Inter 15, 3).

Individual differences in ability vary within and across performance domains. A person whose abilities diverge significantly from the norm is viewed as being different from others in possessing special skills or personal qualities. In speaking with several parents, grandparents, teachers, and children, I learned that these differences may be regarded as special in such domains as (a) trapping, hunting, and fishing, (b) beading and sewing, (c) carving, drawing, painting, music, and oratory. The participants remembered those times as especially important when they participated in one or more of these activities.

I asked several people if they ever referred to someone as being "gifted" in terms of their abilities. I learned from Carin that the term "gifted" did not translate into Ojibway (FD 29, 194). For those interviews that required translation, I was met by confusion when I asked about "giftedness" (Inter 12, 1; Inter 13, 6). Although Emily and Robert both speak English, neither of them gave any indication of having a conceptual frame of reference for the word "gifted" (Inter 13, 6). Curt, a teacher who has been educated through the residential system as well as post-secondary teacher training programs, equated giftedness with talent (Inter 1, 1). Deanna, who like Curt has received post-secondary education, viewed giftedness as special abilities (Inter 3, 1).

Trapping, hunting, and fishing. Arnold, the son of Roger and Emily, told me that learning about trapping and rabbit snaring with his father were very special moments for him. Ann, Arnold's sister, particularly enjoyed fishing (Inter 14, 2).

With the decline of traditional lifestyle, various skills associated with trapping, hunting, and fishing are regarded as special abilities. Examples of these

skills are: the ability to skin animals; tan hides; make traps, fishing poles, paddles, and snowshoes; and to guide travel across waterways and in the bush (Inter 11, 1; 14, 3; Inter 11, 5; Inter 12, 2; Inter 16, 4; Inter 13, 1; Inter 16, 5-6; Inter 5, 2; Inter 14, 10).

Beading and sewing. Emily suggested that learning how to bead and sew by watching her mother were very special times. She expressed pleasure in telling me that she created some of the designs for her patterns on her own. When I asked her where her ideas came from she told me:

> Once I learned to make designs it just popped out in my mind what kind of designs to make....I created these designs on my own.... (Inter 13, 7).
>
> ...it's like someone showing me what kind of designs I'm going to make without even preparing. It just comes out of my mind (Inter 14, 27).
>
> I don't know because every time I want to do something like in traditional ways, it just comes (Inter 14, 28).

She also described how she felt during the creations of these designs:

> I really don't know how to explain it. I feel something that makes me want to do it. It's almost like someone's showing you how to do it and there's nobody there. Like someone is talking to you in your mind how to do that....It could be me inside (Inter 13, 10).
>
> ...feeling proud of myself when I did it, I really

loved that (Inter 14, 28).

I asked her if she believed that everyone could experience the same feeling. She responded by saying:

> E: Some of them who are, have some Native culture...proud of what you are and proud of what you have....Some of them have a special feeling but most of the people are forgetting their ways, they're just looking ahead to the future and acting like they're white.
> I: Is that how you can almost lose that special feeling?
> E: Yes.

"Rose", a grandmother, lost her mother when she was eight years old. She learned the basic skills of beading and sewing by watching other women as they worked. In developing her own style, Rose compared the sewing skills that she had learned from Native women with the approaches used by "white people" (Inter 15, 1).

Carin remembers her mother telling her that some women made gloves differently from others. Instead of making them by stitching the inside of the hide, these women would make their stitches on the outside. Carin asked her mother if someone could teach her how to make gloves in this way. She simply replied that Carin would figure it out on her own (Inter 6, 2).

<u>Carving, drawing, painting, music and oratory.</u> I

asked Kevin, John's grandson, if he could tell me tell me about the people in Sweetgrass that did things differently from others. He told me that Jordan, "Paul", and "Tim", are carvers. "Michael" also carves and creates drawings on moosehide. "Leon" carves and paints. There are not very many people today who know how to carve (Inter 13, 10; Inter 8, 21). David, a grade 5 student, identified Tim and Paul as having special abilities in carving. Paul is also a talented musician and singer (Inter 9, 1). "Jerry" is a skilled guitarist who has learned to play "by ear". His father reads notes and plays the organ (FD 32, 221-222). Carin enjoys creating lullabies for her baby daughter as she rock her to sleep (Inter 7, 5).

Karl and David suggested that the carvers got their ideas by watching animals on the traplines, from each other, and from the Elders (Inter 9, 1; Inter 8, 20).

Each carver has his own distinctive style:

> You can tell a Paul "R" carving from a Tim "M" carving. Because it's done in such a way you can recognize right away that that's Paul's work. He uses a hot metal rod to colour up the wood, turn it into dark. If he does a bird carving he'll put feathers on using the rod (Inter 9, 1).

Karl describes how some of these artists develop

new ideas for their work.

> Leonard is a painter. He does beautiful drawings. When he sleeps he dreams about it and sometimes in his mind he doesn't copy other drawings....Sometimes you have to think a lot and not be disturbed (Inter 8, 20-21).

His grandfather, John, carves. Although his great grandfather does not carve, he did make Karl a bow and arrow.

> I think he's the only one that could make that (Inter 8, 21-22).

Curt told me about an Elder who elaborated upon the traditional paddle design to create a paddle that was more comfortable to use. Over a number of years he made many improvements upon his experimental forms until he was satisfied with his creation.

> C: There's an Elder that paddles in a different way. He makes his handles like you can grab on, but creates something at the top so you feel comfortable with your palms. The rest of the people who make paddles make them just a straight stick. This guy makes them fancier. This was his idea.
> I: So he started out making a basic paddle, so he was skilled at doing that and then created a different idea.
> C: Making a lot of improvements over the years.

Occasionally, individual differences that led to special abilities were motivated by the demands of survival. Basic skills were passed on from one generation to the next (Inter 5, 5-6). This knowledge

provided the foundation for the creative thoughts and acts that would enrich the lifestyle of the people over many generations.

Individual differences are nurtured through a cooperative model for human development in traditional and neo-traditional Ojibway culture. This is in contrast to Euro-Canadian culture which promotes individual differences through competition. The "need to succeed" has become the survival instinct of Euro-Canadian society.

Acculturating influences such as the school, economic change, and television, have contributed to a decline in the values and beliefs represented by traditional and neo-traditional Ojibway culture. The following section presents a discussion of the nature and effects of such influences in Sweetgrass.

Acculturation

The following themes are examined in a discussion of acculturation in Sweetgrass: worlds in conflict, language and identity, work, play, and education.

Worlds in Conflict

The youth of Sweetgrass are torn between following a traditional way of life and adopting the beliefs and

practices taught and modelled at the school (Inter 13, 2-3; Inter 14, 16-17). The decline of traditional lifestyle has contributed to changes in child-rearing practices which have given rise to behaviour problems with the children (Inter 14, 3; Inter 13, 5). Television, video, and electronic games played in the local arcade, often have a negative effect upon the attitudes of the children towards their elders and their peers (Inter 14, 4). Emily pointed out that many youngsters turn to alcohol and drugs as a result of the confusion which they feel in trying to live in "two worlds" (Inter 14, 33).

School. Emily explained to me that many of the children in school feel pulled between whether they should "learn or follow and don't know where they are" (Inter 13, 2). She pointed out that:

> ...kids are wondering why their parents are telling them to respect the white people and their teaching. They don't know why, they're confused why they're in school and why they're called Indians, and why they should go trapping because most of the parents don't go out trapping....they don't know where they're at....I hear some of the parents talking on the radio telling the younger people that they should learn their ways, and what are the younger people thinking, how can they learn if no one's going out trapping or going out in the bush (Inter 13, 2-3)?
>
> That's what is confusing them. They feel like

> they're being torn apart, they're being pulled by both sides (Inter 14, 16).

Emily suggested that the disjuncture between school and community could be compared to a broken marriage. Specifically, she observed that if she and Robert were to separate, each parent would place pressure on the children to follow their particular way of doing things (Inter 14, 16).

Emily believes that school and bush knowledge are equally important to the future lifestyle of today's Native youth (Inter 13, 6). She is concerned however that because so many people have placed money as a priority in their daily lives, children are not being taught about "pride and personal wisdom" (Inter 13, 14).

Decline of traditional lifestyle. The importance of traditional activities and skills has been diminished with the introduction of modern technology to the community (Inter 1, 3). Since many families do not hunt or trap today, fewer children are exposed to these skills (Inter 13, 1-2). Emily claims that those people who have not had the experience of being on the trapline with their parents will not know how to hunt, trap, and fish (Inter 14, 12). For example, she

recalled a time when her brother-in-law's family joined her own family to go trapping:

> His wife is a little bit younger than I am and that was the first time in the bush for her. She never went in the bush when she was a kid and she really had a hard time. Like when we went out to set traps, she didn't dress well like she should....she just stood there frozen watching me setting traps (Inter 14, 12).

Emily suggested that those families who do not carry out traditional activities behave differently from those who do. Many of the former parents grew up in the residential school system. When they returned to Sweetgrass, they neither knew how to conduct themselves in the community nor in the bush. They did not know how to teach their children appropriate customs and skills (Inter 14, 13; Inter 13, 2).

> They're just different from the people who always go to the bush. They act as if they're white people. White people don't really know what to do when they're in the bush or even when they're in the community....Like they don't really take good care of things like when they kill a duck or any animal they don't really take care of it like they should. They just throw it away. Kill it for sport (Inter 14, 13).

Those individuals who were sent away to residential school did not have the opportunity to grow up in an Ojibway family and learn parenting skills. This has led to a generation of many parents for whom

the experience of child-rearing poses many problems (Inter 14, 13).

> ...it's really hard for them even to control their kids. It's usually hard for the people who hardly go to the bush. Sometimes I know some of the kids, younger kids, they control their parents. Like they act bigger than their parents, especially the ones going out to the city all the time (Inter 14, 13).

Television, video, and arcade games. Many of the children have become preoccupied with television, video, and arcade games. They are therefore showing less interest in the activities of their parents, their responsibilities at home, and their schoolwork (Inter 14, 14; Inter 13, 5). Furthermore, the behaviour of the children is negatively affected by such influences:

> ...maybe of all the things that come into our community like nintendo and there's even an arcade now, it's really driving the kids crazy because it's all new to them and they just go after it. They don't work, a lot of them don't work at home. Like in my days we used to work just the same as what our parents did...now you hardly see younger people do that....they don't respect other people...when they wrestle with each other...they don't realize that they're doing harm to the other kid. They think it's funny when they make the other kid cry or...when they hurt the other kid....I know a lot of kids who watch violent movies and they think it's funny....they act bigger than adults....they don't really respect their own language too (Inter 14, 14).

Emily observed that many of the young people think that their non-Native teachers want them to act like

the "white" youth that they see in movies:

> ...pushing each other around and making fun of their teacher and I think that's what they're following in the movies. The Indian kids are trying to act big, they're dressing differently. They're writing on their jackets and all those things....They see it on the movies. That's what they're doing in the schools....they're being torn apart, they don't know...how to act, they don't even know who they are. They're confused (Inter 14, 31).

Carin suggested that television has also had a negative effect upon language development.

> ...it changed badly. Most of the kids learn their second language from TV. You know the cartoons they're watching, speak English, learn words from there (Inter 6, 8).

Curt shared his concern with me regarding a teenage boy who had spray-painted a door with satanic symbols. The student told Curt that he wanted to represent the lyrics of several selections of "heavy metal" music (FD 22, 164).

Alcohol and drugs. Emily and Robert have decided that involving the children in sports activities will help them to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Emily suggested that this is one of the reasons that Curt is trying to organize a hockey team for very young boys. These types of interests will give the children varied interests. There will be less time for them to

experience the confusion of trying to live in the conflict and confusion created by acculturating influences (Inter 14, 33-34).

> That's the only way I can see now is to put them in sports to keep them away from drugs. That's the reason why kids today are going into drugs, they're confused with two worlds. Confused and torn apart. Even in this community I hear that there's some kids that are taking some kind of drug, cigarettes, pot. Some are from outside the community or I think it's from "Whitefalls" (urban center) selling those things here, sending it in (Inter 14, 33).

Language and Identity

Language can reflect the traditions, values, and beliefs of a cultural group. The structural nature of a language may indicate the merit of certain behaviours and beliefs including the manner in which they are to be recognized. For example, the English language tends to compact and compartmentalize culturally valued ideas into brief phrases and one-word creations. These are therefore readily identified in both written and spoken communication (FD 32, 214, 216). Several examples of such linguistic inventions are "creativity", "giftedness", and "success".

In contrast to English where meaning can be designated through an understanding of external categories, meaning in the Ojibway language is based

upon the contextual reality of the communication (Inter 4, 18, 20). Thus, a word or phrase may have a double meaning depending upon how it is used (Inter 4, 18). In this way, language cues meaning (FD 32, 216). Therefore, direct translation from English to Ojibway and vice-versa does not ensure that culturally relevant understandings are achieved. I asked Deanna if Native culture could be understood by learning the language of the people. She responded with the following:

> No you can't. It takes something away when you hear a story or thing in a Native language, it's not the same when you put it in English, wouldn't mean the same. You take things away when you start translating (Inter 4, 16).

Carin's grandfather told her that it was important that she maintain the language, culture, and traditional ways of her people. He also stated that she needed to learn both Ojibway and English (Inter 6, 9). Many of the Elders do not know how to speak English nor are they familiar with English ideas (Inter 6, 9). This contributes to a breakdown in communication between those children and grandchildren who cannot speak Ojibway with their grandparents.

