

Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers

STEM Education & Professional Studies

1993

A Study to Determine the Correlation Between the Level of Cultural Literacy and the Rate of Progress an Illiterate Person Experiences During the First Year of Learning to Read

Elizabeth M. Lohman
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lohman, Elizabeth M., "A Study to Determine the Correlation Between the Level of Cultural Literacy and the Rate of Progress an Illiterate Person Experiences During the First Year of Learning to Read" (1993). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 380.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/380

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.

A STUDY TO DETERMINE
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN
THE LEVEL OF CULTURAL LITERACY AND
THE RATE OF PROGRESS AN ILLITERATE PERSON
EXPERIENCES DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF LEARNING TO READ

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Faculty of The School of Education
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Adult Education

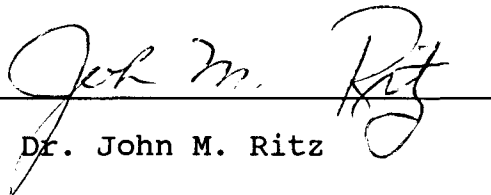
by
Elizabeth M. Lohman

August 1993

Cultural Literacy i

This research paper was prepared by Elizabeth M. Lohman under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Adult Education.

APPROVED BY:

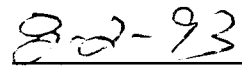


Dr. John M. Ritz

Advisor

Graduate Program Director

Occupation and Technical Education



Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Signature Page	i
Table of Tables	iv
Table of Figures	v
 CHAPTER I:	
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	2
Hypothesis	2
Background and Significance	2
Limitations	3
Assumptions	4
Procedures	5
Definition of Terms	6
Overview of Chapter	9
 CHAPTER II:	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
Cultural Literacy Explained	11
Cultural Literacy and Reading	12
Cultural Literacy in Reading Programs of Traditional Schools	14
Cultural Literacy and Adult Reading Programs	18
Summary	24
 CHAPTER III:	
METHODS AND PROCEDURES	25
Population	25
Instrument Design	25
Administering the Instrument	29
Analysis of the Data	30
Summary	33
 CHAPTER IV:	
FINDINGS	35
Individual Scores of Non-Readers	36
Correlation of Cultural Literacy and Reading Progress	43
Cultural Literacy: Non-Readers and General Population	46
Summary	48
 CHAPTER V:	
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	50
Summary	50
Conclusions	54
Recommendation	55

BIBLIOGRAPHY 56

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Test: Cultural Literacy and
the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers 57

Appendix B: Cover Letter:
Cultural Literacy Test 63

TABLE OF TABLES

	Page
TABLE 1: The mean of the Cultural Literacy Scores of the General Population	27
TABLE 2: The Standard Deviation of the Cultural Literacy Scores of the General Population	28
TABLE 3: Percent that Determines High Cultural Literacy and Low Cultural Literacy	28
TABLE 4: Reading Program's Requirements: Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council	32
TABLE 5: Non-Reader's Individual Cultural Literacy Scores and Corresponding Reading Progress Scores	41
TABLE 6: Frequencies of Non-Readers' Reading Process in Relation to Their Level of Cultural Literacy	44
TABLE 7: Results of Chi-Square Test	45
TABLE 8: Individual Cultural Literacy Scores Comparing Non-Readers with General Population	48

TABLE OF FIGURES

	Page
FIGURE 1:	
A Comparison of Individual Non-Reader's Cultural Scores and Reading Progress	42
FIGURE 2:	
A Comparison of the Levels of Cultural Literacy between Non-Readers and the General Population: Scores Greater than 75% of Thirty-Three Possible Correct Answers	47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Can you read this stanza of a familiar Australian song?

Once a jolly swagman camped beside a billabong,
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,
And he sang as he sat and waited while his billy
boiled,
"You'll come a'waltzing Matilda, with me."
(qtd. in Hirsch, 1988, p. 17)

E.D. Hirsch Jr., Professor of English at the University of Virginia, suggests that unless you are literate in the facts that pertain to the Australian culture, you cannot read these words (1988, p.17). Hirsch explains that reading is more than identifying words; it is understanding those words through shared cultural knowledge (1988, p. 3). This example may help us understand the problem of teaching adults to read basic reading material: no, "Waltzing Matilda doesn't mean dancing with a girl; it means walking with a kind of knapsack" (Hirsch, 1988, p. 17). Thus, it is, perhaps, the culturally illiterate individual that experiences the most difficulty learning to read. Since sending and receiving a clear message are essential for effective communication and reading is a form of communication, reading words in isolation, without meaning, is ineffective communication, leaving the reader without interest to continue.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the

correlation between the level of cultural literacy and the rate of progress an illiterate person experiences during the first year of learning to read.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Although there exists a fair amount of literature on the subject of the relationship between cultural literacy and related factors, exclusive information on the relationship between cultural literacy and reading remains limited. While some sources, such as books on education, newspaper and magazine articles, and ERIC documents, hint at this relationship, Hirsch seems to stand alone as he clearly discusses the importance of cultural literacy upon the process of reading, in Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (1988). In addition, many articles cite Hirsch as a leading authority on the subject of cultural literacy.

It appears that in addition to the limited amount of literature on cultural literacy as an advantage in reading achievement, this literature seems to focus on elementary and high school students. Even Hirsch, who stands out as an advocate of cultural literacy in reading programs for all ages, unproportionately addresses the issue as it relates to

children and young people. Thus, a gap in the research concerning the affects of cultural literacy on reading improvement in adult reading programs was detected.

This study, however, was not designed to close the gap in the research on cultural literacy in adult reading programs. This study, instead, was an attempt to supply information that might narrow the gap and indicate a cause to conduct further research on the relationship between cultural literacy and the beginning reader's progress. The results of this research indicated the need to address questions concerning (1) illiterate individuals who are not enrolled in basic reading programs and (2) illiterate individuals who possess high levels of cultural literacy but display unproportionately low levels of reading progress. Further, the results of this research produced evidence that without improvement, adult literacy programs might be headed toward a bleak future. Thus, it would behoove leaders of adult literacy programs to encourage research on strategies that would benefit the illiterate population and add credibility to their programs.

LIMITATIONS

This study was based on the following limitations:

1. Subjects were limited to the students from the Tidewater Literacy Council.
2. Since the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council guarantees its students anonymity, specific

conditions were agreed to in order to ask the students of the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council for their help in gathering data for this study.

- a. Records could not be released. Thus, subjects were chosen by tutors, who were usually chosen by coordinators.
- b. Interviews were limited to face-to-face and telephone interviews by the learners' tutors.
3. The study was limited to twenty-one (21) subjects from the population.
4. The accuracy of answers was limited to relying on the recall of information that would have been true before the student began the program.

ASSUMPTIONS

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Since the Tidewater area is a transit area, it was assumed that the subjects were representative of the United States' illiterate population.
2. Since all Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council tutors are trained and certified as Laubach tutors in structured workshops, it was assumed that all subjects had received approximately the same reading instruction during instructional sessions.
3. The Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council teaches basic reading skills, to adults, up to the fourth

grade level. Thus, it was assumed that all the subjects in this study read below fourth grade level.

PROCEDURES

The population targeted for this study was the adult non-readers who chose to seek instruction in basic reading programs. In order to facilitate the study of this population, the researcher chose the adult non-readers who were members of Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council (TVLC). Since the Tidewater area has a large diverse population, people who are native to other sections of the country, TVLC can be considered representative of the adult non-reader nationwide.

The data were analyzed and tabulated using the following procedure: first, in order to measure the non-readers level of cultural literacy, identical tests, as the tests administered to the non-reader, were given to the general population to produce a scale that determined low cultural literacy and high cultural literacy. Second, data were analyzed to determine the level of cultural literacy of each individual and assigned to one of two groups: low cultural literacy or high cultural literacy. Third, individual scores of progress after one year of reading instruction were determined. Fourth, the level of cultural literacy was compared to the reading progress using the chi-square test. Last, a conclusion was made based on the

results of the chi-square.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were referred to throughout this study:

1. Adult: The adult Education Act was amended in 1970 to define an adult as "any individual who has attained the age of sixteen (Costa, 1988, p. 80).
2. Adult non-reader: The adult non-reader is an alternative term that refers to the illiterate. The term non-reader is thought by many to be a more respectful term that refers to the individual who cannot read than the term illiterate.
3. Coordinator: Coordinator refers to the title given to the volunteers who match students with tutors for the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council. Each of the four areas served by TVLC, Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, have one or more coordinators.
4. Cultural facts: Cultural facts refer to "essential names, phrases, dates, and concepts" (Hirsch, 1988, cover) that are a part of the United States culture.
5. Cultural literacy: Cultural literacy refers to the knowledge of cultural facts. This knowledge cuts across the literacy of sub-cultures and allows the United States citizen to relate to the

United States as a whole.

