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The Use of Native Language Models in the Development of Critical Literacy

GLORIA DYC

The community life of rural Native Americans offers a formidable set of problems and contradictions involving the interaction of traditional cultural values with contemporary realities. For example, an abundance of coal and uranium on the Navajo Reservation compels the Navajo to reconcile their traditional reverence for the land with the need for economic development. The Mescalero Apache of New Mexico are split on the issue of allowing a nuclear waste site on their tribal land; in Hopi, traditionalists and modernists are arguing over a road-building project and other forms of development that would threaten snake habitat where, for centuries, tribal members have gathered serpents for the sacred ceremonies. The Lakota of South Dakota are divided over non-Indian participation in ceremonies that are becoming increasingly popular. The "sovereign" islands of native people have become enmeshed in the economic and political problems of the United States. That the tribes do not easily arrive at a consensus suggests the complexity of the problems and the presence of political factionalism that is a consequence of colonization. The cultural values and indigenous languages remain vital in many native communities, even though the traditional modes of education and social organization have been disrupted by Western

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influences. School experiences founded on Western European ideologies and values have resulted in disempowerment, making the formation of tribal consensus all the more difficult.

A tribal-specific literacy is one that embraces the cultural values and language practices of the people and ultimately empowers the learner. Native cultures have powerful oral traditions, and tribal members define themselves and establish their cultural identity through skillful use of language in the community. English literacy continues to be perceived as a cultural threat because of the conflict between the tribal members' primary home language and the secondary discourse system associated with Western European ideologies and values. In Native American traditions, language has a power to heal or transform the world; leaders have been very ambivalent about the transmission of sacred songs and stories in written form. "With written literacy, language becomes descriptive/historic and begins to lose its unique power as creator of reality," critic Louis Owens contends.¹

Activist Russell Means takes an uncompromising position on English literacy. He chose to dictate a contribution to a book on Marxism and explained his rejection of writing: "The process itself epitomizes the European concept of 'legitimate' thinking: what is written has importance that is denied the spoken. My culture, the Lakota culture, has an oral tradition and so I ordinarily reject writing. It is one of the white world's ways of destroying the cultures of non-European peoples, the imposing of an abstraction over the spoken relationship of a people."² Means cannot envision the coexistence of orality and literacy in his own community, because he sees writing as an act of collaboration.

The fear that the literate tradition will replace the oral is not grounded in fact. The traditions of orality and literacy can coexist in communities in cooperative, rather than competitive, modes. Deborah Tannen points out that the two modes are "superimposed and intertwined with each other."³ English literacy may transform thought and behavior in a community, yet it can accommodate Native American thought and function to support the values and needs of tribal members. With literacy, a technology of communication becomes available. The recollection and transmission of knowledge can be accomplished with accuracy. Writing puts distance between humans and their verbal acts so they can examine what has been said in a more objective manner; contradictions are easier to perceive and resolve in writing. Our

dependence on literacy has increased with technology. Defined in the context of tribal needs, literacy is necessary for survival.

Paulo Freire's literacy work in Brazil offers a model for the creation of tribal-specific literacies for Native Americans. As they acquired the skills of reading and writing, Freire's students critically examined and intervened in their reality. Currently, this method is being used in the peasant movement in Haiti. Such attitudes and actions constitute "critical literacy." Freire challenges the notion that the acquisition of literacy is politically neutral: "Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables—lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe—but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, of self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context."⁴ Freire worked with adult learners in rural settings, but his principles can be applied to learners who have been disempowered by previous school experiences. College level composition teachers have become more aware of the political implications of their work as a result of this philosophy, and they acknowledge that models of literacy acquisition serve to either support or challenge the status quo. Sandra Rietz, working with the literacy needs of the Crow, has called for "literacies of recovery": "Literacies which allow us to discover differences, remove barriers while respectfully preserving boundaries, build connections, and engage in critical constructions of our own life worlds, are literacies of recovery."⁵

This article will describe approaches to critical literacy built around the language practices and cultural identity of the Sicangu (Burnt Thigh) band of the Western Teton Sioux of the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. Skilled orators, the Lakota, along with other Plains tribes, also used a highly developed sign language in their trade and negotiation with others. The traditional Lakota narratives teach the virtues, explain the phenomenon of nature, and recount events of importance to the tribe. The *Ehanni Wico'oyake* relate God's revelations to the Lakota people. They begin with the genesis of the people and end with the migration of the Lakota to the southeastern part of the North American continent. At this point, the *ehanni* end and the Winter Count, a pictograph system recorded on deerskin, was used to update people on the secular events of the most recent period.⁶ Today the Rosebud community is functionally bilingual, and leaders are concerned with both native language maintenance and the development of communicative resources to function within a larger context.