I asked Emma why she felt that it was important to maintain the language. She told me:

> Because it's our first language and we should keep it all the time. It's like you're losing somebody you really love, that's how it feels when you're losing your own language. They (children) should know who they are (Inter 14, 16).

Carin observed that many of the Elders "feel sad about losing their Native language" (Inter 6, 9).

Children respond to instruction and discipline in a more positive manner when the Native language is used at school (Inter 4, 16-17; IO 4, 237-241). Deanna believes that the children "have the respect of their own language" (Inter 4, 17). Emily has observed that when she is working with students in the first language they are inclined to respect one another. However, when she is not teaching them in this way she notes that they become restless (Inter 14, 28).

The Ojibway language is the primary means of communication in the homes of Sweetgrass. The identity of the child is defined by the use of the first language. When youngsters have difficulty expressing themselves in English, this can contribute to feelings of frustration and negative self-worth. For example, Arnold is uncomfortable at school when his teacher doesn't understand what he is trying to say. He feels discouraged when he cannot answer a question in English

even though he knows the answer (Inter 14, 28). Emily claims that when the teachers are unable to speak the Native language they are unable to understand the children's feelings.

> You have to understand the kids how they feel and have to be the person to understand them. When you're white you don't understand what the kid feels....most of the kids I know they express their feelings differently. Sometimes a kid... picks on other kids when he doesn't feel right about something. I could see that teachers are having a hard time with that because they think that kid is just being mean or just doesn't want to listen....They're trying to show how they feel because they can't say it very easily for a white teacher or white person....They think their teachers will somehow know how they feel (Inter 14, 30).

Work

The nature of work in Sweetgrass has changed with acculturation. For example, traditional pursuits such as hunting and trapping have been modified by technological innovation such as the ski-doo and the chain-saw (Inter 3, 1; Inter 13, 4). Fewer people need to be involved in these activities which are completed in shorter periods of time than in the past and are less labour intensive.

A consequence of this type of "efficiency" is that many adults and children no longer share in the work which has been traditionally associated with hunting,

fishing, and trapping (Inter 13, 4). Changes such as these have altered the fabric of family life especially in the roles and relationships among family members that were identified at one time through traditional cultural pursuits.

Another factor that has brought about changes in the nature of work has been the impact of residential school on today's parents (Inter 14, 35). Many of these individuals attended residential school for months and years from a very young age until adolescence. They lived away from their families over long periods, and did not have the opportunity to engage in the learning of traditional cultural values, beliefs, and skills.

Neo-traditionalists wish to maintain traditional customs and skills within an acculturated setting. However, many are not trained in traditional skills. For example, many people are unable to make the equipment which is required in traditional pursuits. Furthermore, there are few Elders alive who can teach these skills. Therefore many items such as traps and nets must be ordered from major urban centers and flown in to the community at great cost to the individual (Inter 14, 20). As a result, there are families today

who cannot finance a traditional Ojibway life-style.

Government policies also effect change in the nature of work. For example, provincial legislation requires individuals to purchase licenses for fishing and hunting (Inter 14, 18). This adds a further financial burden to the families including the following limitations: rules regarding approved methods for catching and killing various fish and game, regulations defining the seasons and locations for hunting and fishing, and quotas that are set which define the legal limits of catch allowed.

Emily pointed out that the children of Sweetgrass face an uncertain future. They do not know what is going to happen to them (Inter 14, 19).

> ...there's something heavy in the air all the time....(Inter 14, 19).
>
> ...the government is holding us in jail. It... tells us when to go fishing, hunting, and we are told what things to kill. It's going to be really hard for the younger kids in the future because... they'll be paying if they want to go out fishing, and they'll pay to go out moose hunting (Inter 14, 16).
>
> One day maybe there won't be anything like trapping and fishing. There probably won't be any game...getting the traditional food and doing things like beadwork....(Inter 14, 15).
>
> Young people don't know how they're going to make a living (Inter 14, 17).

> ...they're afraid of what's going to happen to them in the future (Inter 14, 19).
>
> They're probably scared that they won't have a job in the future (inter 14, 19).

The introduction of a money-based economy with an infrastructure of salaried work and social assistance (Interview 14, 22) has contributed to changes in traditional values and self-esteem in Sweetgrass. Emily stated her belief that people have lost their sense of pride with the rise of technology and a monied economy.

> Before there was money and this town was established there was hardly anything, no TV, hydro, telephone, or anything in the stores like taperecorders....Everybody had pride in themselves (Inter 13, 14).

Some of the community members are employed by local services such as the school, the Band office, the post office, and the store. After working all day they go home to haul water and chop wood. There is little time left for traditional activities such as the making of snowshoes (Inter 14, 17; Inter 7, 4). Wage-labour and salaried work also limits the time that parents have to spend with their children. This type of restriction can lead to the lack of supervision for youngsters which in turn can contribute to behaviour problems. Parents have become preoccupied with "making

a living" (Inter 14, 35-36; Inter 13, 5). Many of the youth would rather watch TV and play Nintendo and sports than learn the skills of their parents and Elders (Inter 14, 12/14).

Those people who are unemployed and are unable to support themselves and their families through traditional means receive welfare. This represents the major form of support for the people of Sweetgrass (Inter 14, 22).

Play

During my interview with Irene, her two sons (primary-aged) played floor-hockey in the kitchen area of the four-room log house (FD 30, 195). Hockey is an important form of organized play for men and boys in Sweetgrass. Women and girls play broomball (Inter 5, 9-10; Inter 14, 33-34; Inter 1, 1-2). A large community rink is maintained for these sports throughout the winter months. In the summer children and adults swim, fish, pick berries, and go boat-riding (Inter 7, 6).

Emily told me that Ann likes to play with her stuffed toys while Arnold likes to play with his plastic army men (Inter 14, 6-7). Irene has noticed

that many children will pretend to have certain toys.

> That's how the kids are now, they're pretending....When they don't hold a car or something for instance, they're pretending. They're making the sound of a car....That's how she used to play. Pretend to have kids, talk (to imaginary children) (Inter 12, 3).

Carin recalled that her brothers used to pretend that they were in a band.

> ...they were pretending they were in a band. They were making a drum, (it was) a pail and sand on top, and (tied) plastic bags with sand on top (Inter 7, 6).

These boys eventually acquired instruments and learned how to play. Today three of her brothers are members of a rock band (Inter 7, 6).

During one of my evening walks I came upon three young children who were dressed as Ninja warriors. They wore headbands and capes made out of yellow material. One boy carried a home-made bow and arrow while another held two sticks joined together with rope. They were actively involved in role-playing a battle of Ninja soldiers (FD 20, 139).

As I returned to my cabin I met two boys carrying rifles. I stopped to greet them and was quickly told by the older boy that he was eleven years old and his brother was nine. They were going hunting with their

air guns loaded with lead pellets. I asked the boys if this was a form of play for them. They both agreed that it was (FD 19, 130).

The only play equipment that I saw in the community was an attempt by someone to make swings out of rope along one of the paths. The playground for the primary and junior students is a small barren stretch of land inside the compound outlined by the school buildings, teacherages, wood piles, and tool-sheds (IO 1, 93). There is a small log building in one corner of the yard which serves as a playhouse for the youngsters. Children played in and around this small log cabin during recess and after school (IO 2, 101/107).

At recess, the teachers supplied the students with soccer balls, hula hoops, skipping ropes, and footballs (IO 2, 101-102). Many of the younger girls continued to play skipping games on Deanna's walk after school was dismissed (IO 1, 93; FD 18, 105).

On occasion the children will engage in play-fighting (IO 2, 101). This can result in youngsters getting hurt. Teasing also leads to hurt feelings and angry fighting. For example, during one recess period

a primary boy was being taunted by his peers. He had climbed on top of a wood-pile to get away from the students as they were throwing stones at him. He was crying hysterically and shouting in Ojibway. He then started to hurl large logs at his tormentors. Marilyn, the principal, tried unsuccessfully to remove him from the wood-pile. The recess bell rang and the primary children joined now by junior grade students continued to verbally harass the boy as they entered the school. As Marilyn turned to go into the school, she told the little boy "after you finish being angry you will have to put the logs back" (FD 9, 33).

The boy was left outside alone on the playground. He was still crying and shouting in Ojibway. He threw stones aimlessly around him. A janitor walked over and spoke to him quietly. The boy remained extremely agitated. Curt appeared from the school and went straight to the boy. Without hesitation he knelt down on one knee and drew the boy close to him. As he held the small child he spoke softly to him in Ojibway. The boy's crying gradually turned into sobbing. Curt took him into the school to his kindergarten class. During this entire event I had been standing on the porch of

the primary/junior building. Curt reappeared and told me that what I had just witnessed was not an uncommon occurrence for two reasons. Firstly, the lack of playground equipment promoted fighting among the children as they have little else to do with their time. They became bored and frustrated and often resorted to violent behaviour. Secondly, a child may not respond very well to a stranger with whom he is unfamiliar and who cannot speak the child's language (FD 9, 29-35).

Another difficulty that arises with the lack of playground equipment is the tendency for some children to use the surrounding buildings as climbers. One evening a kindergarten youngster climbed on the roof of the tool-shed behind Deanna's cabin. Upon hearing a loud scream, I ran outside to find a small boy lying on the ground crying and rocking himself while he held his leg. An older boy picked him up and brought him into the cabin where I was staying. I called Marilyn and she called a Native nurse to come to and check the child's leg. After unsuccessfully trying to reach the parents, the nurse decided that nothing was broken and sent the boy limping home (FD 17, 95).

Formal Education

Formal education refers to institutionalized teaching and learning that takes place within a school setting. The following categories are reviewed in a discussion of formal education: "I am an educated man but I can't make snowshoes", "the real world", "red on the outside and white on the inside", teaching and learning, achievement, task commitment, problem-solving, creativity, and giftedness. Each of these aspects is presented separately.

"I am an educated man but I cannot make snowshoes". On the evening that I presented my research proposal to both Band and school officials, Curt delivered a profound and touching statement. The discussion had turned to the importance and purpose of education when he looked across the table at me and quietly said, "I am an educated man but I cannot make snowshoes" (FD 9, 38). Curt's observation makes a clear distinction between education, or formal knowledge which is learned inside schools, and informal, or practical knowledge which is woven throughout the fabric of traditional Ojibway lifestyle.

Although Emily regrets that her children are

learning more about the "white ways" than Native ways in school (Inter 13, 1), she expresses the hope that they will attend college or university. She feels that parental support is important to the success of the youngsters at school (Inter 14, 32). Anne and Arnold have been told that they are going to school to help them prepare for their future (Inter 14, 15). Emily believes that it is important for Indian students to understand why they are being sent to school in order for them to have an interest in their studies (Inter 13, 6).

Both Emily and Carin maintain that it is critical that Native children acquire the formal knowledge of the school and the practical knowledge of the bush (Inter 6, 10; Inter 13, 6). Carin describes the need for both types of knowledge in the following:

> They (children) have to learn both ways...they have to learn traditional ways and they have to learn education....When they have a job like at the Band office, they have to have education, same as at the school, the nursing station, or the store. They have to speak well in Ojibway and English, that way they can translate....They're both important (Inter 6, 10).

"The real world". The transition from the home to the classroom can be a difficult experience for many Native children. Carin suggests that at home children

are comfortable in the knowledge of what is expected of them. At school they must conform to the rules of conduct that are imposed by their teachers (Inter 6, 11-12).

> ...they know what they're doing at home and at school they have to follow the rules....it's a little bit different there because, you know, it's from the school, the Board. That's their rules, the teachers have to follow the rules. It's really hard for the kids....It's different at home (Inter 6, 11-12).

A meeting was called early in the school year to inform parents of the classroom rules for the students in grades 7/8 and 9/10. Lists of rules (see Appendix 3) were created and presented to the parents by the classroom teachers. Both teachers are Anglo. It is the high school teacher's first year teaching in Sweetgrass and the second year for the grade 7/8 teacher. During a discussion of the rules for the high school, the teacher emphasized the disagreeable aspects of gum-chewing by stating that "when they (students) go out to work in the <u>real</u> world, gum-chewing isn't acceptable on all jobs" (FD 9, 36). He also stressed that the students must learn to behave like adults. Penalties for misconduct took the form of fines - twenty-five cents each for being late for instruction

and for chewing gum beyond five minutes after the break (Doc 1).

I felt uncomfortable with the teacher's references to "the real world" and "adult behaviour" - whose reality and whose model for adult behaviour was he referring to? The parents and Elders listened silently throughout the meeting...some waited patiently for Curt to translate the teacher's remarks. The presentation of classroom rules emphasized Euro-Canadian values and behaviours. Specifically, conformity and submission to authority were identified as important classroom behaviours (FD 9, 36).

"Red on the outside and white on the inside".

Teaching in Sweetgrass presents challenges for both the non-Native and Native teacher in working with students. The non-Native teacher must learn to deal with such factors as culture-shock, isolation, and being a member of a visible minority. Furthermore, the non-Native teacher will encounter the difficulties inherent in working students, parents, and their Native peers who are from a different cultural background than their own, and whose first language is not English.

Native teachers also experience difficulties in

working with students and parents. Individuals who leave the community to study and then return to teach in the local school may encounter discipline problems with their students because of the way in which they are perceived. Specifically, some people believe that Native teachers who have been educated in "white man's schools" outside of the community feel that they are superior to those with less education. The term "apple", meaning "red on the outside and white on the inside", is sometimes used to refer to the Native person who has been educated outside of the community. Deanna told me that the Elders in her reserve warned her not to return to the local school to teach. She had lost respect by studying away from the reserve and would therefore encounter difficulties with discipline in the classroom and with gaining the trust and support of the parents (FD 16, 82).