6. **Illiteracy:** Although the term illiteracy is categorized into three definitions: functional literacy, functional competency, and adult competency (Costa, 1988, pp. 46-47), this study will use the term to refer to the lack of skills necessary for an adult to communicate effectively through the use of the printed word, used in American English.
7. **Illiterate:** The term illiterate refers to any adult who lacks the skills necessary to communicate effectively through the use of the printed word, used in American English.
8. **Laubach Literacy:** Laubach Literacy is the program used by Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council to teach reading to the illiterate individual. The Laubach program is a one-to-one method of teaching adults to read. It is based on phonics and strategies that encourage adult learning. The Laubach program requires the adult basic reader to master four levels of reading, from a first grade level of competency to a fourth grade level of competency, in order to successfully complete the program. The home office for Laubach is in Syracuse, New York: Laubach Literacy Action, U.S. Program of Laubach Literacy International, Box

131, Syracuse, NY 13210 (315/422-9121).

9. Literacy: Although the term literacy is categorized into three definitions: functional literacy, functional competency, and adult competency (Costa, 1988, pp. 46-47), this study uses the term to refer to possessing the skills necessary for an adult to communicate effectively through the use of the printed word, used in American English.
10. Literate: The term literate refers to any adult who possesses the skills necessary to communicate effectively through the printed word, used in American English.
11. One-to-One: One-to-One refers to the method used to teach reading to the illiterate individual. The situation involves a tutor and a student studying in a private environment.
12. Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council: A volunteer organization that teaches reading primarily to English speaking, American born illiterates. The Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council serves four Tidewater areas: Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. The main office for the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council is in Norfolk, Virginia: Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council, 7665 Sewells Point Road, Norfolk VA 23513

(804/587-2446).

13. Traditional programs: The term traditional programs refers to programs that are part of public or private preschools, elementary schools, high schools, or colleges.
14. Tutor: Tutor refers to the trained individual who teaches the adult non-reader to read.
15. Tutor trainer: Tutor trainer refers to the trainer who conducts the Laubach workshops and trains perspective tutors to teach illiterate individuals to read.
16. T.V.L.C.: T.V.L.C. refers to Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

Chapter I of this study introduced the reader to the problem of the relationship between cultural literacy and learning basic reading skills for the adult reader and presented questions that will be answered by this study. In addition, this chapter, along with supplying a brief account of the research background dealing with the problem of cultural literacy and its relationship with adults basic reading, has provided a rationale of the possible outcome resulting from a study of this nature. Chapter I has also provided the reader with an outline of limitations, assumptions, procedures, and definitions of terms used in this study.

Chapter II of this study will examine published and unpublished literature relating to this research. This examination will be followed, in Chapter III, by an in-depth explanation of the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. After Chapter IV, that will report the results of the research, this researcher will summarize the findings and make recommendations for possible uses of these findings in order to improve adult basic reading programs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because of the limited nature of the literature concerning the relationship between reading progress of adult non-readers and cultural literacy, this chapter will relate the common thread of cultural literacy that runs through successful reading programs of traditional schools to the adult reading programs. The Review of Literature will explain the concept of cultural literacy and its wide relationship to reading, the role of cultural literacy in reading programs of traditional schools, high schools, elementary schools and colleges, and the success rate of these programs. Then, this chapter will discuss the reading programs designed for adults and will explain how adult programs can enjoy the same successful results of traditional programs by indicating how cultural literacy in reading programs geared toward traditional students relate to adult programs. In addition, Chapter II will cite possible problems that might threaten adult literacy programs in the future, suggesting an urgent need for further investigation into the improvement of adult literacy programs.

Cultural Literacy Explained

Hirsch defines cultural literacy as "[possessing] the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world"

(1988, p. xiii). He continues to explain that the term "culture" does not refer to any one social class nor the society of the arts as he states, "It (cultural literacy) is by no means confined to "cultural" narrowly understood as an acquaintance with the arts. Nor is it confined to one social class" (1988, p. xiii). Hirsch clarifies this distinction, between the literacy of sub-cultures and cultural literacy, as he explains that while it is true that members of cultural sections know a great deal about their own group and can communicate successfully within that group, what they know is confined to this society (1988, p. 7). Hirsch adds that the members of any sub-cultural must be culturally literate, possessing the knowledge of the wider cultural, in order to communicate effectively with the wider cultural in which each smaller society exists and in which its members must function (1988, p. 7). Consequently,

Only by accumulating shared symbols, and the shared information that the symbols represent, can we learn to communicate effectively with one another in our national community. (Hirsch, p. xvii)

Cultural Literacy and Reading

As Hirsch discusses the relationship between cultural literacy and reading, he explains that "background information" is critical to understanding context since it (background information) gives meaning to what is being read, thus, allowing one to read with comprehension (1988, p. 2). He emphasizes the importance of "background

information" in reading by suggesting that although the understanding of context as well as surface meaning is important to interact effectively through oral communication, the understanding of context as well as surface meaning is more important in order to interact through print:

We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than the surface meanings of words; we have to understand the context as well. The need for background information applies all the more to reading and writing. To grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page. (1988, p. 3)

Professor Jeanne Chall, the author of Stages of Reading Development and a published authority on American literacy rates (Hirsch, 1988, p. 216), supports Hirsch's position as she states that cultural literacy is "essential to the development of reading and writing skills" (qtd. from Hirsch, 1988, p. 2). In addition, D. Hymes, the author of Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach (Taylor, 1983, p. 117), suggests that background information of a culture as a whole strongly influences the ability of its members, regardless of sub-cultural affiliations, to successfully interact with the printed word, adding further support to the position of the positive relationship between cultural literacy and reading.

One cannot take linguistic form, a given code, or even speech itself, as limiting frame of reference. One must take as context a community, or network of persons, investigating its communicative activities as a whole, so that any

use of channel and code takes its place as part of the resources upon which the members draw. (qtd. from Taylor, 1983, p. 1 of the preface)

Thus, the information from authorities on reading development and social linguistics has allowed us to understand that "...literacy is far more than a skill and that it requires large amounts of specific information" (1988, p. 2).

Cultural Literacy in Reading Programs of Traditional Schools

Although limited, the review of literature on cultural literacy concerning reading as a wide issue proved fairly productive. However, the review concerning cultural literacy as it has been implemented into specific programs begins to become more limited. Hirsch acknowledges that there is, indeed, limited information on the relationship between cultural literacy and education (1988, p. 19). He explains this problem as resulting from the fact that for years we had taken cultural literacy for granted, ignoring the role cultural literacy plays in education (1988, p. 19). He illustrates this point by comparing cultural literacy to air:

We ignore the air we breathe until it is thin or foul. Cultural literacy is the oxygen of social intercourse. Only when we run into cultural illiteracy are we shocked into recognizing the importance of information that we had unconsciously assumed. (1988, p. 19)

He continues to explain the problem by suggesting that the system has viewed the independent authority of about sixteen

thousand school districts as "an insurmountable obstacle to altering the fragmentation of the school curriculum even when we have questioned that fragmentation" (1988, p. 19). Thus, "we have shrunk the body of information that Americans share, and these policies have caused our national literacy to decline" (Hirsch, 1988, p. 19).

