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# Home Schooling: Parent Choice And Student Needs

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**HOME SCHOOLING: PARENT CHOICE AND STUDENT NEEDS**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of the Degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Seton Hall University**

**2001**

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## ABSTRACT

### HOME SCHOOLING: PARENT CHOICE AND STUDENT NEEDS

The purpose of this study was to examine the parent choice to home school and student needs. This qualitative analysis of these perspectives was three-fold. The first included the initial decision to home school by the parent, for what reasons, the choice of curriculum and the number of years to home school. The second included the motives, goals, perceptions, and curriculum implementation of the home school. The third included student needs, which were carefully evaluated in terms of academic achievements and social values as a result of parent choice.

A demographic survey was used to examine 25 home school families. From these families, 8 home school families were interviewed from which 5 families were presented as in-depth case studies. Using an interview format, questions were asked about why the family originally decided to home school, what curriculum choices were made and used, and how these choices changed from year to year. This study explains why they continued to home school, what their current perceptions were, and what materials they were currently using. The interview also included questions concerning the children of these families. The responses to these questions explain the needs of the children, a typical home school day, likes and dislikes that a curriculum might impose, their social life and future goals.

The research findings included reasons why families originally began to home school. The three main categories that were precisely noted according to the interviews of eight families were: ideological, pedagogical and sociological. Demographics of twenty-five families were provided which included: father's

education, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's occupation, family income, number of children, grade level of children, number of years home schooling, number of visits to the library per month, dollars spent per student per year and religious affiliation. The five case studies focused on the parent choice to home school, and what curriculum best fit the student needs. The families in this study, whether they home schooled from the beginning or pulled out their children from public education saw home schooling as an alternative means of education.

Several practical implications resulted from this study. Parents who home school meet the needs of their children as students. They have the freedom to develop a curriculum, choose textbooks and materials to do so. Test scores are significantly higher than the national norm ranging between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile regardless of the level of education of the parent. Race/ethnicity also has no bearing on these test scores. Home schooling is an alternative form of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One-on-one tutorial learning and parental involvement is the key to success and an excellent education for all students.

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Dear God, I thank you for breathing into my soul, spirit and heart this unending desire to live life to its fullest and best.

**DEDICATION**

**To My Family**



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curriculum paradigm, home schooling is also a member of restructuring. "Home schooling is likely to continue to flourish. . ." (Carper, 1992, p.253).

In the past twenty years, a growing number of parents are choosing to educate their children at home. At an annual rate of 15 percent, home schooling is a growing movement keeping children at home for longer periods of time. Existing support groups and community opportunities enhance young home schooled people who choose not to go back to school. Their education continues to attendance at colleges and universities being strong advocates of home schooling.

### Overview

#### Historical Background of Home Schooling

Three major shifts in education have taken place outside of the public sector. They are nonpublic education: Roman Catholic schools, Protestant Christian day schools, and home schools. The Roman Catholic school marked a major shift in the private school enrollment; however, it has significantly decreased in numbers of participating clientele since the 1960's. On the other hand the Protestant Christian day schools or fundamentalist academies have current enrollment of near 1,000,000 students. Finally, with this spiritual awakening and a sense of morality ". . . an increasing number of middle-class parents, most of whom are of an evangelical Christian persuasion, have chosen to fulfill state, compulsory education requirements, particularly at the elementary level, at home rather than through institutional schooling" (Carper, 1992, p. 252). These children test on higher levels than students in the public sector, and are more socially developed in most cases. Stemming from religious, social and pedagogical reasons, the parents of these children have designed

an educational program that allows children to achieve, reaching high academic achievements and social values.

Colonial schools were agents that assisted parents in the education of their children. “ ‘By the middle of the eighteenth century, a variety of specialized institutions has begun to absorb traditional familial responsibility’ ” (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988 as cited in Carper, 1992, p. 254). These institutions grew in number declining the instruction at home from family instructional responsibilities to the school. The nineteenth century family relied on schools. Schools offered status for economic advancement. “Nineteenth century public education was intensely localistic” (Carper, 1992, p. 255). “Thus, parents looked upon the school as an extension of family and community educational preferences rather than an instrument of state authority . . .” (Carper, 1992, p. 225). Among the notables who were home schooled in the nineteenth century are Thomas A. Edison, Jane Addams, Andrew Taylor Still, John Brown, Alexander Campbell, Daniel Dawson Carothers and others in various professional fields.

Stemming from the Judeo-Christian heritage, family life was the primary center of learning. Children learned predominantly from their parents. Very much like the Judeo-Christian culture were the Germanic and Latin cultures influence by Christianity. “Schooling at home was often the only schooling available to the common person” (Parker, 1912 as cited in Knowles, Muchmore & Spalding, 1994, p. 238). Even the upper class child in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was educated at home. Children were exposed to a significant learning environment “ . . . at the feet of parents, extended family, or community members. . .” (Chagnon &

Shostak, 1983 as cited in Knowles, Muchmore and Spaulding, 1994, p. 239). By the mid-nineteenth century, the United States, however, deemed compulsory and formal education more appropriate than home-based education. "Early compulsory and formal public schooling had a variety of objectives, among which Americanization was central" (Knowles, Muchmore & Spaulding, 1994, p. 239). This rid the immigrant family of individual and ethnic orientations. Not only was public schooling a remedy for minority immigrant families, but also for the "ills of lower-class family structures."

#### Legislative/Governmental History of Home Schooling

The late 1960's and early 1970's began a liberal education movement by reformers know as Holt (1969), Illich (1970), Kozol (1972), and Kohl (1970). Once again home education surfaced as an educational alternative. This was the consequence of parents who were displeased with public education. This reemergence of home education resulted in confrontations between home school parents and public school administrators. In no way did home schooling threaten the public or private schools; however, it did separate itself from the norm. This led to widespread litigation. In the 1990's home education was a respectable educational alternative. "Largely as a result of litigation outcomes, for instance, many public schools now have policies that allow home-educated students to benefit from public school programs and facilities" (Knowles, Marlow, & Spaulding, 1994, p. 240). State legislators, school boards and the general public have become more receptive to home schooling. As a result, the home schoolers now have more access to more resources offered at the public schools.



“Home schooling has come of age” (Lines, 1996, p. 63). The United States Supreme Court has never explicitly ruled on home schooling. Constitutional protection for the parents is ambiguous. However, compulsory education laws do exist. Although these laws do exist, all states allow home schooling. Many times school boards have exceeded the board’s statutory authority where the courts have put them down. State legislatures have responded expecting the home schooling family to file basic information with either the state or local education agency. Other requirements by the state may be the submission of a curriculum plan, the testing of students and sometimes the required certification for the parents. “Although no current state statutes narrowly construed by courts have allowed states to absolutely foreclose home education as a lawful choice for parents” (Thompkins, 1991, p. 302).

In the opinion of Reinhiller and Thomas the fundamental rights and family privacy should be protected by the constitution. Home education is a parent’s choice. “Home schooling today is significantly different from home schooling as it occurred in the beginning of our country’s development” (Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996, p. 11). The right to parental choice of home education is found in the privacy penumbra of the Constitution. “. . . The right of parents to control the education of their children is protected by numerous provisions of the United States Constitution, including free exercise of religion, free speech, family privacy, and parental liberty, and has been consistently recognized by the courts” (White, 1999). Given this protection to the parents to make the choice to home school their children, specific state regulations come into play.

### Legal Issues of Home Schooling

“At present time, hundreds of thousands of students are meeting the compulsory education requirements at home rather than in public or private schools” (Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996, p. 11). Compulsory education began in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1642. This was the first law requiring parents to educate their children. This is where the state served as a guardian; however, “. . . parents controlled the schools” (Barrett, 1985, as cited in Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996, p. 11). With the underlying thought that government control leads to a quality product, one finds a common fallacy. “With public school being one of the most regulated institutions in our nation, it is also the one with the most problems” (White, 1999).

Regulations do vary from state to state. “In 1987 nine states required school attendance with no exceptions” (Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996, p. 12). As strict as this may seem, court decisions or through state boards of education certain changes have been made to accept home schooling. “Legislative action in 30 states has eased restrictions on home schooling since 1983” (McCarthy, 1992 as cited in Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996, p. 12). State regulations on home schools many times include a required curriculum, an established number of hours and days in session, and the parents be certified. A visit to the home schooling family was once a guideline. Other state regulations “require families to submit either results of annual standardized achievement tests or a narrative evaluation by a certified teacher of a student’s work portfolio” (Ramsey, 1992, p. 20). The participation of the home schooled in high school sports can be another state criteria. “Oregon children can

participate in high school sports, provided they meet criteria that include scoring in at least the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile on standard tests" (Natale, 1992, p. 26). The interesting fact is that "the growth of the home school movement is having positive results.

Standardized test scores show that, on average, the 1.7 million children schooled at home do better than their public school counterparts" (Home School Legal Defense Association, 1998). Most home schooling families oppose government and state regulations.

Two proactive organizations, the Home School Legal Defense Association and The Rutherford Institution provide weekly as well as daily new updates. They offer political information and advice for working with local school districts, state boards, and state and national representatives and senators. These organizations provide legal protection for member families along with on going updates regarding legislation that occurs at the national level.

Internal state organizations for home school families are growing larger and larger incorporating exhibits, conventions, seminars and numerous workshops. These are led by well-known keynote speakers such as Peter Marshall and Raymond Moore. Teaching techniques, curriculum, software in many varieties with the newest products and catalogs are displayed and distributed. These are just some of the places where parents meet, network and compare notes on the latest methods and newest curricula; many created and sold by home schoolers themselves. These state organizations also have monthly and bimonthly magazines, which they distribute to members.

Local home school support groups and cohorts are meticulously organized and extremely active. Through a team effort parents share academic, extracurricular

community activities and services. Field trips are created, planned and smoothly executed. Participation in science projects, drama, sports, art, or music is just some of the activities for home school families. Monthly newsletters, e-mail and telephone lists are the methods of communication as to upcoming events. In addition, home school periodicals such as the Home Education Magazine addresses teaching methods, learning styles, and curriculum suggestions to the adults.

#### Statement of the Problem

The home schooling that the researcher has investigated in this study indicates that the structural patterns (building and curriculum) of the traditional school can no longer remain as is. The parent has the choice to fulfill the student needs in terms of success and a meaningful outcome for educating their child/children.

The number of home schooled children is based on estimates ranging from 10,000 to 1,000,000 from the 1970's to the 1990's. Based on moral, religious and social ethos of public schools, the home school movement appears to be moving full force. Contemporary home schooling can be recognized as "reminiscent of educational arrangements and beliefs, of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries" (Carper, 1992, p. 253). Educators from these eras mention the family as an educational entity. The family teaches "propositions, skills, and dispositions of thought, behavior, and appreciation" (Carper, 1992, p. 253). Incorporated in this theory is also the educational role of the church, place of work, press and the entire involvement of the household. With the most recent development of formal education, the substance of family education is given less attention. Some researchers suggest that "The effectiveness of home schooling varied depending particularly

upon region and gender; literacy was much higher in the North than the South, and for males than for females” (Louis, 1989 as cited in Carper, 1992, p. 254).

While these studies provide insight into orientation and philosophy, demographics, motivational, academic, social, legislative, and organizational research, little is known about the day-to-day operations of these families and how choices are made and needs are met over time. What do we know about these families? Who chooses to home school? What are their goals and motivations for making this choice? Do their goals and motivations insight new and innovative choices as time progresses? How do they implement the curriculum and instruction they have chosen? How does the choice of curriculum and instruction meet the needs of the children? Do the home school parents become more at ease with their choices? Do the choices of the parents change as the children grow older? How do families integrate the choice of home schooling with their personal lives and in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the parent choice to home school and student needs. Parent choice includes the initial decision to home school – for what reasons, the choice of curriculum and the number of years to home school. Included in parent choice are the motives, goals, perceptions, and curriculum implementation of the home school. Student needs were carefully observed and perceived in terms of academic achievements and social values as a result of parent choice.

Using an interview format, questions were asked about why the family originally decided to home school, what curriculum choices were made and used, and how these choices changed from year to year. The researcher asked why they continued to home school, what their current perceptions were, and what materials they were currently using. Finally, the researcher asked about their perceptions of home schooling, what materials they currently use and the reasons to continue with home schooling. This interview also included questions concerning the children of these families. These questions asked about the needs of the children, a typical home school day, likes and dislikes that a curriculum might impose, their social life and future goals.

In the following chapters this study will examine the demographics of 25 families that have home schooled, interview 8 of these families and present in-depth case studies of 5 out of these 8 families. Names will remain confidential and changed. All of these families have home schooled for at least 3 years. The researcher spent two years meeting and getting to know home school families. The researcher went to various fairs, seminars and joined cohort groups. The researcher carefully examined curriculum and the associated books. From the 8 families, the researcher chose 5 families to observe over a six month period of time. The researcher went to the homes of these families and observed and joined in their home school way of life. With many years of educational expertise, the researcher was able to assist with curriculum questions and advice. The researcher has thus written curricula and on occasion has been outsourced as a private consultant. The researcher was an observer and also a participant observer.

From the start of this study, the researcher spent months in the summer and fall of 2001, interviewing families whom the researcher either called initially or was introduced to by other home school families. The researcher's main objective in the interview was to ask why they made the choice to home school, what were the specific needs of their children, and then describe their experience from the very beginning to the present day.

During the interviewing, the researcher chose to observe five families on a weekly basis. During these observations, the researcher wrote extensive field notes including observer comments and reflections. The researcher took into account the on-going participant observation especially at extracurricular events and all records containing document analysis of the participants' curricular records from the start to the present.

The following Chapter Two will present a literature review of the research that has been done on home schooling for at least twenty years. Chapter Three will describe the methodology that was used. Chapter Four will begin with the beginning of the actual parent choice, motivations, the description of the curricular and instruction, the changes of the curricular and instruction, and the implementation of this curriculum and how their children are being taught according to their needs. Chapter Five contains five case studies, each describing the beginnings of the home school family, then difficulties and the successes they encountered along the way. Chapter Six will include the researcher's final discussion, implications and recommendations for further research.

### Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed through this study:

1. How does each home school family offer an alternative education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. What choices were made the first year?
3. What was the first year like?
4. What choices were made during the second year of home schooling?
5. What choices were made during the continued years of home schooling?
6. What were the current perceptions of the home school parents regarding their choices and the needs of their children?
7. What does each family's home school look like now?
8. Why did parents decide initially to home school?
9. What curriculum was initially chosen?
10. How did the choice of curriculum change over time?
11. What student needs were met the first year?

### Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations, including the following:

1. The number of the respondents and the type of response that the respondents gave are a limitation of the study.
2. The study is limited by the interpretation of the data and the skills of the researcher.
3. This study represents only those who have home schooled successfully and not those who decided to send their children back to public schools.



4. This study is represented by: participants who volunteered and those who were asked to volunteer.
5. As an outsourced consultant to home school families, the researcher has been aware that a bias could potentially affect the outcome. The interview strategy was conducted in a format that constantly made the researcher aware of personal assumption. This is evident in the open-ended interview questions, the observations and the recorded data. The researcher was intent on supporting all findings with the collected data using a researcher's expertise in order to present the parents' perspective.
6. Another area of limitation was that visits to the home were prearranged or unpredictable visits. In some instances the researcher relied on parents' memories, while in other instances parents had profound record keeping.
7. Finally as the researcher not only was the researcher the observer, but also at times the participant observer. The researcher was constantly aware of my presence having an effect on the setting. Too much participation can lead to the researcher getting so involved and active with subjects that their original intentions get lost (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

#### Definitions of Terms

Curriculum – all of the experiences that individual learners have in a program of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and research, or past and present professional practice (Hass & Parkay, 1993).

Flexibility – the freedom to explore.

**Home school** – a learning/teaching situation in which children/teenagers/young adults spend the majority of a regular school day in or near the home instead of attending a conventional school (Pawlas, 2001).

**The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)** – an association formed to assist families involved in home schooling with legal challenges in state and federal courts (Farris, 1997).

**Individual needs** – the many differences that are inherent in a person, which must be accommodated through developmental stages (Williams, 1971).

**Lifelong learner** – one who continually desires to learn and masters required skills, constantly seeking new and better ways of doing their job and enjoying outside interests (Rieseberg, 1995).

**Microvouchers** – based on family income, parents will have the ability to deduct money from their local tax liability for each child who does not attend a public school (Monasco, 1996).

**Motivation** – the will and responsibility to proceed with a goal attaining success.

**Parent** – a person who has custody of the child (N.J.S. 18A: 1-1).

**Perceived rights of parents** – the legal rights of parents and guardians toward the education of their children (Carper, 1992).

**Performance grants** – the opportunity given to the family to choose the learning services it finds most suitable (Monasco, 1996).

**Private school** - a nonpublic institution where instruction is imparted (N.J.S. 18A: 1-1).

Public school – a public institution established by a school district or by a county school superintendent where instruction is imparted (N.J.S. 18A: 1-1).

#### Significance of The Study

“We are a nation at risk. We are a nation, that is, whose 13-year-olds have average math skills that rank below those in 14 other developed countries, according to one 1991 study” (Gleick, 1995, p. 67). By the time students reach college, professors are many times forced to teach the basics first prior to teaching the college level subject matter. In 1994 U.S. spending on education was estimated at \$484 billion. Less than half of the \$5,300 spent per pupil each year goes into the classroom. Although the proposals for reforming education are diverse, a community-based program such as home schooling points out growing success. “We have had a one-size-fits-all system, and it doesn’t work”, says Diane Ravitch author of National Standards in American Education. Home schooling is obviously headed in the right direction.

The traditional school usually conforms to a bureaucratic structure. These schools are large. They offer many courses. The courses are organized in departments. There is very little contact between the staff and the student. Tracking is evident. The principal acts as a CEO. The public schools supposedly take the burden off of the parents of raising their children. However, stronger than ever is the dissent in regard to curriculum, structure, and the belief system. The twentieth century has made schooling compulsory but extended to varied styles. What seems to be ever expanding is home schooling. The reasons for home schooling range from the distaste of the secular world transmitted by the public schools to absolutely

“unacceptable pedagogical practices.” The twentieth century homes have in some cases reverted to the mode of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries becoming the center of work, worship and formal instruction. “Perhaps the home schooling phenomenon is more than just a protest against the religious, social, political, and/or pedagogical climate of public and, to a lesser extent, private schools . . . home schooling has again become visible on our educational landscape” (Carper, 1992, p. 256).

### Summary

The rise of home schooling is one of the most significant social trends of the past half-century (Lines, 2000). Home schooling is a reemergence of an old practice but for very distinct modern reasons. Primarily, it reestablishes the family as the center to a child’s learning. Second, it is a desire to be free from the education bureaucrats. Home schooling is a parent choice not to send their children to school, but to be the family that meets the needs of their children.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century presents the rapid growth of home schooling as an astonishing movement with credible data of success. In introspect the mid-1980’s estimated 50,000 children being home schooled. The 1990’s had probable growth from 250,000 to 355,000 children. Towards the end of the 1990’s the best possible estimate was 700,000 home schoolers. Currently from 2000 to 2001 the growth is at a rate of predicting 1.5 to 2 million home school children. Home schooling is a serious education alternative.

In the age of school restructuring, home schooling has established itself as an alternative. It is becoming well known, respected and accepted. Home schooling

includes, families of diverse backgrounds embracing a philosophy of parent choice and student needs. It is considered to be not a movement of separatism, but one of active membership in both the family and community. Preserving the values and ideals of the American family within the education and raising of future generations is the renewal of home schooling.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Researchers have found that it is hard to ignore the nation's academically underachieving students and the American public school system. Anderson (2001) remarks about the ever-growing movement of the American home school children at a brisk 15 percent annual growth rate. Serving as a benchmark of what is possible in the turn-of-the-millennium America, home schooling awakens many to the existing school ills of underachieving, morally irresolute, disorderly, and often scary public schools.