A description of the introduction of English literacy to native people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides a historical context for the discussion of Lakota ambivalence toward English literacy. In higher education, community-based language models—such as the Lakota “language of advocacy” and the language associated with contemporary political activism—can be used as a base for the development of writing skills (see tables 1 and 2). Students retain their distinct cultural and political orientation as they move deeper into critical inquiry. While the focus is on a specific, land-based tribal group, the article contains some references to other tribes and has implications for teachers in other multicultural settings and for those concerned with empowering pedagogies.⁷

Table 1

Essayist	Literacy—Academic Discourse	Community Language Model
Audience:	Critics and adversaries	a. Community b. Non-Indian adversaries
Image:	Ceremonial combat	a. Creating a circle of consensus b. Real combat
Objective:	To win To gain acceptance from portion of audience	To create continuity between values of past and present course To bring about change
Stance:	Politically neutral scholar Analytical in tone	Advocate for community values and political interests Committed, passionate in tone
Strategies:	Attack the logic and evidence of opponents Defend oneself against authorities Disqualify opposing points of view	“Language of Advocacy”: Narratives, affirmations References to traditional stories Parallel monologues Think with heart as well as head
Support:	Cases, arguments, explanations Sound reasoning Print and media	Consensus, common sense, traditional values, intuition Ethos of individuals Realm of spirits
Form:	Linear	Circuitous

Table 2

Personal Writing	Advocacy Writing	Critical Writing
Engaging with a topic	Adaptation to community audience	Audience does not share same references
Clarification of personal values, opinions	Problem viewed within tribal cultural/historical context	Tribal experience viewed in a more global context
Create meaning from interplay of self and world	Community language models	Recognition of multiple perspectives
Narratives	Resolve inconsistencies in oral sources	Dealing with complexities and contradictions
	Advice or action recommended	Dialectical thinking

LITERACY AND COLONIALISM

Resistance to English literacy had its origin in contact situations between the Lakota and Euro-Americans; it was reinforced by the status of the Lakota as an involuntary cultural minority in a disempowering school system. English literacy was associated with the colonial exploitation and the eradication of native culture in the nineteenth century. As the Lakota witnessed the breaking of treaties during westward expansion, for example, they came to believe that the signing of written documents was no real protection against people who were bent on appropriating Indian lands and resources. They doubted the integrity of the Europeans and questioned their dependency on the written word. In the early days of the reservation, a Lakota named Running Wolf gave writer Clark Wissler a frank estimation of Western literacy:

Whenever white people come together there is writing The white people must think paper has some mysterious power to help them on in the world. The Indian needs no writing; words that are true sink into his heart where they remain—he never forgets them. On the other hand, if the white man loses his papers, he is helpless.⁸

As members of an oral culture, the Lakota relied on the ethos of the speaker rather than on written contracts.

Missionaries and educators worked to replace the indigenous cultures with the language and culture of the Europeans. The uses of literacy by the missionaries who moved West in the beginning of the nineteenth century were inextricably linked to the promotion of their theology and politics. English was taught so the native people could have access to the Bible; often the scriptures were translated into the vernacular of the tribe. On the Rosebud Reservation, the Catholic missionaries offered Lakota translations of their hymns. Father Eugene Buechel of St. Francis Mission contributed to native language maintenance with the publication of both a grammar and a dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux language.⁹

Assimilationist policies were evident in texts with moral themes translated into native languages. The *Osage First Book*, cited by Katherine Iverson, contained information on spelling, grammar, and familiar sentence patterns as well as a section called "Moral Lessons for Children." This section included pronouncements on the proper use of tools, the proper female role, the importance of a cabin with a stone chimney, the significance of agriculture, and the concept of private property. Later, industrial training and military drill were used at the schools for native people to facilitate this cultural transformation. Furthermore, a language policy of exclusive use of English was implemented in boarding schools to destroy tribalism. In the words of the policy makers, "[T]hrough sameness of language is produced sameness of thought."¹⁰

The development of literacy in nineteenth-century Cherokee and Choctaw communities is an exceptional case, suggesting the importance of community control and bilingualism. These tribes were forced off their homelands and moved to Oklahoma under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The reconstruction of their school systems after this tragedy was easier as a consequence of literacy; the tribes could boast of an 80–90 percent literacy rate in their native language. In the late nineteenth century, the two tribes extended their efforts to non-Indians within Indian Territory. "In essence, these schools and programs anticipated the democratization of education and current multi-cultural bilingual education," George Ann Gregory suggests.¹¹

Some of the deep-rooted resistance to English literacy, then, can be explained through an examination of history. As tribes have assumed control over local educational institutions in the past thirty years, bilingual programs have been instituted and

native teachers have been hired to teach in their own communities. Bilingual readers were introduced into the BIA schools operated for the Lakota (as early as 1937) after the enactment of the Indian Reorganization Act. While nonnative teachers have continued to outnumber native teachers, they have become more sensitive as a result of cross-cultural training programs. Postsecondary educational opportunities became available to Rosebud Sioux tribal members in 1970, when Sinte Gleska College was chartered. In spite of reforms that place native language and culture in the curriculum, however, Lakota students continue to experience alienation at school and to lag behind members of the dominant society in the acquisition of literacy.

An explanation of native student alienation can be found in their status as an "involuntary" cultural minority and in the use of pedagogical techniques that result in disempowerment. If language and culture are taught through the dominant instructional model—the transmission model—students will continue to be disempowered; the relationship between the student and the school will remain essentially unchanged.