Hirsch supports his position by comparing evidence, from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and National data from the College Board's Admission Testing Program, respectively, 1973-1983, to evidence of a decline in cultural literacy:

...between 1970 and 1980 seventeen-year-olds declined in their ability to understand written materials....(1988, p. 4)

...out of a constant pool of about a million test takers each year, 56 percent more students scored [on verbal scores] above 600 in 1972 than did so in 1984. More startling yet, the percentage drop was even greater for those scoring above 650 - 73 percent. (1988, p. 5)

Hirsch cites excerpts from Benjamin J. Stein's article that appeared in the Washington Post in 1983, "The Cheerful Ignorance of the Young in L.A.," in order to present evidence that during the same period of a decline in literacy, 1970-1985, "the amount of shared knowledge we have been able to take for granted in communicating with our fellow citizens has also been declining" (1988, p. 5):

I have not yet found one single student in Los Angeles, in either college or high school, who could tell me the years when World War II was fought. Nor have I found one

who could tell me the years when world War I was fought. Nor have I found one who knew when the American Civil War was fought...A few have known how many U.S. senators California has, but none has known how many Nevada or Oregon has...a pre-law student...thought that Washington D.C. was in Washington State....Only one could place the date of the Declaration of Independence...On and on it went....(1988, pp. 6-7)

Because of the alarming rate of the drop in shared knowledge and literacy rates, the NAEP was commissioned in 1985 to measure the amount of cultural knowledge that our teenagers possess (Hirsch, 1988, p. 7). In addition, it seems that this new information, of a possible correlation of the drop in literacy rates and the drop in the level of shared knowledge, has sparked the interest of educators.

Indeed, a probe into the literature of the effects of cultural literacy on traditional reading programs has revealed that recently, there has been a slight increase in the information that has trickled into its literature. One such report, that is representative of the reviewed literature on tradition programs, is "What Kids Need to Know: Putting Cultural Literacy into Elementary Schools" by Barbara Kantrowitz (1992, p. 80). In Kantrowitz's article, we recognize Hirsch's "culturally literacy" as the force behind a reading program, Core Knowledge, that has been responsible for dramatically improved reading rates at Monegan, a South Bronx elementary school, as Kantrowitz credits Hirsch for the scheme that was used to develop Core Knowledge (Kantrowitz, 1992, p. 80): "The scheme was

developed by University of Virginia English professor E.D. Hirsch jr., author of the 1987 best seller 'Cultural Literacy'" (Kantrowitz, 1992, p. 80). Kantrowitz reports that Monegan is "one of more than 50 schools around the country that have revamped their curricula around a system known as the Core Knowledge plan" (1992, p. 80). Kantrowitz adds that since the plan was incorporated into the curriculum last fall, reading rates increased " by 10 percent" (1992, p. 80). Jeffrey Litt, principal of Monegan Elementary School, conveys a message of support for the program as he states, "What we're doing here...is creating an educated child." (qtd. from Kantrowitz, 1992, p. 80).

In addition to reporting the successful results of test scores, Kantrowitz reports the positive comments of students as a measure of success:

"I like doing the homework," says 6-year-old Elizabeth Sanchez. Her classmate, Danielle Normil, is even more enthusiastic: "I like doing lots of homeworks" [sic]. Amanda DeJesus, 7, loves reading so much that she even takes a book along when she goes to the movies....(1992, p. 80)

Litt reinforces the idea that the underlying success factor in Core Knowledge is the "common body of information" that Hirsch refers to as "cultural literacy" as he (Litt) explains that Core Knowledge gave his students a "slice of the Big Apple" (qtd. from Kantrowitz, 1992, p. 80).

Another article, Margaret Rauch's "Increasing Student Awareness of What is Involved in Reading," representative of

the literature on the subject of culturally literacy and traditional programs explains a general education elective course for college students. Rauch, a teacher of a reading improvement course for college students, states that the main purpose of her general education elective course was to acquaint college students with the variable of background knowledge that promotes reading comprehension (1989, p. 220). She adds that research on the effects of background knowledge upon reading comprehension suggests that "prior knowledge must be activated to enhance comprehension" (1989, p. 220). Clearly, a review of the literature concerning traditional education programs has indicated that Hirsch's theory on cultural literacy as a influencing factor on reading achievement has validity. However, although 20-78 million adults have "serious skill deficiencies" (Davis & Fitzgerald, 1989, p. 37), literature that addresses this problem seems to be almost non-existent. Therefore, can we assume that cultural literacy as an influencing factor on reading achievement only applies to the traditional system?

Cultural Literacy and Adult Reading Programs

Hirsch answers the question, can we assume that cultural literacy as an influencing factor on reading achievement only applies to the traditional system, with a definite no, as he tells us that the educational goal he explains in his book, Cultural Literacy: What Every American

Needs to Know (1988) "is that of mature literacy for all our citizens" (1988, p.xiv). We recognize support for Hirsch's answer, no, cultural literacy is not limited to traditional reading programs, as Brian Street discusses the writings of Jack Goody, a social anthropologist, that address the issue of communication in primitive societies:

...'primitive' peoples do not simply construct words and meanings in relation to the felt needs of everyday life but classify according to more general intellectual interests and concerns. The characteristics of 'storage', 'indirectness', and the construction of 'successive layers of historically validated meanings' which Goody attributes to literacy alone are, then, part of the intellectual framework of any society. (1984, pp. 48-49)

Thus, we recognize that cultural literacy is a factor that plays a major role in the reading progress of all readers.

Therefore, now, we must ask the question: why does the literature that addresses the subject of cultural literacy and reading programs trickle down to almost a stop when we research adult programs? Perhaps we can find the answer in Hirsch's suggestion that it is important that education reforms begin in the early grades since this is the age when "memories are most retentive, and children have an almost instinctive urge to learn specific tribal traditions" (1988, p. 30). Does this, then, suggest that as one matures it is not possible to begin accumulating shared knowledge? This is exactly what Hirsch seems to imply as he states that "preschool is not too early for starting earnest instruction

in literate national culture. Fifth grade is almost too late. Tenth grade usually is too late" (1988, pp. 26-27). However, as he adds that "around grade four, those who lack the initial knowledge required for significant reading begin to be left behind permanently. Having all too slowly built up their cultural knowledge..." (1988, p. 28), we quickly realize he is actually seeming to suggest that the later one begins accumulating shared knowledge the more difficult it becomes to achieve success. In addition, by providing cultural literacy for younger students, we give all students an equal opportunity to achieve:

...if in the early grades our children were taught texts with cultural content...the specific knowledge deficit of disadvantaged children could be overcome....(Hirsch, 1988, p. 27)

The message becomes clear that our system has prioritized resources; the majority of research resources it seems have gone into research to improve the education of our young people. This choice of priority cannot be argued. These young students will be the literate adults of tomorrow. However, it is time that we extend our resources into researching the effects of cultural literacy on adult readers since the review of literature has produced evidence that suggests possible problems in the funding of adult reading programs if they cannot show signs of improvement. These programs are much too important to be cut: first, they provided a second chance for achievement and second, they produce productive citizens.

Although limited, there exists literature on the subject, of cultural literacy and adult readers, that encourages further research in order to enhance adult programs. First, we recognize that the concept of "cultural literacy" has been introduced into adult reading programs, as we read one of the ten points toward building a successful adult literacy program: "build on students' background knowledge and expand it" (Guidelines of Adult Literacy Programs, 1989, p. 221). Second, it appears that successful strategies in traditional programs can be applied to adults. Taylor supports this point as she explains the traditional practice of learning to read as a process of interrelated skills that focuses on "culturally remote pedagogical attention" (1983, p. 90). Thus, she adds, "literacy becomes an end in itself, reduced to a hierarchy of interrelated skills..." and warns that "a skills approach to literacy runs counter to the natural development of reading and writing as complex cultural activities" (1983, p. 90). It seems to follow that if a skills approach is counter productive to the "natural development of reading and writing" for children, then, this approach would also be counter productive for the non-reading adult. Since we can see that "cultural literacy" is being considered as a strategy to improve adult reading programs and some of the same basic concepts, regarding "cultural literacy," that relate to children can also be applied to adult learning, we

can begin further research into the positive effects of cultural literacy on the adult learner. In addition, research in the literature concerning adult literacy programs indicate a bleak future for programs that cannot produce objective signs of success. Therefore, it would behoove leaders of adult reading programs to encourage research into the improvement of instructional processes in order to demonstrate a dynamic approach to learning. In her article, "Why Johnny's Dad Can't Read: The Elusive Goal of Universal Adult Literacy," Meredith Bishop indicates major flaws in adult literacy programs (1991, pp. 19-25). She states that the lack of accountability results in the loss of millions of dollars (1991, pp. 20,24,25). In addition, Bishop tells us that this, the lack of accountability, is also recognized in the inability to clearly define "what literacy means" and "what works in teaching people to read" (1991, p. 20). Support for Bishop comes from Anne Lewis as she cites professionals from leading universities as saying: "The field is making tremendous mistakes" (1990, p. 38) and "...adult literacy is barely a field at all" (1990, p. 39). Larry Mikulecky, a professor of language at Indiana University and a workplace-literacy expert, seems to sum up the possible fate of adult literacy programs in one sentence: "It would be a mistake to give more money to a majority of the adult basic education programs in the country" (qtd. from Lewis, 1990, p. 38).