Teaching and learning. Deanna emphasized that a positive relationship among teachers, students, and parents is fundamentally important to the learning process (Inter 4, 13; Inter 4, 12). She pointed out that teachers who have an understanding of how Native children are reared will work more effectively with

them as students (Inter 4, 3). For example, Deanna believes that students should learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions without the use of force by the teacher (Inter 4, 2).

> ...I think it makes them more...independent if they're treated like that. They have the freedom to make their own choices and learn from those choices (Inter 4, 3).

The teacher helps the students to take responsibility by allowing them to decide when they will begin and finish classroom tasks. Deanna explains that children need to learn the importance of various responsibilities "on their own time, and at their own speed" (Inter 4, 2).

> Well, my kids for example, brushing their teeth in the morning. I don't push them. They know the toothpaste is there and it gets handed around. But they brush their teeth when they're ready, they don't forget to do it, they do it when they feel like it. I don't push them, shove a toothbrush in their mouth. I give a lot of responsibility to my kids (Inter 4, 2).

Deanna pointed out that the Native people with whom she has lived and worked have a different sense of timing than their non-Native counterparts (Inter 4, 4). Traditional practices incline people towards reflection and quiet deliberation of issues and ideas. The importance of the relationship between timing and

productivity in Euro-Canadian culture is minimized within the context of traditional Ojibway values and beliefs. One aspect of this relationship in Euro-Canadian culture is the notion that the student who responds quickly to questions posed by the teacher is more capable than the student who is slower to respond or who fails to respond at any level. This is not the case in Ojibway culture. Teachers need a responsible awareness of the differences between the two cultures if they are to judge the abilities and achievements of their students in an appropriate and just manner.

> Lots of people say we're stupid when we sit in meetings and never say anything. But we're not sitting there stupid. When we say something we want it to come out perfectly. That's why a lot of Native students sit back, even at the university level. You hardly ever hear a Native student speak up and when they do it comes out perfect, the way they want to say it. You don't just want to blurt out anything. A lot of non-Native students don't see it that way. They think that Native students are dumb when they don't speak out like that in class (Inter 4, 4).

Deanna also emphasized the importance of cooperation and sharing when working with Native students. She explained that during a spelling lesson she allows the children in her class to sit in pairs so that they can help each other (FD 16, 38). When she gives a spelling test, she will help the students sound

out words that they may be having difficulty spelling. In this way she feels that the students will experience a sense of achievement. Competition is not encouraged as a means to success.

> I don't think it's so much competition in a Native community. They all want to see each other succeed. Sure I find in my classroom that the kids are always testing each other but they're not testing for competition, they're testing to make sure that everybody gets their work handed in....it's a question of everyone succeeding together (Inter 3, 10).

Each child is considered to be special, and each person has some special ability/ies at some point in their lives. Competition for the purpose of determining who is the "best" at some task is not an appropriate behaviour (Inter 3, 11). In recognition and support of this belief, Deanna asked her children to identify three things that made them special and to print these on the outlines that had been traced and cut out of their body shapes. Each child's life-size form was hung in the hall outside of the classroom (FD 16, 38).

Deanna also speaks to the children individually when they encounter difficulties with their work instead of marking a large proportion of their assignments wrong (FD 16, 91; Inter 14, 10). She

determines the ability levels of her students by the degree to which they successfully complete their assignments. She prefers to use criterion-referenced classroom-prepared tests and teacher observations as opposed to commercially-prepared tests in identifying the needs of her students (Inter 3, 9).

Deanna is uncomfortable with standardized tests as a result of her own experiences as a student. She shared painful memories with me about being labelled a "slow learner" and being placed in a "special class" in elementary school because she had done poorly on an IQ test. As a result, she became determined to fight for the education that she needed in order to become a teacher. Over the years she attained a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degree, an Ontario Teaching Certificate, and a Native Teacher Education Diploma (FD 16, 87). She told me that she began to believe in herself after she met Alwyn Morris, the celebrated Native sports figure. She was convinced that "if he can do it so can I" (FD 23, 168). Deanna believes that youngsters work most effectively when they are interested in their learning experiences. Forcing students to listen and work when they are not

motivated to do so can result in behaviour problems. Allowing them to initiate and direct their own learning creates enthusiasm and a feeling of independence (Inter 4, 8).

Deanna stated her belief that Native children are primarily visual learners (Inter 4, 7) and therefore do not respond well to "lectures". They are eager to see how something is to be done and want to be involved in its practical application as soon as possible (Inter 4, 8-9). She therefore keeps her "teacher-talk" to a minimum leaving the balance of time for activity-based learning.

Deanna places great importance upon the development of a positive self-image in each child with whom she works (FD 16, 91; Inter 3, 6). She has been shaped in this belief by her own memories of a teacher who had hurt her deeply during an art lesson in her Bachelor of Education program. Deanna tearfully told me the following story.

> ...I went into class and everybody had finished the first step of their clay model head...I had missed the first class. I just went over to the clay box, grabbed a chunk of clay, walked over to my desk, plunked it down on the table, and...just took my one hand and started moulding my clay. The next thing you know I start getting yelled at by the teacher saying "Use two hands!" I said

> "I'm sorry, I can't use two hands". He said "What do you mean you can't use two hands!" Instead of coming closer to me he just stood a good 8 to 10 feet away from me and really started centering me out. He said again, "Use two hands!"...I said "I can't, I have cerebral palsy". He said "Well, I'm sorry but you won't be able to do the art. So I just put the clay back" (Inter 3, 6-7).

During my visits to Deanna's classroom, I observed the students to be cheerful and highly motivated towards their learning experiences. A warm and easy-going rapport was evident between Deanna and her students. The children appeared to be fond of their teacher and enjoyed being at school (IO 1, 92-93; FO 3, 163; IO 3, 207-211).

"Len", an Ojibway man in his late thirties who was in his first year as a teacher in Sweetgrass, described a different view of the classroom and his junior-level students. The principal suggested to me that Len tended to model "white teacher behaviours" that he had observed in residential school. For example, his desk was situated at the back of the classroom while the pupils faced the blackboard. The boys sat on one side of the room and the girls on the other side (FD 8, 25; FO 2, 156).

I asked Len if he could recall a time in his life when he did something that was different or special

from anyone else. He told me about his days as a youngster in residential school.

> L: When I was going to residential school we used to get prizes and I used to get most of them. I just listened to the teacher, did my work, that's how I won prizes. I started noticing the other kids looking at me, then I laid off for awhile to give the other students a chance to win these prizes.
> I: What did you find that you were particularly good at?
> L: I was just doing my work and doing everything right, I guess (Inter 2, 6-7).

Obedience to the teacher and conformity to rules are important student behaviours for Len.

Len believes a major difference between boys and girls is in their motivation to do school-work. He told me that "boys would rather play more often than work" (Inter 2, 3-4). He added that the boys in his class "tend to be a little lazy..." (Inter 2, 3).

Len is inclined to use traditional or transmissional teaching methods. He teaches from the text-book and assigns photo-copied pages from commercial workbooks as seatwork. Once their work is complete the students line up at the teacher's desk to have it marked (FO 2, 156-162; FD 13, 56).

Len spends more time working with the boys in his class than the girls because the girls tend to be

quieter (Inter FD 19, 117). Those students who exhibit disruptive behaviours receive more attention from the teacher than those who are not discipline problems (FD 19, 117-118).

Len suggested that the classroom program focused primarily upon reading, math, and science (Inter 2, 3). He said that although he is not sure how to determine the reading levels of the students he believes that most are at a grade 2 level (FD 19, 117).

Larry and Jordan, two Native language teachers, shared their feelings with me about teaching and learning. Both teachers believe that the students are more confident about their ability to learn when they can communicate in Ojibway with the teacher. For example, although Native youngsters rarely participate in an class with a non-Native teacher, they will regularly ask questions of their Ojibway teachers (FD 23, 181-182).

Larry and Jordan keep the introduction and presentation portions of their lessons to a minimum so that the students will not become bored. If a lesson fails to achieve its objectives, the teachers alter the format as they proceed. They agree that Native

students prefer to be shown as well as told what they are to do (FD 23, 182).

At the beginning of the year Larry asked the high school students what they would be interested in learning. They offered that they would like to learn Cree and translation skills. These interests have been included in their program. Including students' interests in program development helps to motivate learning (FD 23, 182).

Larry and Jordan are in the process of creating curriculum materials for the Native language program. They have also conducted a survey of the community to determine the views and concerns of the people regarding the teaching of Ojibway. Larry commented that students who complete the high school program have achieved considerable mastery of the Native language. However, some of the students who have attended an urban school system for the balance of the high school program have found that Native language instruction is presented at a grade 3 level (FD 23, 182).

Larry and Jordan are coaches for the students' hockey teams. They try to promote a positive attitude towards school in their players by creating rules for

the game of hockey that also reflect desirable behaviour at school. Larry shared the following example with me:

> Positive feeling means that you have to like and be proud of someone who teaches you or coaches you... (Doc 3, 1).
>
> Concentrate and work hard to get your education skills...positive thinking in sports and in school, positive feeling about your coach, teachers, students...(Inter 5, 10).

Jordan pointed out that many students at the grade 4 level do not understand English. They therefore have great difficulty in understanding instruction. This factor can contribute to negative student behaviour and a hatred of school (Inter 5, 4/7).

Carin agreed that Native students who do not speak English cannot understand their teachers (Inter 6, 11). She explained that outside of school one must speak Ojibway as this is the functional language in the community. However, at school "you have to speak English for the teacher" (Inter 6, 12). Carin shared memories of her own difficulties with understanding English and the coping mechanisms that she eventually developed.

> C: When I was in elementary school...we used to have a white teacher and I used to talk to her....but I didn't know what I was saying. I

> just learned that language....from the other people, other kids, I didn't understand myself....
> I: But the teacher thought that you understood?
> C: Yes.
> I: Do you think that a lot of kids do that?
> C: Yes....When Senior Kindergarten comes in....they (children) laughed, speaking English like a joke....I asked them what that meant. They said "I don't know" (Inter 6, 14).
>
> C: When I went to high school...I was really shy to talk English. When the teacher asked me a question, I just stuck my head down...really nervous to speak out, and I couldn't make it.
> I: Do you think that other kids are like that?
> C: Yes, I've seen them (Inter 6, 13).

Karl, Arnold, and Ann, agreed that they enjoyed Native language instruction at school (Inter 8, 17-18; Inter 14, 5-6). Karl felt that being able to speak in Ojibway allowed him to have some privacy in the classroom. This type of instruction also gave him an opportunity to learn about his cultural traditions (Inter 8, 17-18). He stated that it is important to be able to speak two languages.

Arnold told me that at school he likes reading, writing, helping his teacher, and working individually and in a group. Ann also enjoys the same activities but prefers to work alone. The only dislike of school that these children raised was Arnold's complaint that he felt "down" when his non-Native teacher didn't understand him (Inter 14, 5-6; Inter 14, 6). Karl

offered that although he can become bored with writing, he likes math, art, and doing his seatwork (Inter 8, 17/19). David and his sister "Linda" enjoy math, reading, physical education, art, and science (Inter 9, 2-3). Charlotte chooses to work with a group because the students can help one another. She dislikes geography but looks forward to creative writing opportunities (Inter 10, 13). Charlotte shared her stories with me that she had created on the computer I felt saddened as I read the following story:

> Once upon a time there was a baby. The old woman found the baby. The woman was crazy. The woman had a drinking problem. When the baby was crying the woman thought it wanted to drink. The woman put Jack Daniels (whiskey) mixed with milk (in the baby bottle). 23 years later, the woman killed herself by drinking. So the baby was 24 years old. Since the girl thought that was her mother she became Evil (Doc 4, 2).

Achievement. Although Emily feels that Ann and Arnold do very well at school in terms of their marks and grades, she is concerned that distractions from other students could hamper their progress.

> I've seen a lot of good kids in the past and they failed their schooling and never went back to school. They failed because of a lot of distractions from other kids (Inter 14, 32).

She also believes that television, radio, and music interfere with the achievement levels of students.

> ...in my days when I went to school I did pretty good, I was an "A" student just because there was no television, no music at that time. Now there is TV, radio, music, and I think that's what the kids do when they go home. They put their minds somewhere else. That's why they have low grades and have problems when the teacher asks them to do something (Inter 13, 3-4).

Emily, Jordan, Larry, Carin, and Deanna share the belief that low achievement can be attributed to the language barrier that the students experience when their teachers cannot speak Ojibway (Inter 14, 28/33; Inter 5, 4/7; Inter 6, 11-14; Inter 7, 2). This problem also leads to low self-esteem, frustration, and disruptive behaviours in the classroom.

Carin told me about the painful experience she had in going to high school with a minimal understanding of English.

> The first time I went to high school was really hard and I couldn't even say a word....I was shy. I couldn't even ask for help (Inter 7, 2).

She recalled that once she could read, her marks improved. Math, typing, and bookkeeping were among her stronger subjects (Inter 7, 2-4). With the help of her parents and older brothers in learning English and math she was able to cover grades 5, 6, and 7, in one year (Inter 13, 17).

Valerie's mother, "Irene", feels that her

daughter's achievement at school is very good (Inter 11, 10). Emily suggested that sometimes the students can become "jealous" when one of their peers is viewed as "smarter" (Inter 13, 15).