As an involuntary minority absorbed into the United States through colonization, Native Americans have developed their own perspective on how American society works. Minorities who have chosen to move to the U.S. typically do better in school, according to John Ogbu, because they believe they can advance in society. This is not the case for involuntary minorities: "For involuntary minorities, there were no expectations of economic, political, and social benefits. Resenting their initial incorporation by force, regarding their past as a 'golden age,' and seeing their future as grim in the absence of collective struggle, they understood that the American system was based on social class and minority conditions."¹² Refusal to learn, then, can be interpreted as a form of political resistance.

The transmission model is the dominant teaching orientation in North American schools. Freire has called this the "banking" model of education. It is based on an assumption about teaching and learning: The teacher transmits his / her knowledge and skills, controlling and initiating most of the interaction in the classroom. The student is a passive receptacle for the superior knowledge of the teacher. Even if the content consists of cultural studies, use of the transmission model results in disempowerment and cultural stasis.

LANGUAGE USE IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

The alienation of Native American students can also be explained by the learner's experience of the profound discontinuity between language use in the school and language use in the community. The informal modes of education in the community are powerful; language patterns are acquired early in life and allow a person to function as a member of the community. Bea Medicine, a Lakota, notes the importance of fluency in an indigenous language: "Speaking an ancestral language is often the key to ritual participation and other expressive elements of culture—the least of which is the lively humor which is so much a part of contemporary Indian life. Proficiency in the language can buttress one's tribal identity."¹³ For students whose first language is Lakota, for those who participate in the social and ceremonial life of the tribe, academic writing and essayist literacy represent a second culture. Ron and Suzanne Scollon argue that the acquisition of English literacy can create a crisis in ethnic identity for indigenous people as the learners are required to adopt the discourse patterns and orientation of another culture.¹⁴

The Lakota people have retained a set of communicative rules and a style of spoken discourse that have roots in the traditional social system. At the core of the tradition is an observance of proper conventional behavior as prescribed by kinship. This emphasis on kinship, on being a good relative, enabled the Lakota to live harmoniously with one another and to achieve what Ella Deloria has described as a "scheme of life that worked."¹⁵ The tradition of oral performance is still integral to the ceremonial, social, and political life of the tribe. For those connected to the ceremonial life, use of language entails a special responsibility, for language has the power to change the world: to transform relationships, to heal or wound, to exercise power over others.

One style of oratory, typically delivered by Lakota elders and other respected individuals in a public forum, is designed to advocate a particular set of values or point of view. A correlative speech act has been described by Bea Medicine: *eyak sapa*, "to speak wisdom to one." A distressed Lakota may ask for advice from a respected individual in the *tiospaye* (extended family group) or the community at large. The adviser listens with empathy and then may comment on the problem and on the role of the petitioner in the family and community. The adviser may offer a

number of alternatives in order to protect the autonomy of the petitioner. Medicine notes that *eyak sapa* may occur in other contexts as well: At naming ceremonies and weddings, respected relatives or community members may offer advice and promote Lakota values; at all-night wakes and memorial feasts, a person may offer tribute to the deceased and solace to the bereaved.¹⁶

Skillful use of the “language of advocacy” enhances a tribal member’s identity.¹⁷ Fluency in Lakota has a special value in the community, but the same style of rhetoric can be offered in English if the speaker does not know the native language or if the audience is mixed. A Lakota has many opportunities to display his or her skills at traditional ceremonies such as the *Wiwang Wacipi* (Sun Dance), at Native American Church ceremonies, powwows, and tribal council meetings. In higher education, one finds that the spoken patterns of the language of advocacy can be transferred to the written page.

TRIBAL RHETORIC AND CULTURAL SURVIVAL

The pantribal rhetorical models associated with Native American cultural survival resemble the Lakota “language of advocacy” in the use of metaphors, aphorisms, and affirmations of tradition. Other characteristics of the language associated with the activism of the 1950s and 1960s and later with the American Indian Movement—particularly the fatalism and polarization—can be traced back to the apocalyptic vision of the Ghost Dance Movement of the 1880s, which George Hyde describes as the “last stand of the Sioux as a tribe against the attempts of the government to make them into imitation white people.”¹⁸ Wovoka, a Paiute who worked for a religious, Euro-American family in Nevada, was thought by the Sioux to be a messiah. Wovoka described his visionary excursions to a spirit realm; his interpretation of these visions showed the influence of Christianity. The Sioux believed that Wovoka had been murdered by whites and then had returned from the dead to punish the whites for their wickedness. The rhetoric of the pantribal Ghost Dance Movement suggests a mixture of indigenous and Christian beliefs, particularly those of the sects, such as the Shakers and the Adventists, advocating prophecy, hypnotism, and a second coming of the messiah.¹⁹ So while the Ghost Dance movement was a form of resistance to European invasion and

influence, the rhetoric reflects Euro-American fundamentalist thought patterns prevalent at the turn of the century.