Lewis reports that the "The Federal Education Department [had] contracted with the Education Testing Service, in Princeton, N.J., to devise a definition of literacy by the end of the summer" of 1990 (1990, p. 38). She suggests that any legislation that results from defining the problem will "guide Federal dollars to the more important, and effective, programs." (1990, p. 38). Forrest Chisman, a policy analyst for the Southport Institute, a nonprofit policy research organization, comments that "a lot is going to be asked of a field that is not very professional and not strong enough right now to do the job" (qtd. from Lewis, 1990, p. 39). Chisman suggests that literacy workers have only a few years to organize successful programs (qtd. from Lewis, 1990, p. 39).

Clearly, bleak predictions about the future of inadequate adult literacy programs should encourage further research into the field. Perhaps, in addition to narrowing the gap in the literature on cultural literacy and adult reading programs, this study will inspire further research that will enhance adult literacy programs. As Bishop states, in reference to the declaration made "at the Education Summit":

...by "the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." (qtd. in Bishop, 1991, p. 19)

"Such platitudes ring hollow considering the major flaws

with adult literacy training today" (Bishop, 1991, p. 19). Even though we must agree that, in all probability, we will not achieve complete adult literacy by the year 2000, it is possible to offer every adult who lives in the United States the chance to become literate by improving our adult literacy programs.

Summary

Chapter II, Review of Literature, has defined cultural literacy as the accumulated shared knowledge that members of any culture need in order to communicate effectively, orally and through print. In addition, Chapter II has explained the role of cultural literacy in reading achievement and has shown that cultural literacy has been successfully incorporated into traditional reading programs. However, the Review of Literature has discovered a gap in information concerning cultural literacy and adult literacy programs. This limited nature of literature relating to adult programs and reviewed literature suggests a troubled future for adult literacy and indicates a need for further research.

The following section will explain the methods and procedures used to gather, analyze, and tabulate data. The section will provide a description of the population and the sample used to represent the population. In addition, the section will explain the procedure used to randomly select subjects from the sample.

CHAPTER III
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter III will explain the methods and procedures used to gather information for this study. The chapter will discuss the targeted population, the sample population, and the procedure used to narrow the sample. In addition, Methods and Procedures will discuss the instrument used to collect data for the study and the procedure used to analyze the data.

Population

The population for the study was adult non-readers who chose to seek basic instruction in beginning reading programs. In order to narrow this population, the non-reading adults of Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council (TVLC) were chosen as a sample population. Because of the diverse population that is characteristic of Tidewater, Virginia, the members of TVLC presented a sample that was representative of the American non-readers.

From the sample population, fifty subjects were chosen to be interviewed. The completed interviews from twenty-one subjects, 40% of the narrowed sample, were used to reach a conclusion.

Instrument Design

The instrument used to gather data, from a face-to-face interview, was a test that was developed to measure the amount of cultural knowledge the student possessed before

beginning the reading program. The test consisted of thirty-three questions that were divided into eight topic areas: history, geography, government, national symbols, music, literature, holidays, and sports (See appendix A). Although these are some of the categories and question listed in Hirsch's Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, Merriam Scott, the administrative assistant and a tutor trainer for TVLC, and the researcher discussed the categories and questions that would be beneficial to the study and allow the student to maintain a positive self-image.

The validity of the instrument was based on construct validity. The concept, of what was believed to be relative information pertaining to cultural literacy, was developed from the literature studied while preparing Chapter II of this research report. In addition, the responses from discussions that the researcher had about cultural literacy with individuals from different social and educational backgrounds were considered, thus, adding reality to the concept of what measures cultural literacy.

Previously to being given to the selected subjects, the same test was given to twenty-one (21) randomly selected adults at a busy Tidewater shopping mall, a fast food restaurant, and a working class housing complex in order to assure the generalizing ability of the instrument. In addition, in order to obtain a range of scores that would

measure cultural literacy, the scores from the tests of the general population were computed for the mean (See Table 1) and a standard deviation (See Table 2) was used to produce an average (C) range to measure the cultural literacy data from the non-readers (See Table 3).

TABLE 1
THE MEAN OF THE CULTURAL LITERACY SCORES
OF THE GENERAL POPULATION

Scores =	100	97	94	
	100	97	94	
	100	97	91	
	100	97	85	
	100	94	85	
	97	94	85	
	<u>97</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>85</u>	
	694	+ 670	+ 691	= 1983
<u>Total Value of Scores</u>	= <u>1983</u>			= 94.43 = 94
Number of Scores	21			
M = <u>94</u>				

Administering the Instrument

The procedure used to gather information was a personal face-to-face or telephone interview. Personal tutors administered the test to their students. Some tests were distributed to the tutors by coordinators, and some tests were delivered directly to the tutors. Twenty (20) interviewers administered the tests to twenty-one subjects. The interviewers were the personal tutors of the subjects. Each of the twenty (20) interviewers asked their student all the questions and all the answers were recorded by the interviewer. All the questions were in test format, requiring direct answers. In addition, each test was accompanied by a cover letter that provided instructions on administering the test (See appendix B).

In order to minimize the effects of extraneous variables, assuring internal validity, the interview questions were in pairs. The first question of a pair required an answer that provided specific information such as a name, place, or date. However, the answer was recorded as yes or no. The second question of a pair required a direct yes or no answer. For example, The first part of a question asked if the subject knew the name of the first President of the United States. Depending on the response, the answer was recorded as yes or no by the interviewer. The second part of the question asked if the subject knew the name of the first president of the United States before

he began the reading program. The answer was recorded as yes or no by the interviewer. Thus, the first question asked for information that measured cultural knowledge, and the second question asked for information that assured that the student possessed this knowledge before beginning the program.

In addition, while some questions required exact answers, others did not. Asterisks were placed in front of the questions that did not need exact answers. For example, the question that asks if the subject is familiar with the name Rip Van Winkle only needs a response that indicates the subject knows that Rip Van Winkle is a fictional character. On the other hand, the question that asks if the student knows the name of the first president of the United States needs an exact answer.

Analysis of the Data

The process of the analysis included five steps. First, the tests were scored on a one-hundred percent (100%) scale. Secondly, each test was assigned a numerical value that reflected the portion of the program's total requirements that the non-reader had completed. Values that measured average to rapid progress and slow progress were, then, established. Next, the tests were separated into four categories: high cultural literacy with average to rapid reading progress; high cultural literacy with slow reading progress; low cultural literacy with average to rapid

reading progress; and low cultural literacy with slow reading progress. Last, the nominal data, produced by the above process, were analyzed in order to test the hypothesis that there is no significant correlation when comparing students' cultural knowledge with their reading progress in basic adult reading programs.

High cultural literacy and low cultural literacy

All numerical scores that were greater than or equal to the grade that determined the lowest average score for high cultural literacy (91.5) were labeled high cultural literacy. All numerical scores that were less than the score that determined the lowest average score for high cultural literacy (91.5) were labeled low cultural literacy. The scored tests were, then separated into two categories: high cultural literacy and low cultural literacy.

Program's total requirements

The assigned numerical value that indicated completed requirements was determined by Scott. The percentages, that Scott used to measure the program's requirements, were based on the numerical evaluations of the program's required instructional manuals (See Table 4).

TABLE 4
PROGRAM'S REQUIREMENTS:
TIDEWATER VIRGINIA LITERACY COUNCIL

Percentages - Completion of Books

100	All of Book Four
87.5	First Half of Book Four
75	All of Book Three
62.5	First Half of Book Three
50	All of Book Two
37.5	First half of Book Two
25	All of Book One
12.5	First half of Book One

Average to rapid reading progress
and slow reading progress

The values that determined average to rapid reading progress and slow reading progress were set by Scott's suggestion that the student who demonstrates average progress, attending all sessions and actively participating in the learning process, will have completed Book Two (50% percent of the requirements) and will be working in the first half of Book Three. Thus, the completion of 50% of the program's requirements indicated average to rapid progress, and completion of less than 50% of the program's requirements indicated slow progress.