The principal of the school, "Marilyn", a non-Native woman in her mid-forties in her second year in Sweetgrass, stated that the more exposure a student had to the "outside world", the better he/she would do in school (FD 19, 134).

Louis, a School Board trustee, claimed that high staff turnover leads to difficulties for the children (FD 9, 43). This problem can contribute to a lack of consistency in program development.

Task commitment. Deanna stated that children must be interested in their learning experiences if they are to work conscientiously and complete their assignments as required (Inter 4, 9). She also believes that it is important to allow the students to have some input into the way in which their responsibilities may be carried out.

> ...you take another teacher that wants everything done her way, you've got a battle on your hands (Inter 4, 9).

Deanna emphasized that the students like to be

actively involved in their learning. If they are required to listen for extended periods of time to the teacher, discipline problems can arise (Inter 4, 9). During my visits to Deanna's classroom, I observed that the students were actively and eagerly involved in their work. They appeared to enjoy their assignments and seemed pleased to share their efforts with their peers and their teacher (IO 1, 93; IO 3, 207/209; FO 3, 162-163).

Jordan stated that off-task behaviour is sometimes caused by the student's inability to understand the language of instruction (Inter 5, 3-4). Carin noted that once students understand how to do their work they will have less difficulty in completing their assignments (Inter 6, 11). Curt maintained that determination is an important factor in successful task completion. He pointed out that:

> ...people who are really determined to do something, they work at it. They stay with it even though it may take years (Inter 1, 3).

Len told me that once he begins a "project" he will work on it until it is finished. He does not care to "leave it and go on to the next one" (Inter 2, 7). He observed that although most of his students will

"try to finish their work, some will come up with ways to avoid that" (Inter 2, 4). At times they left the classroom as soon as school was dismissed instead of staying to finish their work. Len added that the students created many "excuses" for not completing their assignments (Inter 2, 4).

I asked Len to describe his views regarding the causes of off-task behaviours. He gave me the following reasons:

> I think mostly that they don't know how to do it, and some of them are just plain lazy, and some of them just don't feel like doing it (Inter 2, 4).

Len told me that he tried to encourage on-task behaviours by continuously reminding the students to do their work and by making them write lines. If these two methods failed he would send them home.

> But they refuse to go home. They'll just stand in the hallway for a few minutes and come back in class (Inter 2, 4-5).

Success for Len is being "able to do what you're supposed to be doing" (Inter 2, 5). I asked him if he felt that his students were motivated to succeed. He replied that they would get used to completing their responsibilities over time. He also suggested that many of the students want to work at the Band office

when they are finished school. He pointed out that they may not "know the opportunities that are open to them....careers...like policeman, doctor, lawyer, and dentist" (Inter 2, 6). These professions are non-existent in Sweetgrass.

During one of my visits to Len's class, I noticed that several students were having difficulty with their seatwork (FO 2, 158-160). The assignment was based upon the use of the apostrophe in showing ownership - ex. "Jack's pony" (Doc 5). One of the boys walked back to the teacher's desk to ask for help. Len proceeded to explain the use of the apostrophe in the case of ownership incorrectly. Another boy had gone to the girl's section to ask for assistance. "George" a grade 6 student walked over to the gerbil cage, scraped the screen, went to sit down, and began to loudly sing "Mary had a little lamb". Len rose from his desk, walked over to the boy's section, and proceeded to check each boy's work in turn. He did not visit with the girls to check their progress during this lesson.

A Native language school was created in the last week of classes before the Christmas holidays. Native men and women including the Native language teachers

replaced the non-Native staff who had left to spend several professional development days working in their home schools. The students were grouped in "family groups" across the grades and assigned to a teacher. During this period the children were taught about traditional Ojibway customs such as making snowshoes and ski-boards. All of the lessons took place in the Ojibway language (IO 4, 236-243).

The children appeared to be interested and actively involved in their learning. They seemed to be very relaxed and comfortable with their teachers and their peers. I did not see any disruptive behaviours during classroom time or at recess. All of the students ate a hot lunch at school that was prepared by staff and community volunteers (IO 4, 236-243; FD 36, 243).

Emily remarked that TV, radio, and music, distracted youngsters from their work at school. They are preoccupied with these forms of entertainment and therefore fail to apply themselves to their assignments. Low grades are often the result. Furthermore, many students keep late hours watching television and are often tired at the beginning of

their school day (Inter 13, 4-5). She also pointed out that many of the youngsters do not "know how they are going to make a living" (Inter 14, 17). Students who are confused and unsure of their futures will have difficulty in feeling motivated towards school work when it does not reflect their practical needs.

Problem-solving. Deanna explained to me that she avoids problem-solving experiences with her students that are of a formal nature. She prefers to informally introduce problem-solving activities into the learning environment which are supported by concrete materials and visual aids. For example, when she introduced the concept of estimation to the children she asked them to guess how many jellybeans there were in a jar. Deanna believes that with this type of approach, the students will have "fun" solving problems. She also emphasized that since she believes the students are "visual learners" it is important for them to be able to see the components of a problem as well as receive auditory input (Inter 4, 6-7).

A major barrier to effective problem-solving occurs when English is the sole language of instruction. Deanna feels that most students would

become adept at solving problems if the Native language was used. She also believes that some youngsters are naturally talented in this domain. She added that it is important to break down larger concepts into smaller ideas in order to facilitate the processes of analysis and synthesis (Inter 3, 7-8).

Deanna noted that timing is an important factor in terms of the response time that is afforded the child during problem-solving experiences (Inter 4, 4 She clarified her concern for me in the following discussion:

> D: ...I noticed the day when I did the apple experiment with my kids....the one student got it within 5 seconds of putting the apple on the table....I asked Jordan to ask her in her own language how she knew that. And she looked at him with a blank look that she didn't have time to think about it....She just went, "I don't know". But I think that if we left her, if we leave them time to think about things that they are grasping, give them a couple of days to figure it out in their own heads what they're doing...they'll explain it to you (Inter 4, 5-6).
>
> I: Would you say that Indian people need...a different type of timing?
> D: I think so (Inter 4, 4).

Carin explained that her favourite problem-solving activities at school were those she encountered in math. She said that these learning experiences were facilitated by the teacher creating examples on the

blackboard. In this way she was able to see the components of the problems and understand how they interrelated (Inter 7, 2).

Len told me that he enjoyed problem-solving while he was in school. When he experienced success he was encouraged to go on to new challenges. He told me that he approached problem-solving by doing what the teacher had prescribed. When I asked him what he did to solve a difficult problem, he said that he would simply avoid it (Inter 2, 8).

Creativity

Curt told me that there were many creative people both in the school and in the community (Inter 1, 5). When I asked him what he means when he says that someone is creative he responded:

> Being creative means that you have to be good at something, you want to be different from what the rest of the people are doing....you always wanted to do something fancy or in your own way (Inter 1, 5-6).

Proficiency and originality are emphasized in Curt's definition of creativity. He made reference to an Elder who makes paddles as a creative person. This man created a paddle handle that fit more comfortably than others into the palm of the user's hand. Over several

years this Elder made numerous modifications to the original design. He developed and refined his ideas through practical use (Inter 1, 6).

Although Curt believes that all children can be creative, he feels that some are naturally inclined to be more creative than others. He also feels that the development of creativity in students can be facilitated by teachers (Inter 1, 6).

Jordan feels that a creative person is one who becomes closely involved with their work:

> I: What do you think it is to be creative?
> J: It's the work. To get yourself into a job. Put yourself into it. That's what makes it different (Inter 5, 5).

The creative process allows for the expression of the individual. Jordan's recognition of individual differences among people supports his notion that the expression of the individual through a creative process will result in creative production.

Jordan gave the example of his uncle as someone who was "very creative":

> He's very experienced, mechanical work and carpentry, artist and woodcarver (Inter 5, 5).

Experience is an important factor in creative expression. This experience may involve the learning

of skills from the level of novice to mastery, including opportunities to make modifications and elaborations to technique and design over and through time. Jordan also believes that everyone has the ability to be creative and that teachers can facilitate the growth of creative expression (Inter 5, 7). However, he feels strongly that students would find it much easier to express themselves in a creative manner if they could communicate their ideas in Ojibway.

Deanna observed that a characteristic behaviour of creative students is that "they take their time....they think of what they want to do and they figure out their ideas first before they start...." (Inter 3, 12). This implies a creative experience which is open-ended and requires that the participant make judgements and decisions.

Deanna believes that everyone has the capacity to be creative if they are given the opportunities and experiences. Teachers, parents, and peers, can all facilitate the expression of creativity in youngsters. She does not feel however that one can be creative in everything. Each person will exhibit a preference for certain avenues of expression over others. It is

important that teachers provide as many creative learning experiences as possible. Many such opportunities can be found in the arts (Inter 3, 3-4/6).

Deanna believes that she has lived a creative lifestyle as a disabled person (Inter 3, 5). She was determined from a young age to be as independent and "normal" as possible in the eyes of her family and peers.

> My brothers have all...treated me just like another normal person, like they forget that there's something wrong with me....My brother....asked me to have some soup with him. He said, "I'll wash the dishes and you cook the soup. He says, "Oh, you can't open the can of soup. I said, "Oh yeah! Wanna make a bet! Give me an extra couple of minutes and I'll have this can of soup open. I've got a way. I know how to work a can opener (Inter 3, 5).

Daily life has presented itself as a continuous exercise in creative problem-solving for Deanna. She has developed many unique approaches to living in a world that is designed for people who have the use of both arms and legs. Deanna is convinced that when an individual is engaged in a creative experience there is a sense of satisfaction in knowing that one "can do something" (Inter 3, 4-5).

Deanna expressed the concern that opportunities

for creative experiences are limited in Sweetgrass (Inter 3, 5-6). This is especially true for the children. However she believes that an important resource for the youngsters could be the people in the community who have "special abilities".

> ...if you start using people in the community that have a special ability, say you want them (children) to learn how to paint or how to carve, or how to make the hats and the mukluks...their own artwork, people that are here...could be brought into the school....every child could figure out something that they could be creative at....they (community people) can teach them the techniques on how they got that way (Inter 3, 6).

Learning the basic skills of a process provides a foundation for the expression of creative production. Deanna's suggestion that community members with special abilities be used to mentor students, is reminiscent of the mentorship model for teaching and learning that was used in traditional Ojibway culture.

Carin showed me the syllabic expression that referred to the generation of ideas by an individual that were qualitatively different from others. This expression also represented the act of doing or making something in a way which was different from others. After comparing her idea with the definition for creativity in the staffroom dictionary, she decided

that the syllabic construction was similar in meaning to the English word (FD 32, 213).

Carin told me that people in the community commonly referred to others using the expression she had shown me. She added that this was a positive recognition of someone's ability to express themselves in a way that was viewed as different from others. She pointed out that the context for this type of expression may be different in the Ojibway culture from the Euro-Canadian culture. Although appreciation is felt for the individual who may be viewed as creative, this person is not given special status. Such a person is not valued above other family or community members (FD 32, 213-214/217).

Carin recalled that when she was in high school she enjoyed writing poems about "hunting, fishing, cooking, and something to do with love" (Inter 7, 4-5). She said that she "loved art" (Inter 7, 2). Some of her activities included creating her own designs as she drew and painted. I asked her why she enjoyed art so much. She told me that:

> I like drawing things. I like to draw an animal or flower and...I liked drawing a house, like I wish I could live like this (Inter 7, 3).

Carin added that she would like to have been an artist but she lacked materials such as paint brushes, paint, and paper. She suggested that if she were to pursue her interests today she would need a sponsor who could help provide such items (Inter 7, 3). At present much of her time is spent caring for "Sherry", her infant daughter, and working at the school as a secretary. She told me that she has always enjoyed singing and continues to sing for the baby.

> ...when I rock the baby I just make up the songs, like baby songs. When I try to put her to sleep I just make up my own song and music. She loves that (Inter 7, 5).

I asked Len if he felt that any of his students were creative. He answered by saying that "there have been a number of students" (Inter 2, 2). I asked him if he could give me some examples of students who are creative. He gave the following response:

> (they can) write stories and read very well. So far I haven't noticed anybody like that yet. But there are 6 students who can write a page or even 2 pages in that daily diary, but they lack in punctuation and grammar (Inter 2, 2).

Len further describes the creative person as one "who can do a lot of things extremely well....this creativity involves more detail, work, or words" (Inter 2, 2). Len's perception of the creative individual

corresponds with school-based achievement in subjects such as reading and mathematics where the language of instruction and production is English.

Giftedness

Carin equated giftedness with special ability/ies. She suggested that fishing, trapping, and sewing, were examples of these types of abilities in Sweetgrass (Inter 6, 1).

Deanna also stated that giftedness was synonymous with special ability/ies (Inter 3, 1). She described a carver as someone who possessed this type of ability. She noted that the patience and passion that such a person gives to a work are evidence of this type of giftedness.

Deanna discussed a gifted student as one who:

> ...intellectually grasps everything that's around him, not just the language but special abilities too. Some students are intellectually capable but there are also others that don't have the language but they see things specially rather than look at a bunch of words and try and read them (Inter 3, 1).

She also feels that these students share certain behavioural characteristics. They tend to: grasp new concepts quickly; display high levels of task commitment; they are adept at problem-solving, have

high achievement levels in subjects such as mathematics, creative writing, science, and physical education; are organized in their work habits taking more time than others to plan and develop their ideas; are enthusiastic and eager learners; are most often girls (Inter 3, 11-13).