In an upward battle swelling from Christian fundamentalists, Catholics, Jews, hippies to a full array of American secularists, families are joining the ranks of home schooling. Historically, home schooling was an adversary of government, legislature and judicial courts. The parent choice to educate at home was restricted. About 30 years ago in 1969 Raymond Moore set the groundwork that would legitimize home schooling as one of the great, populist educational movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lyman, 1998). Issues surrounding home schooling have been illustrated by and supported by religious differences, nontraditional education and distance education, and the advancement of on-line technology. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is representative of home schooling as largely deregulated, allowing for an easier parent choice and student needs.

## Government, Legislative and Judicial Influences on Home Schooling

### Federal Government and Home Schooling

“A more favorable legal climate also signals the coming of age of home schooling. Twenty years ago, many states did not allow it” (Lines, 1996, p. 63). The right to privacy, and parent choice referring to home education are issues in the Constitution with certain ambiguous degrees of protection. What gives a sound base to definite convictions for home schooling is definite court ruled cases. From the Lockner era to the modern era case, *Wisconsin v. Yoder* prevents “free rein by the states in restricting parental choice of home education for their children” (Thompkins, 1991, p. 303). The Lockner era began with *Meyer v. Nebraska* when a private tutor was teaching children a foreign language to elementary school age children. Convicted of this violation according to state law that prohibited this, it went to court on the basis that American citizenship must be enlightened, enforced and strengthened in all civic matters. Under the fourteenth amendment, Meyer won her case with the right to choose a vocation and these rights were being violated. The teacher’s “right to teach and the right of parents to engage him so to instruct their children . . . are within the liberty of the (fourteenth) amendment” (Id. at 400. as cited in Thompkins, 1991, p. 304).

Following Meyer two years later came *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 1925 “the high court upheld, in more general terms, the right of parents to direct the education of their children” (Lines, 1996, p. 63). In this case state statutes were forcing parents to send their children to public schools instead of the private schools. The state cannot unreasonably interfere with the business and interests of private schools.

Similar to this case included the final segment of the Lockner-era trilogy, *Farrington v. Toshushige* restricting federal law in the Territory of Hawaii “as too restrictive of private school.” “The Court rejected the contention that the government’s interest in assimilating and indoctrinating aliens with American ideals could operate to totally control private schools and choices by parents” (Thompkins, 1991, p. 304).

From 1927 to 1972 the Supreme Court did not address issues of education where parent decisions and rights were in concern. However, “in 1972, in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Court did restrict compulsory school requirements in a limited ruling involving the rights of Amish students not to attend high school” (Lines, 1996, p. 63). This case not only involved parents’ rights, but also religious rights of choice. This was an education beyond public and private schools. “The plaintiffs in *Yoder* were Old Order Amish who contended that the compulsory school attendance statute interfered with their first amendment rights of free exercise of religion” (Thompkins, 1991, p. 305). Based on the religious beliefs and parents’ personal beliefs regarding their children “. . . the right of parents to control the education of their children is protected by numerous provisions of the United States Constitution, including free exercise of religion, free speech, family privacy, and parental liberty, and has been consistently recognized by the courts” (White, 1999). These cases especially have protected home schoolers.

#### State Regulations and Home Schooling

If fundamental rights outright clash with the state’s interest deemed to be compelling, the state will choose the least restrictive. This is the case in home schooling. The state responds quickly in comparison to the courts. In many states it



outright forbade home schooling. Today, home schooling is allowed in all states with the contingency that the home schooling family fill out basic information with either the state or the local education agency. "While laws vary widely across the country, the trend in most states has been a relaxation of home-schooling regulations – much to the chagrin of public school administrators" (Ramsey, 1992, p. 21). It is easier for parents to make the decision to teach their children. "The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is a national organization that provides members with legal representation in the event of a legal challenge by government officials" (Duffey, 1998, p. 8). The week of September 19-25, 1999 was designated "National Home Education Week" by the United States Senate sponsored by Senator John Ashcroft. The highlights of this resolution state that, "parents have the fundamental right to direct the up-bringing of their children; family participation and parental choices in pursuit of educational excellence are important; and training in the home strengthens the family and guides children in setting the highest standards for their lives which are essential elements to the community of morality in our culture" (Selected News & Announcements, 1999).

### Attitudes Toward Home Schooling

#### Public School and Curriculum

On the other hand the state may require an "equivalent" program to that of the public schools. But this very program known as a curriculum is the contention of dissatisfaction that motivates parents to home school their children. "Despite the concerns expressed by politicians, parents, and community leaders, our nation's public schools have not improved" (Lawrence, 1994, p. 7). The typical American

high school day spends an average of three hours a day on core academic subjects such as English, math, science, history geography, foreign languages, civics and fine arts. In comparison to German, French and Japanese students, this is only 50% of what international students do in a normal day. "The typical U.S. public school curriculum has been 'dumbed down,' at the same time schools have taken over the responsibility for teaching everything from health to consumer affairs" (Lawrence, 1994, p. 7). Requiring parents to follow this curriculum is quite intrusive. "Most state laws give a laundry list of required courses, such as reading, math, English, spelling, art, music, physical education, science, US history, geography, state history, health and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution" (Selected News & Announcements, Farris, 1997). Where is its worth when core curriculum is less than a half of a school day in a student's life in a public school?

#### The Moore Formula

Curriculum development in home schooling is especially inclusive in The Successful Homeschool Family Handbook: A Creative and Stress-free Approach to Homeschooling by Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore. "The Moore formula for home schooling emphasizes a creative curriculum, skill-building work, and community or family service, and which results in low stress, low cost, and high achievement and sociability" (ERIC ED360 167, 1994). Many home schooling curriculums adhere to that of the public schools, leaving very little room for creativity, resulting in parent burnout and student frustration. The Moore Formula targets the child's interest and motivation. As the child's level of comprehension develops in various stages, the child contributes on each level to learning. Home education should not reflect

conventional schools. It should not have the "formal pressures to read, many workbooks, programs that require a lot of close work before videos or computer – especially during the first ten to twelve years, lack of adult encouragement, and an imbalance in work and service" (Moore, 1994 as cited in ERIC ED360 167, 1994, p. 13). If a child is sent to a conventional school, the mere supplement creative activities of quality adult attention can also invite a child to excel. The choice of home schooling cannot be shallow. It must be authoritative in research on all programs and materials.

Home schooling is the alternative education that provides the very best education and socialization for the child. For the new teacher role of the 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum paradigm, a home school parent model is advisable: "(1) responding warmly to their students; (2) providing a consistent model of good values in a ration where their influence would count heavily; (3) teaching only tasks for which the child is ready; and (4) encouraging children to explore their own interests and to work out their own imaginations instead of only adult-contrived myths and fairy tales" (Moore, 1994, as cited in ERIC ED360 167, 1994, p. 16). In the conventional school, site-based decision making with parental involvement will help to provide for the children who do not have a home school choice. With the assistance of the parent to master the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling, the more time to explore, research and by high school "effectively operate on their own."

Individual needs are met in home schooling. Every individual is as different as their fingerprints. The freedom to grow naturally actually creates each individual's academic framework. The loving parent and the teacher who cares can best know

this in a child. "Whether at home or at school, freedom and flexibility have a way with children as well as adults!" (Moore, 1994 as cited in ERIC ED360 167, 1994, p. 18). A good basic education invites a child to bring out their natural talents and intellectual abilities. Home schooling customizes learning to fit each child's needs. In an informal way, a balance is achieved within an unpretentious systematic structure. The freedom to explore makes it grow to a yet greater level of success.

In some states a certified teacher/parent was once required. For the home school parent who fits this mold, they actually must unlearn what they learned. Being taught to teach mass production is not individual learning for the home schooler. Successful home teachers are curriculum entrepreneurs. School-type curricula with accompanying textbooks and workbooks belong in a crammed six-hour or more a day classroom. One "may discover (1) how easy it is; (2) what fun it is to glide instead of plod, to have fun as a master teacher of your own children; and (3) how foolish it is to drop conventional baggage on your home as so many curriculum publishers and state departments of education propose today" (Moore, 1994 as cited in ERIC ED369 167, 1994, p. h22). Home school curriculum pursues individual interests, learning and development, exploiting each child's motivational ability. "Every child, as all parents know, marches determinedly along to his or her own drummer. Home-schools, - where the student-teacher ratio is about as good as it gets, - are in a unique position to zero in on each student's learning style, to adopt to the needs and interests of the individual. In home-school, you can strike while the educational irons are hot, and you have the freedom to drop them when they're cold" (Rupp, 1994 as cited in Lawrence, 1994, p. 8). The approaches to home schooling curriculum vary, but are

consistent with learning style and philosophy with the time and ability to focus on strengths.

The home schooling day may consist of the use of a curriculum and other times it may not. Most families avoid conventional school curriculums entirely. Daily life and natural curiosity of children is what most parents rely on to excite the eagerness of the child to learn. To replace the convention curriculum "parents may decide to provide resources, tools, support and encouragement but no lessons and no timetable" (Lawrence, 1994, p. 10). In California school districts, "in an attempt to keep home schoolers linked with the public schools, gives a sort of curriculum subsidy to home-schooling families: \$1,000 per child per year to purchase district-approved textbooks and other teaching tools" (Natale, 1992, p. 27). Home schooling parents are home schooling to avoid the conventional curriculum of mass education that is structured, rigid and sometimes bizarre in presentation. "Learning to talk is a basic skill, and our children learn to do it very well without a curriculum or a timetable" (Lawrence, 1994, p. 10).

The practicality of home schooling is the everyday life experiences. It is a curriculum that has greater flexibility. This flexibility is an advantage for the child. " 'Courses in the home school could lead children into the garden to study botany, or to the local zoo to study zoology'" (Avner as cited in Simmons, 1994, p. 48). Spontaneous needs and demands of the child motivate far beyond the foundation level to meaningful learning. "Often, the supervisory parents allow their children to assume responsibility for choosing and carrying out projects as the children mature" (Everhart & Harper, 1997, p. 51). Choosing a curriculum for one's home school is

certainly an experience and can be overwhelming. "An umbrella school provides the curriculum, teacher support services, testing and record keeping" (White, 1997).

There are also home schoolbook fairs. There are least expensive and most expensive, and the parent has the option to tailor the program to the needs of the child. "A quick thought on the matter of curriculum: it is a resource not a rule book. If you choose to use it wisely, don't let it use you!" (Home Educate, 1999). "There is one word to describe your home school curriculum choice: Endless!

1. You can choose to use all textbooks, you can choose to use a total unit study approach or a blend of the two!
2. You can use a curriculum style that is totally your own or one that is prepared by others!
3. You can use almost any combination of books and information that suits your home school!
4. Children learn! Find the style that fits your family and go for it!" (Home School Education Association, 1999).

"Parents can even enroll their kids in a mail-order school, complete with lessons and tests that are sent back to the school and graded" (Sullivan, 1993, p. 3).

### Issues Surrounding Home Schooling

#### Religious Differences

The stereotyped home schooler is one who has made this choice for religious reasons. "Homeschooling used to be the province of the religious right" (Pfleger, 1998, p. 11). In the 1980's public schools were perceived by many as anti-family culture. Home schooled families relied on other religious groups for added

curriculum. "Home schooling does allow families to incorporate their personal religious beliefs and values into all areas of the curriculum" (Dahm, 1996, p. 69). In some cases home schooling actually gives time to practice religious services. For many years fear of church and states has caused legal friction. "Instead of working side-by-side with religious establishment, the educational establishment has attempted to strangle religion's influence" (Jeub, 1994, p. 52). In many cases parents worry about schools teaching conflicting values. "Religion is a major part of the American culture, but public schools fail to take religion seriously" (Jeub, 1994, p. 52). Recognizing that it is part of the American culture, public schools have actually made religious culture have the right to choose home schooling.

Further than religious culture comes morality and varied overwhelming parent concerns, "including overcrowded and underfunded schools, fear of violence and drugs, and concerns about subject matter and the overall quality of education" (Crum, 1995, p. 34). Education does not evolve around the menaces of society, nor does it evolve around attendance and discipline. Parents of home schoolers can "...engage in instruction focusing primarily on religious teachings, moral values and patriotism mixed with basic skills" (Russo & Gordon, 1996, p. 17). Many home schooling families have rejected the public schools on religious grounds. "For these families, home schooling combines a Christian lifestyle and plenty of family time with academic pursuits" (Taylor, 1997, p. 111). A lifestyle of godliness, which keeps them out of public schools, fuels their home. Parents who choose home schooling for religious reasons are approximately 36% nationwide. According to Dr. Glenn Kimber, a person is not an educated person until he learns to serve. "Learning to

serve God, family, and community should be the aim and end of all true learning” (Kimber, 1998). Public schools actually eliminate religion from public life altogether as found by home schoolers and are not about to risk a family decline or decay.

#### Nontraditional Education and Distance Education

Home schooling is a legitimate educational alternative representing the 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum paradigm in education. “Ironically, recent shifts in the philosophy and methods of teaching – changes that have been fostered by the academic community itself – may also be contributing to a climate that encourages parents to try their hand at teaching at home” (Crum, 1995, p. 34). The traditional classroom of passively absorbing information is no longer logical. Open classrooms and achievement-based learning programs give children a natural inclination to learn. Parents at home motivate out of love the curiosity of their children to follow with the most logical conclusion. This trend of education is “. . . a remedy for the overcrowded classrooms, cookie-cutter curriculum, and indifferent teachers that plague so many public school systems” (Pfleger, 1998, p. 11). Home schooling customizes an education to meet the needs of a child. Educational reform and restructuring is on the rise for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The unconventional approach is to learn by experience through real-life experiences rather than a classroom. “The most important issue is probably not so much whether the method works better than traditional schooling, but rather how to make home schooling as effective as possible” (Latham, 1998, p. 85). School reform in public education is to improve public education through teaching techniques, school curriculum, technology, administrators, community people, and parent involvement. “The more extensive the



parent involvement, the higher the student achievement. When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently. When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior" (National PTA, 1997, p. 7). Parent and family involvement in home schooling as an educational alternative promotes social, emotional and academic growth in children.

### On-line Technology

Fortunately, with the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology has given traditional schools, and for that matter businesses and people worldwide, the opportunity to reform. No one can escape technology. The home schooler is not alone. "Home schoolers are linking up with E-mail, and on-line classes" (Natale, 1995, p. 34). High school curriculums are on-line and home schoolers can log on. The Internet offers home schoolers research and a wide variety of educational software. They can reach other home schooling families around the world. The at-home virtual school gives the home schooler an opportunity to talk to a teacher and even be instructed in an on-line course. The impact of technology on home schoolers is tremendous. Cyber support groups are being used in home-education circles. Home schoolers communicate with other home schoolers. Information is current without wasting time. Technology actually makes home schooling more appealing. "Cyber school students say on-line education improves grades and relationships" (McLean, 1998). Technology is creating an educational reform in which families have extraordinary choices to educate their children. "Add a personal computer and some or all of its applications, and the home school opens windows of learning

opportunities and acclimates the home-schooled child to one of the primary media of tomorrow's workplace" (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 13). The resourceful home schooler with technology has formed groups with mutual interests, support groups, cooperatives and co-ops. On-line sharing, organizing and hosting make social interaction for the home schooler an important technology advancement encompassing personal expertise, independence and challenging opportunities.

### Parents

Parents' decision to home school their children is often after they have exhausted all alternative means of education. "Families reported that home schooling provided a better learning environment than traditional schools and that they home schooled because of dissatisfaction with those schools" (Cappello, ERIC ED385 903 1995, p. 6). The mother is usually the primary instructor, while the father plays an active but supplementary role in the education of their children. Most parents are college educated and practicing Christians. These families may fall into three categories: (1) ideological, (2) pedagogical, and (3) sociological. The ideological object to what they thought was being taught in public and private schools. The pedagogical teach their children out of a shared respect for the children's intellect, creativity and innate desire to learn. The sociological express concern with racial discrimination, peer pressure, violence and all unacceptable behavior. Within these three categories, parents have viewed religious convictions, dissatisfaction with curriculum, protection from negative influences and philosophy, family unity, self-esteem, self-responsibility and a time to pursue the arts in depth. Parent involvement

is a critical component to a child's achievement and educational improvement. Home schooling represents this.

Parents as parents.

Most parents want to provide the best for their children. Most parents will comment that one of their goals is to facilitate the development of intellect and character, not merely to prepare students for college or a career (Pawlas, 2001). The growth of their children, whether it is intellect, character, college and career as a whole, has no single right answer for educating children. Home schooling means different things to different parents. For some families, home schooling means duplicating school at home, complete with textbooks, report cards and regularly scheduled field trips. For other parents, home schooling is simply the way they live their lives. Children and adults are living and learning together with a seamlessness that would challenge an observer to determine which was 'home' and which was 'school' (Homeschool Information Library, 2001). School at home, learning and living are completely integrated.

Celestine Kuchar (2001) states that as a parent of eight children, she and her husband Edward home school because they want their children to be strong in the four most important developmental areas: intellect, spiritual, apostolic and human virtues. For many, the deepest and most abiding benefit of home schooling is the claiming or reclaiming of their family. Home schooling families spend incredible amounts of time together living, learning and playing. They have the opportunity to develop a depth of understanding and a commitment to the family that is difficult to

attain when family members spend their days going in separate directions. Home schooling is more than just a school. It is a life-style (Bassett-Carmichael, 2001).

Many families like the flexibility home schooling provides for both parents and children. Children can learn about things they are interested in and at a time in their lives when they are ready to learn. School schedules do not hold parents back from planning vacations. Opportune times are often when the crowds are smaller or the costs are lower. Homeschool Information Library (2001) suggests that children can learn about the 'real world' by being a part of it – no artificial settings to provide exposure. Also stated is that children can receive a superior education attuned specifically to their own needs, learning styles, personalities, and interests at far less cost than that of a private or public school.

Parents are aware of their child's growth from the moment of birth. When they were babies and toddlers, parents can discover what their child is learning by spending time with them and observing the growth in their understanding of the world (McCarthy, 2000). McCarthy (2000) states that as a parent you will be home schooling your own children in your own way. The development of a child is individual in progress. Some may progress faster than others. Parents are always challenged to stay ahead of their child's/children's needs. "Home schooling parents eventually discover that, by providing individual attention and appropriate academic freedom, students who were burned out or restrained by labels can flourish in amazing ways" (Long, 2001).

### Parents as teachers.

Like parenting, teaching depends on quick, instinctive habits and behaviors that develop from deeply held ways of seeing and valuing (Meier, 1995). Parents and teachers instruct according to their own personal experiences. They envision what should be learned, needs to be learned and how to be learned. Vaguely enough these ideas become developed into goals. For home school parents as teachers these goals range from a simple list to a formal mission statement. Jane Smith (2001) states, "When things are not running smoothly, your goals list and mission statement can help you keep focused on your original purpose for home schooling." The process of home schooling enables the parent to become a teacher and formulate their own philosophy of education. A simple list of goals by Joyce Fleck Long (2001) is as follows:

1. Establish foundations that we could build upon in well-structured domains, such as math;
2. Combine repetition and discovery into an enjoyable learning process;
3. Make chronological and cultural connections within academic disciplines, such as geography and literature;
4. Move our classroom boundaries to include community resources;
5. Integrate practical experiences with theories, such as planting a garden and raising animals; and
6. Encourage creative and individual solutions to problems.

There are lots of options for families beginning to home school. The Educational Philosophy statement is not to overwhelm the parent as a teacher, and can merely

need to be nothing more than a review of relevant scriptures regarding the instruction of children (McCarthy, 2001).