The rhetoric of the cultural survivalists typically offers a strong repudiation of the non-Indian world. The red and white cultures are depicted as being in opposition. A certain fatalism imbues the rhetoric; this invokes an apocalyptic vision originating in the visions of the Ghost Dancers, who saw a return of the buffalo and a reunion with relatives in a purified, pristine continent free of European influence. In the following Ghost Dance song, a message is brought by the sacred birds—the eagle and the crow—announcing the return of the buffalo and the departed dead:

The whole world is coming,
A nation is coming, a nation is coming
The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe
The Father says so, the father says so.
Over the whole earth they are coming.
The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming
The Crow has brought the message to the tribe,
The Father says so, the father says so.²⁰

The premise underlying this song and other activist rhetoric suggests that the precolonized Native American lived in an idyllic state, in harmony with the natural and spiritual worlds. This paradise was invaded by Europeans bent on genocide and destruction. The damage is intractable; since reconciliation between cultures is not possible, paradise can be restored only by entry into another dimension.

During the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, Wallace Black Elk shared his views on the two cultures:

It all boils down to two philosophies now—the white philosophy and the Indian philosophy. The white philosophy we understand. Their philosophy is based on money. Our gold, they stole our gold. They ripped off the whole Western Hemisphere and they stole all the minerals. They took our gold and they stamped the Great Spirit's name on it, "In God We Trust." So that's their god, and they forgot the real spirit.²¹

The white man, motivated by greed and selfishness, has created an economic system requiring people to work at tedious and alienating jobs, Black Elk observed. The irresponsible uses of technology and science by Europeans are cited as further evi-

dence of impending annihilation in a nuclear war. The vision embedded in the rhetoric is fatalistic. The irreversible scenario culminates in divine retribution and purification. For *Lame Deer* (the late *John Fire*), the scenario involves the discontinuance of electrical energy and a return to self-reliance: "There is a *Light Man* coming, bringing a new light. It will happen before this century is over. The man who has this power will do good things, too—stop all atomic power, stop wars, just by shutting the white electro-power off. I hope to see this, but then I'm also afraid."²²

The rhetoric of the radical movements has offered a critique of American society and a vision of a future that will be transformed by supernatural intervention. The prophecies of the Hopi and other tribes are often cited by cultural survivalists as evidence that the original status of indigenous people on this continent will be restored and the immigrants eliminated. In the forum on Marxism, *Russell Means* noted that when *Mother Earth* retaliates in response to environmental abuses, the native people will come full circle: "That's revolution. And that's the prophecy of my people, of the Hopi people and other correct peoples."²³

What is compelling about this view is that humans do not act alone: The earth and spiritual forces have power to transform social reality. Traditional tribal people place great value on knowledge that comes from the realm of the spirits; true knowledge, from a Western perspective, is associated with educated specialists. The vision is revered by the Lakota, and it is often difficult for them to relate to Western strategies for achieving social change. If Marxists insist that dialectical thinking is the basis of revolutionary action, the Lakota can claim that they have always understood the "dialectical nature of the universe" if this is defined as a relational means of conceiving reality. In the tradition of Lakota spirituality, everything in the universe is related.²⁴

The psychological dynamics underlying the rhetoric of activists function as a necessary prelude to the development of a critical literacy. Literacy, *Freire* argues, is facilitated by the learners' awareness of their own power to construct a meaningful analysis of their social reality and to enter into a dialogue with members outside their immediate reality. The rhetoric examines the cultural and political experiences of the Native American and communicates that frame of reference to a larger audience. According to literacy theorists, this sensitivity to an audience that does not share the same frame of reference represents a critical shift in the consciousness of learners.²⁵

The possibilities for transformation are typically not addressed in the activist rhetoric, however. As humanity veers toward the inevitable, the individual is freed from responsibility for action. Freire suggests that colonized people are often characterized by fatalistic attitudes. In the fatalist's view, the world is static and the individual is manipulated by people and events beyond his control. Problem-solving is irrelevant, because there is nothing new to be learned. But the world is not static, Freire argues; it presents problems that must be continually addressed by critical subjects. "Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of becoming—unfinished, uncompleted beings with a likewise unfinished reality."²⁶ Critical subjects must relinquish their beliefs that fate controls their destiny; they must be assured of their power to influence human arrangements.

IMPERIAL LITERACY VS. CRITICAL LITERACY

To empower native students, literacy programs must make use of this problem-posing model, which allows students to draw on their own experience and encourages student-student interaction. The end product—critical writing—is moored to the cultural values and commitments of the community. The choices that teachers of writing make with respect to the discourse style of their students and their willingness to redefine academic traditions are political ones. Educators hold opposing views on the use of community-based language styles and on the integrity of academic traditions.

The conservative point of view on the use of community-based language competencies was expressed by Mina Shaughnessy, composition theorist and author of *Errors and Expectations*. One could argue that, with her emphasis on the mastery of essayist literacy, she promotes "imperial literacy." If one focuses on preparing students to enter society rather than to challenge the existing order, the resulting pedagogy upholds the status quo.²⁷ Shaughnessy notes that teachers at multicultural, open admissions colleges have a deep appreciation of the language style of their students and are often reluctant to impose the academic model. According to her analysis, the problems of basic writers can be attributed to their reliance on oral styles of development and their unfamiliarity with the conventions of academic discourse. Teachers do a disservice to their students, Shaughnessy

argues, simply because of their preference for “expressive over discursive, personal over public, or spoken over written styles” of language.²⁸ Students need to learn to develop a thesis and then defend it by using cases, arguments, and explanations, always keeping in mind that the academic audience is the “least submissive of audiences, committed as it is, in theory at least, to the assessment of new and yet unproven interpretations of events.”²⁹ The writer must develop a case to meet his audience’s criteria for fullness and sound reasoning, but, in the end, Shaughnessy admits, it is not always clear what constitutes adequate support in specific cases. Since most Native American students begin their higher education as basic writers at open admissions institutions, one is to assume, relying on this kind of analysis, that their problems as writers and thinkers will be resolved as they master the conventions.