Deanna noted that many of these students do not want to be viewed as gifted "because the other children who are average learning students will begin to shun them" (Inter 3, 13). She feels that this is one of the reasons that gifted Native students go unnoticed by their teachers. She offered that one way to alleviate the problem may be to have gifted students work with their peers to facilitate the learning of the average and below-average youngster. Deanna emphasized the important role that the teacher has as a facilitator and resource person to the students' interests and concerns. She elaborated upon this point with the following description of a student in grade 2:

> A student noticed a poster in the classroom...on fishermen...one of the fish's names was misspelled...he told his teacher and the teacher and he decided to write to the company and tell them....They sent the letter away and the student received a poster with the correct spelling of the fish along with a gift from the company (Inter 3, 13).

This youngster is interested in science and holds a fascination for encyclopedias (Inter 3, 13).

Curt equated giftedness with talent (Inter 1,1). He pointed out that many children exhibit talent when working with concrete materials. He suggested art as an area that fosters this type of expression. Some youngsters are talented in the area of sports in that they are key players taking on leadership roles with their peers (Inter 1, 1-2).

Curt believes that certain students are naturally talented in a particular area of activity or expression. They tend to grasp ideas and learn more quickly than the other children. He explained that:

> In my experience as a teacher, you may have to teach the subject over and over again, other kids need to be reminded all the time, and some kids just have natural talents....some kids will take a long while to get something good and some kids just pick it up over night (Inter 1, 1).

Curt pointed out that there were areas of giftedness or talent among certain adults in the community such as oratory, carving, woodwork, and making snowshoes and toboggans (Inter 1, 2). These abilities have been passed on from one generation to the next. The process of acculturation has contributed to the decline of traditional Ojibway culture. Along

with this change is the continued loss of traditional skills by the people. For example, those who still know how to make snowshoes in Sweetgrass are few in number and are therefore considered to possess a rare and valuable ability, talent, or gift.

The correlation between the rarity of a trait, characteristic, or ability, and its past, present, or future value to the community, defines such ideas as special ability, talent, and giftedness. Curt explained that those skills that are so highly valued as rare and special abilities in Sweetgrass today, were common knowledge to the members of the community when they were "in demand" (Inter 1, 2).

> 20 years ago everybody should know how to make a snowshoe. It was in demand. Men had to be able to make snowshoes and toboggans and know how to trap in the Indian way. The women had to weave the snowshoe, help out with the toboggan or the sleigh, make mukluks....These things have been sort of diminished over the years because nobody is really practising anymore because of the more modern things that have been introduced to our culture, society....I don't know of any one person who makes those sleighs anymore here. The snowshoe is the only thing that is being followed up by the Elders in the community (Inter 3, 2-3).

Curt believes an individual can know that he or she has a special talent or ability if mastery of the skills inherent in such a domain comes easily.

However, he added that a gifted person is one who exhibits high levels of task commitment and determination even if the task is unappealing (Inter 1, 3). Curt commented to me with a small grin that he felt that the children must be gifted in order to function in two languages and survive (FD 9, 38).

Len equated giftedness with musical and artistic talent, and with high achievement in subjects at school such as reading and writing. These types of students usually "stand out in the classroom" (Inter 2, 9). Someone may be born with a natural ability and can enhance their development through experience and training. People need to be given the opportunity to explore and discover their potential for having special abilities, talents, or gifts (Inter 2, 1-2/9-11). Sometimes the teacher can point these out to the individual.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Restatement of the Problem

This study has yielded descriptive and interpretive information in response to the following guiding research questions:

1) What are the conceptions of "giftedness" in a Native community and school?
2) Is Renzulli's model of "giftedness" relevant to the norms of a Native community and school? Why?

This discussion responds to the research questions and reviews findings in relation to the literature. The analysis provides a conceptual and empirical overview of the ways in which traditional values, beliefs, and perceptions of abilities, have been affected by acculturating factors. In responding to the research questions it is important to understand that the Sweetgrass community represents a culture in transition.

I will examine the findings by briefly reviewing

the literature with the following foci: the effects of acculturation on ability, the relevance of Renzulli's model for "giftedness" in Sweetgrass, and Native conceptions of "giftedness" in Sweetgrass. This will be followed by an overview of responses to the research questions.

Revisiting the Literature

Acculturation and Ability

Human abilities develop in accordance with the needs and priorities of particular cultural contexts. Therefore, the patterns of ability in one cultural context will differ from those in another (Berry, 1979; Ferguson cited in Berry, 1988).

The process of acculturation has been characterized by the cultural domination of Native people by Euro-Western influences over several centuries (McShane & Berry in Irvine & Berry, 1988). Consequently, patterns of abilities of Native people have changed. Such changes can reflect abilities which have moved towards the norms of the dominant group.

Acculturating influences can damage and even destroy a minority group in terms of its "cultural and psychological functioning....A serious performance

decline in many domains...is the predictable outcome. Here, rather than 'improvement' there may be a 'decline' due to cultural disorganization or disruption" (McShane & Berry in Irvine & Berry, 1988, p. 404).

Although Sweetgrass is an isolated community in sub-arctic Canada, it continues to experience several acculturating influences. The introduction of technology and schooling represent two of these major factors which have contributed to changes in the traditional lifestyle and the abilities of the people in Sweetgrass.

The impact of technology. Innovations such as the chainsaw, skidoo, and the wringer washing machine have altered the nature of work in Sweetgrass and the roles that family members hold in maintaining the household. For example, trapping, fishing, and hunting, traditionally required the participation of all members of the family with the exception of infants. Robert explained how technologies such as the chainsaw and the skidoo have meant that work is completed in a shorter period of time by fewer people.

Many of the basic skills such as making nets,

traps, and snowshoes by hand have been replaced. For example, the skidoo has replaced the snowshoe and the dog-sled. Emily pointed out that these items are often ordered from urban centres and flown into the community at great cost to the individual. Curt noted that most of the Elders who could teach the basic skills related to traditional abilities have died. Therefore, those people who wish to develop such skills are often unable to find someone to teach them.

Emily suggested that many of the young people in Sweetgrass express little interest in developing traditional skills. They fail to see the practical value of traditional ways in a community where primary needs are essentially supported through social assistance, and where manual work can be replaced with machinery. The prevalence of technology has reduced the need for traditional tools, as well as traditional skills and abilities. This underlies the diminished importance of the Elders as teachers of Native culture.

Children are not involved in the work of their parents since they are usually in school during these times. Their help may not be required due to the efficiency of the technology employed to do the work.

(Emily spoke of how little the children work today at home compared to the time when she was a youngster).

Carin and Emily noted that television, video games, and arcade games have led to aggressive behaviors among many children and a decline in the development and use of Ojibway and English. Furthermore, youngsters often learn the second language from these sources. For example, the material presented in English by "Ninja Turtles", martial arts warriors, and horror figures, appear to have encouraged aggressive behaviours among many of the youngsters. Emily stated that children who watch television until late at night are often late for school and are too tired to participate in the day's learning experiences.

The residential school system. Indian residential schools operated from the late 1800s to the 1960s (York, 1989). Federal day schools were built for those children who did not live near a residential school. These schools were inferior in both structure and funding for curriculum materials and teachers' salaries. By 1920 school attendance was mandatory for Indian students.

The residential school system represented a major

force of acculturation and assimilation (York, 1989). Children were removed from their homes as young as six years of age to attend these schools with some youngsters unable to see their families again for several years at a time. These Indian children were not allowed to speak their language or refer to their cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs for fear of being punished.

The approach to education in these schools diverged dramatically from Native views regarding teaching and learning (English-Currie in Perreault and Vance, 1990; More, 1987; Vernon, 1969; York, 1989). Many of the participants in Sweetgrass described how children learn new skills by watching parents and Elders. After observing a process the youngsters participate in its execution. Larry noted that legends and stories from the culture were important in teaching strategies and appropriate behaviour with youth. Deanna emphasized that the children learned from a community of teachers.

Traditional child-rearing practices are linked to learning styles in Native children (More, 1987). Children were given the freedom to learn with minimal

or no interference from older children and adults. Deanna, Emily, Jossie, and Irene, agreed that children learn from the consequences of their actions and in this way were encouraged to take responsibility for the choices they made. The youngster is encouraged to become independent. Misbehaviour is often overlooked so that the child would learn to regulate his or her own behaviour.

In contrast, the teachers in the school would often use rules, regulations, and punishment, to regulate behavior. Many Indian children encounter a form of "culture-shock" when they go from the home to the school (York, 1989). Behaviour codes were in effect in two of the teacher's classrooms. Len also subscribed to a strict code of behaviour which demanded obedience from his students. Those students who violated the classroom rules wrote lines, stayed in after school, or were sent home.

The Indian language was prohibited in the residential schools (York, 1989). Consequently, Native students gradually lost the use of their language. When they returned home they encountered difficulty in communicating with parents and Elders. Emily, Deanna,

Carin, and Larry, suggested that the students in Sweetgrass appeared to be more confident and comfortable when Ojibway was used in the classroom. Emily and Deanna noted that the behavior of the students improved when the Native language was in use. Although Deanna and Len are Ojibway teachers, they are unable to speak the dialect which is indigenous to Sweetgrass. Therefore, the language of instruction in their classrooms is primarily English.

The residential schools also had an impact upon the ability of many Native people to parent their children (Comeau & Santin, 1990). Due to living in an institutionalized setting, the students in the residential system did not experience family life and parenting. Emily suggested that this problem has contributed to confusion and conflict for those parents who attended residential schools regarding the raising of their children. Consequently, many youngsters are confused as to their identity, have low self-esteem, and often become involved in negative behaviors such as vandalism, fighting, and drug abuse.

The move to provincial schools. Through amendments to the Indian Act in 1951, many Indian

students were integrated with their non-Native peers in provincial schools while others continued to attend Federal reserve schools (York, 1989). This period initiated the dismantling of the residential system. The move to provincial schools proved to be a difficult experience for those students who had been with other Native children during their years in the residential system. Anglo teachers usually had little or no understanding of the Native language and culture.

Band control of education. In their paper, "Indian Control of Education" (1972), the National Indian Brotherhood requested that education be transferred to Band control. The primary concern of this report was to have Native people involved in the education of their children. In 1982 the Indian Affairs document, "Indian Education Paper", reviewed several issues arising from the transfer of education to Band control. The need was expressed for culturally relevant curriculum, improved school facilities, and better training for teachers (Comeau & Santin, 1990).

The need for culturally-relevant education. The Assembly of First Nations report, "Tradition and Education: Towards A Vision of Our Future" (1988),

recognized the need for culturally-relevant curriculum, and the recognition of the Native language and Native spiritual beliefs (Comeau and Santin, 1990). It also recommended that more traditional methods to teaching and learning be used with Native students.

An uncertain future. Many Indian students are faced with an uncertain future. Their communities offer little in the way of employment and other opportunities that would help them improve their quality of life after graduation (Comeau and Santin, 1990). Specifically, the Sweetgrass community offers minimal employment to students who graduate. Consequently, student motivation to achieve in school is reduced when formal education appears to have little or no practical significance. Furthermore, if the students wish to pursue higher education they must leave home and relocate to an urban center. Many youth do not pursue their education beyond the local school program. Curt suggested that many of the students in Sweetgrass drop out of school due to poor self-image. Native children may develop "bicultural ambivalence" meaning that they become increasingly indifferent towards both their own culture and the dominant culture

as a result of schooling (Cummins, 1986).

Substance abuse and suicide. Although alcohol and narcotic substances have been banned in Sweetgrass, Emily acknowledged that there is still a problem with substance abuse. Violence and suicide among Native people has been linked to alcohol and drug abuse (York, 1989). The Chronicle-Journal (Thunder Bay, March, 1991) issued a report regarding the incidence of suicide in the past five years in Northern Ontario. The article stated that 43 Native males and females had committed suicide out of a population of 15,000 people. In the same article, James Morris, Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation commented that Native youth are facing a serious dilemma today:

> He (James Morris) said they don't fit into the old way of life or the new way of life. Young people have lost hope of finding a place for themselves in the world...and they see suicide as their only way out (p. 13).

The Literature in Review

In summary, the impact of technology and schooling are forces of acculturation which have altered the patterns of traditional abilities among Native people in general (McShane & Berry, 1988) and the inhabitants of Sweetgrass in particular. Traditional abilities

have lost their value with the deterioration of traditional lifestyle. Such acculturating factors continue to promote changes in the ecological and cultural conditions within which these people live.

The cultural context for the people in Sweetgrass represents a mixture of traditional, neo-traditional, and acculturated beliefs and values. It is therefore difficult to identify a clearly defined set of cultural norms for the community. Traditional abilities are underdeveloped or non-existent in Sweetgrass. Abilities associated with technology and schooling are also underdeveloped. Today's youth do not excel in either lifestyle - traditional or acculturated.

The Relevance of Renzulli's Model in Sweetgrass

The Nature of the Renzulli Model

The Renzulli model emphasizes the identification of average and above-average abilities associated with school achievement in subjects such as math and language arts, task commitment, and creativity. Therefore, it is useful to examine the effects of acculturation upon ability in understanding the relevance of the model in Sweetgrass.

Renzulli (1986) points out that a discussion of

"giftedness" inevitably raises certain biases, since "giftedness" itself is "a complex and value-laden topic" (p. 54). This section endeavours to show that the Renzulli model may reflect beliefs and values about human abilities, potential, and productivity, that are in conflict with the beliefs and values of the participants in Sweetgrass.