Assigning the tests to categories

The tests were assigned to one of four categories that were produced by the above scoring process: high cultural literacy with average to rapid progress; high cultural literacy with slow progress; low cultural literacy with average to rapid progress; and low cultural literacy with

slow progress. This procedure determined the frequencies of the data.

Testing the hypothesis

The nominal data were analyzed using chi-square in order to test the hypothesis that there is no significant correlation when comparing students' cultural knowledge with their reading progress in basic adult reading programs, thus, determining a relationship between cultural literacy and the reading progress of beginning adult readers.

In addition, since the purpose of this study was not only to address the hypothesis but also to encourage further research into the subject of cultural literacy and the beginning adult reader, the data were analyzed to illustrate the percentage of high culturally literate adults from the program and the percentage of high culturally literate adults from the general population. The sample means of the cultural literacy scores, from both groups, were calculated. It is hoped that this information will raise questions that will encourage further research.

Summary

This Chapter discussed the targeted population and the sample population of this study. Further, Chapter III described the process used for narrowing the sample. In addition, the instrument design, the implementation of the instrument, and the procedure used to analyze the data were explained in this section.

The following section will produce the results of the collection of data. Chapter IV will display the scores from the testing and explain the scoring procedures. In addition, Chapter IV will illustrate the findings through the use of tables and charts.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter will present the results of the analysis of the data used in this study. These results will be discussed in three sections. The first section will discuss the results regarding the individual scores of the non-reader's levels of cultural literacy and progress in the reading program. The correlation between the non-readers' levels of cultural literacy and their rates of achievement in reading programs will be addressed in the second section, and the difference between two sets of cultural literacy scores that reflect higher levels of cultural literacy from the general population than from non-readers will be addressed in the third section.

In addition, Chapter IV will include tables and charts that illustrate the findings of "Cultural Literacy and the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers." These illustrations will be presented in the three sections that are representative of the text discussion. In the first section, the non-reader's individual cultural literacy scores and corresponding scores of reading progress (Table 5) and a comparison of individual non-reader's cultural literacy scores and reading progress (Figure 1) will be presented. The second section will include the frequencies of non-readers' reading progress in relation to their levels of cultural literacy (Table 6) and the results of the

chi-square test (Table 7). The third section will present a comparison of the levels of cultural literacy between non-readers and the general population (Figure 2) and a list of individual, non-readers and general population, cultural literacy scores (Table 8).

Individual Scores of Non-Readers

The results of the analysis of data regarding individual scores of the non-reader's levels of cultural literacy and reading progress (refer to Table 4, p. 31) produced three distinct sets of differences between these scores. Sixty-two percent of the twenty-one (21) pairs of scores showed only a slight difference between the levels of cultural knowledge and reading progress. However, thirty-eight percent of the pairs of scores displayed extreme differences between cultural literacy and reading progress.

First, sixty-two percent of the subjects showed levels of cultural literacy and reading progress that were within a 26% range of each other. Secondly, fourteen percent of the subjects showed levels of cultural literacy and reading progress that indicated the greatest progress was achieved by students with lower cultural literacy, displaying a spread as wide as 64% between cultural literacy and reading progress. Third, higher levels of cultural literacy produced lower levels of reading progress; twenty-four percent of the subjects displayed levels of cultural

literacy that were between 34% and 79% higher than their corresponding reading progress levels. Thus, as the percentages of cultural literacy increased the corresponding percentages of reading progress decreased.

The following is an explanation of the three sets of differences: a narrow margin between cultural literacy and reading progress, a wide spread between low cultural literacy and elevated levels of reading progress, and a wide spread between higher cultural literacy and lower levels of reading progress.

Similar scores between cultural literacy and reading progress

Thirteen (13), sixty-two percent, of the pairs of scores indicated a narrow margin, of twenty-six percent, between cultural literacy and reading progress, during the first year of instruction. Of the thirteen (13) pairs of scores, twelve (12) pairs displayed differences, between cultural literacy and reading progress, that ranged from 1% through 20% while one pair displayed a 26% difference between the two scores. These differences expressed higher levels of cultural literacy than reading progress in eleven (11) pairs of scores and lower levels of cultural literacy than reading progress in two (2) pairs of scores.

Lower levels of cultural literacy with higher levels of reading progress

Three (3), fourteen percent, of the pairs of scores displayed lower levels of cultural literacy with elevated

levels of reading progress. The three (3) cultural literacy scores, 36%, 39%, and 64%, displayed corresponding scores of reading progress that indicated that the students entered the reading program possessing a low level of cultural literacy and within a year completed 100%, 87.5%, and 87.5% respectively of the programs's requirements. These figures expressed a difference of 64%, 48.5%, and 23.4% respectively between levels of cultural literacy and reading progress.

Higher levels of cultural literacy with lower levels of reading progress

Five (5), twenty-four percent, of the pairs of scores displayed higher levels of cultural literacy with lower levels of reading progress. Two (2) cultural literacy scores of 97% had corresponding reading progress scores that indicated that the students entered the program possessing a high level of cultural literacy and within one year completed only 37.5% and 62.5% of the program's requirements. These figures expressed respectively a 59.5% and 34.5% difference between the levels of cultural literacy and reading progress.

In addition, two scores, of 91%, that expressed elevated levels of cultural literacy had corresponding reading progress scores of 12.5% and 50%. The pairs of scores indicated respectively a 78.5% and a 41% difference between the level of cultural literacy the students possessed when entering the program and their levels of reading progress. Although the students entered the program

with scores in cultural literacy that were less than 1% lower than the high cultural literacy average (91.5), during one year of instruction, one student completed only a little more than one-tenth of the program's requirements and one student completed one-half of the requirements.

Further, one score, of 88%, that expressed an elevated level of cultural knowledge showed a corresponding reading progress score of 50%. Thus, the student completed one-half of the program's requirements. In addition, these figures expressed a 38% difference between the student's level of cultural literacy when entering the program and his reading progress during the first year of instruction.

Thus, individual scores of the non-reader indicated that the subjects who possessed lower levels of cultural literacy when they entered the program progressed, during the first year of instruction, at a more rapid pace than subjects who possessed higher levels of cultural literacy. However, from a total of twenty-one (21) cases, the scores that showed lower levels of cultural literacy with elevated progress were limited to five (5) cases. Two (2) of the cases were from the scores that displayed a narrow margin between cultural literacy and reading progress, and three (3) cases were from the scores that displayed lower levels of cultural literacy with higher levels of reading progress.

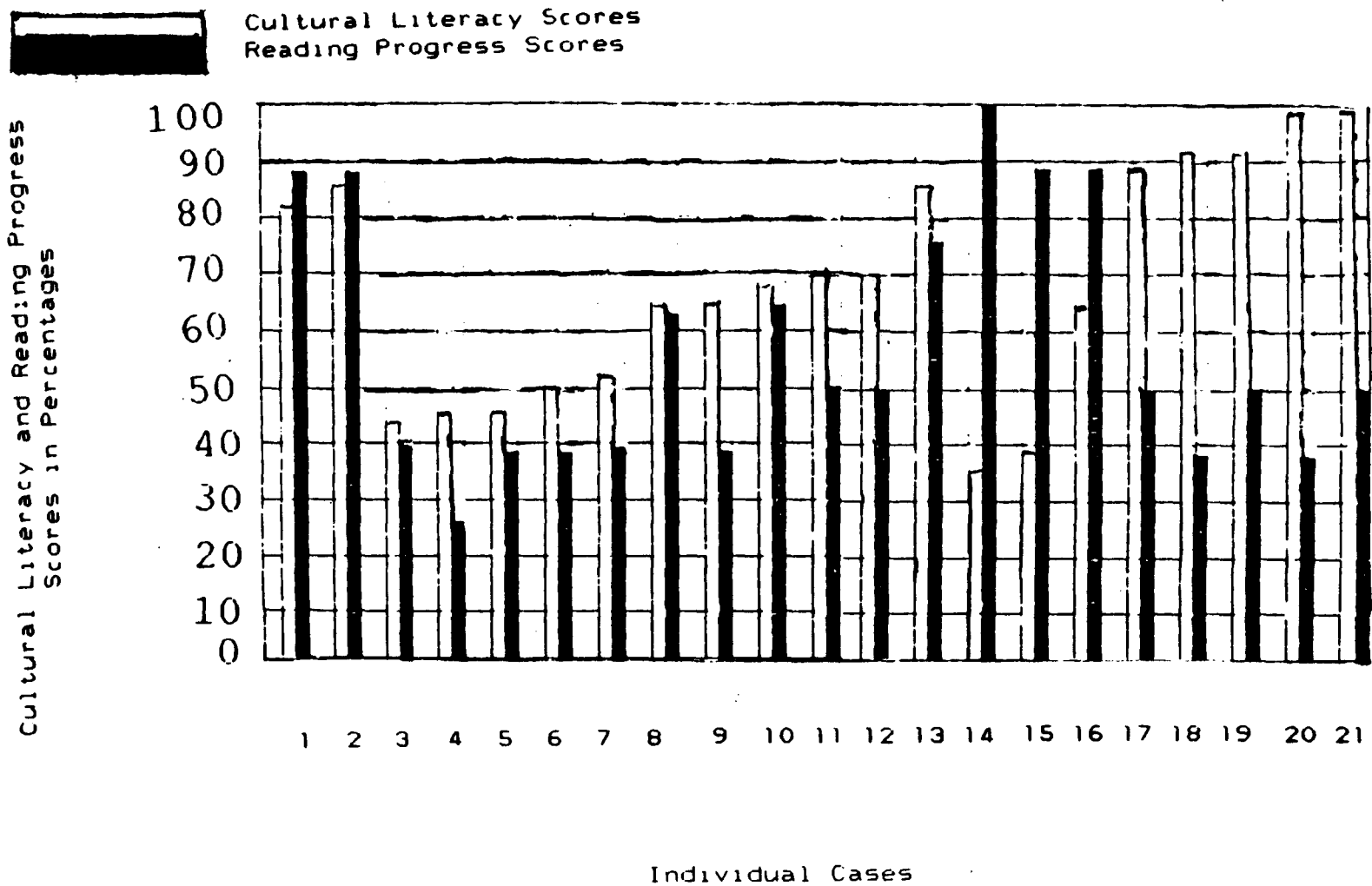
On the other hand, from the thirteen (13) pairs of scores that displayed a slight difference between cultural