However, the openly combative nature of this style of rhetoric, the exclusion of values, experience, and political orientation, all conflict with ways of using language in Lakota and other tribal cultures. Students are asked to defend themselves against authorities by demonstrating their ability to disqualify points of view that challenge their own. They are expected to construct arguments strong enough to meet the standards of some impersonal and invisible authority. The field of rhetoric is an arena for combat as participants attack the logic and evidence of opponents. The actual content of arguments may not be as important as the mastery of form and the display of disinterested reason. Walter Ong has traced this ceremonial combat to the romantic age, when all academic education was focused on redefining a position or thesis, or attacking the position of another person.³⁰ When higher education served only the elite, argumentation was truly an academic exercise.

With the democratization of education, this style of rhetoric has been challenged by women and minorities—groups that have an interest in changing American society. For them, the stakes in argumentation are real (see “ceremonial combat” vs. “real combat” in table 1). A transformation has been underway as the critics have created a dialogue in the traditional disciplines, calling into question some of the assumptions behind the Western intellectual tradition and offering alternative rhetorical models. Poet and feminist Adrienne Rich argues that women and minorities resist traditional academic rhetoric because it is a “masculine adversary style of discourse,” and acceptance of authority does not come as

easily to people outside the system. Public institutions have encouraged the development of a rational, analytical voice and have excluded the private realm of feelings, intuitions, and values. The epistemological orientation of "separate" knowing, as opposed to "connected" knowing, is encouraged, and the style of discourse more closely aligned with the cultural experience of middle class white men serves as a model.³¹

Sociolinguistic research generally supports the notion that effectiveness of schooling may hinge on the acknowledgment and use of community-based language competencies. Dell Hymes is critical of schools that view themselves as missionaries to a district, dismissing oral patterns and potentialities as incompatible with literate traditions. "Insofar as schools can see their mission as the etymologically appropriate one of educating in the sense of drawing out, discovery of this kind of patterning can be a source of encouragement and stimulation," Hymes contends.³² He recommends that teachers develop a more accepting attitude toward native language patterns. The research on "Indian English," typically conducted in grade school settings, suggests that the tribal-specific codes are a synthesis of native language and English language features. Detailed descriptions of these codes enable teachers to break free from the tendency to denigrate the writing style of Native American students. This research has contributed to improvements in literacy assessment and pedagogy and will, over the long term, facilitate student success in writing.³³

A distinct form of rhetoric will emerge from the fusion of tribal oral traditions and essayist literacy. The rhetoric will be characterized by an affirmation of cultural values, the integration of narratives and traditional knowledge. The author's commitment to "connected" knowing and dialectical problem-solving will be evident. The mask of neutrality will be dropped as Native Americans, along with other marginalized people, understand that the work of politically "neutral" scholars has functioned to support the social system and that academic combat was developed by an elite group in a specific historical context. The writing of prominent Native American scholars, such as Vine Deloria, Jr., and Ward Churchill, represents this kind of rhetorical model.

In order to facilitate the development of literacy as it is described in this article, Lakota students can be encouraged to move from a base of personal writing to advocacy writing, and then to make the transition to critical writing. In the personal writing,

students typically engage with a topic in an exploratory way, clarifying their own personal values and opinions. Narratives are often a way of drawing out ideas or discovering a topic. In this early stage of the writing process, students are usually motivated to compose in a personal mode, indicating a preference for "connected" knowing. Private writing is an important first phase in the learning process, since "connected" knowing involves feelings, values, and personal experience. In class discussions, students are encouraged to find connections between personal experience and the themes of the course. A collaborative and supportive atmosphere encourages such exchanges.

"Advocacy writing" requires an adaptation to an audience of community members or nontribal outsiders. In making the transition to the more formal, transactional style of the second draft, students instinctively draw on community-based rhetorical models. Lakota students are familiar with the "language of advocacy," particularly if they speak their native language and are active in the social and ceremonial life of the tribe. Prayers, encouraging words, teachings, and honoring speeches that affirm the traditions and values of the community are familiar modes. Students gravitate towards topics appropriate for advocacy writing: reservation conditions, injustices, the defense of tribal land, and treaties. The problem is typically viewed within the cultural and historical context of the tribe. Oral sources are important, although student writers may later need to resolve the inconsistencies between these sources.

Lakota students often assume a community audience with shared values. In concluding a paper on the problem of illiteracy, a student wrote,

We, as minority people, do not need such an obstacle as illiteracy as we try to be independent. There are too many other walls or frustrations that Native Americans face in their fight to survive as indigenous people.