The challenge for the parent as teacher is deciding on a curriculum. Learning is a lifelong enjoyable process, and a curriculum is not set in stone. Home school parents as teachers listen to their children. It is their education, and they are ready to run with it. Libraries are of great assistance. On the other hand, a home school parent can purchase a curriculum-in-a-box with everything from pencils to report cards. The new home school teacher likes the security of this from the first few months up to approximately a year. Not everyone will wind up with the same curriculum, nor should anyone try to follow a set pattern if it is not working for their child (Smith, 1999). Some parents will want a structured program, while others will find an unstructured approach to be more useful. Grade level is not thought about. The combination of several children in the family can work together on learning. A large part of home education is to allow each child to pursue interests on their own. Ann Leadbetter (1997), a home school mom and journalist, says that she became a better teacher as she began to get out of her children's way and let them discover their own learning opportunities.

As is a curriculum, to test or not to test, or whether to use or not to use a grading system is a parent choice. These are sometimes used as starting points for the first year or so. The How to Start Homeschooling newsletter (2000) suggests to either test at home or to use testing software since this will help put the parent and children to be more at ease and will also enable the parent to use testing for what it was really designed for – a diagnostic tool! However, after the parent has been

working with their child or children, they will know what his/her strengths and weaknesses are without testing. In today's conventional schools, needing to help kids prepare for state-mandated standardized tests forces educators to stick to a curriculum by putting in a lot of time and energy just to submit to school officials, limiting and compromising teachers' abilities to meet the needs of children and to encourage them to learn in ways that work best for them (Kaseman, 2001). According to Zeise and Smith (1999) two main drawbacks with testing are: for the most part, such tests only show how well kids take tests, and the use of such tests inevitably leads to "teaching to the test," in order to give the appearance of raising test scores.

Home schoolers are more interested in real-world applications. Contests are fun for those who have mastered some skill and would like to compete with peers. While not for all, a contest can be lots of fun when a child feels well prepared and is pitted against only those with similar skills. County fairs, spelling bees, and geography bees are examples of such contests. Games and exhibitions give practice and test new skills, and can be fun for all.

#### Parent school relationship.

In the past most home school parents educated their children through the primary grades, and then decided to commence with the local school district either at middle school and usually by high school. As a result of technology, co-ops, conferences, seminars and workshops, parents are opting for new and innovative strategies. Ray (1997) found that 89 percent of 1,657 home schooling families he polled, reported intentions to continue teaching their children at home all the way through high school. Boothe, Bradley, Flick, and Kirk (1997) surveyed 91 percent of

public school administrators who revealed a lack of knowledge of state and district/school policies regulating home schooling. However, indirectly home schooling families are under the supervision of local school districts.

The requests of home schoolers to participate in extracurricular activities or to attend school on a part-time basis are beginning to take shape in many school districts around the country. Not all requests are received open-mindedly. Some schools have established very strict guidelines for extracurricular activities such as passing grades and parent responsibility with transportation. Lafee (1998) discovered that some guidelines included weekly visits by teachers to validate that the student has passing grades in at least four major subjects. Parents must be responsible for all transportation to campuses and points of departure for games (Lafee, 1998). For a home schooler to take a class in the public high school in some cases has cause controversy. Some board members indicated they were philosophically opposed to accommodating students whose parents have opted out of the regular school system (Benning, 1999). Some local school districts receive compensation from the state for any home schooled or private school students they enroll on a part-time basis. The financial aid is regulated according to the formula used for full-time students.

Christine Webb (1997) concludes that home schooling strengthens families and communities. Strong home schools are an asset to our communities and our nation. They provide alternatives to conventional schools, save taxpayers' money and provide valuable perspectives on learning and education. This can be a common ground for home schoolers and public schools to establish. The fundamental ideas of



home schoolers are preserved, public schools are being exposed to them and visa versus and both groups are benefiting.

Winters (2000) reported that home schoolers applying to colleges either directly go or often enroll in a course at a local college to experience both the academic rigor and the social distractions of college life. The Home School Legal Defense Association (1997) revealed that 565 colleges and universities were accepting home schoolers. Stanford University accepted 26 percent of the 35 home schoolers who applied for fall 2000 admission – nearly double its overall acceptance rate (Winters, 2000). Keeping these educational lines open focuses on what is best for the student through parents, teachers and educational leaders.

#### Parent attitudes.

The attitudes of home school parents according to Jane M. Smith (2001) are successful endeavors of both parents to:

1. Develop a sense of family unity of purpose.
2. Cultivate honesty, perseverance, chastity, social responsibility, civic duty, and awareness of the existence and beneficence of a power greater than themselves.
3. Encourage the use of all of their talents for the good of themselves and other.
4. Teach belief in a Creator who loves and cares for them.
5. Develop a lifelong love of learning for its own sake.
6. Cultivate a desire for independent learning.

Home schooling families have often been portrayed as “Dad going to work, Mom staying at home with kids.” The reality for many families, is much different: single

parents home school, working parents homes school, dads at home home school, parents with ongoing illnesses home school. Some families home school some of their children but not others. Grandparents home school grandchildren. It may take a little creative juggling, but many of the perceived barriers can be gotten around with some thoughtful problem solving.

The mother typically assumes the largest share of the teaching responsibility, although fathers almost always pitch in, and in a substantial number of families – possibly as many as one out of ten – fathers take the primary responsibility (Lines, 2000). Outside of being the “provider and disciplinarian, children need more of their fathers and fathers need more of their children (Wyatt, 1997). Wyatt (1997) a home school dad, views the attitude of the American parent as the father brings home the paychecks, take out the trash, fix things that break, and leave home schooling to their wives.

The gender role of the father is limited. Home schooling parents mostly agree that home schooling is primarily “a mother-child thing.” The father works full-time spending an average of 40-50 hours a week away from the family. Therefore Gary Wyatt (1997) suggests:

1. Dinnertime is a terrific opportunity to talk about important things with your family and to discuss the happenings of the day with them.
2. Read good books with your children each day, possibly in the evening.
3. Look for teaching moments everywhere you are.
4. Take your family places.
5. Work on projects together.

6. Become an enthusiastic life long learner yourself, and by so doing set a genuine example for your children.

Both mother and father of home schooling families spend time on what is truly important, the family. This is what makes a difference in the lives of each member of the home schooling family.

#### Social support groups.

There are numerous groups for home school families to join. There are even “umbrella schools” that provide an “Independent Study Program,” but attendance at monthly meetings are required. There are home school support groups in most communities where they can interact with other home schoolers. Also, there are explicit Christian support groups. Many support groups focus on gathering their children together. The increased trend is to gather home school students to go on field trips, join in on special classes, have park days, youth groups, home school sports teams, and home school proms. The National Homeschool Association invites home schoolers to participate in the National Homeschooling Roundtable Conference held in Becket, Massachusetts. This is a workshop designed to discuss and to consider the future of home schooling (Webb, 1997). This workshop takes place annually and works toward a secure home schooling future in this country. There are no “Plans for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” There are no documents of agreements, nor are there pronouncements or mandates. This is a lot of thoughtful conversation, participation, sharing resources, gathering for activities and discussions in order to make an important contribution to the growth and stability of the home schooling

movement. Grassroots organizing and networking have been a source of the home schooling community's strength (Webb, 1997).

### Students.

Socially home school parents do not isolate their children. They can easily be involved in an array of extra-curricular activities such as Scouts, 4-H or sports teams. Home schooled children "are probably more likely to be independent and self-motivated" (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998, p. 4). A response to why home schooling is socially better is as follows:

Less negative peer influence

Different aged children together

More control of social interactions

More real-world learning with parents

More time interacting with parents

More security and comfort. (Marchant and MacDonald (1994, p. 69)

Home schoolers typically make use of community resources such as "the library, museum, art gallery, theater presentations, parks/woods, zoo and church" (Marchant & Mac Donald, 1994, p. 69). Parents can create this flexible arrangement, relying on many varied learning services, resources and technologies. This learning process is a systemic curriculum developed by parents, which is innovative and decentralized. "Parents are a child's life support system. Consequently, the most important support a child can receive comes from the home" (Anonymous, 1997, p. 8).

Real-life experiences are an alternative known as "unschooling." Home schoolers start out in the real world uninterrupted by "time to go to school." This is

infinitely more learning than any classroom can give. Flexibility and appreciation for the diversity in society and the encouraging of a child's own interests are the home schooler's development without a formal textbook curriculum. A natural love for learning surfaces. There is no set way to teaching and learning. Hands-on is the everyday life as a learning experience, combining household activities with textbook learning. Home schoolers have even been known to start cottage industries. "A typical home school's network of resources is so diverse that even without technology, home learning is a rich and active process. Add a personal computer and some or all of its applications, and the home school opens windows of learning opportunities and acclimates the home-schooled child to one of the primary media of tomorrow's workplace" (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 13). Home schoolers pool their resources and mutual interests. There are support groups, co-ops, and meeting places with other home schoolers. This allows for travel, discussion, organizing, considering and sharing curriculum, hosting special events all involving resources, expertise and social interaction.

The home schooler at times, especially of high school age, may need to take advanced courses and especially lab science courses at a public high school. One cannot turn a kitchen into a chemistry lab, nor can every parent be equipped to teach this or even a foreign language to advanced levels. There is always the option for dual enrollment. Fortunately on-line access gives the ability to conduct library searches. Home schoolers can have dual enrollment in many accredited umbrella schools in order to provide a high school transcript. With the completion of correspondence curriculum this is possible. "The hundreds of colleges that have

accepted home schoolers include Harvard, MIT, and Princeton, plus state universities ranging from the University of Alaska at Fairbanks to the University of Michigan” (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 13).

The final critique of the home schooler is their social development. Most critics are outright incorrect when thinking that the home schooler is alienated. On the other hand, the home schooler is more in touch and more in tune with the workplace and diversity in society. “Several studies indicate that home schooling encourages a healthier socialization that more closely mirrors the working place” (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 14). Public school socialization is confined to a conformity, therefore, being horizontal and temporary with immediate peers. Home schoolers socialize vertically towards responsibility, independence and maturity easing into adulthood and the workplace with communication skills, socialization and daily living skills. Home schoolers are lifelong learners “. . . constantly seeking new and better ways of doing their jobs and enjoying outside interests” (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 15). Conforming to peer groups in public schools will make the competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace a struggle. The home schooler thrives in the workplace of tomorrow as a lifelong learner. Their lives allow for instruction, flexibility and freedom permeating their daily life. Work is perceived as natural. “Schooling,” notes Howard Gardner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is a mass-oriented phenomenon based on a “uniform idea”: “You teach the same thing to students in the same way and assess them all in the same way.” The home school movement suggests that educational choices need not be limited to public and private schools.

Rather home schooling “. . . can create far more flexible arrangements, relying on an array of learning services, resources, and technologies. . .” (Monasco, 1996, p. 22).

#### Student needs.

According to John Dewey (1916), learning is a personal process of development, which arises from experience. Building on these experiences in the form of reconstruction or reorganization adds to the existing experience giving it increase direction. This direction is therefore on a course of subsequent experience understanding and exploring the world. Dewey suggests a process of helping the student develop his or her own natural ability to discover and understand the world. The true meaning of learning is when an individual must set his or her own personal curriculum to fit their needs, rather than giving others the right to prescribe what and when others should learn. “Our society is unused to trusting children to learn about the world and feels they must be made to learn, that they are raw material to be molded by experts, empty vessels to be filled on an assembly line” (Priesnitz, 2001). Nathan Isaacs (1973) describes the typical classroom as a “looking-glass world.” Isaacs states that when children attend school, they are taken from their situation of living/learning into a totally new, unreal way of life. This new way of life, which is falsely described as “learning,” requires a different set of rather passive behaviors, orchestrated by an unknown adult and directed by a master plan that is also unknown to the children. Home school educators recognize that the process of learning is often more important than the content. The protection of the love of learning and creativity, as well as the development of problem solving and research skills, sometimes transcends the specific facts that are to be learned. They also recognize

that facts and skills are more easily retained when they are learned in a context relevant to a child's daily life and experience.

Life is an education, and it begins from childhood. The most important focus should be a child's needs. The situation that serves the best interests and growth of a child is learning in a secure and responsive home environment in which caring, respectful parents are the teachers. Parenthood is the guide that should satisfactorily accomplish the development of a child to explore their environment, create, learn and grow. Children are learning all the time. The lessons they are learning are life lessons. According to Marnie Ko (1998), in "real life" children can learn all the time stimulating all forms of intelligence such as:

1. Linguistic Intelligence:

Books, tape recorders, typewriters, computers, story-telling, writing, public speaking, debate, reading, and writing.

2. Logical Mathematical:

Strategy games like chess, checkers, and Monopoly, strategy games like Rubik's Cube, math puzzles, crossword puzzles, and word searches, science kits, computer software, thinking games and puzzles.

3. Spatial:

Films, slides, videos, diagrams, maps, charts, art, telescopes, Lego, building toys, optical illusion.

4. Bodily-Kinesthetic:

Playgrounds, running, hiking, swimming, gyms, model-building kits, wood carving, model clay, machines, animals, costumes, make-believe.



5. Interpersonal:

Clubs, groups, social programs, cooperation, interactive games, group projects, discussions.

6. Intrapersonal:

Self-paced study, individual projects, free time, private spaces, diaries, solo activities, hideaways, tents, and secret places.

Howard Gardner (1998) feels that children have the capacity to be a genius in at least one of these areas of intelligence, if they are allowed to develop at their own rate of readiness. Children are all individuals, as different as thumbprints, and all children learn differently, at different speeds, at different times, with different interests.

Nurturing individuality and encouraging creativity when it comes to education and learning is meeting the needs of a child to develop into a healthy, functioning adult in society. Home schooling, families say, allow you to tailor your educational approach to a child's interests, innate gifts, and learning styles.

In the educational arena of home schoolers, academic education goes hand-in-hand with religious education. Some believe religious duty requires them to teach their own children; others seek to integrate religion, learning, and family life. Many families have other philosophical and religious reasons for their choice. Joining them are many home schoolers who simply seek the highest quality education for their child, which they believe public and even private schools can no longer provide.

The philosopher John Locke maintained that the primary aim of education was virtue, and that the home was the best place to teach it. Even John Dewey (1916) expressed regrets about formal education/schooling when he said that, "A society is a

number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with common aims. . . The radical reason that the present school cannot organize itself as a natural social unit is because just this element of common and productive activity is absent.” According to Dewey, the school is artificially set apart from society and isolates the ordinary conditions and motives of life. Dewey believed that the parent can well recognize the needs of their child, and can supply this need through a learning experience.

Having supplied the child with learning academically and religiously, the home schooler steps out into an active community life. Evidence suggests that the vast majority of home schooling families are more active in civic affairs than public school families. Christian Smith and David Sikkink of the University of North Carolina found, based on responses to the 1996 National Household Education Survey, that home schoolers demonstrate higher levels of participation at almost every level of civic activity. This survey included those choosing Catholic school, other private religious schools, secular private schools, and home schooling. Each of these groups were more likely to vote, contribute money to political causes, contact elected officials about their views, attend public meeting or rally, or belong to community groups and volunteer associations. These characteristics explained activity of the families who had chosen private schools and especially home schooling.

Finally, Marnie Ko (1998), in The Marnie Ko Collection discusses the need for children to have an insatiable hunger to explore the world based on the real need to have nurturing, loving parents who will make sure that they are filled with the

knowledge and force to learn and accomplish this. Marnie Ko stands strong against an en mass of kids in a cement building. "Children don't learn about the real world segregated by age in masses of 20 to 30 kids. This isn't a situation that occurs in the real world, only in schools." Considering that life in itself is an education, children need interests and passions in life in order that they may live lives that are productive, creative, positive and fulfilling. Children do not need to have a controlled knowledge embedded into them. Marnie Ko states that children will learn what they need to know if they are encouraged to ask questions, make decisions, try new things, explore, build, create, think, and play, everyday, anytime, and anywhere.

#### Student curriculum.

The richness of home schooling achievement is the wealth of challenging subjects that the student learns. Life in a nurturing family environment reinforces and embodies the learned practical ideals of a developing child and education. Most home school children spend time at libraries, museums, factories, nursing homes, churches, a parks department, or elsewhere. Usually, parents plan and implement the learning program, although sometimes they find a tutor or older children organize their own independent study. It may be a structured or an unstructured curriculum, and it may also involve shared lessons with other home schooling families.

There are many resources available to home schoolers. Local support groups share experiences, meet for common activities, and help newcomers get started. Home schooling associations provide advice and information, run conferences on legal, philosophical, and pedagogical issues, and review educational materials at exhibition booths. These resources also reflect the philosophical and pedagogical

diversity of home schoolers. The wide variety of curricula may range from: doing a grammar program on CD-ROM, reading in a quiet room, a mix of pre-designed curricula, including the well-known Saxon Math program, their own improvisations, and playing a musical instrument in a home school orchestra.

Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise (2000), co-authors of The Well-Trained Mind, offer a remarkable compendium of information designed to help home schooling parents give their children a traditional liberal education. Most of the home schoolers they have encountered were learning Greek, Latin, and other serious subjects that most public schools have abandoned. Their history lessons emphasized imagination – stirring biographies of great, world transforming men and women instead of the typical historical textbooks. “The rise of home schooling has sparked an explosion of marvelous curricula based on the ideal of a comprehensive liberal education” (Anderson, 2001). Home schoolers use a self-designed curriculum with the best books and techniques that are available.

#### Student extracurricular activities.

Very few home schoolers support the idea of home schoolers playing public school sports. It is especially opposed because it can lead to increased regulation of home schooling. Therefore, alternative approaches to sports are preferred by home schooling families. Larry and Susan Kaseman (2000) offer the following suggestions:

1. Participate in community sports teams.
2. Participate in community sports teams, organized by home schoolers, if they don't already exist.

3. Informal sports, such as neighborhood softball games, groups of home schooling teens, or a foursome for tennis.
4. Conventional private schools that allow home schoolers to pay a fee just to play sports.
5. Playing sports in college without having played in high school.
6. Participating in sport camps.
7. Playing individual sports that do not require a team, such as running and swimming.

In effect, home schooling offers better opportunities for sports than does attending a conventional school. Instead of playing high school sports, home schooling has the flexibility to encourage a child to become an outstanding athlete as a long-term goal. Home schooling simultaneously develops healthy minds and bodies. The exposure is not one of intense competition and pressure, but rather through a positive, supportive physical activity.

Along with sports, home schoolers are also involved in clubs and activities such as: mock trial, national spelling bees, drama clubs, church groups, 4-H Club, Little League, scouts and Gavel Club. John Mooney (2001) of The Star-Ledger newspaper recently wrote an article that claimed that for the first time in 18 years of competition, a team of eight home schooled students from South Jersey made the state finals of New Jersey's High School Mock Trial Competition. Although the home schoolers did not seize the crown, they got to the state finals and are just beginning. One home schooler's mother saw an article on mock trial and decided to start a team. A team was gathered and they practiced at the public library and the

home of one of the families. In New Jersey there are an estimated 2,900 home-schooled students.

#### Student socialization

Past accusations that home schoolers are isolated have been proven to be false. Socialization is one of the most important reasons parents choose to home school. The effect of home schooling on emotional and social adjustment is equal or bettering social skills than those kids educated in schools. Jean Piaget (1973), an acclaimed Swiss psychologist, has stated many times that he feels that children are better socialized at home through parental example than by interacting with other kids. When continuously interacting with children their own age, they often become peer dependent and allow for peer pressure. Therefore, socialization can either be positive or negative. When linked to the family, social development is through feelings of self-worth, value, and family experiences. Oftentimes the negative form of socialization is produced when children spend too much time with peers producing more of a self-centered individual. The question is whether or not children can receive positive socialization at school developing trust, empathy, affection, and encouragement in a controlled, crowded building let alone in a room of exactly the same age group five days a week.