literacy and reading progress, eleven (11) cases produced results that indicated that the subjects had higher levels of cultural literacy than levels of reading progress. An additional five (5) cases resulted from the scores that displayed higher levels of cultural literacy with lower levels of reading progress. Thus, a total of sixteen (16) cases displayed scores that expressed levels of cultural literacy that were higher than their corresponding levels of reading progress. Moreover, thirty-one percent of these sixteen (16) cases revealed that as cultural literacy increased reading progress decreased (See Table 5 & Figure 1)

TABLE 5
 NON-READER'S INDIVIDUAL CULTURAL LITERACY SCORES
 AND CORRESPONDING READING PROGRESS SCORES

Subjects	Cultural Literacy Scores	Reading Progress Scores
# 1	82%	87.5%
# 2	85%	87.5%
# 3	42%	37.5%
# 4	45%	25%
# 5	45%	37.5%
# 6	50%	37.5%
# 7	52%	37.5%
# 8	64%	62.5%
# 9	64%	37.5%
# 10	67%	62.5%
# 11	70%	50%
# 12	70%	50%
# 13	85%	75%
# 14	36%	100%
# 15	39%	87.5%
# 16	64%	87.5%
# 17	88%	50%
# 18	91%	37.5%
# 19	91%	50%
# 20	97%	37.5%
# 21	97%	50%

FIGURE 1
A COMPARISON OF THE INDIVIDUAL NON-READER'S
CULTURAL LITERACY SCORES AND READING PROGRESS



Correlation between Cultural Literacy
and Reading Progress

Two procedures were used in order to determine the correlation between cultural literacy and reading progress of beginning adult readers. First, the data were computed to present the frequencies of the study's four possible combinations: average to rapid reading progress with high cultural literacy; average to rapid reading progress with low cultural literacy; slow reading progress with high cultural literacy; and slow reading progress with low cultural literacy. Secondly, the frequencies were tested using chi-square in order to reject or accept the hypothesis that adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy

Frequencies of data

The analysis of the data presented a table of frequencies that showed 1 score in the combination of average to rapid reading progress with high cultural literacy and 12 scores in the combination of average to rapid reading progress with low cultural literacy. In addition, the analysis presented 1 score in the combination of slow reading progress with high cultural literacy and 7 scores in the combination of slow reading progress with high cultural literacy (See Table 6).

TABLE 6
 FREQUENCIES OF NON-READERS' READING PROGRESS
 IN RELATION TO THEIR LEVELS OF CULTURAL LITERACY

	High Cultural Literacy	Low Cultural Literacy
Average to Rapid Reading Progress	1	12
Slow Reading Progress	1	7

Testing the data

The frequencies of the data were tested using chi-square. The results of the test showed that chi-square was equal to .13. However, chi-square of .13 did not exceed the level of significance of 3.18. Thus, the results rejected the H1 that adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy (See Table 7).

TABLE 7
RESULTS OF CHI-SQUARE TEST

H1 = Adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy.

	High Cultural Literacy	Low Cultural Literacy	
Average to Rapid Reading Progress	1	12	13
Slow Reading Progress	1	7	8
	2	19	

$$\text{chi-square} = \frac{21(12-7)\text{sq.}}{(13)(8)(19)(2)} = \frac{525}{3952} = .13$$

$$\text{df} = (2-1)(2-1) = (1)(1) = 1$$

$$\text{level of significance } .05 = 3.84$$

Chi-square of .13 does not exceed the level of significance of 3.84

Thus, we must reject the H1 that adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy.

Thus, the analysis of the data showed that eight percent of the subjects (1 subject) who realized average to rapid progress, during the first year of reading instruction, possessed high levels of cultural literacy when entering the program. On the other hand, ninety-two percent of the subjects (12 subjects) who realized average to rapid progress, during the first year of reading instruction,

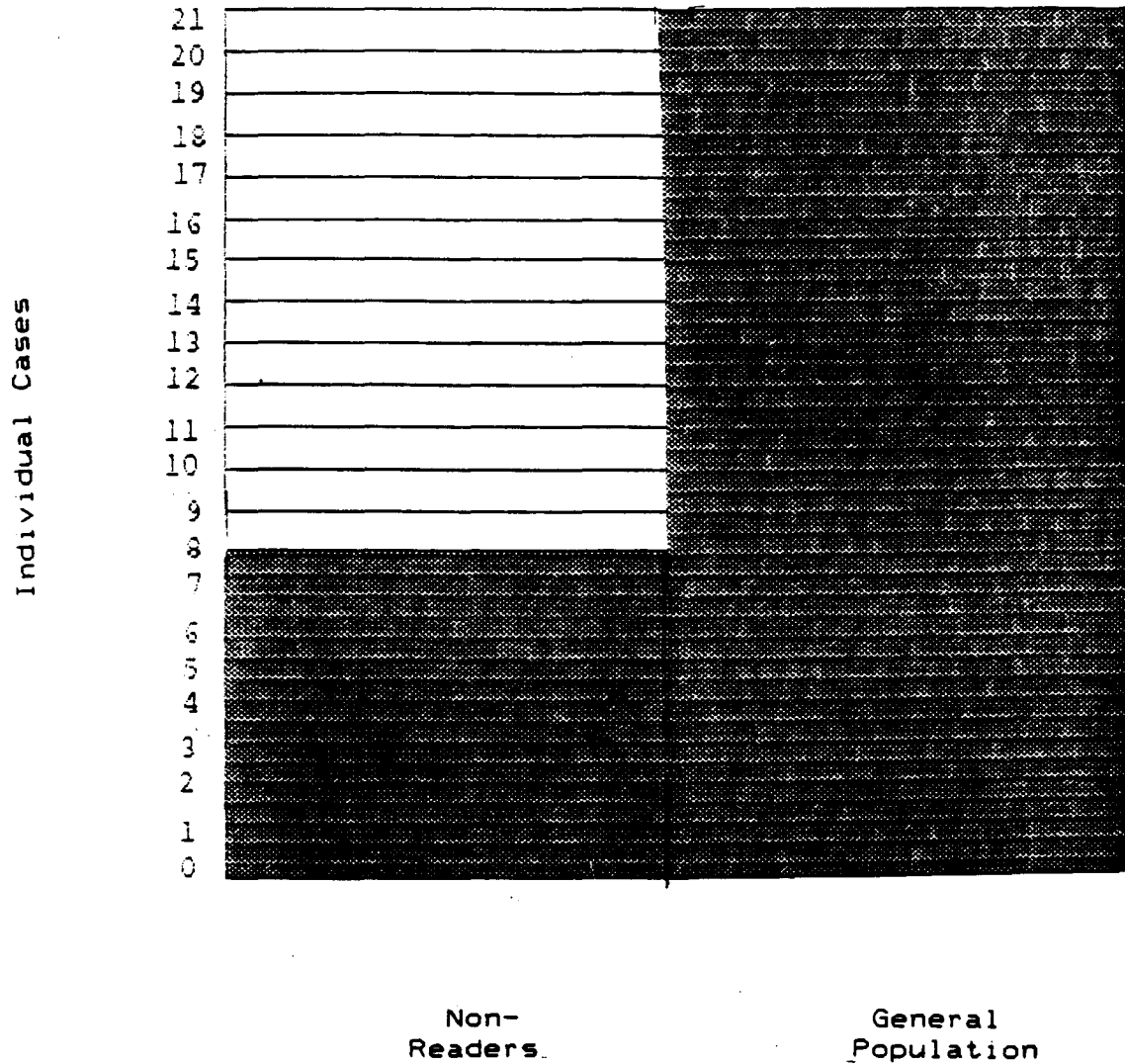
possessed low levels cultural literacy when entering the program.