Often students conclude a paper with advice or a recommendation for a particular action. Writing about the traditional way of child-rearing, one student noted that, although the old way of life could not be restored, many of the moral and spiritual values could be passed on to children:

Through the strengthening of the Lakota family structure, the base of Lakota society, children will have a better learning

environment, in which to grow spiritually, culturally, and intellectually Let us teach them with a kind heart and patient and gentle hand so they may live better than ourselves, for the world belongs to them.

The affirmation of values to an assumed community audience is important in the writer's quest to become comfortable with authority and to create order and meaning in an often distressed community.

In persuasive papers, Lakota students tend to use strategies that would be used in community settings. Teachings and attempts at persuasion are offered in an indirect and nonintervening mode by traditionalists in the community. Direct criticism or contradiction of another person would be interpreted by many as a violation of interactive norms within the community. There are mixed styles in public forums, but one is more likely to hear a set of parallel speeches consisting of aphorisms, narratives, and affirmations of tradition than confrontational debate. In contrast, one is expected to attack the logic and evidence of an "opponent" in academic discourse, to defend oneself against authorities and to disqualify other points of view. Cases, explanations, sound reasoning, and evidence from the print and media are used as support. Lakota students sense this discontinuity between academic and community discourse. For them, the consensus of the tribe, traditional values, intuition, the ethos of individuals and knowledge from the realm of the spirits are important forms of evidence. As advocates for community values and the political interests of the tribe, their writing is committed and passionate in tone, while academic discourse is analytical and dispassionate.

In the following excerpt, the writer is addressing the community, but he is also critical of both the leadership and the younger generation; both groups have capitulated to the non-Indian world. His motive, ultimately, is to recreate a circle of consensus, to direct people back to traditional values and to purge the community of polluting influences.

The year 1868 was a good year for the Great Sioux Nation and the United States Government, it was the beginning of what the white culture now calls the generation gap. Our leaders, Spotted Tail and Red Cloud and many other great leaders decided that the Sioux Nation would live by the terms of the Treaty that was agreed upon at Fort Laramie Wyoming. Two religions were allowed to send their representatives to teach the Sioux their ways, the two religions were the Protestant

and Catholic religious orders, the Black Robes and the White Robes. Many of the Sioux Indians accepted the beliefs and ways of the two religious orders, thereby creating a cultural, religious and generation gap that still exists to this day, December 13, 1983.

The generation of elders who are now in their 70's and 80's were so badly brain washed back in the 1920's, that this brain washing has continued up to this generation of mindless idiots, who over indulge in narcotics and alcohol consumption, the young people of this generation are without leadership. What we have today are leaders who don't know where we came from, how we arrived here, what we are supposed to do while we are here, and where we are going when we leave this planet, Mother Earth. The young people today are asking a lot of questions. They also want some quick answers and there is no one around to teach them the virtues of the Grandfathers and Grandmothers of generations ago.

The young people of this generation need to be shown and taught the ways of the Sacred Pipe. Only through the ways of the Sacred Pipe will they learn where they came from, what they are to do while here, and where they are going when they leave here. Only through the Sacred Pipe, will they, the young people, learn to have respect, not only for themselves but for all of creation. The young people of this generation need to communicate more with their elders and listen to them carefully and with patience. In that manner they will learn something about the past generation.

Through this piece, the writer hopes to show how the values of the past, if reinstated, could help to change the course of tribal affairs. The writer realizes the full impact of colonization on his people. Traditionally, the group identity of the Lakota prevailed over individual opinion and action. The demoralization of the people is associated with religious diversity, factionalism, and displacement.

HIGHER LEVEL COGNITIVE SKILLS

Advocacy writing has an important function in the community. It is congruent with ways of using language in the community and can be used as a base for further development. However, it has limitations. Critical literacy requires the development of higher

level cognitive skills. The problems confronting the tribes are complex, and advocacy writing does not allow for transformation and change (see table 2). As Paulo Freire points out, "Culture only is as long as it continues to be. Perhaps it would be better to say: culture only 'lasts' when it is part of the contradictory interplay of permanence and change."³⁴ It is not enough, Freire argues, to be familiar with the culture of the past; the focus should be on the various tensions in the culture. Furthermore, students in developing cultures need to envision a world that has not yet occurred. The style of literacy that will enable people to actuate change in times of economic and cultural crisis must be problem-posing.

Vine Deloria, Jr., has used this paradigm in a critical discussion of Indian studies programs. In traditional Indian education, knowledge flowed from the experienced to the inexperienced and stories and history were passed on orally from generation to generation, assuring social continuity. Deloria suggests that the mission of Indian studies has not been clearly delineated; one interpretation is that the programs serve as substitutes for community elders, teaching the culture of the group.³⁵ He contends that education will not meet the needs of Indian people if the European content is replaced with tribal history and culture and if knowledge becomes a mere object to be studied. Instead, students need to confront the contradictions in present-day life, and the Native American must be viewed in a continuum, the past linked to the present. In this way, the tribes will be able to project themselves into the future. Deloria does not flinch from an investigation of the disparity between the ideals and the realities of contemporary life:

We tell our audiences at Indian Awareness weeks on university campuses that Indians do not worship money. Yet our tribal councils are leasing their sacred mountains for royalties, and our tribal politicians are seeking better and higher-paying jobs Our activists chastise the white man for his destruction of nature, and admonish people to respect the Sacred Mother Earth, while they themselves are throwing empty beer cans along the road.³⁶

Deloria suggests that the rhetoric of activist movements does not critically examine how the values of the past can be translated into new patterns of action.