The nature of the definition. Renzulli defines "giftedness" from the position of the individual rather than society (Sternberg & Davidson, 1986). Although he proposes that "giftedness" is comprised of an interaction of above-average ability, task commitment, and creativity, he does not suggest that these domains are "wholly task- or situation general" (p. 5). Therefore it is important to understand the nature of each domain when assessing the significance of different types of ability to "giftedness". Specifically, it is important to understand what these domains mean to the participants in Sweetgrass in assessing the model's relevance to the school and community.

The connection between Renzulli's focus upon the individual in his definition for "giftedness" and the

primary purposes of "gifted education" in serving contemporary society, assumes that an individual implicitly represents the dominant cultural context for the society in which he or she lives.

With acculturation, the cultural context of the individual in Sweetgrass has become less traditional and more Westernized. For example, Ojibway is the first language of the community, whereas English is the major language of instruction and communication in the school. Even though hunting, fishing, trapping, and beading, continue to be valued as important forms of work, fewer families are involved in such traditional cultural pursuits today. Emily suggested that many families in Sweetgrass depend upon social assistance. One reason for this is that the community offers limited work to its members. She also pointed out that economic hardship is associated with living in an isolated community. Due to the high costs of food, clothing, and tools, many of the peoples' activities are confined to satisfying primary needs.

Deanna noted that Sweetgrass community offers few opportunities for youngsters to express themselves in a creative fashion. Opportunities which are available to

the individual in the dominant Euro-Canadian culture, are limited or non-existent in Sweetgrass. This community does not represent a microcosm of the dominant Euro-Canadian context. A theory of "giftedness" which assumes that the "gifted" individual will represent and serve the interests of the dominant culture, does not take into consideration cultural and economic differences which exist in Sweetgrass.

Although Renzulli has tried to create an educational conception for "giftedness", his emphasis upon the individual and individual differences makes his definition more psychological in nature (Sternberg and Davidson, 1986). Specifically, such a focus considers a vast scope of cognitive abilities, uses instruments designed to measure such abilities, emphasizes the discovery of the nature of mental abilities, results in the use of the term "gifted", and "more or less ignores ecological factors" (p. 5). Berry (1989) notes that abilities are "adaptive to ecological and cultural context, and...that people develop and institutionalize those human abilities that sustain their daily activities in their respective ecological and cultural contexts" (p. 448).

Although the ecological and cultural contexts for Sweetgrass community are in transition, many of the participants in the study have responded to change through adapting various abilities to satisfy their primary needs. For example, Emily's husband, Robert, replaced the dog-sled and hand axe formerly used for gathering wood with the skidoo and chainsaw.

The purposes of "gifted" education. Although ecological factors have reduced significance for Renzulli in defining and assessing "giftedness", his goals for "gifted" education are culture-bound. He recommends that it is important that the individual makes a productive contribution to society (Renzulli, 1986). The nature of such a contribution depends upon the needs and priorities of the society which are reflected in its contemporary problems. Furthermore, he believes that in making a contribution to society the individual will also experience fulfilment.

The limited opportunities which are available to individuals in Sweetgrass have been addressed in an earlier discussion. These barriers inhibit the individual from making contributions to his or her community. Due to geographical isolation, limited

finances, language differences, and low academic achievement, most individuals in Sweetgrass have limited access to the dominant Euro-Canadian cultural context.

Ability

The decline of traditional lifestyle in Sweetgrass with acculturation has brought about a decline in traditional skills and patterns of ability. While this cultural context is in transition, moving from a traditional to a more acculturated lifestyle, there are no clearly defined cultural norms regarding the nature of, and identification of, abilities. Although Curt, Deanna, Carin, and Emily, recognize the importance of those abilities which are developed through schooling, they also emphasize the value of traditional abilities.

Renzulli (1986) maintains that he does not try to draw a parallel between intelligence and "giftedness". However, an analysis of his approach to the measurement of above-average ability in determining which students are to be included in the RDIM (Revolving Door Identification Model) "talent pool", indicates an emphasis upon standardized instruments of achievement including IQ tests. The norms and language of such

standardized tests usually measure ability based upon Euro-Western criteria and standards of achievement.

Deanna explained that she preferred not to use standardized tests to determine levels of ability with her students. Instead, she determined the classroom norms for average, above-average, and below-average, achievement through observation and teacher-made criterion-referenced tests.

Deanna also emphasized that both instruction and techniques of evaluation (such as problem-solving) should be supported with Ojibway. Jordan noted that many students even at the grade four level do not have a functional understanding of English. This factor often results in an inability to effectively grasp new concepts and leads to low achievement levels. Emily's son, Arthur, and Carin described the difficulties which they have experienced in school due to their inability to understand English, and the teacher's inability to understand Ojibway.

The use of standardized tests and the language barrier contributes to low student achievement levels. Where these results are interpreted as reflective of low or below-average ability, the students are not

eligible for the "talent pool". Consequently, they will not have the opportunity to engage in learning experiences which contribute to the development and expression of "creative productive giftedness". Remediation instead of enrichment is prescribed as a result of low test scores. The students in Sweetgrass would encounter great difficulty in achieving above-average scores on standardized tests in order to qualify for a "talent pool".

Task Commitment

The nature of traditional tasks. The participants in the study described the nature of the tasks involved in such traditional cultural pursuits as trapping, hunting, and fishing. Some of these were: the skinning, drying, stretching, and tanning of hides; the smoking of meat and fish, the creation of, and setting of, traps and nets; the construction of snowshoes and sleds; the sewing of clothing out of hides and furs; the cutting and hauling of wood for heat and cooking; and the hauling of water. Before the introduction of technology and schooling, work involved children, parents, and Elders (English-Currie cited in Perreault & Vance, 1990). A cooperative model for achieving

productivity was followed.

Pre-technological work was difficult and required consistent effort over extended periods of time. Task commitment was motivated by the need to maintain primary needs in order to survive. John, an Elder, and Jossie, a parent in her mid-thirties, described their work on the trapline when they were youths as very hard. For example, they walked when they trapped. John spoke of using an axe to cut wood.

Renzulli (1986) describes task commitment in general terms as "the capacity for high levels of interest...perseverance, endurance, hard work... dedicated practice...self-confidence, a strong ego and a belief in one's ability to carry out important work, freedom from inferiority feelings, drive to achieve (p. 75). When these traits are placed into the context of traditional lifestyle, it becomes apparent that people in Sweetgrass exhibit the capacity for high levels of task commitment.

<u>The nature of tasks in the classroom.</u> When the concept of task commitment is placed within the context of the classroom, the children encounter difficulties with achieving high levels of productivity. The nature

of tasks in the classroom is different from the tasks that children encounter at home, in the community, and in the bush. Outside of the classroom, work has real-world significance in maintaining primary needs. Karl, Ann, Arnold, Charlotte, and David described the work which they did outside of school. Some of the tasks involved collecting kindling, keeping the wood box full of logs, making the fire, cooking, washing dishes, sweeping the floor, and hauling water. This work is guided by "tacit knowledge" (Sternberg & Wagner in Ackerman, Sternberg, & Glaser, 1989). This type of knowledge is practical, informal, and not usually taught directly.

Academic tasks. Conversely, work in the classroom is comprised of tasks which are guided by "academic knowledge" (Sternberg & Wagner in Ackerman, Sternberg, & Glaser, 1989). This type of knowledge is formal and is taught directly by a teacher in a laboratory or classroom setting. Specifically, "academic knowledge" represents information which may have little or no real-world relevance to the learner's everyday life. This factor can have a negative effect upon motivation and interest levels among students and can result in

low levels of task commitment. Emily pointed out that it is important for students to understand the purpose of schooling. She stated that the youth would be more committed to their work at the school if they felt that it held practical significance either for their everyday lives or their future.

Culturally discrepant classroom expectations. Approaches to learning, communication, and discipline, which are used in the classroom are often opposed to the ways in which Native children are traditionally reared (More, 1987). This disjuncture can have a negative impact upon levels of task commitment. Difficulties in learning which may be created by culturally discrepant forms of teaching, communication, and expectations for behaviour, can result in low levels of task commitment among the students.

Emily, Robert, Carin, Jordan, and Irene discussed how children learn from parents and Elders by watching, listening, and through supervised participation. In contrast, the youngster often experiences instruction from a single teacher in the school. Deanna also pointed out that the students prefer to work with concrete and or semi-concrete materials in an activity

based approach to instruction. They are not comfortable with a "lecture-styled" approach to learning. Deanna, who teaches in English, and Larry, who teaches in Ojibway, both said that they kept their "teacher-talk" and introductions to lessons to a minimum so that students would not become bored.

Native children traditionally learned from the consequences of their actions (More, 1987). Parents took a non-directive and non-interfering approach to child-rearing. Misbehaviour was often overlooked with the result that children were rarely if ever punished. Instead, they were encouraged to learn self-reliance and responsibility as a consequence of directing their own actions. Irene, Jossie, Deanna, Emily, and Rose, suggested that when their children failed to carry out or complete a task at home they were not punished. Instead, another child may be asked to do the work or the parent or grandparent may do it. The child who was originally responsible for the work is left to think about the situation until he or she is ready to engage in the task. Irene and Emily do not force their children to work because they do not want to upset them. Emily said that it is important that children

enjoy what they are doing. Deanna believes that as children grow older they are naturally inclined to assume responsibility for themselves and others.

In contrast, when the child is at school, the teacher assigns the work to the students. Irene suggested that although the child does not have to do the work at home, they must do the work at school since the teacher assigns it to them as their responsibility. The teacher often decides how and when the assignments are to be completed. In some classrooms, disciplinary techniques, involving sanctions and rewards, are used to ensure that students complete their work.

Language as a barrier to learning. The language of instruction can interfere with a student's ability to complete tasks successfully when it is not the child's first language. Deanna, Carin, Emily, Curt, Larry, and Jordan, emphasized the importance of understanding the language of instruction to a student's success in completing assignments in subjects such as mathematics, reading, and writing. Furthermore, when a student has difficulty speaking the language of the teacher, the student encounters problems with asking for assistance with the work.

School failure and self-esteem. School failure which contributes to poor self-esteem, also has a negative effect upon levels of productivity (Comeau & Santin, 1990; York, 1989). Curt noted that many of the students who drop out of school after grade 9 or 10 appear to have low self-esteem. Students who experience difficulty with learning are less task-oriented than those students who encounter success on a regular basis. Len stated that some of his students exhibit off-task behaviors when they do not understand what they are to do. This factor contributes to school failure for these students and often results in the development of poor self-image.

A vision of the future. Motivation to finish tasks successfully in the classroom is often bound by a vision of the future (More, 1987). Most Native people perceive the future differently from many non-Indians. A student who feels that, the view of the future which is represented by the Anglo teacher and the curriculum has little or no relevance to his or her everyday life, will usually exhibit low levels of task commitment.

Earlier in the thesis, I made reference to the teacher in Sweetgrass who spoke to the parents about

the "real world" which awaited their children upon graduation from the local high school. His choice of language implied that the "real world" did not include Sweetgrass. This image may appear to devalue Sweetgrass community in favour of the dominant culture. Feelings of confusion, conflict, and inferiority, could develop among parents and students which may contribute to low levels of task commitment.

Task commitment in review. Traditional lifestyle required high levels of task commitment among Native people. However, Native students express low levels of task commitment in school because of the following factors: tasks have become decontextualized and therefore have little or no real-world significance and thus relevance to the everyday lives of the students; there is a disjuncture between child-rearing practices in the home which involve learning, communication, and discipline, and the approach which is taken to these areas in the school; the language of instruction in the school and the language of the home are different; repeated school failure which contributes to poor self-esteem; schooling engenders a vision of the future which reflects the opportunities, values, and beliefs,

of the dominant culture...not those of Sweetgrass.

These disjunctures between the community and school creates a situation wherein Native students cannot attend successfully to their academic tasks.

Creativity

The balance between product and process in determining creativity. Renzulli (1986) points out that tests which have been designed to measure creativity are limited in their scope. Although many of these tests examine divergent thinking skills, it is not clear that divergent thinking is central to the creative process. Furthermore, few such tests have been "validated against real-life criteria of creative accomplishment..." (p. 72). He suggests that the nature of measurement in this domain is highly subjective. He therefore recommends that the focus for assessment in measuring creativity should be on products instead of traits.

It is important to determine whether or not generalizations can be made about products which have been deemed creative across various domains (Tardif & Sternberg in Sternberg, 1988b). More information is needed regarding the "differences between products in

various domains and the qualities they must display in order to be deemed creative" (p. 438). The above concerns also apply to an examination of creative processes.

Furthermore, if the determinants of creativity are to be product-oriented then one needs to understand their cultural context. For example, Curt noted that some people in Sweetgrass are talented in oratory. In order to appreciate the nature of the value which is placed upon oratory, it would be important to understand the traditions, beliefs, and values, which the legends, stories, and discussions may infer and reflect. Novelty has been emphasized as a major quality of creative expression (Tardif & Sternberg in Sternberg, 1988b). Renzulli (1986) reflects this orientation in proposing that creativity involves originality in thinking.

It is important to understand the nature of a cultural context before one can determine the degree of originality inherent in a product. As I was unfamiliar with the culture in Sweetgrass community, I asked the participants about their perceptions of originality. For example, Curt referred to the modifications made by

the Elder to the handles of his paddles as something which no one else had done.