Home schoolers are far from being isolated in their homes. They are very much involved in sports, music, church and varied groups. This interaction with others enables them to learn the values of tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation (Arrai, 1999). Parents also provide these skills and values. Home schoolers are

learning the necessary proper interpersonal interaction from both those older and younger than themselves.

Student achievement/excellence.

Children who have been home schooled generally achieve academic excellence. They learn and retain a variety of facts and skills achieving positive academic results. Home schooling has its advantages of one-to-one instruction, the time and space to make meaning of the world, and the lack of pressure to perform, all contributing to academic progress often beyond that of peers in the school system (Priesnitz, 2001). Home schoolers who have returned to high school are achieving excellent grades in advanced level programs, involved in extra-curricular activities and socially active. Home schoolers who have chosen to return to school on a college/university level have achieved academic success by first receiving above average SAT scores. "On the SAT, which began its tracking last year (1999), home-schoolers scored an average 1,083 (verbal 548, math 535), 67 points above the national average of 1,016. Similarly, on the 10 SAT 2 achievement tests most frequently taken by home-schoolers, they surpassed the national average on nine, including writing, physics and French" (Golden, 2000). Maralee Mayberry (1993), chairwoman of the sociology department at the University of Nevada, says, "Research has shown that the key elements in effective education are small class size, individualized instruction, and a disciplined, nurturing environment – all characteristic of home-schooling." Depending on the grade level and test subject area, home schoolers have placed in the 62<sup>nd</sup> to 91<sup>st</sup> percentile of national norms. This year homes schoolers scored an average of 1,100 on the SAT – a full 81 points

above the national average – and 22.8 on the ACT compared with the national average of 21 (Winters, 2000).

Finally, from school to the workplace, the mixed age, mixed ability environment of home schooling is similar to the workplace environment more than it is to the single grade classroom. The workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes multi-abilities and multi-generations. Students who have taken the route to conform to their peers will struggle with this level of competition. The home schooler, who has developed personal expertise and independence will find opportunities.

Telecommunications and home-based businesses are also a large and growing part of the work force. Home schoolers are familiar with these skills, which are compatible with self-discipline and initiative. Home schooling can well prepare children for the workplace of the future (Rieseberg, 1995).

#### Summary

The rise of home schooling from its historical strains to its effectiveness broadens the knowledge of American education. From the modest beginnings in one-room schoolhouses, American education has grown into a gargantuan government enterprise (Lyman, 1998). Educational reformers reflect a lesson from home schooling. Today, there is minimal government interference and the production of literate students at a fraction of the cost of any government program. John Lyon (1994) states that home schoolers like to say that the world is their classroom. Lyon (1994) has observed that schooling is what goes on in schools; education takes place wherever and whenever the nature with which we are born is nurtured so as to draw out of those capacities which conduce to true humanity. The home, the church, the



neighborhood, the peer group, the media, the shopping mall are all educational institutions.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

This study was designed to qualitatively analyze families that had home schooled for at least three years. The researcher learned why these families chose to home school making home schooling a way of life. Because the focus was on parent choice and student needs, the researcher wanted to compare the materials the families chose to be used the first, second and continued years of home schooling. The researcher then wanted to find out how they made these curricular choices, actually implemented the curriculum and met the student needs. The families had varying reasons for beginning their home school experience. Each family has either home schooled through high school or the definite desire to do so. Two methodologies were used. To collect data, the first was a written survey instrument that strictly dealt with demographic information for twenty-five participating families, developed by the author of the study. In addition, interviews were conducted with eight families selected from the original twenty-five based on the demographic information from the families. This selection was both heterogeneous according to the socio-economics and homogeneous according to categories. Suggestions and models for both the survey and interview were obtained from Babbie (1990) and Fink (1995). Finally, five families from the eight families were the researcher's case studies. The

researcher conducted weekly visits to these families and participated in home school events with the children. Gaining access to the home school community was open, friendly and warm building a strong rapport and trust.

Chapter Three will examine the study's research design, the participants, the instrument development, the data collection, and the data analysis used in this study. The researcher used the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, (American Psychological Association, 1994) as a guide for writing the dissertation.

### Research Design

The research design of this study involved two types of methodology. The first was a survey that contained thirteen demographic questions. The survey was an appropriate direct measure. As a direct measurement some of the issues that were considered in designing the survey included the order of the items, the clarity of the directions and questions, and the simplicity and length of the survey. Ordering of items on a survey was of some concern. Babbie (1990) suggests that the order impacts the less educated more than the more educated respondents. The choice of the demographic items was straight-forward and not meant to be subtle. The surveys were mailed to 25 families.

The second methodology involved the decision to use interviews to add to the richness of the data. Qualitative research allowed the investigator to interpret and reveal what people brought to the particular situation. It was naturalistic because the researcher frequented places where the events naturally occurred (Bogdan & Binklen, 1998). Triangulation or the method of combining methodologies was ideal. Bogdan

and Binklen (1998) state that triangulation is the use of multiple subjects, multiple researchers, and different theoretical approaches in addition to different data-collecting techniques. The research was therefore less vulnerable to errors that may be linked to one particular method. The use of multiple methods gave a cross-data validity check. The interview questions included several areas and experiences that the parents identified as curriculum. The interview questions enabled the researcher to look at both the social and the individual home contexts. It gave a unique view of how home schooling was seen, defined, and experienced by the participants. Most of the families were interviewed at home. The five case study families were interviewed in person at their homes. After a casual conversation, the interview was conducted and recorded verbatim on a tape.

This study included two years of networking with home school families, which was meeting one family after another who introduced the researcher to others in a chain reaction effect. The researcher attended many home school events and home school visitations. The more the researcher became involved, the more the researcher was so casually accepted. The researcher therefore, recognized the many integral parts of home schooling, the parent choice, the student needs, and the process of education that is a way of life.

#### Participants

This was a two-stage study. The first-stage comprised of mailing the survey that contained demographic questions to 25 families and interviewing 8 of the families that were currently home schooling. Interviews were either conducted in person, by phone or e-mail. The researcher analyzed the data, looking at similarities

and differences. From the 8 interviewed families, the researcher chose 5 case study families for further in-depth study. Observations, conversations with family members, participant observer, and document analysis were included in this second-stage.

#### Instrument Development

The original survey of 25 items included demographics, attitudes, and open-ended questions and comments. Realizing that this was too intricate and detailed in response, the researcher decided to develop two methodologies, which would give triangulation leading to less error and more validity. The researcher then comprised a survey of demographic information for 25 families, and an interview for 8 of the 25 families, from which were chosen five case study families. Upon completion of both the survey and the interview, both were sent to a jury of experts. Included was a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research and the role of the jury of experts. Composed of four professors in the field of education with 20 plus years (one of whom home schooled) and held doctoral level degrees, the jury of experts critiqued the survey of demographic information and the interview for home school parents. Anonymous critiques were returned to me by mail. Following the completion of the critiques a pilot study was administered to a home school family outside of the state of New Jersey.

#### Pilot Study Results

The results of the comments from the jury of experts and the pilot study allowed me to make necessary changes. The results from the pilot home school family indicated no problems and that the layout was sufficient.

As the interviewer, it was the researcher's responsibility to establish a climate to permit open and honest responses. Copies of the interview questions were sent in advance to every interviewee.

#### Data Collection

The survey of demographic information for participating families was sent out the last June 2001 after the Institutional Review Board granted approval with no conditions on June 19, 2001. A cover letter was included with two check-offs, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. One check-off asked if the respondent wanted a summary of the research. The second check-off asked if the respondent would be willing to be interviewed.

The interviews were conducted in July 2001. All the interviewees were contacted and arrangements were made for the visit or phone call. This study sought to explore multiple data sources and to discover patterns of generalization. In order to actually understand the parent choice to home school, choice and implementation of curriculum and the student needs, time had to be spent in their homes, observing the home school way of life. These families either volunteered to participate or were recommended by an insider. The researcher was never at a loss for families. The researcher actually had more than what was needed and the choice of participants, at times, became difficult.

Demographics of the participants were organized in the following categories: educational level and occupation of both parents, family income, number of children, grade level of students, number of years home schooling, number of visits to the

library per month, annual amount of money spent on curriculum per student, and religious affiliation.

Five families from the original 8 interviewed families were selected for further study as case studies. The primary concern was to have rich information cases providing an in-depth, descriptive study. The researcher therefore chose purposeful intensity sampling to give the clearest, best examples of home school choice, curriculum choices, instructional objectives and design, and student needs. They are cases, which furnish excellent or rich examples of interest. Keeping a research journal at all times helped with analysis and fitting the events into categories and patterns that eventually emerged.

As the researcher, the role frequently changed from observer to a participant-observer depending on the activities. The family environment was very comfortable and the researcher felt right at home. The researcher's presence never seemed to bother anyone. Everyone went about their own business and carried on with their schoolwork and responsibilities.

The researcher took extensive field notes while observing home school functions, during visits to activities the case study children attended, and while the researcher was in the homes of the case study families. Having made these detailed notes, primary points of interest and themes began to emerge. Informal conversations with the parents and the children often took place. Detailed notes continued to be taken. These notes were continuously reviewed and analyzed. On the other hand, the research journal was a record of personal notes and feelings. Family relationships, student needs, curriculum choices and implementation, and

instructions began to emerge. The interaction within the homes and the communities outweighed any difficulties or frustrations concerning their choice and the needs of their children on the part of the parents.

### Data Analysis

#### Interview Questions

The interviewing process led the researcher to many areas of parent choice and student needs. The researcher wrote down all the different areas and activities that the parents had mentioned in relation to 'school.' There were several similar categories that emerged. This brought the researcher's attention to the fact that the home school family's day is divided into segments of 'school activities' and 'home activities.' The two were inextricably intertwined and presented an accurate portrayal of home schooling from the participant's point of view. The list was as follows:

1. Parents' categories: support groups, field trips, exhibits, conferences and seminars
2. Every day is different
3. Curriculum
4. Library
5. Extracurricular and community activities
6. Fine arts
7. Community service
8. Apprenticeships
9. Chores
10. Employment



## 11. Record keeping

Finally, bar graphs and pie charts were used to present the frequencies found in the received 25 surveys of demographic information for the following: father's education level, mother's education level, father's occupation, mother's occupation, family income, number of children in family, grade level of students in study, number of years families have home schooled, visits to public library per month, dollars spent per student per year, religious affiliation of home school families.

An interesting analysis that emerged is that there is no 'typical day.' Every day remained flexible and open. This gave insights to many other areas of home school life. There were so many activities that they participated in that were considered 'school.' This flexibility was even noted every time parents made the choice to change the curriculum and mode of instruction. There was no major change. It always went smoothly as though it was just another day. Library books, textbooks, and computers were used on a regular basis. Every family had a computer and it was used for home school purposes.

Extracurricular activities and community activities were extremely diverse and interesting. Music lessons, foreign language lesson, scouts, 4H, journalism, mock trial, model UN, sports, and field trips made for interesting networking and socializing, as also did the fine arts. Many of the children did volunteer work, including fundraisers for the elderly and disabled in the community. At times this even led to short-term apprenticeships and sometimes a part time job for several of the teenagers.

Chores were continuously a part of the day for the home schooler. This was as important as the subject matter that was being taught. Each child had a chore to do and it was so routine, that the parent did not specifically mentioned it. One chore that the older children may have had was assisting the parent with record keeping. Careful records of academic procedures were kept.

The longer the researcher did the study the more clearly defined the categories and patterns became. This is a very slow and arduous process as is evident in the researcher's field notes and research journal. Collection of data and analysis were constantly interwoven. The researcher constantly compared the data and especially with the case studies. For the most part the parents made their home schooling successful. It was not any particular curriculum. The researcher's rapport with these families enabled the researcher to receive honest answers. This especially was the goal of the researcher.

### Triangulation

Triangulation is an important aspect of any qualitative research study. Many variables are often unknown to the researcher. The researcher made it a point to tease out subjective and objective assessments of current and past events. The researcher therefore made every effort to explore every avenue that might either substantiate or invalidate the findings. Lessons plans were collected and/or examined from families in the study. These documents were important because they triangulated the information gathered during the interviews.

## Summary

This dissertation is a presentation of home schooling from the parent's point of view. They presented their objectives, motivations, and goals to successfully home school their children. This is also a presentation of the themes that were discovered while interviewing, observing, and spending time with the participants. Even though many of the families were religious, religion did not play a controlling role in their decision to home school.

As a qualitative study, several methods of data gathering were used. They included demographics, interviews, case studies, participant observation, and document analysis. The study took place over a period of two years in order to confirm context validity and secure the trust of the participants.

All names have been changed to insure participant confidentiality. The actual language of the informants was used. Many strengths of patterns were referenced, making it possible to assess their frequency accurately from the information gathered. After several interviews, patterns became obvious.

This analysis did not come easily. With the onset of coding the material and comparing the data, many times a new category emerged. It had to be reanalyzed and recorded. The research journal reflected extensive thoughts, ideas and questions.

The following chapter will present the parents' choice to home school, their many experiences and adjustments, curriculum choice, implementation, instruction and student needs. The chapter will present findings from year one to the present and what home schooling is now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Family relationships will be

recognized as will the role of the parent/teacher, the motivations to continue with home schooling and their future goals.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Overview

This chapter will reveal the goals, perceptions, and patterns of parent choices and student needs in home school families from the perspective of the parents. The families in this study that home schooled from the beginning wanted to home school, and the families that pulled out their children from public education saw home schooling as an alternative means of education. Each of these families had religious, academic or social concerns that they believed could not be addressed satisfactorily at school. Although many of these families were religious, it never altered or controlled the parent choices and the student needs in their home school way of life.

The reasons families originally began to home school varied, but fell basically into three main areas, which were: ideological, pedagogical, and sociological. These categories have been precisely noted in previous research. Ideological encompassed views, concepts, ideals and religious beliefs incorporated in a specific way of life. Pedagogical was strictly in concern with learning and the patterns of learning related to growth and development from day one. Sociological was the relationship with others such as: family, siblings, relatives, friends, colleagues and the world – diversity. As parents continued their journey into the choice to home school, obviously curriculum changed, as did the student needs, but their goals and

motivation remained steadfast. This study describes the home school way of life in eight families, who were heterogeneously diverse according to socio-economics, but homogeneous in their patterns of home schooling: parent choice and student needs.

#### Parent Choice to Home School

The families in this study included 25 families in response to a demographic questionnaire. All 25 families made the choice to home school for varied reasons. Eight of the 25 families were interviewed. The eight interviewed families in this study have decided to home school for very specific reason, which fall into three major categories: ideological, pedagogical, and sociological.

Two of the eight interviewed families showed a strong evidence of ideological reasons. Three of the families decided to home school their children after experiencing academic situations in the regular school system. Three of the families expressed social concerns ranging from racial prejudices, peer pressure, relationships within and outside of the family, and violence. Two of the eight families removed their child or children from the regular school system, while the remaining six began to home school from pre-K. All eight families respected and valued family relationships consistent with their religious beliefs, but did not make this a separate entity. Each category simply and evidently emerged in the eight families; however, in varying degrees.

#### Ideological

In the early to mid 1990's there were over 1,600 families nationwide who home schooled for religious reasons (Faris, 1997). Many of these families were found to be born again Christians and have varied denominations: Independent

Fundamental, Baptist, Independent Charismatic, Roman Catholic, Assembly of God, and generally Christian or Protestant in nature. Faris (1997) states that the religious preferences of the fathers and mothers were clearly Christian with 93.8% of fathers and 96.4% of mothers describing themselves as "born-again." About 40% of the fathers and 41% of the mothers considered themselves Independent Charismatic. Catholics represented 3.4% of the fathers and 3.2% of the mothers. There were extremely few parents in the categories including, Muslim, Jewish and Mormon.

All families in this study professed strong religious affiliation except for one family that has no affiliation. The following two families very specifically stressed the fact that they decided to home school for ideological reasons.

### Interviews

#### The Castello family.

Karen Castello has been home schooling for five years and recalls how she felt it was her parental responsibility to educate her children from a Christian perspective. Presently, Karen has three children: ages 9, 6, and 3.

I was not willing to give up my children. I wanted to be there when they learned first words, solved first math problems, all those important firsts. Besides, I teach them from a Christian perspective, and they wouldn't get that from public school.

When I started to home school, my goals and objectives were to teach my children that God is in everything and to love learning new things. I wanted my children to stay the sweet, caring, loving kids that I am teaching them to be. Public schooling tends to have a bad affect on those things.

As soon as I graduated from high school, I knew my kids were never going to “school.” I wasn’t sure how I would accomplish this. I just knew I had to find a way. I heard of home schooling on a Christian radio station. My husband and I decided together.

The Rieseman family.

Barbara Rieseman was especially inspired by her church group mothers, who had formed a small community of home schoolers.

When I began home schooling seven years ago, I joined every group, read every book, and subscribed to every magazine imaginable within the home schooling community. I watched as Christian home schoolers grew weary of being portrayed as religious nuts by mainstream media and non-Christian home schoolers tired of being left out of the picture all together. Within my state, there was an established statewide Christian group and a newer group dedicated to serving all home schoolers, “without bias toward any group.” The newer group formed in reaction to the perceived exclusive nature of the Christian group, but because I am a Christian and a home schooler, I expected to find more support among the Christian home school group and its local chapters. My first impression was through strong love for God and a guiding light to a beautiful life.

I have spoken as a keynote individual in the Christian home schooling community who felt Christian home schoolers were numerous enough to come together for home schooling and serving Christ at the same time and shouldn’t have to dilute their convictions by belonging to inclusive groups. I



am a Christian who is adamant about my beliefs. My husband, a minister, and I along with our two children love God and have a beautiful family life.

### Pedagogical

Home schooling means different things to different people. For some families, home schooling means duplicating school at home, complete with textbooks, report cards and regularly scheduled field trips. For others, home schooling is simply the way they live their lives – children and adults living and learning together with a seamlessness that would challenge an observer to determine which was ‘home’ and which was ‘school’ (Homeschool Information Library, 2001).

This study found home schoolers with every possible variation of what home schooling could mean. Three of the families home schooled for pedagogical reasons. Two families home schooled from pre-K on. One, a home school dad, took his son out of school to be home schooled by him, while mom held a full time job to support the family.

### Interviews

#### The Barletti family.

Jill Bartletti, who has six children, began home schooling with her first child. Jill has three undergraduate degrees: interior design, early childhood development and counseling. She currently counsels the elderly.

I really feel that I began home schooling my first born from birth. Simply beginning with reading, writing and arithmetic made me realize how gifted John was. No matter what I taught him, he soaked it up like a sponge. When it came time for Kindergarten, he was so far ahead, that my concerns

quickly set in. I did not want him to be bored, nor did I want him to be a discipline problem. No one could give him the education I could.

Someone said, "We can teach our children to have courage, faith and endurance; they can teach us to laugh, to sing, and to love." The deepest and most abiding benefit of home schooling is this and the family. Home schooling families spend incredible amounts of time together living, learning and playing. They have the opportunity to develop a depth of understanding and a commitment to family that is difficult to attain when family members spend their days going in separate directions.

Now that I have six children, I like the flexibility home schooling gives to both parents and children. My children can learn about things they are interested in and at a time in their lives when they are ready to learn. No preconceived schedule forces them ahead or holds them back. Vacations and outings can be planned for times when the family is ready and often when the crowds are smaller or the costs are lower. My children can learn about the 'real world' by being a part of it with no artificial settings to 'provide exposure.'