The fact that native people face crises and contradictory realities in their communities can be viewed in positive terms. A crisis

is an opportunity for growth and change, according to dialectical psychologists. As individuals work through contradictions, accepting them as the basis of thought, they engage in dialectical operations, which are viewed as a final stage of cognitive development.³⁷ The dialectical thinker adapts to changing realities and is able to transcend restricting ideologies, false dichotomies, and the static definitions or “terminal creeds” to which writer Gerald Vizenor refers. Terminal creeds, regardless of their origin in Native American or Euro-American thought, restrict one’s ability to use language authentically and creatively.

It is through the medium of fiction, critic Louis Owens contends, that indigenous writers have fully demonstrated how the English language can accommodate Native American thought. In his provocative trickster fiction, Vizenor challenges static definitions of Native Americans. His futuristic novel *Bearheart* depicts Native Americans who are victims of terminal creeds and have lost the ability to create authentic identities.³⁸ N. Scott Momaday’s *Ancient Child* contains two main characters—Grey and Set—who live and think biculturally, having moved beyond the categories of “modern” and “traditional.” In this novel that challenges the reader’s notions of time and narrative stance, Momaday affirms the freedom of Native Americans to create their own identities.³⁹ “Like his fellow Indian writers, Momaday discovered that the task before him was not simply to learn the lost language of his tribe but rather to appropriate, to tear free of its restricting authority, another language—English—and to make that language accessible to an Indian discourse,” Owens observes.⁴⁰

While personal writing flows organically into advocacy writing, more effort is required to facilitate the transition from advocacy writing to critical writing. One has to encourage students to be more explicit, to consider an audience that may not share the same references or values. Once students conceptualize an audience beyond the immediate community, one that does not share their emotional or physical context, they provide explanations and historical references and are more likely to define their values. To encourage such critical inquiry, I have asked students to research the government’s attempt to relocate traditional Navajo away from a disputed territory near the Hopi Reservation in order to open the area to coal and uranium mining. The land dispute invokes a multitude of contradictory realities; a range of materials is available representing the views of tribal governments, the U.S.

government, and the American Indian Movement.⁴¹ I have also effectively used materials on the plight of the Finnish Sami tribe, whose traditional reindeer-herding lifestyle has been permanently changed by the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl, to challenge students to look at tribal histories in a more global context.⁴²

The persuasive power of rhetoric is strengthened when a writer acknowledges a range of perspectives on a topic; the writer may learn about refutation or discover a higher reality in the process. To achieve this end, I have asked students to construct a dialogue between individuals with opposing political views on a social problem. This keeps writers moored to spoken models and community values, and they can have great fun in the process. As they listen more fully to the voices they create, the writers can be challenged to contemplate the origin and consequences of the various points of view. In the following dialogue on water rights, the writer explores the differences in perspective between a person who believes in working through the system and one who prefers direct action.

#1: I think it's time we blow up Oahe Dam to show this damn government we're the true landlords!

#2: You're crazy! The water suit initiated by the government will backfire on them, so why not wait?

#1: Horseshit! Those White folks won't let the Lakota utilize the water according to our treaty rights. Look at them Whites in Missouri, all the way down there and still claiming rights to Lakota water. Well, I say let's let a few of them bastards drown in Lakota water; blow Oahe and given them all of the water they want!

#2: You're talking massacre and that leads to trouble! Listen, in 1908 the U.S. Supreme Court in *Winters vs. the United States* established what is known as the "reserved rights" doctrine. In short it says Indians are entitled to a quantity of water which fulfills our present, as well as future needs in order to satisfy the purpose for which the reservation was created. You don't believe the courts will go against such a long standing precedent, do you?

#1: Massacre you say, well, I say it's shorter and sweeter than the genocidal policies we've had to endure. Besides, the Winters Doctrine doesn't state who will decide a reservation's present and future needs. And if you think those Whites will take into consideration the Lakota view, you're crazier than me!

To further encourage dialectical thinking, students can be asked to situate this local conflict within the larger American system in which the Lakota operate, and to examine parallel cases, both nationally and internationally, involving indigenous land / water rights.

At this point, students can begin to deal critically with the tensions within the culture; some of these have been described in the first paragraph of this article. The tribes need to find new language and frameworks in order to collaborate on internal problems, solve intertribal conflicts, and negotiate as sovereign nations with outside groups. Given the nature of global capitalism, it is also imperative that alliances form between indigenous communities and people who wish to stop the destruction of the environment. The community-based language models, such as the "language of advocacy" and the rhetoric of the cultural survivalist movements, can have an important place in the development of this rhetoric.

The challenge of critical literacy must be faced by everyone in higher education. In postmodern culture, the seductive images and market values of media prevail over ideas. Educational policy is often dominated by worn-out rhetoric and paralyzing frameworks. The resistance to multiculturalism suggests that the Eurocentric paradigms will not be relinquished without a struggle; nationalist ideologies, such as Afrocentrism, fill the needs of the powerless. Native Americans can offer a valuable way of looking at the world: "It is a holistic, ecological perspective, one that places essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all elements but superior to none and giving humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the world we inhabit."⁴³

NOTES

1. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 9.