By emphasizing the importance of concrete products as visible "proofs" of originality in a determination of creativity, the significance which creativity may have for the psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human expression is reduced. Furthermore, when the external manifestation of a creative experience becomes a priority, the significance of the internal nature of the experience may be overlooked.

Although a premium may be placed upon the external benefits of "creative production" (Renzulli, 1986) to a culture's economy and security, the nature of the creative experience which takes place inside the individual may be qualitatively different from the ways in which it may be viewed by the society:

> Inside the creative experience is....inquiry, the expansion of emotional depth and range, the tuning of the spirit, and the quest for meaning (London, 1989, p. 18).

Jordan, Emily, Deanna, and Carin, spoke of the special feeling they felt when they were involved in a creative endeavour. This feeling was characterized by a sense of satisfaction and pride in accomplishing something

which was different from others. Some of the areas which Curt and the above individuals referred to as domains for creative expression in Sweetgrass today tend to be of an aesthetic nature: wood-carving, painting, story-telling, beading, sewing, and music.

Creative expression in traditional lifestyle was often functional and utilitarian in nature. Creative expression grew out of basic skills associated with the maintenance of shelter, food, and warmth. Once these basic skills were learned from a parent, Elder, or mentor, the individual could decide to refine the original process. Several examples of creative expression in traditional lifestyle were the construction of various types of traps, nets, fishing poles, snowshoes, and sleds, and the use of plants and berries for food and dyes.

Creative expression may serve extrinsic and intrinsic purposes. Intrinsically, the creative process allows the individual to seek for, and establish meaning, within and through him or herself in relation to the context of lived experience (London, 1989). Extrinsically, creative expression can offer a manifestation of an individual's internal search in a

product. In this way the creative process is contextual and therefore needs to be understood within the cultural context in which it takes place (Sternberg, 1988). The creative process may reflect an individual's "social vision" (Lippard, 1990, p. 7) regarding the culture's institutions, economy, political systems, values and traditions. For example, Jordan's carvings of birds, animals, and people engaged in traditional cultural pursuits, reflected a regard for nature and traditional lifestyle.

Curt cautioned me regarding the danger of a non-Native researcher valuing something as creative in a Native context because it is not present in the researcher's own culture. An example of this could be the making of snowshoes. Another area of concern is the danger of the researcher identifying something as creative in another culture simply because of its rarity. For example, Curt suggested that the making of snowshoes today could be regarded as a creative act because so few people do so. However, he pointed out that twenty years ago everyone should know how to make snowshoes. Forces of acculturation such as the skidoo have made the snowshoe of little or no use to the

people in Sweetgrass. In this case, the concept of rarity has given aesthetic value to an object which at one time had only functional value.

The determination of creativity becomes a value-laden process when placed, as it must be, into a cultural context. The participants in this study made many references to traditional abilities and skills as being creative processes today. This reflects their deep regard for the past and the traditional culture which has been eroded and lost through acculturation. Specifically, neo-traditionalists represent a group who support a renaissance of traditional Native culture.

Necessary conditions for creativity to develop. The participants in Sweetgrass expressed the belief that everyone can be creative and that creativity can be taught. However, certain conditions need to be in place to support the implementation of such beliefs. Firstly, opportunities for creative expression require that certain materials are accessible to the individual. Carin described how she was unable to pursue her interest in art because she could not afford to buy the materials. Second, there must be sufficient time available to be involved in the creative

experience. For example, with an infant at home Carin was unable to find the time to follow her interests in painting.

Third, the concern among teachers should be upon the development of programs which offer optimal conditions for the expression of creativity instead of on the measurement of creative abilities (Irwin, 1990). Deanna pointed out that Native people prefer to work in a cooperative as opposed to a competitive manner with one another. For this reason, Native students would intuitively understand and appreciate a creative process which is characterized by a form of "noncompetitive knowing" (London, 1989, p. 45). This means that a student would not feel required to evaluate his or her efforts against those of another. Evaluation becomes a personal assessment as opposed to an external judgement of ability according to some standardized criteria. Self-evaluation is familiar to the Native youngster. In a traditional Native family, children were expected to evaluate their own learning (More, 1987). They were not formally assessed by their parents and Elders.

Fourth, the students should have access to

creative learning experiences in the area of verbal expression. This will require that they will have the choice to use Ojibway as the primary language in communicating their ideas to the teacher and the class.

The fifth and sixth conditions which are integral to the positive expression and development of creativity for students are "psychological safety" and "psychological freedom" (Rogers cited in Harman & Rheingold, 1984). "Psychological safety" is created in a non-threatening environment where the student feels self-worth and acceptance. "Psychological freedom" represents the freedom for a student to express him or herself symbolically while assuming responsibility throughout the creative experience. Traditionally, child-rearing practices in Sweetgrass have reflected these beliefs.

Creative learning experiences should be a part of all teaching and learning for the students in Sweetgrass. Such opportunities should not be perceived as a form of "enrichment" which is "added on" to the program. These students would not qualify as "creative" according to Renzulli's (1986) definition unless those conditions are in place which contribute

to the positive development of creative expression.

Native Conceptions of "Giftedness" in Sweetgrass

In order to appreciate Native conceptions of "giftedness" in Sweetgrass, it is important to understand the relevance of the idea to the participants from a linguistic and conceptual point of view. I learned through working with Carin and Curt, my interpreters in this study, that a discussion of "giftedness" depends upon the degree to which this word held both linguistic and conceptual significance to the participants. Responses varied according to the amount of English the participant spoke and their exposure to secondary and post-secondary education outside of Sweetgrass.

I learned through the interview process that the word "giftedness" does not have a linguistic counterpart in Ojibway. Therefore, I was unable to discuss the relevance of the concept of "giftedness" with those people who did not speak English and who also had little or no exposure to secondary and post-secondary education outside of Sweetgrass. These people included Fanny, Ida, Jossie, Rose, and John. I did not try to gain a reaction from these people

regarding "giftedness" by imposing upon them through translation a definition for the concept. Instead, I continued these interviews with discussions of individual differences among people in Sweetgrass and the ways in which such differences are interpreted and valued. I also listened to the participants recall stories about special times in their lives, their interests, and their concerns. Each of the participants chose to speak about traditional lifestyle in terms of his or her beliefs, abilities, and values.

As a researcher conducting bilingual investigations, I learned that even when English words and phrases could be translated into Ojibway this did not ensure that there was a correlation between the English conception that was created by this process and the Ojibway interpretation. Furthermore, translation from English to Ojibway may create a linguistic invention in the Native language which holds little or no meaning or conceptual frame of reference to the Native person being interviewed. It is critical that the researcher in a bilingual study does not make assumptions about the nature of the correlation between two languages based upon the significance of ideas in

the researcher's own language.

Emily, Robert, and the children in the study represent those participants who speak English but for whom the word "giftedness" has no conceptual relevance. Emily and Robert have had limited experience with schooling outside of Sweetgrass. The group of children are currently elementary school students.

Carin and Deanna equated "giftedness" with special abilities such as trapping, fishing, sewing, and carving. Curt suggested that "gifted" people in Sweetgrass are talented in oratory, carving, woodwork, and in making snowshoes and toboggans. Len compared "giftedness" to musical and artistic talent, and exceptional achievement in school subjects such as mathematics and reading. Carin has attended high school in an urban centre and is currently taking summer courses in Native Teacher Education at a university. Deanna and Curt are also pursuing post-secondary training as educators.

Deanna and Curt perceive a "gifted" person as one who learns new concepts quickly and exhibits high levels of task commitment. Deanna emphasized that "gifted" students are adept at problem-solving.

However, it is important for these students to be able to receive instruction and share their ideas in Ojibway. It is important too that learning experiences are activity-based and supported with concrete materials.

Deanna also pointed out that Native people value cooperation over competition. In this way, Native people feel that everyone is special regardless of individual differences in ability. Those people who are exceptionally skilled in a particular domain are not regarded as more valuable to the culture than those who are less able. Therefore, those who are more capable have the responsibility to help those who are less competent to succeed. For this reason, Native students often try to protect their peers in the classroom from the humiliation and embarrassment of failure by helping each other with assignments. Where the ethic of competition is emphasized by the teacher, this type of behaviour may be perceived as "cheating" as opposed to cooperative assistance. Furthermore, Native students may not volunteer answers to questions that the teacher asks because they do not want to embarrass those children who do not know the answers.

They also do not want to appear as if they believe that they are more important than their classmates by singling themselves out for recognition.

There is not a uniform recognition of "giftedness" in Sweetgrass. Responses among the participants ranged from a complete lack of recognition of the concept to interpretations involving special abilities, talents, and exceptional achievement in academic subjects. Those respondents who readily entered into a discussion of "giftedness" were those individuals with the greatest degree of exposure to schooling and other acculturating influences which represent Euro-Western beliefs and values.

The respondents in general recognize that there are individual differences among people and that these may be manifested in special abilities or talents. These abilities and talents are represented by exceptional achievement in both traditional and acculturated domains of endeavour. Although the special abilities, talents, or "gifts" of individuals are valued within the community, a social meritocracy based upon individual differences in ability has not been promoted by the Native people in Sweetgrass.

The Research Questions Revisited

An overview of the answers to the research questions has been provided by this chapter. In summary form these are:

1. What are the conceptions of "giftedness" in a Native community and school? "Giftedness" is a Euro-Western perception of how individual differences in human behaviour can be valued according to an ethnocentric measure of exceptional achievement in preferred domains. The idea has no meaning for those people who are the least affected by acculturation. "Giftedness" is in conflict with traditional norms regarding the ways in which individual differences are to be perceived and valued. Its presence in the education of Native students would emphasize individual competition for the achievement of merit and recognition over cooperation.
2. Is Renzulli's model of "giftedness" relevant to the norms of a Native community and school? Why? The relevance of the Renzulli (1986) model to the school and community of

Sweetgrass is placed in question for four major reasons. Firstly, Native students are at a disadvantage when their abilities are measured with Euro-Western norm-referenced instruments. Second, since this model emphasizes the need for a positive self-image in candidates for "gifted" programs, it discriminates against children like those in Sweetgrass who have been victimized by acculturation. Third, although Sweetgrass is a culture in transition, "giftedness" is still a Euro-Western value-laden invention which is either irrelevant to, or in conflict with, traditional Native cultural norms. Fourth, although Native people recognize and value individual differences in abilities such as traditional skills, creativity, and high levels of task commitment, they do not approve of making distinctions among people based upon these differences. For the above reasons, the Renzulli (1986) model has little relevance to the school and community of Sweetgrass.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study begins with the community as the central element in its design. Much educational research with Native people has been generated by an interest in examining Euro-Western theories in a Native context through the use of tests (McShane & Berry in Irvine & Berry, 1988). Little concern has been shown for the impact of cultural and environmental factors in the interpretation of the data. Instead, the focus has often been upon comparing the performance of Native subjects on norm-referenced instruments with the performance of non-Native subjects. Since these measures are linguistically and culturally biased in favour of non-Native groups, they provide depressed scores when used with Native people. These depressed scores have frequently resulted in deficit models for the description and interpretation of behaviour among Native people.

The process of renorming standardized instruments so that Native performance more closely resembles Anglo

norms for achievement and aptitude can be patronizing and misleading. Not only does this approach legitimize deficit models for the description and interpretation of Native behaviours, but it also ensures the supremacy of Euro-Western norms.

Educational research is an ethical and political act (Roman & Apple in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). The nature of research questions and the selection of research methodology in a cross-cultural study of this nature inevitably reflect the researcher's positions regarding ethnic relations and issues of human rights.

This study has made an empirically based contribution to existing knowledge in studies of Native people, "gifted" education, educational psychology, and cross-cultural psychology. This final chapter will firstly, offer my own reflections on the research, and secondly, outline significant conclusions. Third, implications for theory, practice, and research will be considered.

Personal Reflections

The nature of qualitative research methodology has forced me to confront my own biases, strengths and weaknesses, and values. Consequently, I have gained a

greater awareness of my own capacity for ethnocentrism. As researchers we can increase the integrity and validity of cross-cultural study by explicitly acknowledging our biases as they emerge.

A major limitation of this study was the short period of time available for data-collection. A longer stay in Sweetgrass would have provided me with more opportunities to conduct formal and informal observations, informally structured interviews, and document analysis. It would have been useful to interview all of the participants twice in order to provide another avenue for the triangulation of data. However, circumstances required that I limit data collection over the period of a month in two visits.

The cost of this type of research can present a serious limitation for the length of time that the researcher may be able spend living on the site. For example, air transportation costs included three return trips totalling approximately $1500.00. Other expenses included accommodation, food, shipping, film, audio-tapes, and fees for interpreters and transcriptions.

Another limitation inherent in this research is the negative effect that fatigue and illness can have

upon the performance of the researcher. This consideration is of critical importance to this type of study since the researcher is the major instrument in the field.

Financial and temporal constraints meant that I was unable to stay in Sweetgrass long enough for the people to become as familiar with me as I wished. A longer stay may have increased trust between myself and the participants. The participants may have shared more intimate insights, feelings, and beliefs with me had they "known" me for a longer period of time. It would also have been useful to be able to include more people in the study. Again, time and money limited my sample.

My experiences with qualitative research methodology have encouraged humility, patience, and empathy towards the feelings and perceptions of other people. The quest for emergent theory requires that the researcher place the integrity of the study within the conduct of the research process. This means that I had to lay aside any preconceived notions that I may have had about the resolution of my research questions. Furthermore, I had to learn to be patient throughout

the process of data collection and analysis. Over and over again I had to tell myself to let the data "speak" to me. It is critical to the validity of the study that the researcher refrain from manipulating the data to support personal biases.