I truly feel that my children can receive a superior education attuned specifically to their own needs, learning styles, personalities and interests, and at far less cost than that of a private or public school.

#### The Zaccarie family.

Crystal Zaccarie has two children and has a passionate belief in "unschooling" enjoying lots of "flexibility."

As a nurse, caring for the terminally ill from very young to the elderly, I have an articulate philosophy of life. We only live once. This is not a dress rehearsal. I have clear ideas and even a philosophy of learning, which is a daunting task. A mind is a virtual box of magic with innovative ideas for learning, which I feel can be just plain fun with clarity, certainty and humor. As a mother of two children, home schooling answers my questions, those of my children, and maintains flexibility when looking at the world. I have never categorized the "school year." That was such a dread for me as a child when summer ended and September rolled around. It seemed as though my entire world was disturbed. It was unnatural.

I did not want my children to dislike learning as a result of a scheduled school year, and I am glad to have considered home schooling as my alternative. There is no path that will provide everything for a child. I just consider what my husband and I think our children really need. A good example of this is when our son Anthony began to ride a two wheel bike. I knew he was able to ride his bike when I let go, quit running, and watched him ride away. I knew Anna could tell time when she told me what time it was. Best of all, when I spelled something out to my husband and both kids knew the word. They could read.

With other teaching/learning situations, it all takes place inside the learner. It cannot be inserted, nor can a switch be turned on at the moment.

### The Stringum family.

Stanley Stringum, a home school dad, took his son out of first grade to home school. He now home schools his son and daughter.

My son Henry had been tested, and did have minor neurological problems that he would overcome with maturity. Until then he did need a one-on-one mentoring. This was when I made the decision to home school Henry. He was falling farther and farther behind. Henry could not keep up with his class. He began to do things his own way. By the time he came home from school, Judy and I did not have enough time to work with him. I decided to home school Henry, but I was a little scared about the choices I would make as a parent and at the same time making sure Henry got what he needed.

I immediately went online and looked for home schoolers in the area. I found a large number, who were even involved in co-ops. They were all involved in church, community and neighborhood activities. I needed to find out what they did and how they did it. There were so many methods to decide from. With the support groups, I have been able to successfully home school Henry and now his sister Catherine. I have been home schooling for eight years. I use an eclectic approach.

### Sociological

Three of the eight families home schooled for social reasons. One family was concerned with peer pressure and racial prejudices. The second family remarked about the existing violence in the school system, and home schooling was essential to

the well- being of their children. The third family was a family of community involvement with an environment that contributed to family, community and self.

### Interviews

#### The Pae family.

Erna Pae has been home schooling for eight years. She has three children, who are all home schooled. Erna had some concerns of racial prejudices against her children, since she is white and her husband is Chinese.

When my first daughter was two years old, I started gathering information so that I would be prepared to teach my own children at home. This would have been 1993.

I was drawn to home schooling because of the ability to be with my children during the course of the day and have the opportunity to model my values and protect my children from the bad effects of peer pressure and racial prejudices. I wanted my children to have me as a role model instead of their peers.

My goal was to provide a safe environment where reading and learning were valued and my children would not be ostracized for being different. I had some concerns of racial prejudices against my children, since I am white and my husband is Chinese. My most important concern was that I would be with my children to help them interpret whatever lessons life would teach them.

My only child at the time was two years old. I now have three children and have been home schooling for eight years.

### The Bruner family.

Mary Bruner has six children and one more on the way. She did not want her children to interact with unruly and undisciplined children where no biblical values were taught. She wanted positive reinforcement for all of her children.

In April 1999 when two student gunmen walked into the hallowed halls of Columbine High in Littleton, Colorado and killed thirteen people, one of them reportedly because she professed Christ as her Saviour, my status as a home schooler improved almost overnight. "I'll bet you're glad *now* that you home school, eh?" Prior to that I was simply the right wing nut "too good" to send her kids to the neighborhood school.

My neighbor, the same man who scoffed at the word "obey," criticized our decision to home school by asking, "How can you do that to your kids?", while in the same breath complaining about how little his son was learning in school. According to him, the kids were out of control, the teachers were outnumbered and overwhelmed thus his son, who would have been my son's classmate, was still learning his shapes and colors in the second half of kindergarten prompting his frustrated wife to teach him the alphabet and numbers at home. "Sounds to me like we're both home schooling." I told him, "I'm just eliminating the frustration."

While protecting my children from crazed killers has turned out to be a hidden bonus that was not our motivation. Crazed killers could wander into the grocery store where we shop. Evil is everywhere. We simply wanted to control the environment in which our children learned. The agenda of public

education, with its politically correct thinking and immoral teaching with regards to sexual education and homosexuality, as exemplified by the use of a books such as "Heather has Two Mommies", was something with which we strongly disagreed on biblical grounds. Beyond that, however, we simple wanted to limit the interaction between our children and the undisciplined, unruly children coming from homes where biblical values-heck, any values-were no longer taught.

#### The Deil family.

Lenore Deil has four children, and has been home schooling for eighteen years. Home schooling was an alternative education to be a family involved in the community and involved in life.

Having always loved a mountainous terrain, my husband and I decided to raise our family in such an area. This environment has created in our kids a deep respect for nature and incredible devotion to the lifestyle of the area. Our oldest son is now eighteen years old is living on his own in the neighborhood, while attending college. His two years volunteering at a local, state-run nature center led to his first employment there when he was sixteen and attending community college part time for advanced courses. He's been involved (I mean really involved!) as a volunteer with the local fire department since the age of fourteen, which led to training and certification as an EMT recently. Three months later he had a full time EMT position.

Our daughter Susan, now sixteen, would like flexible jobs so that she can travel. She volunteers at the library, is learning American Sign Language,

developed home schooling lessons, and helps teach classes at the adult ed program at the community college.

John is now thirteen. He enjoys his community basketball and baseball teams. He is very active in Boy Scouts and leadership roles there, including camping. He likes rocks, polishes them, turns them into jewelry and sells them. John has enjoyed his hobby so much that he has done several apprenticeships with owners of jewelry stores. He spends from one to three afternoons each week doing everything from dusting to filling treasure bags to tagging merchandise to creating some of the most beautiful, jewelry quality cabachons from templates and freestyle. Thus John has been given a certificate of completion of lapidary work.

Gerald, the youngest, loves to garden like his dad. He recently won a gold medal for prize radishes and cucumbers at the 4-H competition.

All the kids play musical instruments: guitar, bass, violin and piano. I just sing.

They have all branched out looking at the community and becoming increasingly responsible young people.

#### Demographics of Participants

A demographic questionnaire was initially sent to 25 families. This questionnaire was modeled after the Ray (1997) study. The parents filled out this questionnaire. All families consisted of mother and father. Nationalities were diverse: Caucasians, Hispanic, Asian, African American and other. Families were



chosen from the following states: New Jersey, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C.

#### Father's Education Level

The father's education level ranged from high school graduate to doctoral degrees. Five fathers were high school graduates. One received an associate degree. Three received bachelor's degree, and nine received master's degrees. There were four Ph.D., two J.D. and one D.D.S. (see Figure 1).

#### Mother's Education Level

The mother's education level was varied, but not to the extent of the father's. Five mothers were high school graduates. Three received an associate degree. Nine received bachelor's degree, and eight received master's degrees. There were no doctoral degrees (see Figure 1).

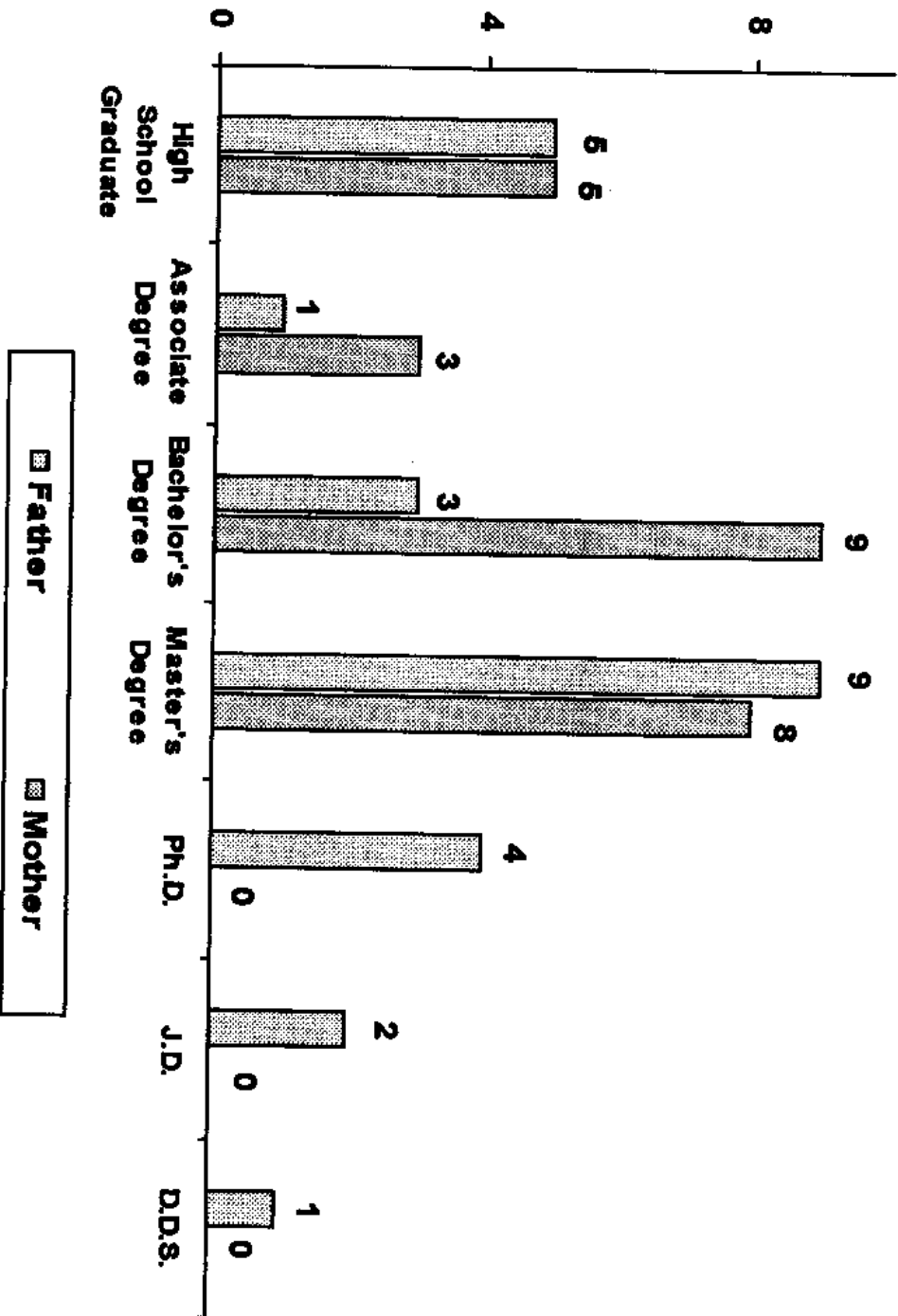


Figure 1. Father's & Mother's Education Level

### Father's Occupation

In all but 2 of the 25 families, the father was the supporter of the household. In the case of the two fathers who stayed home, the mothers were the supporters. The occupations of the fathers included two attorneys, four business administrators, one engineer, two chemists, seven laborers, two ministers, two professionals, one teacher, two technicians, one dentist and one librarian (see Figure 2).

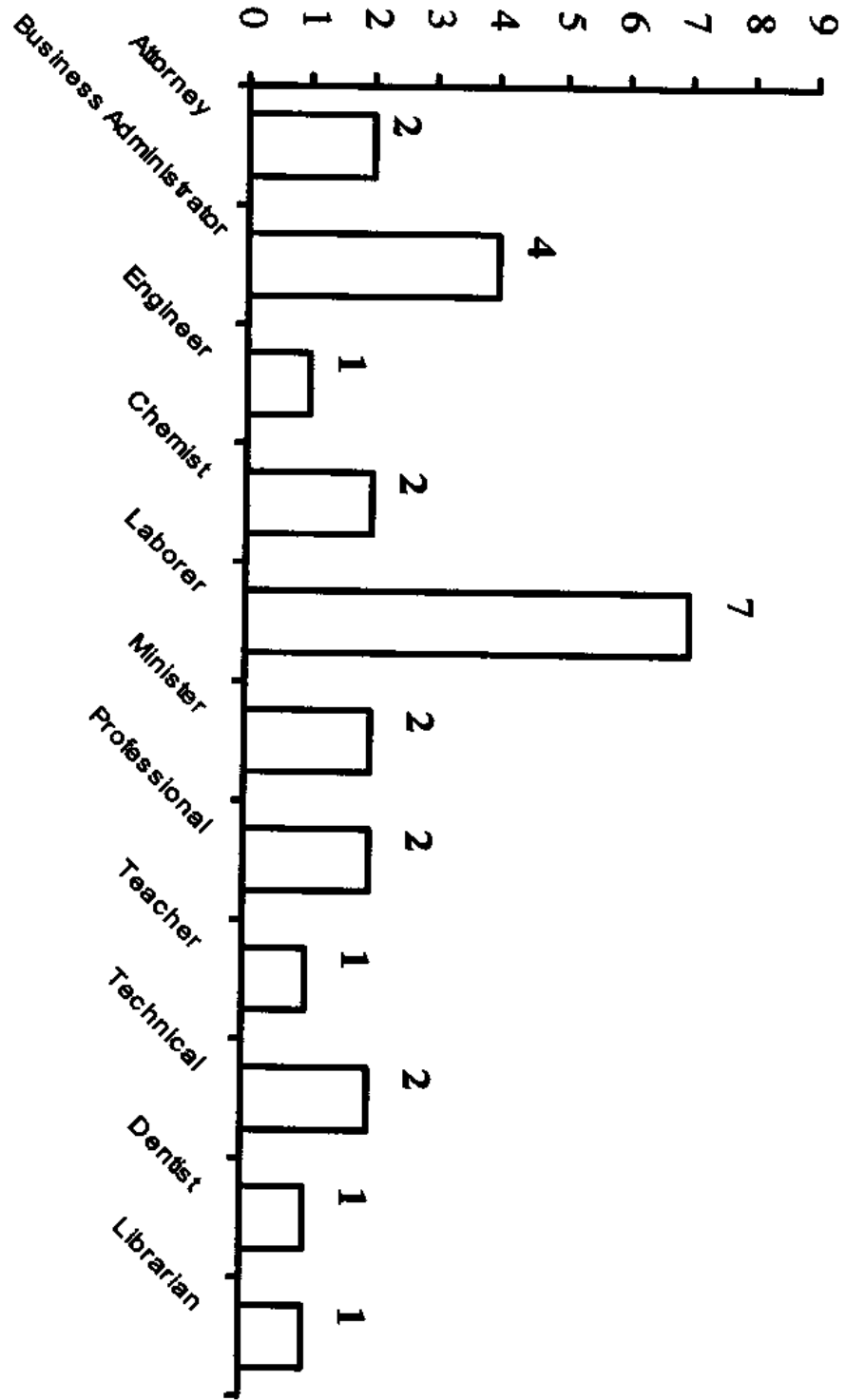


Figure 2. Father's Occupation

### Mother's Occupation

All but two mothers stayed at home to be the main educator. However, they qualified for a variety of occupations. The occupations of the mothers were two secretaries, one artist, one journalist, three nurses, four professionals, seven teachers, one architect and six homemakers (see Figure 3).

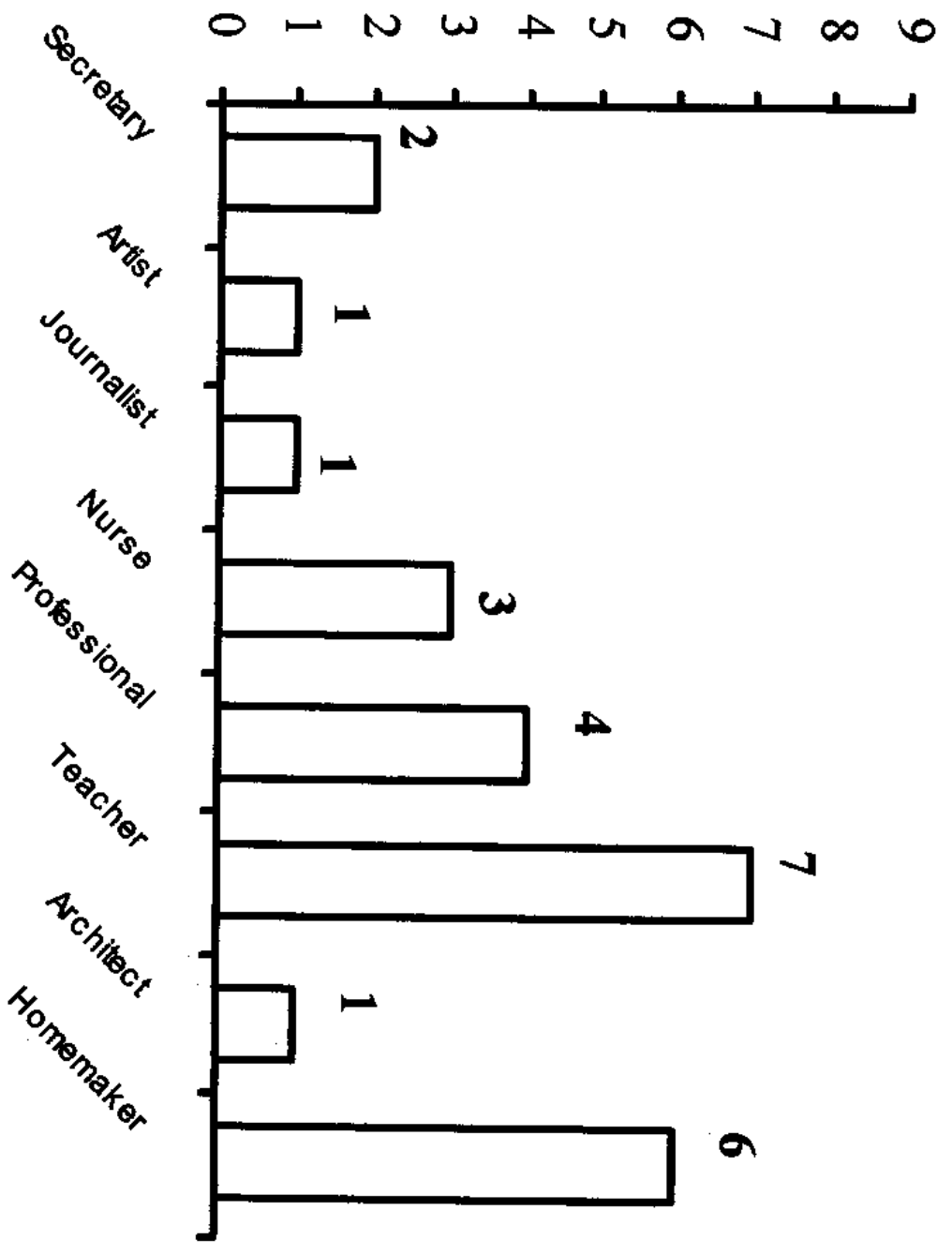


Figure 3. Mother's Occupation

**Family Income**

Incomes ranged from \$20,000 to over \$50,000. One family was in the \$20,000 to \$29,000. Three families were in the \$30,000 to \$39,000. Seven families were in the \$40,000 to \$49,000, and fourteen families were in the over \$50,000 (see Figure 4).