In addition, thirteen percent of the subjects (1 subject) who realized slow progress, during the first year of reading instruction, possessed high levels of cultural literacy when entering the program. And eighty-seven percent of the subjects (7 subjects) who realized slow progress, during the first year of reading instruction, possessed low levels of cultural literacy when entering the program.

Cultural Literacy:
Non-Readers and General Population

Further, the analysis of the data produced results that may raise questions about the affects of cultural literacy on reading literacy in the United States. The results indicated an extreme difference between the number of cultural literacy scores greater than 75% of thirty-three possible correct answers from the tested general population and the number of scores greater than 75% of thirty-three possible correct answers from the tested non-readers. From the general population group, of twenty-one (21) subjects, there were twenty-one (21) scores that were greater than 75% of the total possible correct answers. In contrast, the non-readers group showed eight (8) out of twenty-one (21) scores that were greater than 75% of the possible correct answers. This difference is illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
A COMPARISON OF THE LEVELS OF
CULTURAL LITERACY BETWEEN NON-READERS
AND THE GENERAL POPULATION:
SCORES GREATER THAN 75% OF
THIRTY-THREE POSSIBLE CORRECT ANSWERS



In addition, the analysis of the data showed that while five (5) subjects from the general population group scored 100% on the cultural literacy test, no one from the non-readers group scored 100% on the same test (See Table 8).

TABLE 8
INDIVIDUAL CULTURAL LITERACY SCORES
COMPARING NON-READERS WITH GENERAL POPULATION

	Scores from Tested Non-Readers	Scores from Tested General Population
1.	97%	100%
2.	97%	100%
3.	91%	100%
4.	91%	100%
5.	88%	100%
6.	85%	97%
7.	85%	97%
8.	82%	97%
9.	70%	97%
10.	70%	97%
11.	67%	97%
12.	64%	94%
13.	64%	94%
14.	64%	95%
15.	52%	94%
16.	50%	94%
17.	45%	91%
18.	45%	85%
19.	42%	85%
20.	39%	85%
21.	36%	85%

Summary

This chapter discussed the results of the analysis of the data gathered for researching "Cultural Literacy and the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers." Chapter IV discussed

the individual scores of the non-reader and his progress in the reading program, TVLC. Secondly, it reported the correlation between the non-readers' levels of cultural literacy and their rates of achievement in the reading program. Third, the chapter reported the difference between the general population's level of high cultural literacy and the non-readers' level of high cultural literacy. In addition, this Chapter presented tables and figures that were representative of the text discussion.

The following section, Chapter V, will summarize the research study, "Cultural Literacy and the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers." In addition, it will address and offer a conclusion to the hypothesis concerning the influence of cultural literacy on the reading progress on the adult non-reader. Further, Chapter V will suggest recommendations of ways the research in this study can be applied.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY
CONCLUSION
RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V will present a summary of the research study, "Cultural Literacy and the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers." Following the summary, the researcher will offer a conclusion to the stated hypothesis. In addition, recommendations will be made for further use of the information in this study.

Summary

Clearly, in recent years, cultural literacy has emerged as a possible solution to the problem of reading literacy in the United States. Indeed, Hirsch, an expert on the subject of cultural literacy, states:

The recently rediscovered insight that literacy is more than a skill is based upon knowledge that all of us unconsciously have about language. We know instinctively that to understand what somebody is saying, we must understand more than the surface meaning of words; we have to understand the context as well. The need for background information applies all the more to reading and writing. To grasp the words on a page we have to know a lot of information that isn't set down on the page. (Hirsch, 1988. p. 3)

Although Hirsch and other experts on the subject of cultural literacy focus on the positive affects of cultural literacy on the reading skills of younger people, the important role that cultural literacy plays in the reading process is emphasized, giving rise to the concept of cultural literacy

as a possible solution to the problem of adult literacy in the United States. The possibility, that cultural literacy could be identified as a positive influence on adult literacy, became the focus of this research study.

Thus, this study was undertaken in order to determine the correlation between the level of cultural literacy and the rate of progress an illiterate person experiences during the first year of learning to read. In order to address this problem, the researcher presented the following hypothesis: adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy. By focusing on the research hypothesis, the researcher attempted to produce results that not only supported the hypothesis but also encouraged further study into the relationship between cultural literacy and adult reading literacy.

Twenty-one (21) students from Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council represented the study's population of adult non-readers who were participating in basic reading programs. It was assumed that the subjects chosen for the study were representative of the population since Tidewater is a transit area. In addition, it was assumed that all subjects were beginning readers since TVLC teaches reading skills up to the fourth grade level.

Certain limitations were set regarding the research procedures. One of these limitation, resulted from the policy, of the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council, that guarantees students anonymity; thus, the records that identified the students could not be released. As a result, the subjects were chosen by tutors and all interviews were done by the students' personal tutors.

In addition, an investigation into the literature on the subject of cultural literacy indicated that the problem was researchable. However, it was obvious that adult reading programs had been neglected. Although there proved to be a substantial amount of writings from several experts on the subject of cultural literacy and reading programs, this literature was limited to reporting the success of implementing cultural literacy into traditional reading programs. Only a limited number of writings addressed the concept of cultural literacy and adult reading programs.

However, the writings that addressed the subject of cultural literacy and adult reading programs encouraged further research into the subject. Also, these writings suggested that the same strategies in traditional programs can be applied to adult programs. In addition, a few experts addressed the problems of adult programs and predicted a bleak future for many programs, unless these problems were corrected.

The methods and procedures used to continue this

research study required the help of the members of the Tidewater Virginia Literacy Council. After narrowing the population to the students of TVLC, the researcher worked with the administrative assistant, coordinators, and tutors from TVLC, in order to gather the data needed to complete the study. The administrative assistant and the researcher developed a cultural literacy test that included thirty-three questions on the United States' culture as a whole. This test was developed to provide the needed data for the study and, at the same time, protect the student's self-image. Previously to administering the test to the subjects, the same test was given to the general population to assure the reliability of the test and to obtain a range of scores that would measure the non-readers' levels of cultural literacy.

Personal tutors administered the test to their students. Some tests were distributed to the tutors by coordinators, and some tests were sent directly to the tutors. In face-to-face or telephone interviews, all the questions were asked by the tutors and all answers were recorded by the tutors.

During the analysis of the data, the tests were, first, scored and assigned a grade. Then, they were separated into four categories in order to determine the frequencies of the data. Finally, the data were analyzed to test the relationship between cultural literacy and the reading

progress of beginning adult readers.

An analysis of the data produced individual scores that indicated that as cultural literacy increased reading progress decreased. In addition, evidence from chi-square showed that the frequencies of the data suggested that there is no significant correlation when comparing students' cultural knowledge with their reading progress in basic adult reading programs. Further, the results expressed a significant contrast between the cultural literacy of the adult non-readers group and the general population group. While all (21) of the subjects from the general population scored over 75% on the cultural literacy test, only eight (8) of the subjects from the non-readers group scored over 75% on the same test. In addition, five (5) subjects from the general population group scored 100% on the cultural literacy test, but not one subject from the non-readers group scored 100%.