I learned a great deal about appropriate communication styles with Native people from Carin, my interpreter. She taught me that a translator is much more than a facilitator of spoken communication for a researcher. Carin became my partner. She was my ambassador to the people in the community. By agreeing to work with me and to take me into the intimacy of her peoples' homes, she indicated her approval of my presence and my work. In these ways, she was an invaluable link for me with the people.

Carin taught me many valuable lessons about the appropriate ways in which one is to approach parents, Elders, and children. She helped me to understand the responses of the participants in the context of Native norms for behaviour and guided me against making inappropriate overtures.

My first few experiences with conducting an informally structured interview through translation

were unnerving. How does one invoke dialogue and reflection given these constraints? Carin saved me from myself by taking control of the interview guide and tape recorder. I noticed that this gesture would often bring smiles and laughter from the individual to be interviewed. The atmosphere gradually became relaxed. Carin spoke in Ojibway to each person selected for the sample about the purpose of the study and the ethical requirements of the research. She would then ask the individual to indicate his or her approval to take part in the study by signing the forms which I had brought with us. Finally, she would ask if our interview could be taped explaining the importance of my later need for transcripts in analyzing the data.

Carin would initially ask one of my questions from the interview guide and then wait for the participant's response. Once this was given, she would turn to me and tell me what the person had said. As the interview proceeded I observed that although I cannot understand Ojibway, Carin and the respondent would enter into a dialogue. This sometimes would go on for several minutes. She would intermittently explain for me the nature of the discussion giving me an opportunity to

ask for clarification or prompt more dialogue regarding certain areas. We would eventually have a conversation taking place among the three of us.

Carin and I shared a deep sense of mutual respect and eventual friendship in this short time. I told the principal that it was a great honour to work with Carin. She told me that Carin had said the same thing about working with me.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from a consideration of the research process and the research questions. First it is important to note that Berry's (1981) position of "cultural relativism" proved to be a valuable starting point in setting out the conceptual framework for the design of the study. A position of "cultural relativism" avoids ethnocentric evaluations of the participants by emphasizing and giving integrity to their conceptions, descriptions, and interpretations. This perspective therefore allows the researcher to discover and describe points of view regarding the nature of phenomena which may be different from those held to be valid, important, or "true" in his or her own culture.

A second conclusion of this study which follows from a recognition of the first is that "giftedness" is a value-laden idea which is culture-specific to the norms of Euro-Western culture. This means that because "giftedness" is culture-dependent (Sternberg, 1988) it does not have a universal dimension nor is it a generalizable human condition. Specifically, "giftedness" is an idea which is a construct which lacks relevance to the norms of traditional Native culture in Sweetgrass.

A third conclusion directly relates to the second. Those participants with the greatest exposure to acculturating factors such as schooling, are more prepared to discuss "giftedness" when set within a cooperative model of education. Essentially, they believe every child is special and therefore every child is "gifted" in some way.

A fourth conclusion is that Renzulli's (1986) model for "giftedness" is inappropriate for use with Native students due to its failure to attend appropriately to cultural differences. School boards should recognize the significance of this problem as it impacts upon the education of all minority children.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Further Research

Implications for Theory

The outcomes of this study support the analysis of educational research as an ethical and political enterprise. This conclusion is consistent with Roman and Apple's (1990) observation that education is "implicated in processes that are connected to the patterns and social relations of unequal power that permeates this society" (p. 42). Educational research becomes an ethical and political act in that it "is strongly connected to conflicts over knowledge, resources, and power outside as well as inside of education...." (p. 42).

A research process which seeks to discover and describe the perceptions and beliefs of others reflects an important dialectic between, the research questions which guide the study and, theory as it emerges from the practice of data-collection and analysis. Specific theoretical constructs are without meaning in the cultural context of Sweetgrass community.

In contrast to a specific theory, Sternberg's (1988) "Triarchic Theory of Intellectual Giftedness"

implies that "giftedness" is culturally relative. Its meaning may change from one group of people to another, and within one group over time, depending upon cultural expectations. The contextualist sub-theory emphasizes that "giftedness" is a culturally dependent construct. It must be understood within its cultural context and according to clearly defined cultural expectations.

Implications for Practice

This study contributes to existing knowledge in the field of education, specifically "gifted" education, from a point of view of "cultural relativism" (Berry, 1981). Following is a discussion of implications affecting educators.

First, the Renzulli (1986) model for "giftedness" should not be used with Native students due to its inattention to cultural differences. Efforts to renorm culturally-biased instruments to measure the ability of these students do not increase their validity. Furthermore, a model for "giftedness" which permits depressed norms of achievement and aptitude to serve as standards for the measurement of average and above-average ability is misleading. This process does not

improve the Native student's chance of gaining access to secondary and post-secondary institutions.

Second, teachers need to gain an awareness of the cultural differences inherent in working with their Native students to develop teaching strategies, communications styles, and curricula, which reflect the needs of their students. Activity-based learning experiences should be emphasized with many opportunities for students to work with concrete materials.

Teachers who cannot speak the local dialect in a community should ensure the use of visual aids to provide support for the oral-auditory element of instruction. Consideration needs to be given to the use of the Native language as the language of instruction in the primary years, with English treated as a second language subject area in the curriculum.

Instruction in the first language facilitates concept development in the primary years. This creates a foundation for learning in the second language in the junior, intermediate, and senior years. This approach is intended to enrich the students' learning experiences. It is not meant to provide a foundation

for the identification of "gifted" Native students.

Third, cooperative group learning experiences in the classroom reduce the element of competition which aims to compare the performance of one student with that of another. Whereas a de-emphasis of competition is incompatible with how the "gifted" construct recognizes individual differences, it is consistent with Native beliefs. Many Native students want to help each other succeed with their assignments. They prefer to be part of a group and refrain from identifying themselves as less or more capable than their peers.

This does not mean that Native people do not recognize and value individual differences. However, public displays which celebrate the achievements and talents of an individual are de-emphasized so that no one person will appear to be more valued than another by the group. In contrast, the "gifted" construct publicly promotes the perception that some individuals have more value to the society than others.

Fourth, teachers of Native children need to understand the values and beliefs which guide the communication styles of their students. Indirect forms of communication are more comfortable for the Native

student. For example, instead of confronting a student directly about a concern, the teacher may request the assistance of an intermediary - another Native teacher, student, or parent. Story-telling represents another indirect approach for sharing information. Instead of asking Native students to raise their hands to answer questions in a class, the teacher could focus upon group and individual responses. Individual responses may be invited on a one-to-one basis.

Some students may prefer to share their ideas in a written form instead of orally. Others may wish to draw or paint their ideas and feelings. Differentiation of process and product in the planning and delivery of curricula will accommodate a variety of communication styles.

Fifth, teacher education for Native teachers should include training in strategies to develop culturally relevant learning experiences for Native students. "Enrichment" of this nature could be integrated across the curricula for all students. For example, Elders and crafts people could be invited to the school to demonstrate traditional skills such as: skinning animals, and drying, stretching, and tanning

hides; making snowshoes, mukluks, moccasins, gauntlets, and hats; beading and embroidery; carving; drumming; singing; dancing; traditional cooking (such as bannock-making); and, story-telling (such as legends). Field trips could be arranged in coordination with community volunteers during which students could learn about hunting, trapping, fishing, and canoeing, snow-shoeing, and camping.

Contemporary skills are also important areas of "enrichment" for students who may decide to stay in communities like Sweetgrass. They could be demonstrated by members in community through visits to the school and during field trips to local institutions. Several areas of study in communities like Sweetgrass would be: the skidoo - safety precautions, care, and maintenance; designing and constructing a log house; cutting and hauling ice for water in the winter; painting on canvas; playing the guitar, drums, and fiddle; using a cash register and calculator as a clerk in a store; book-keeping and accounting skills involved in working as the manager of a store; the responsibilities and skills involved in working in the nursing station, post office, radio

station, Band office, and in the school as a teacher or secretary.

Individuals who visit these communities should also be invited to act as mentors and to share the nature of their activities with students. This would facilitate the students in their gaining more information about the responsibilities and requirements of work outside of the community in larger centers. Some of these people may be employed by: the Mines and Natural Resources department; hydro; and the telephone company. Others may be visiting personnel such as: pilots, doctors, dentists, optometrists, artists, musicians, writers, dancers, actors/actresses, constructions workers, pipeline workers, plumbers, electricians, divers, accountants, and educators.

Once the students are familiarized with a particular domain, those who appear to have an interest in a skill area may choose to work with an Elder or community member. The teacher may arrange for the student to be with the mentor during class time or after school. This approach could also accommodate a small group of individuals who are interested in the same skill area. The students may wish to treat their

experiences with the mentor as a research project. They would eventually share these experiences with their classmates using a differentiated approach to communicating their ideas. "Enrichment" experiences need to be flexible and diverse in their organization and expectations.

Implications for Further Research

Although this study is limited to the beliefs and perceptions of one Ojibway community in northern Ontario, it may have significance for other Native communities in the region. On a larger scale, some ideas, such as the belief that individual differences are to be valued in an equal fashion, are widespread across Native groups.

The findings of this study raise the need for research into several areas. Further investigations are required regarding the ways in which Native people perceive and value individual differences and abilities. Studies such as these should be conducted within and across communities to strengthen the generalizability of such perceptions and values. Investigations of this nature could provide a clearer understanding of cultural differences for educators in

their work with Native students, parents, Elders, administrators, and members of the Native community in general. This type of information would assist educators in creating culturally relevant curricula and teaching models for use with Native students. A liaison may also be facilitated between the community and the school through which parents and Elders will feel that they have been invited to participate in the educational process.

Further investigations are recommended into the ways in which culturally relevant "enrichment" programs could teach and support the cultural heritage of Native students. Studies of this nature need to focus upon the integration of this type of "enrichment" throughout all areas of curricula. The feasibility for all students to take part in such programs needs to be determined. For example, consideration needs to be given to those handicapping conditions which could prevent a student from participating in certain types of activity.

In Conclusion

This study has provided a description and interpretation of participants' conceptions of

"giftedness" in the community and school of Sweetgrass. The findings suggest that "giftedness" is a Euro-Western idea which is irrelevant and even in conflict with the norms of Sweetgrass community and school.

Specifically, this study does not recommend that the Renzulli (1986) model for "giftedness" be used in Sweetgrass, or in any focus for Native education which reflects the beliefs and perceptions of the participants in this community. Instead, culturally relevant "enrichment" strategies need to be developed and integrated into the curricula for all students who can benefit from this approach to teaching and learning.

In closing, I wish to share the following statement which Berry (1971) makes regarding the importance of understanding cultural differences:

> ...if you think there is only one race (yours), people headed in a different direction will necessarily appear to be slow or even lost! However if you realise that there are many races being run, by many people with different goals, then the pattern of results becomes understandable (p. 11).

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Appendix: Interview Guide

The following list of questions was used in an informal fashion. Therefore, not every question was used nor were the questions necessarily presented in this order.

Section A: "Gifted"

What does the word gifted mean to you?

Do you ever refer to someone as being "gifted"?

What does the word "talented" mean to you?

Do you ever refer to someone as being "talented"?

Are there people that you know in your community who have special abilities? (Who are these people; types of abilities; what do they do with these abilities?)

Does everyone have a special ability or abilities? (Why do you believe this?)

How does someone know that they have a special ability?

Tell me about something that you have done that was special to you?

Is it a good thing to be thought of as different from other people in your community?

Section B: Creativity

What does the word creative mean to you?

What factors may influence your decision to call someone creative?

What factors may influence your decision to call something creative?

Do you think that everyone can be creative?

Can creativity be taught?

Where does creativity come from?

Is there a difference between exceptional skill and creativity?

How would you describe a creative learning experience?

For Teachers:

In what types of creative learning experiences are the students involved?

For Students:

What kinds of things do you like to do at school? What makes these special?

What kinds of things do you like to do when you are not at school? What makes these special?

What kinds of things do you like to do alone? What kinds of things do you like to do with a group?

Section C: Task Commitment

How is work at school different from work at home? (type, frequency, purpose, motivation)

What type of work would you rather do: school work or work for the family? Why?

What does success mean to you?

Is it important for a person to go to school in order to be successful?

Do you like to work on one thing over an extended period of time or more than one task at a time? Why?

How would you describe the effect/s that schools has had upon you?

For Teachers:

How important to school success is the ability to persevere with a problem or task until it is completed? Why?

What factors influence your decision that a student has a high degree of task commitment?

How would you describe off-task behaviour? What factors may lead to off-task behaviour?

In what ways do you encourage students to work over extended periods of time towards the completion of an assignment?

For Students:

What are your favourite subjects or activities at school? Why?

What subjects or activities do you like the least at school? Why?

What special interests do you have that you would like to spend time exploring?

What are some of the reasons that can make it difficult for you to get your work finished?

Section D: General Reasoning Ability

Do you like to solve problems?

What types of problems do you enjoy working with? Explain.

How do you approach solving a problem? Do you think that everyone solves problems this way?

When you are working with a problem, would you prefer to work alone or with a group of people? Why?

Tell me about someone who is good at solving problems.

Tell me about an experience with problem-solving that you have had when you felt that you were very successful.

What factors can make a problem especially difficult to solve?

Does school instruction help a person become good at problem solving?

What experiences outside of school help a person to become a good problem solver?