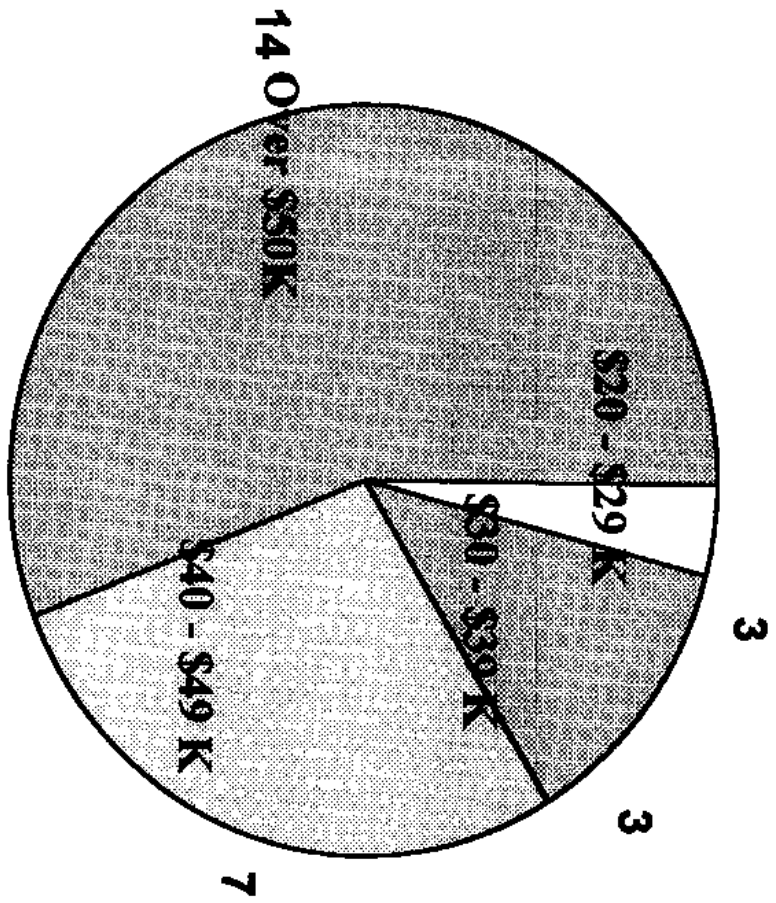


Figure 4. Family Income



### Number of Children

Families had from one to eight children. Two families had one child. Ten families had two children. Six families had three children. Three families had four children. Three families had six children, and one family had eight children. No family had five or seven children (see Figure 5).

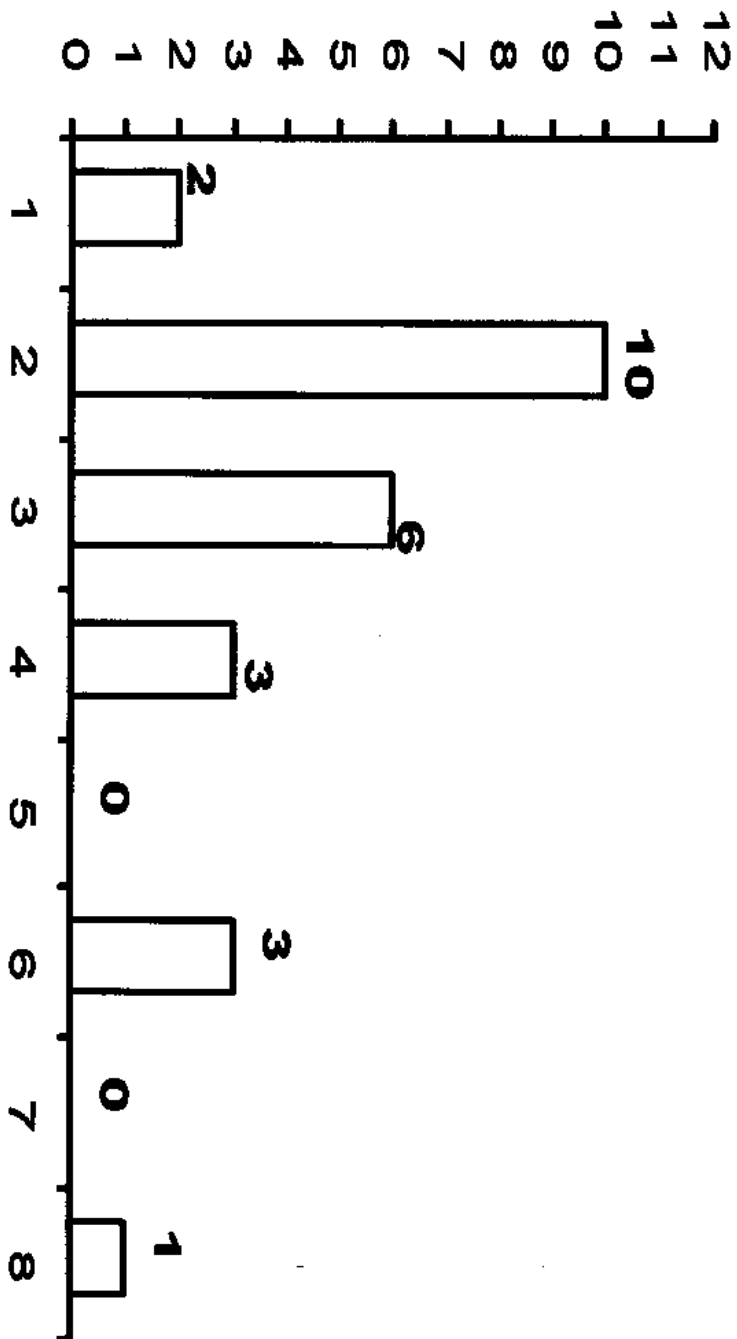


Figure 5. Number of Children in Family

### Grade Level of Children

Seventy-one children were being home schooled from the twenty-five families. Their grade levels ranged from pre-K to grade twelve. Five of the children were in pre-K, twenty-nine in grades K through five, eighteen in grades six through eight, and nineteen in grades nine through twelve (see Figure 6).

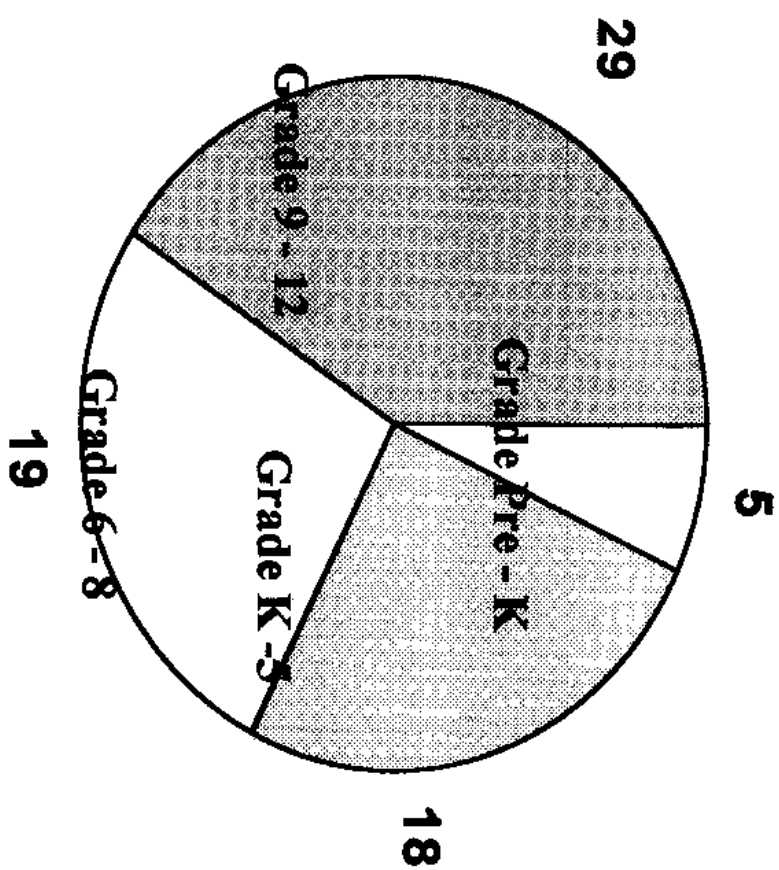


Figure 6. Grade Level of Students in Study

### Number of Years Home Schooled

The number of years that parents home schooled ranged from 3 years to 18 years. One home schooled for three years, one for four years, five for five years, three for seven years, four for eight years, one for ten years, two for eleven years, four for twelve years, one for fourteen years, one for seventeen years, and two for eighteen years (see Figure 7).

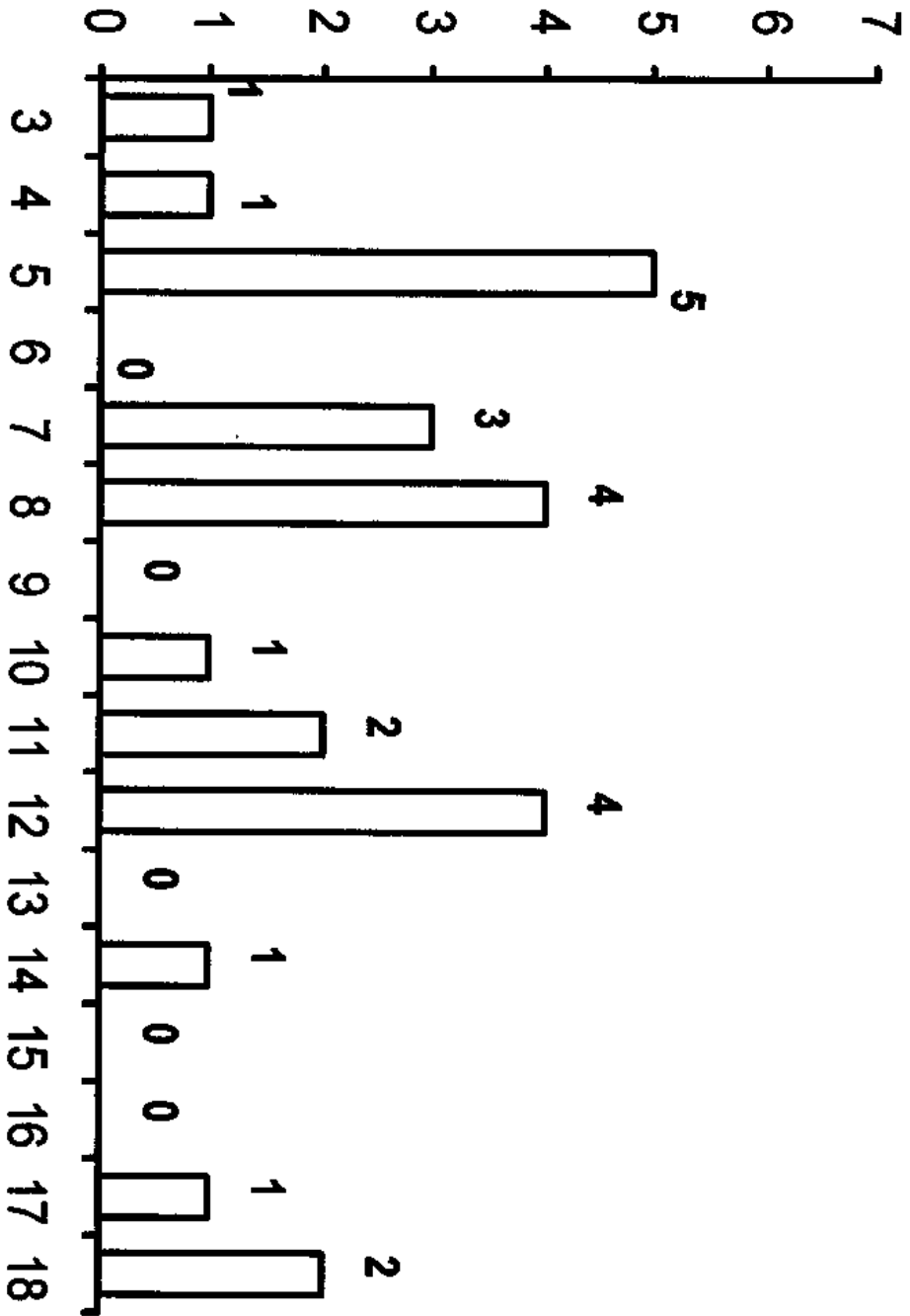


Figure 7. Number of Years Families Have Home Schooled

### Number of Visits to the Library per Month

All twenty-five of the families visited the library on a monthly basis ranging from one time to seven times. One family visited the library once a month, six families visited the library twice a month, three families visited three times, nine families visited four times, two families visited five times, three families visited six times and one family visited the library seven times a month (see Figure 8).

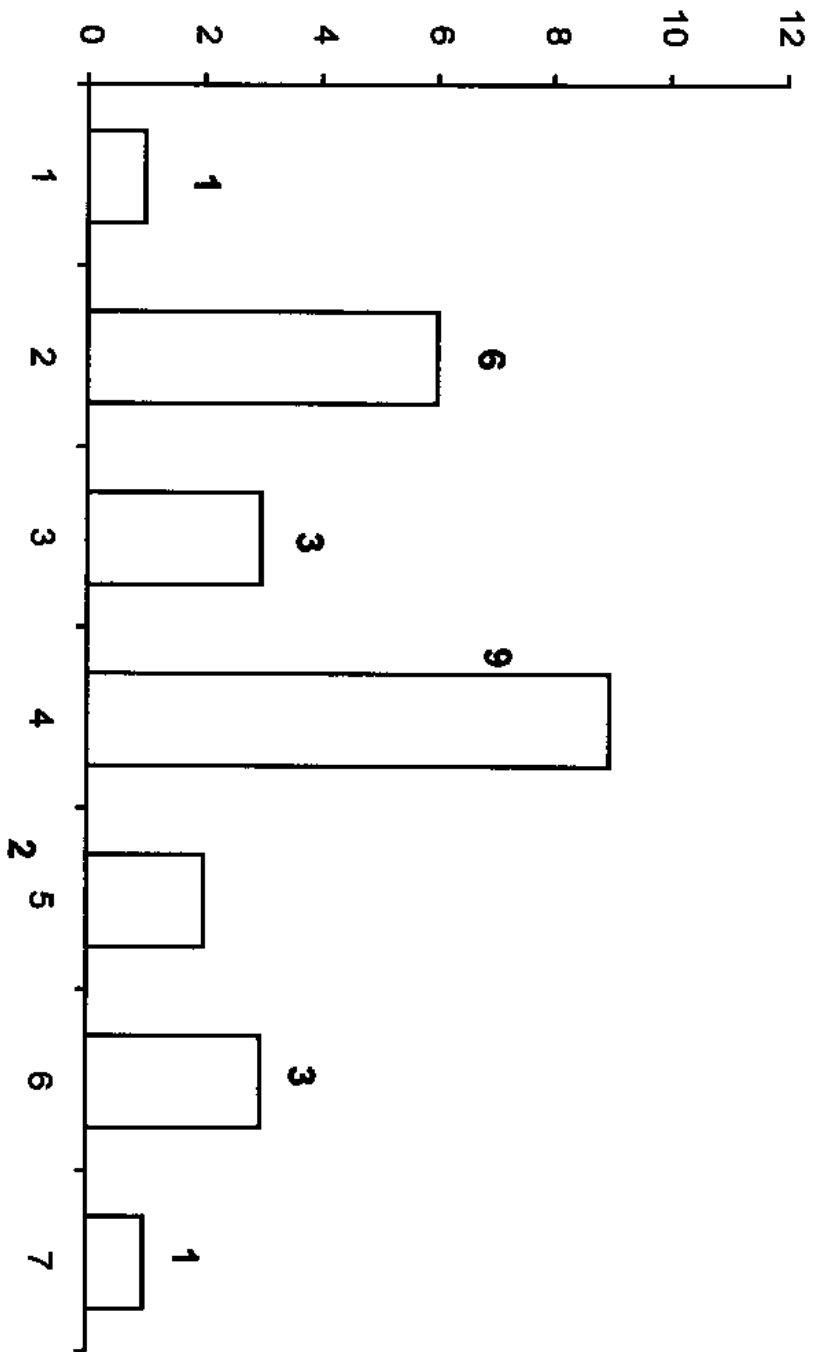


Figure 8. Number of Visits to Public Library per Month



**Dollars Spent per Student per Year**

The amount of money spent per year on each child ranged from less than \$200 to over \$1,000. Five families spent less than \$200, four families spent between \$200-\$299, three families spent \$300 to \$399, three families spent \$400-\$499, five families spent \$500-\$749, three families spent \$750-\$1,000 and two families spent over \$1,000 (see Figure 9).

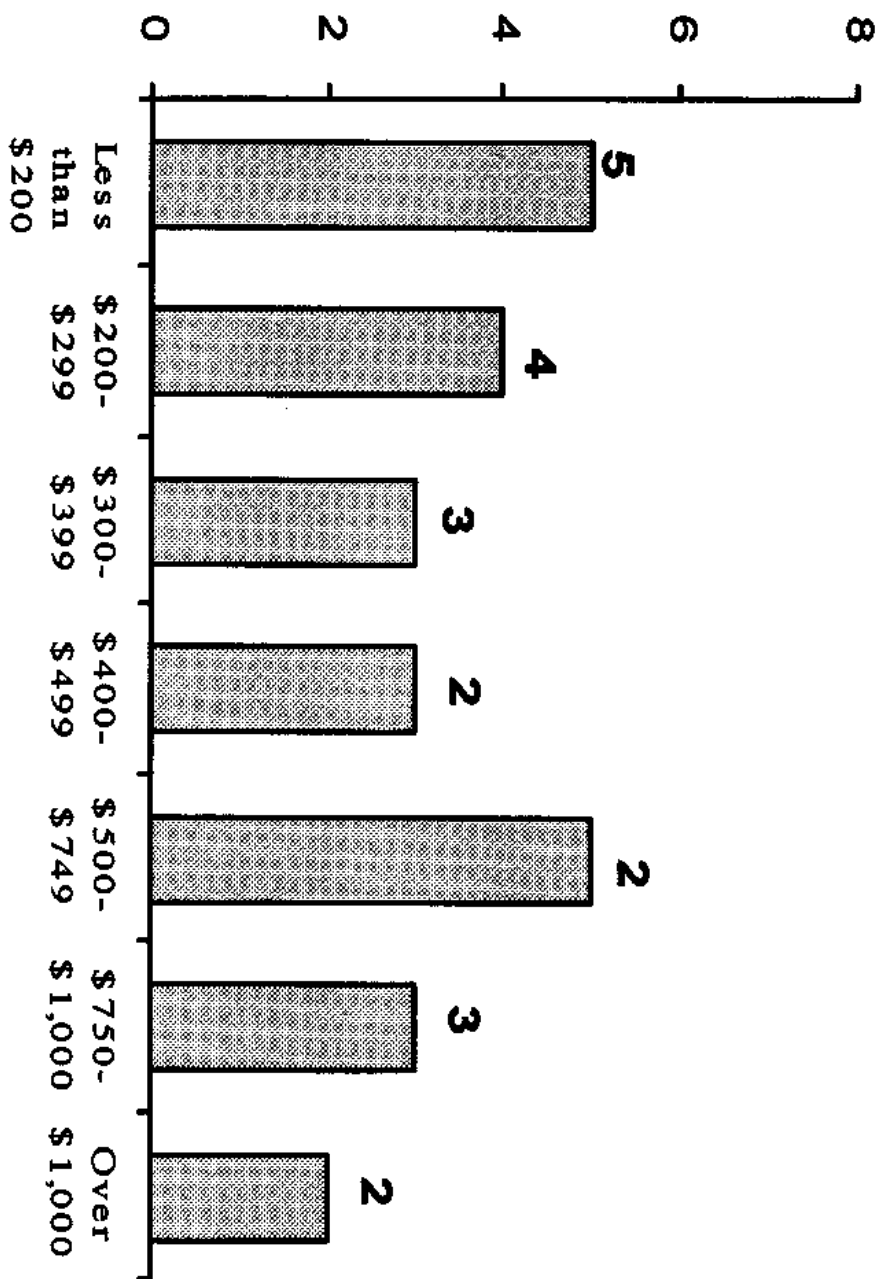


Figure 9. Annual Amount Spent on Curriculum per Student

### Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation was also varied. Six families were Catholic, seven were Charismatic, ten were Christian, one was Jewish and one was of no religious affiliation (see Figure 10).