2. Russell Means, "The Same Old Song" in *Marxism and Native Americans*, ed. Ward Churchill (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 19.

3. Deborah Tannen, "The Oral/Literate Continuum in Discourse" in *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, ed. Deborah Tannen (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1982), 3.

4. Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1980), 48.

5. Sandra A. Rietz, "Plurality of Literacies: Restructuring for Diversity," *Journal of Navajo Education* 10:2 (1993): 42.
6. Thomas Simms, "Lakota Oral Tradition," *Sinte Gleska College News* 18 (1983): 7-10.
7. The Indian populations of urban areas face a formidable set of problems related to cultural identity. This analysis derives from my work with Native American students in rural areas, on or near reservations.
8. Clark Wissler, *Red Man Reservations* (New York: Collier Books, 1938), 140.
9. Eugene Buechel, *A Grammar of Lakota* (Rosebud, SD: Rosebud Educational Society, 1939) and idem, *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language* (Pine Ridge, SD: Red Cloud Indian School, Inc., 1970).
10. Katherine Iverson, "Civilization and Assimilation in the Colonized Schooling of Native Americans" in *Education and Colonialism*, ed. Philip Altbach and Gail Kelly (New York: Longman, Inc, 1978), 163.
11. George Ann Gregory, "Standard/Standards: How Diné Student Writers Get It Right," *Journal of Navajo Education* 11:1 (1993): 34.
12. John V. Ogbu, "Minority Status and Literacy in Comparative Perspective," *Daedalus* 119:2 (1990): 150.
13. Bea Medicine, "'Speaking Indian': Parameters of Language Use among American Indians," *Focus: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education* 6 (1981), 5.
14. Ron Scollon and Suzanne Scollon, *Narrative, Literacy and Face in Interethnic Communication* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1981).
15. Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Vermillion, SD: Dakota Press, 1979), 35.
16. Bea Medicine, "Native American Communication Patterns: The Case of the Lakota Speakers" in *Handbook of Intercultural Communication*, ed. Molefi K. Asante, Eileen Newmark, and Cecil A. Blake (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979).
17. Gloria Dyc, "Lakota Cultural Values and the Language of Advocacy: An Approach to Literacy in a Native American Community" (D.A. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1989).
18. George Hyde, *The Sioux Chronicle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 319.
19. James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).
20. *Ibid.*, 1072.
21. *Voices from Wounded Knee, 1973* (Rooseveltown, NY: Akwesasne Notes, 1979), 107.
22. John Fire Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 124.
23. Means, "The Same Old Song," 29.
24. Frank Black Elk, "Observations on Marxism and Lakota Tradition," in *Marxism and Native Americans*, 148.
25. Nan Elsasser and Vera John-Steiner, "An Interactionist Approach to Advancing Literacy," *Harvard Educational Review* 47:3 (1977): 355-70.
26. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 72.
27. Lynda Haas, "In Search of Dignity: Liberatory Literacy in the Two-Year College," *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (December 1992), 258-65.

28. Mina P. Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 239.
29. *Ibid.*, 240.
30. Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966–78* (New York: Norton, 1979), 138.
31. Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986).
32. Dell Hymes, *Language in Education: Ethnolinguistic Essays* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1980), 141.
33. William Leap's work with sixth-grade students on the Northern Ute Reservation provided a paradigm for research in this area. "Written Ute English: Texture, Construction, and Point of View," *Journal of Navajo Education* 7:1 (1989). Leap has continued his inquiry with "Written Navajo English: Texture, Construction, and Point of View," *Journal of Navajo Education* 11:1 (1993) and "What Navajo Students Know about Written English," a manuscript in progress with co-author Daniel McLaughlin. George Ann Gregory has conducted research into the discourse texture of essays by Diné students on a college level (see citation).
34. Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1980), 126.
35. Vine Deloria, Jr., "Indian Studies—The Orphan of Academia," *Wicazo Sa Review* 2.2 (1986): 1–7.
36. Deloria, Jr., "The Indian Student amid American Inconsistencies" in *The Schooling of Native America*, ed. Thomas Thompson (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and Teacher Corps., U.S. Office of Education, 1978), 24.
37. Klaus F. Riegel, "Toward a Dialectical Theory of Development," *Human Development* 18 (1975), 50–64.
38. Gerald Vizenor, *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
39. N. Scott Momaday, *The Ancient Child* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).
40. Owens, *Other Destinies*, 13.
41. Students can contrast the rhetoric of *Akwesasne Notes* with mainstream publications. *Akwesasne Notes* covers Big Mountain and Navajo relocation in numerous issues, among them 18:1 and 18:3 (1986), 20:1 (1988), and 20:6 (1989). Attorneys Hollis Whitson and Martha Roberge provide a detailed history of the situation in "Moving Those Indians into the Twentieth Century," *Technology Review* (July 1986), 47–57.
42. Sharon Stephens, "Chernobyl Fallout: A Hard Rain for the Sami," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 11:2 (1987): 66–71.
43. Owens, *Other Destinies*, 29.