Conclusion

An analysis of the data suggested that there is no significant correlation when comparing adult students' cultural knowledge with their reading progress in basic reading programs. Thus, the researcher must conclude that the findings do not support the hypothesis: adult non-readers who display higher levels of cultural literacy before beginning basic reading programs show average or rapid progress, during the first year of basic reading

instruction, more often than those who display lower levels of cultural literacy. However, the analysis of the data produced additional variables that can be investigated for further research into cultural literacy and the adult beginning reader.

Recommendations

The results of the analysis of data has produced questions that concern cultural literacy and the reading process. Two such questions are (1) why are there so few non-reading adults who display high levels of cultural literacy in basic reading program and (2) why do the non-reading adults who display high levels of cultural literacy display unproportionately low levels of reading progress? Another question raised by the study is why do the cultural literacy scores of the general population and non-reading adults show such a extreme difference? It is recommended that the data and information from this study be used to investigate these and other questions that this research study has brought to light. In addition, it is recommended that the information from this study be used to address the survival problems that adult literacy programs will face in the near future.

Bibliography

- Bishop, Meredith. (1991, Winter). Why Johnny's dad can't read: The elusive goal of universal adult literacy. Policy Review, pp. 19-25.
- Costa, Marie. (1988). Adult literacy/illiteracy in the United States. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
- Davis, Nancy Harvey & Pam Fitzgerald. (1989, July). Library Journal, 114. 37.
- Guidelines for adult literacy programs. (1989, December). Journal of Reading. p.221.
- Hirsch, Jr., E.D. (1988). Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kantrowitz, Barbara. (1992, November 2). What kids need to know: Putting cultural literacy into elementary school. Newsweek, 120. p. 80.
- Lewis, Anne C. (1990, April 8). Emphasis on first 'r'. The New York Times, pp. 38-40.
- Rauch, Margaret. (1989, December). Increasing student awareness of what is involved in reading. Journal of Reading, 33. 120-121.
- Street, Brian V. (1984). Literacy in theory and practice. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Taylor, Denny. (1983). Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write. Exeter: Heinemann Educational Books.

APPENDIX A

Test: Cultural Literacy and the
Progress of Beginning Adult Readers

TEST: CULTURAL LITERACY AND THE
PROGRESS OF BEGINNING ADULT READERS

Questions

I. History:

1. a. Does the student know the name of the first President of the United States?
_Yes _No
- b. Did the student know the name of the first President of the United States before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No
- *2. a. Is the student familiar with the Revolutionary War? _Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the Revolutionary War before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No?
- *3. a. Is the student familiar with the Civil War?
_Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the Civil War before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- *4. a. Is the student familiar with the Korean Conflict?
_Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the Korean Conflict before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No
- *5. a. Is the student familiar with the Vietnam War?
_Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the Vietnam War before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No
- *6. a. Is the student familiar with the name Martin Luther King? _Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the name Martin Luther King before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No

II. Geography:

1. a. Can the student locate the United States on a map?
_Yes _No

- b. Could the student locate the United States on a map before starting the reading program?
_Yes _No
- 2. a. Does the student know how many states are in the United States? _Yes _No
- b. Did the student know how many states are in the United States before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- *3. a. Is the student familiar with the Mississippi River? _Yes _No
- b. Was the student familiar with the Mississippi River before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- 4. a. Does the student know the name of the ocean that is on the East Coast of the United States?
_Yes _No
- b. Did the student know the name of the ocean that is on the East Coast of the United States before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- 5. a. Does the student know the name of the ocean that is on the West Coast of the United States?
_Yes _No
- b. Did the student know the name of the ocean that is on the West Coast of the United States before starting the reading program? _Yes _No

III. Government:

- 1. a. Does the student know what title is given to the leader of the nation? _Yes _No
- b. Did the student know what title is given to the leader of the nation before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- 2. a. Does the student know the name of the President of the United States? _Yes _No
- b. Did the student know the name of the President of the United States before starting the reading program? _Yes _No
- 3. a. Can the student name the two major political parties in the United States? _Yes _No
- b. Could the student name the two major political parties in the United States before starting the reading program? _Yes _No

4. a. Does the student know that Washington, DC is the capital of the United States? Yes No
- b. Did the student know that Washington, DC is capital of the United States before starting the reading program? Yes No
5. a. Does the student know the capital of his home state? Yes No
- b. Did the student know the capital of his home state before starting the reading program? Yes No

IV. National Symbols:

- *1. a. Is the student aware of the Pledge of Allegiance? Yes No
- b. Was the student aware of the Pledge of Allegiance before starting the reading program? Yes No
2. a. Does the student know the title of the national anthem? Yes No
- b. Did the student know the title of the national anthem before starting the reading program? Yes No
3. a. Does the student know the colors of the American flag? Yes No
- b. Did the student know the colors of the American flag before starting the reading program? Yes No

V. Music:

- *1. a. Is the student familiar with "America"? Yes No
- b. Was the student familiar with "America" before starting the reading program? Yes No
2. a. Is the student familiar with "America the Beautiful"? Yes No
- b. Was the student familiar with "America the Beautiful" before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *3. a. Is the student familiar with "You Are My Sunshine"? Yes No
- b. Was the student familiar with "You Are My Sunshine" before starting the reading program? Yes No

VI. Literature:

- *1. a. Is the student familiar with the name Rip Van Winkle? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the name Rip Van Winkle before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *2. a. Is the student familiar with the name Edgar Allan Poe? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the name Edgar Allan Poe before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *3. a. Is the student familiar with the title Gone with the Wind? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the title Gone with the Wind before starting the reading program? Yes No

VII. Holidays:

- *1. a. Is the student familiar with Thanksgiving? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with Thanksgiving before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *2. a. Is the student familiar with the Fourth of July? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the Fourth of July before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *3. a. Is the student familiar with Halloween? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with Halloween before starting the reading program? Yes No

VIII. Sports:

- *1. a. Is the student familiar with the name Babe Ruth? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the name Babe Ruth before starting the reading program? Yes No
- *2. a. Is the student familiar with the name Michael Jordan? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the name Michael Jordan before starting the reading program? Yes No

- *3. a. Is the student familiar with the name Muhammad Ali? Yes No
b. Was the student familiar with the name Muhammad Ali before starting the reading program? Yes No
4. a. Does the student know what sport has the Super Bowl? Yes No
b. Did the student know what sport has the Super Bowl before starting the reading program? Yes No
5. a. Does the student know what sport has the World Series? Yes No
b. Did the student know what sport has the World Series before starting the reading program? Yes No

Student's Progress:

Check one or more of the following blanks. Please, note any comments after the appropriate line.

After one year of instruction the student had completed:

- the first half of Book One
 all of Book One
 the first half of Book Two
 all of Book Two
 the first half of Book Three
 all of Book Three
 the first half of Book Four
 all of Book Four

Note: Please, do not include the name of the student or any personal information about the student.

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter:
Cultural Literacy Test

Cultural Literacy 64

Appendix B:

5656 Caxton Court
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
May 28, 1993

Thank you for agreeing to help gather the information needed for the research study, "Cultural Literacy and the Progress of Beginning Adult Readers." I hope this study will aid the reading progress of adult non-readers and encourage further research that will benefit the beginning adult reader.

The questions, on the enclosed test, relate to the United States' cultural as a whole. Please, ask your student the questions and check the appropriate blank. Some of the questions do not require exact answers. I have placed asterisks in front of the questions that do not need exact answers. For example, question 1 in part VI only needs a response that indicates the student knows that Rip Van Winkle is a fictional character. However, the questions without asterisks need exact answers. For example, question 1 in part I must be answered George Washington. If you are satisfied that the student knows the answer, check yes. If you believe that the student does not know the answer, check no.

Each question has a second part that asks if the student knew the information before beginning the reading program. In the second part of each question, record the student's reply by checking yes or no.

At the end of the test, there is a section for you to indicate the student's progress during the first year of instruction. If you have not been with the student a year, record the progress and note how long you have been working with the student. Please, do not include the student's name or any personal information about the student.

Please, use the stamped self-addressed envelope to return the completed test to me, or I will be glad to pick it up. If it is possible, please, make a copy of the completed test before mailing. This way, if it happens to get delayed during delivery, we will not have lost valuable information. I will reimburse you for the copying charge.

If you have any questions, call me at 499-2454. Again, thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Lohman