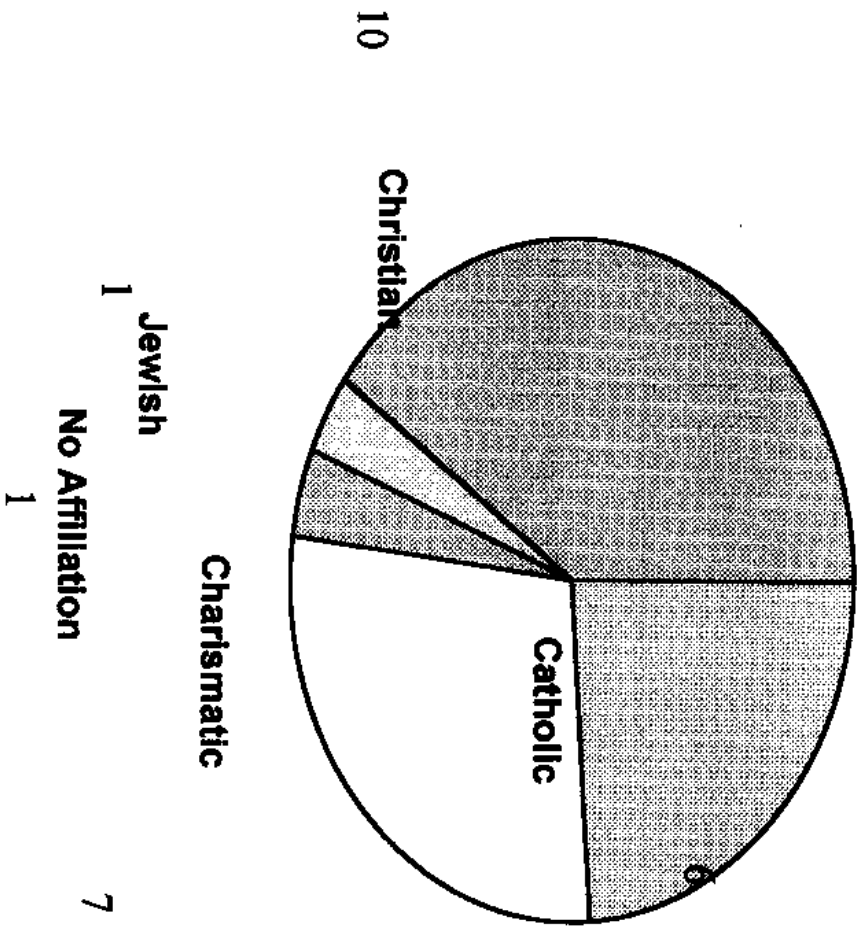


Figure 10. Religious Affiliation

### Summary

Home schooling is a choice to be made. For some of the families in this study, there was no question about this choice. It was natural and expected as a family and a parent responsibility to fulfill the needs of their children. For some it was an alternative link to academics and social concerns. All families involved in this study home schooled from the birth of their children or later in years of their children. To this day they are still home schooling.

The next chapter will present an in-depth look at five families that have home schooled from the birth of their children, early childhood years, or have taken their children out of the school system. Following these five case studies will be a comparison of differences and similarities. In spite of their differences, all relate to a strong family unit, with strong convictions and high levels of achievement within and outside of the family structure.

## CHAPTER V

### CASE STUDIES

#### Introduction

This was a naturalistic study, designed to understand and document the day-to-day reality of the settings under study. The researcher observed families that have home schooled for a minimum of three years. These families have home schooled from the birth of their first child, early childhood years, or after several years of their children in a school system. The focus in the case studies was the parent choice to home school, and what curriculum best fit the student needs.

The researcher observed five families over a period of six months, spending four to six hours with them each week. Observations were not just in the home. The researcher attended numerous activities and events that took the researcher outside of the home to the community and private lessons of all sorts. On occasion the activities enabled the researcher to meet with many more home school families. The setting was informal where the researcher had the opportunity to meet and talk with many other parents and children. It was a non-school setting.

With careful observation the researcher's goal with these five families was to make sure they were different in reasons for home schooling, but at the same time to find key links to their choices of curriculum, implementation and learning styles, thereby fulfilling the needs of their children. Families One and Two chose to home

school for ideological reasons. Family Three chose to home school for pedagogical reasons. Families Four and Five chose to home school for sociological concerns.

Although these families had differences there were similarities that emerged in curriculum, implementation, instruction and learning styles. The parent choice to home school was different, but the student needs was similarly and effectively met in each family.

#### Case Study One: The Castello Family

Karen Castello is a high school graduate. Her husband Dave is an electrician. They have three children, Susan, Mark and Joy. Susan is nine years old. Mark is six years old. Joy is three years old. The Castello's have been home schooling for five years. They began home schooling for ideological reasons.

##### Parent Choice

Karen knew from the moment she graduated high school that she would never send her children to "school." She felt that public school did not include the Christian aspects of life that she wanted her children to have. Home schooling was the only choice she preferred for her family.

At first I really wasn't sure how I would not send my to children to "school", but yet educate them from a Christian perspective. I heard of home schooling on a Christian radio station. My husband and I listened carefully, and made the decision to home school together. There was no particular person, people or community that influenced us. The choice to home school our children was our own parent choice.

Karen and Dave made this decision before they even had children. This decision was made early in their marriage, which gave them time to prepare.

### Family Relationships

Karen and Dave were high school sweethearts. They knew and planned on marrying soon after graduation once Dave finished his apprenticeship as an electrician. Once they were married, they wanted a family that included God. Their marriage was sacred and committed to each other.

Dave and I went through the same public school system together. We both experienced good and bad things. Honestly, the bad outweighed the good. There was so much peer pressure to do bad things. I often thought to myself, that there just could not be so much bad and meanness in people. It bothered me terribly to see how some of my classmates were being treated by others. Why can't everyone just be nice to each other? What ever happened to the word 'respect?'

Karen wanted a family that was truly united with God. She wanted her children to be sweet, loving, caring kids with respect and love for their parents, and for each other. After they were married for nearly one year, Karen was pregnant with their first child, Susan. Being a family was not a chore for the Castello's. They wanted a strong, closely knit, bonded and God-filled family.

### Curriculum Choices

Having made the choice to home school, Karen was willing to be the instructor. Her natural instincts were to teach and copy what the schools did. She wanted her children to learn the best possible way.



I tried the “school at home” approach first. I literally tried to copy what the schools do. That did not work at all!! I must admit that I was overwhelmed. What would I do, and where would I go for help? I took a deep breath and realized that my children had natural instincts. Then I learned to build on their natural interests and let things flow naturally, using my children’s timetable. Now things are going wonderfully. I have always intended to home school through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and still do.

Karen’s trial and error with curriculum choices did not last for long. Her parenting was exceptional, and soon to come was a parent as a learner. Learning to tune into the natural interests of her children was the key link to her success and choice of curriculum materials. As a teacher there was also a natural blend.

### Learning Styles

Karen got her feet off the ground within the first year of home schooling. The approach was somewhat difficult, but changes had to be made. Karen often thought about her responsibility to educate her family in the best possible way. Although she did not use the “school at home” approach when that failed, she still remained rigid and structured.

I started with my oldest, right at Kindergarten. I was very rigid and structured. I look upon myself as the teacher. No fooling around. I also was pregnant with my third child at the time. Luckily it was only Kindergarten and we accomplished a years worth of work by December.

This fast pace, rigidity and structure led Karen to even more changes in curriculum. She also did not want to have separate roles, such as a teacher. Her relationship with her children and husband was a family unit.

### Curriculum Changes

Now that the "school at home" situation was resolved, Karen's rigid and structured methods needed to change. After one year of home schooling, definite changes were made in curriculum.

I stopped using "curriculum." I bought real books, classics and field guides and stuff like that. We still use math books though.

Comparing the first two years, there were similarities and differences.

Curriculum had its changes, as well as the time elements of each day.

I think the main difference was me. I lightened up A LOT!!! I found that a certain type of reading instruction book didn't work for my daughter. She just couldn't learn that way. I searched until I found something that did work and then she took right off.

### Home Schooling as a Life Style

Presently Karen has smoothed out most of the wrinkles dealing with curriculum in concern with subject matter. But subject matter is just a small part of curriculum. Curriculum is the every day activities from morning until night. Karen has no particular schedule or routine per day.

No day is typical for my family. But I'll try to give you a feel of it.

The kids get up, get dressed and we have breakfast. We then begin discussing the American Revolution. I ask questions and we discuss some things. Then I

read a little in the book we are doing. Maybe do a craft project or drawing.

That brings us to lunchtime. After we eat, we go outside and do nature study or science. Then they go play until after dinner when daddy comes home, and I work individually with each of them.

Karen's day is a family day. Many activities are done together as a family.

Individual needs are met more towards the evening with a one-on-one instruction.

Karen's husband also takes part in this individual instruction.

#### Field Note Excerpt

As the day began, the children all got up at nearly the same time. They dressed by themselves and had breakfast. They chose different breakfasts to eat, but nothing out of the ordinary. Dad said good-bye kissing each one and wishing a fun day to all.

The children assisted Karen with cleaning up after breakfast, when moments after all worked on the same topic in dialogue. This dialogue was especially amongst the two older children and Karen. The three year old was kept busy with a book of her own. Attentively, all sat to listen to Karen read. A craft project or drawing was done with great enjoyment. After lunch the walks outside, as Karen explained, have included nature trails, educational trailside museums or just a walk in the park. Dialogue once again resumed, but this time related to science and their findings on this particular day's walk outside.

Playing is free time for the children. It either took place on the swing set in the backyard, on the computer chatting with other home schoolers, or even reading a book of their choice.

When Dave came home, his greetings were endless with hugs and kisses. All sat for dinner with an opening prayer. Lots of discussion took place among them. Everyone had something to say. Again all helped with the clean up after dinner.

Both parents did individual instruction easily. Questions were answered and each progressed on their own level according to levels of achievement. The excitement to learn was always present, as was the positive reinforcement.

### Extracurricular

All three children in the Castello family are involved in extracurricular activities. Susan takes dance and piano lessons. She belongs to the local Brownie troop. Mark plays soccer and T-Ball on the community team. He will start a musical instrument next year. Joy, who is three years old, attends the community Kindergym.

Getting involved in community activities has given my children the opportunity to meet other children. They have some very close friends whom they call and visit. Some are home schoolers, and some are not. Our church community also has a children's group as well as an adult group. We always try to keep up with our church activities, and attend services at least once a week.

With lessons, sports and church activities, Karen still manages an average of five visits per month to the library, which many times lead to a monthly field trip.

When we have a field trip, it is mainly science related. Every season has something scientific going on. We collect a lot and learn about what we have collected.

### Reflection

Leaf collections were beautifully displayed in the family room. Each child proudly talked about his or her leaf collection booklet to me. They were decoratively put together in a booklet form, which showed the different levels of ability.

### Parent Assessment/Current Perceptions

Karen has definite perceptions of home schooling. Her assessment is complete success in a family lifestyle that she would not change. The family is a unit that is closely bonded and filled with God. It is godly. The children are happy and well adjusted. Karen's advice is as follows:

Go with your kids' interests and learning styles. Give it at least a year. Ask for advice from other moms. Relax! You taught them to walk, talk, eat, use the potty and other life skills. You can teach them this too. As far as curriculum goes, I'd have to know more about their child to advise properly.

I believe the essence of home schooling, the bottom-line, is to enjoy this time with your children. Love them! The rest will come naturally.

I am clearly committed to home schooling. There are no other options in my mind. I believe this is the best for my family. It's what God wants of us.

To reassure parents themselves that home schooling does meet everything their children need, Karen gives other suggestions.

Go meet other home schoolers. You'll find they are normal well-adjusted kids, with a unique look at life. They are unafraid of failure or new experiences.

People home school for many different reasons. No matter what that is, the bottom line is that we are all in this together.

### Record Keeping

Karen keeps a detailed record of each year of home schooling per child. It is kept in a three-ring binder separating each child. Also a record is kept on the book list that is read, field trips and projects. Each day is recorded in a diary effect. The summation is done by topic, and each topic has its own list.

After completing Kindergarten by December with my first child, I realized that I must pace myself. My record keeping helps me do just that. Each child has his/her own section. Separate listings are done on books, field trips and projects that we have accomplished.

If there is something unique, needed or that just pops into our heads, we make a list and then do a check-off as completed.

### Reflection

Karen's record keeping was orderly and systematic. I could look at this document and easily continue where each child left off. I was able to have dialogue with the children concerning their subjects, field trips, projects and extracurricular activities.

Each year had a progressive flow, adding subjects and advancements on other subjects. I also notice a section on future goals. This consisted of notes and remarks made by each parent as to where their expectations are going for the up coming year.

### Case Study Two: The Rieseeman Family

Barbara Rieseeman is a high school graduate and works as a secretary. Her husband Dan is a minister (pastor) and has a bachelor's degree and one master's degree. They have two daughters, Sarah and April. Sarah is in college, and April just graduated from high school and is going on to college. Both girls were taken out of public schools for ideological reasons. Sarah was home schooled from grade four through grade twelve. April was home schooled from grade two through grade ten. April returned to public school in grade eleven.

#### Parent Choice

Home schooling for the Rieseeman Family did not even come into their minds. Sending their children to school was the usual thing to do. At this point the girls went to school, but Barbara was never overjoyed about their education. Certain things made her uncomfortable. It took several years to make a decision about the education and rearing of Sarah and April.

I didn't want to home school. Home schooling kind of found me. The church I belong to has a number of home schooling families and I thought that was OK for them, but definitely not for me.

I was, at best, an average student in school – did what I had to too get by. My husband was pretty much the same. What attracted me to home schooling were two things: (1) I love the rapport the families had with their children. We are a close family to begin with, but these home schoolers had still a better/different bond that I admired. (2) The school system actually drove me to home school. My children had been in "the system" in Canada,

Philadelphia and New Jersey, so it's not like it was just one school, or one teacher or one principal. They were just godless. The schools always made me feel insignificant as a parent. They always came across as though they knew what was best for my girls – more than I would. Also, I always visited their teachers to meet them and share with them some of our religious convictions that would affect some school activities or reading topics.

Barbara realized at this time that she and her husband needed to make an important decision concerning the goals, choices, and futures of their daughter.

I guess my goal was just be sure the girls would receive an understanding of many things that included God. These were many things that they would need to move on and make choices for their futures.

#### Parent as Parent/Teacher

Barbara was confident about her parenting skills and knew her children as individuals. Each child was different and yet similar.

I knew I could equal the public school system as far as information was concerned – but I could teach them as individuals, knowing their strengths and weakness – both in learning styles and personalities.

Home schooling began for Sarah in grade four and for April in grade two.

We started home schooling for grades four and two.

#### Curriculum Choices

Barbara and Dan wanted to find what was available for home schoolers in order to educate Sarah and April in the best possible way. But they wished to save



time and steps, since their daughters were not only being taken out of the public school system, but also at certain grade levels.

Friends from church told me about a homes school conference that takes place every year in South Jersey run by ENOCH, which is a home school advocate. I went, heard several speakers, attended several workshops – looked at all kinds of curriculum and knew before I left the place – This was for us.

#### Field Note Excerpt

ENOCH is the Education Network of Christian Home – Schoolers of New Jersey. I attended several conferences, and while I was there, I was introduced to the North Jersey Home Schoolers Association (NJHSA). This gave me a good feel for what was currently being offered to home schoolers in New Jersey.

North Jersey Home Schoolers Association is an open Christian support group of currently 260 families. The group is currently organized into eight Local Support Groups (LSGs). The LSGs are designated by geographic location, covering the four counties and then some. Leadership of NJHSA is Christian. It is composed of a Board with each LSG having representation. The Board meets throughout the year. Members are expected to contribute to the success of NJHSA. The group is as helpful to the members as the members are willing to put time into it. Membership entitles the Directory – our Membership Handbook – access to our Resource Library Network. Membership dues are minimal and annual. NJHSA offers its members: Opening Day Picnic, Curriculum Fair, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, Annual Shakespeare Competition, and Annual Jr. and Sr. High Academic Competition. It has

also offered Toastmasters classes, high school science labs, chorus, drama, etc. Individual LSGs offer to their members: Young Author Clubs, Activity Days, younger chorus, field trips, Book-it, etc.

At the ENOCH fair, I picked up various items. I found a Family Worksheet that was considered a useful tool to help parents make a “wise decision about home schooling.” Debra Bell, the author of The Ultimate Homeschooling: Is it for your family? Developed this worksheet (see Appendix C).

### Curriculum Problems

Looking back on the school system days, Barbara remembers some real problems with what was being taught. Learning styles such as: visual, kinesthetic and auditory were being used but did not include her Christian convictions. Barbara knew her options at this point.

While in the school system, there were several difficult situations, which the school showed us no respect as being the guardians/parents. One example was in second grade. They were showing a PG rated film during a rainy day. It was to be shown in two parts. My daughter came home and said, “Mommy, we are watching a movie at school. I don’t think I would be allowed to see it at home.” I went to school the next day, inquired, and asked the teacher what she thought PG meant. She said she had the authority as a parent to make those decisions while in school! I said, “I DON’T Think So!!

This happened twice – two different schools.

Then there was the “Listening Skills” book in grade one called Creature Teacher. It had a black glossy cover, the title in blood dripping red

letters. The book was all illustrated with ghosts, spirits, headless people and witches. Again my daughter (April this time) came home and said, "Mommy, I have an ugly book in my desk at school I don't want to use." Long story short – very little cooperation from the school, created a scene and separated April from other students bringing negative attention to her.

At home it was just us with our own convictions, our own choices of reading and viewing material, and not challenged because of our differences.

Curriculum soon enough became the parent choice and the student needs. As Barbara knew and stated that there are hundreds of choices in all subject, and reading is an endless choice.

#### Home Schooling as a Life Style

In the beginning, Barbara had a basic routine to the day that was similar to the school day. However, this not only included subjects to be learned. Responsibility, chores and family relationships were intertwined in a very full day.

Starting out, we kept our routine a lot like the school day the girls were use to. We started school at 8:30 AM. That meant that they were dressed, beds made, breakfast done and ready for school.

Our first subjects were usually ones we worked on together – science, new math. The girls basically worked on their own if it wasn't new material. I had a planner that I scheduled our pace in, and did lesson plans once a week.

We use Abeka material for the most part. Through the years, I use others to add to different themes, but Abeka material was very complete. A lot of private schools use Abeka.

We would end our school day about 1:30 or 2 PM. The only homework the girls would have would be to study for a test, or work on a paper or a project.

### From Year to Year

As each year passed, there was always an uncertainty as to whether or not the home schooling would continue.

Every year, from year to year, I never was sure we would continue home schooling, but it just moved into another, another, another. No complaints.

As time went by, Sarah completed grade twelve and took her GED. April was nearing this also.

Sarah went through to grade twelve and took her GED. April was already interested in going into medicine. We felt she needed more hands on Science, which became somewhat of a deciding factor to putting her back in school.

At the same time, my husband Dan needed to return to graduate school for a second master's degree in pastoral studies in order to receive a necessary certification which his first master's did not cover.

In combination with Sarah and Dan, I felt I also needed to return to work for financial reasons.

### A Typical Day

Research has found that there is no typical day for home schoolers. The luxury of having flexibility is the difference. Most home schoolers experience rigidity and structure at first, but as time moves on it is a way of life.

There were a lot of typical days and just as many non-typical. The first year was a little difficult because I was trying to find a happy medium between structure and flexibility. We were anything but, typical school day.

### Reflection

One day that I spent with Barbara and the girls included a Math class. At first I expected to see books, workbooks, notebooks, pencils, calculators, etc. Barbara explained to me that from the time they were in the earlier grades, math began as hands on. There were no books. Today, they seemed like architects and engineers using math that was far beyond my conception. They can handle college math classes with ease.

### Mathematics

Barbara explained how she developed the girls' math skills.

A math class for us would consist of baking, measurements, times and cooperation. We would go food shopping. The girls each had a list and a certain amount of money. After a few trips to the store, they learned quickly to spend and shop wisely.

### Field Trips

We took all kinds of trips – all kinds of museums; businesses gave us tours, professional people talked to us as a group.

### Extracurricular Activities

Sarah and April were always busy. This included subjects, projects, plays, talent shows, competition, and sewing lessons. An interest in one thing sparked an interest in another. They even created their own projects.

Our home schooling group did theme parties, or we would divide the group and put on plays, read book reports, do talent shows, and have sewing lessons.

We hired a retired Biology teacher who did labs with us once a week for twelve weeks. The girls were fascinated by the experiments and entered into many Science Fairs winning all kinds of medals and awards.

They read book after book and entered into short story, essay and poetry contests only to lead to more medals and more awards.

Some of their activities led to part-time jobs.

The girls would inventory in a bookstore twice a year. Again all kinds of projects developed.

One year the girls wanted to do something special for Christmas. They did a prison project. They got the church involve in this. They made Christmas Angel Trees and collected hundreds of gifts to be packaged, wrapped and sent to the families of the prisoners and to the prisoners. It was their Prison Project. They thought of this themselves. I had nothing to do with it. Sarah and April not only thought of this project, but also developed it and carried it out with great success.

### Year Five

Just as every day was different, every year was different. There were continuous changes in curriculum. Barbara wanted and finally achieved this flexibility.

As we got into our fifth year, we moved our teaching time to video classes. This is how they were able to learn Spanish, etc. BUT STILL using Abeka material. The videos were very good.

When April did return to grade eleven, she was fluent in Spanish. Her Spanish teacher said that she was too advanced for what they had to offer even in an honors Spanish class. April could also read and write Spanish perfectly. Of course her other subjects were just as advanced and beyond the remaining high school years.

April graduated in the top 10 in her class of 268 students.

### Current Perceptions

Reminiscing the many years of home schooling brought about certain thoughts, comments and suggestions for Barbara. To even think about home schooling when she began her family, apparently it was not for her. What it has done for her, her daughters and her entire family is something else.

Home schooling is not for everyone. You really have to want to be with your kids twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Choosing curriculum is hard at first, because you have to see what fits your kids' needs.

I had one who loved to study – one who had to be prompted always.

Would I do it again? – YES!!! – No questions asked. I feel my girls are much more rounded in life experiences. We have a very special relationship.

We loved the flexibility we had. I had a sister very ill in Florida, and on several occasions for several years I would take the girls to Florida for five weeks at a time to take care of my sister. If we were in a public/private school we could never have done this.

Because of my husband's job as a pastor, our weekends were usually pretty busy. So many times we would only do school four days a week.

Mondays became a day with Dad.

### Student Goals

Sarah is now entering into Bible School. She has a passion to teach disabled children and to spread the word of God. She has been a nanny for a while, and loves being with children.

April will be attending nursing school this fall. She is strong in the sciences, and has a passion to care for the ill. She aspires to complete her RN and BSN degrees.

### Case Study Three: The Kidman Family

Shelly Kidman is a high school graduate. Her husband John is a college graduate and has a master's degree in computer programming. They have three sons, Tyler, Trever and Darren. Tyler is eleven years old. Trever is seven years old. Darren is five years old. The oldest of their sons, Tyler, was removed from public school after first grade at seven years old. Shelly has been home schooling for four years.



Trever and Darren have been home schooled from the start. Tyler was taken out of public school for pedagogical reasons.

### Parent Choice

Shelly and John were very excited about sending their first son Tyler to school. As a computer programmer, John provided for his family quite well. They had the ability to buy a new home soon after marriage. Although they did not initially have children, they knew the importance of a good education.

When we bought our new home, we actually decided on it because of the fine school system. We were very careful to research different areas, and meticulously checked out the ratings of the schools. As a result, we found this lovely home in a great area with the best school system around. We knew this would be perfect to raise our children, and to give them the best possible education.

There were four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. We even made a comparison study of the four elementary schools, and found our dream home close to the best one. We were set, and had no worries.

When Tyler became pre-school age, Shelly began him in the pre-K program at the nearby elementary school. Tyler was very much prepared for school.

I knew I wanted Tyler to excel in school. I taught him and prepared him for school from the time he was a toddler. He knew his alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes and other basics. He loved pre-K and his playmates at school.

I, on the other hand, noticed that Tyler was learning no more than what I taught him. I thought that maybe because he had such good skills already academically, that the socialization would be his education for the pre-K year.

Shelly and John were somewhat disappointed that Tyler did not learn anything new. Shelly then taught Tyler how to read before Kindergarten. Shelly also taught him simple addition and subtraction.

Tyler always enjoyed when John or I would read to him. On occasion we noticed that he wanted to try a word or two himself. At first we thought he was just memorizing some words as we flipped the pages. I put some words on flash cards and began practicing with him. No matter how many times I shuffled the cards, Tyler knew the words. I bought supermarket phonics workbooks. Before we knew it Tyler could read.

With this reading ability, Shelly expected Kindergarten to be more productive than pre-K.

Not only was I disappointed with pre-K, but also Kindergarten was worse. Tyler came home frequently with notes pinned on his shirt. They were discipline notes from the teacher, stating how poorly Tyler behaved in class. I immediately went to school to meet with his teacher. She seemed very annoyed that Tyler knew so much and, "He can read?!", as though he wasn't suppose to do that until she was ready to teach it.

I asked her to give Tyler more advanced work that would keep him busy and out of trouble. She said, "I have a classroom of twenty-two five year olds. I do not have the time to privately advance Tyler." I thought to myself,

“There must be other bright children that this teacher can make a small group out of.” She was unwilling to do anything. It was her way or no way, and in one set plan.

Tyler seemed to be bored and not challenged, and was slowly but surely becoming a discipline problem.

Shelly and John wanted to give the school system one more year while they investigated other options. They considered a private parochial school and also a private prep school.

We knew something different had to happen for Tyler. Either the first grade was going to be an improvement, or we would put him in a private school. Tuition was never a question, but a fine education was. We wanted the abilities of our son to not only be met, but also challenged and advanced.

The more I thought about this, I wondered if any teacher in any grade had the time to key into individual learning styles – of course not! No matter how large or small a class may be, no teacher can have, or give a one-on-one lesson.

Shelly had friends who home schooled, but she knew very little about it.

We had friends that home schooled and it never occurred to me to home school until we met with them. Then I thought, “I could never do that.”

My son asked me to home school and we went from there, with prayer.

### Choosing a Curriculum

When Tyler completed first grade in the school system, he was taken out. The choice to home school was made, but Shelly was unsure where and which way to go.

I watched Tyler become more and more of a problem in school. His grades and testing were superior, but his discipline was bad. We took him out of the school system at the end of the first grade. At this time the choice was made to home school.

Tyler was seven years old, Trever was three years old, and Darren was one year old. The thought of all three boys being home all day scared me. I prayed a lot. At the same time, I knew that our sons learned best with one-on-one time with me. I knew I could match the elementary school, so I intended to home school at least through elementary years.

Shelly's best instinct to home school Tyler was to have a mini school at home.

The first year I tried to set a mini school in my kitchen, with schooling from 9 AM to 12 PM, including recess. I picked my curriculum from many sources and put it together myself.

### Specific Curriculum

Of course curriculum differ in many ways, and Shelly wanted one that would match Tyler's learning style. However, she was not sure, as to what her options were, and which curriculum would be the best.

By the second summer, I went to the convention and attended several workshops. I also belonged to a home school county group. I bought Sonlight Curriculum, which was already together for me.

Although I had so many resources and even my own method of teaching Tyler and my other sons, we spent more time with Sonlight. There is

a lot of reading. Tyler loved to read at such an early age. This is perfect for him.

Each of my sons is so different, and therefore I use Sonlight as my base, but add different material for each child.

Then there are times when we are talking about the same topic, but on different levels.

### Subjects

Reading, math, science and history were Tyler's interests. Shelly focused on these for him and added more and more material. She shared and exchanged various curriculums with other school parents. More choices were being made along with more learning for Tyler.

### Family Relationships

The family was functioning well. Tyler was at times becoming more of a self-learner. While the other two children were being taught, Tyler was to move on in other subjects. Shelly was slowly but surely losing her mini school in the kitchen, which included a time schedule.

Now we are much more flexible. We go on many more field trips as a family. We do more hands on work. There are also more little ones, so we generally don't just sit down and school for hours all at once.

Family relationships were wonderful. Shelly and John were enjoying Tyler home all the time, along with Trever and Darren. They especially enjoyed the flexible schedule home schooling allowed. This made their family life very much fulfilled.

Field Note Excerpt

I have been on several field trips with Shelly, John and the boys. The most recent was this summer. We went to the Museum of Natural History to see the prehistoric animals, lunch in Central Park and then to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the Egyptian mummies.

I arrived at the Kidman house at 7 AM. Shelly was getting breakfast ready for everyone and I was included. The boys were dressed, and the entire family sat together to eat breakfast. First we said a short prayer lead by John. We all held hands while praying. While eating breakfast there was lots of dialogue about the plans for the day. Everyone agreed on the itinerary. Tyler knew quite a bit on prehistoric mammals, and mentioned that he did a project on it. He showed me the project. Trever had books on both the mammals and the mummies. Darren knew some names of the prehistoric mammals and had his own book with pictures and names.

Lunch in Central Park was going to be at the lake where there are remote control boats. They also talked about the bronze "Alice in Wonderland" statue.

Each boy had his own small backpack. Tyler included his camera (35mm), as did Trever and Darren (Fisher-Price cameras). They also packed their own bottled water, baseball cap and sunscreen.

We all got into the SUV, drove to the train station, parked the car and got on the train. Just before the train arrived, the boys bought their own tickets with their own money. Tyler used the computerized method of getting his ticket. I went to the window with the younger boys. They knew exactly what to ask for and the amount.

Soon we arrived at Penn Station and took a subway to 82<sup>nd</sup> St. There was always conversation. John especially talked to the boys about the train and the subways. The boys asked so many questions. John and Shelly responded at all times.

We spent several hours at the Museum of Natural History. The boys again used their own money to buy small items. They were reminded about not spending too much in one place and having nothing in the final place.

We walked through Central Park to the lake and sat in the shade for lunch. Darren used his sunscreen mentioning the danger of the sunrays causing skin problems. Tyler and Trever followed.

Shelly packed lunches for everyone. It included the daily essential food groups. Tyler was especially interested in nutrition. He and I had a long conversation about this.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art followed. This visit was specifically meant to only see the Egyptian mummies. Again there was lengthy conversation about ancient Egypt and the pharaohs. Tyler and Trever named the pharaohs.

Finally we were on the train home before rush hour. That evening we had dinner together, which again began by holding hands and saying a blessing before the meal.

After dinner each parent did a one-on-one lesson with the boys. Selections of books were made, as were future projects and Internet research.

### Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are also an important part of the curriculum. The boys have participated in sports and have made lots of friends in the process. Mostly,

they have taken advantage of public facilities, and Parks and Recreation Programs. Tyler, Trever and Darren have been involved in tennis, T-ball, Pop Warner Football, basketball, soccer and swimming respectively according to their ages. Tyler takes piano and guitar lessons. Trever takes piano lessons. Darren is starting violin lessons in the fall, Suzuki method at a nearby university. Tyler has performed in recitals with other children.

I really feel that the flexibility of home schooling allows more time to do more things. My children have the ability to become well-rounded people. The nice thing about it is that we are a family who prays together with a very strong bond.

### Reflection

The hours of homework, brought home from school, lessened time for other activities, which were important to Shelly and John. There were no constraints of regular school. Tyler enjoyed having an afternoon to develop new interests, travel and even take art lessons. Some mornings Shelly and the boys run errands and do other activities. As explained to me, this also counts as 'school.'

### Current Perceptions

Shelly has learned how to home school by trial and error. She says that now she can give some advice to anyone who is considering home schooling.

There is so much curriculum out there. It is easy to be overwhelmed. My advice would be to talk to someone you know that has been successful home schooling, or join an internet home schooling group and ask their advice.



As far as choosing curriculum, it is helpful to find out what kind of learner your child is and the best way to teach them, and what will work for you. Also, narrow your selections down by deciding if you want a Christian curriculum, and how much money you are able to spend. Then pick the first one that meets your criteria.

After you have home schooled a year, you will have a better idea about what you want and can fine tune it over the years to come.

### Essence of Home Schooling

The commitment to home schooling is definitely a sacrifice according to Shelly. She also feels it has its many rewards.

I believe the essence of home schooling is loving your kids and providing the best for them. It is sacrificing to give them your time. I am committed to this choice. God has convinced me that this is the best for my kids. God gave these precious children to you, and we are to train them in the way they should go. Who can provide better for them than anyone else.

Just like anything else worthwhile with kids, home schooling is hard, but it is so rewarding! I love home schooling!

### Student Goals

Shelly and John intend to home school their children through grade twelve.

#### Case Study Four: The Pae Family

Erna Pae is a college graduate. She holds a teaching certificate in Vocational Agriculture and Comprehensive Science, K-12. Her husband Bill is a college graduate with a BS degree and a master's degree. He works as a business reference

librarian at a major state university. They have three daughters, Christina, Ryane and Celeste. Christina is ten years old. Ryane is seven years old. Celeste is five years old. The Pae family has been home schooling for eight years. They began home schooling for sociological reasons.

### Parent Choice

Erna and her husband Bill not only have an interfaith marriage, but also an inter-racial marriage. Erna is Christian. Bill is Buddhist. Erna is Caucasian. Bill is Chinese. As parents, concerns ranged from racial prejudices to peer pressure.

When my first daughter was two years old, I started gathering information so that I would be prepared to teach my own children at home. I felt a need to protect my children from peer pressure and racial prejudices. Peer pressure has bad effects on children.

I was drawn to home schooling because of the ability to be with my children during the course of the day and have the opportunity to model my values and protect my children from the bad effects of peer pressure. I wanted my children to have me as a role model instead of their peers.

My goal was to provide a safe environment where reading and learning were valued and my children would not be ostracized for being different. I had some concerns of racial prejudices against my children since I am white and my husband is Chinese.

Erna had many concerns, the most important being life itself.

My most important concern was that I would be with my children to help them interpret whatever lessons life would teach them.

### Parent as Parent

Being a parent to Erna was a huge responsibility. She knew that it involved her time to a great extent, but not all day. This was not realistic, nor should it be expected of anyone. It would lower her self-esteem and her individual identity.

I had thought that I would never stay home with my children. It would be too demeaning to tend children all day. Once I had a child, I realized the great responsibility I had before God and to my own child to raise her up in the image and glory of God. I then treasured the times I had with my child and would not easily shirk my responsibilities.

### Parent as Teacher

Erna gathered as much information as possible to prepare herself for the education of her child. Christina at the time was two years old. Her research was extensive, including researching educational philosophies. Erna wanted to educate Christina in the best possible way.

I had heard an interview from "Focus on the Family" on the radio about the merits of home schooling when my daughter was still a toddler. I had not really heard about home schooling until then. I started researching educational philosophies, in particular Charlotte Mason and Dorothy Sayers, to form convictions on the best ways to educate. I am more influenced by books and writes than I am by people I might know, generally.

As Erna's convictions formed, she wanted to develop a careful educational method of instruction for her child. This included various attributes and devoted learning habits.

I believed that I should be careful to instruct my child with love and patience, that I might arouse a hunger for truth and a love for learning.

#### Parent as Facilitator

Carrying out her instruction methods of educating Christina, led Erna to certain level indicators. Erna was not going to begin and go on forever with home schooling without needed benchmarks and assessment. Initially the commitment to home school was short term.

Initially, I would only commit to home schooling until my daughter was eight years old, at which point we would re-evaluate. I had hoped that by age eight, she would be confident of her value in God's eyes and her family's, that she would be able to resist the negative effects of her peer's values.

Once again Erna mentions the negative effects of peer pressure. Educating Christina was more than subject matter. Erna looked at the whole person to be immersed in growth and development inside and outside.

#### Parent as Partner

Being a home school parent allowed Erna to do everything with her children. This did not begin at school age. There is no particular age for home schooling.

When was my first year of home schooling? When my daughter was two and we measured flour together to bake cookies, or when she was four and we did workbook pages together after dinner, or when she was six and declared that she hated to read, and I learned to back off and give her space (yet within two weeks she had joined a book club and was reading avidly)?

I believe home schooling is more an attitude than a time-schedule.

The love of learning should permeate all we do.

The legal age for a child to be in school is six, and up to that time I tried to be low-key and teach as opportunities and interest occurred.

### A Typical Day

At six years old, Christina's day was not your typical kindergarten or first grade day in a school system. However, Christina's home schooling days began as far back as when she was two years old according to Erna's recollection.

A typical day when my daughter was six involved nursing a one year old and potty training a three year old. We read books together while the three year old rested next to me after lunch and the baby nursed. We walked around our block, talking about the plants we saw, while pushing the baby carriage. She did workbook pages while I prepared dinner with the baby on my back.

### Curriculum Choice

A natural setting was the educational guide that Erna chose to use for her children. It was an eclectic approach lending to each child as being an individual.

### Reading

After Christina learned to read, I assigned a daily checklist of what work I expected her to get done. I've experimented with set times for certain subjects and with just assigning the work and insuring that it gets done.

By the next year of school, my oldest and middle child sat with me at the table playing educational games or doing worksheets every morning for a time, while I balanced nursing the toddler.

We still read many books aloud, went on frequent walks, and baked together.

### Subjects

In my opinion, there were few differences in approach those first years. The greatest changes came when I tried to teach three students at the same time (my middle daughter turned five and I was home schooling my niece for three months). It was at this time that I reevaluated my whole program and analyzed each portion to determine its worth and value to my goals.

My approach is eclectic and holds in tension the merits of a classical approach to home schooling with the essence of each child being an individual, as espoused by Charlotte Mason.

I don't use a set curriculum for history, geography, science, reading, spelling, or grammar, but I do use one for penmanship, math, Latin and Greek. As I have gained experience and confidence in my educational philosophy and seen results, I have less concerns about not using pre-made curricula.

### Field Note Excerpt

Erna invited me one day to go through the average day's schedule. She did warn me that it would be busy, hectic at times and may completely change according to the needs of the children.

I arrived at 7:20 AM. The day's schedule was as follows:

7:30 – 8:00 AM schoolwork or if the child wants to watch “Arthur” (a PBS cartoon).

All three girls watched “Arthur”.

8:00 – 8:30 “Arthur” or morning chores.

Ryane, the second child, decided mid-way to do some chores.

The girls were dressed and beds were already made by them.

8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast, Bible devotion and prayer.

All sat at the kitchen table.

A passage from the bible was read and discussed.

It was followed by a prayer, then they ate breakfast.

9:00 – 12:00 Independent work for the older girls; reading time for the youngest.

Independent work was subject related.

Erna explained to me that there are many interruptions to ask for assistance to understand a concept, set-up a math speed-drill, deal with a school-related frustration, wash breakfast dishes, start lunch or dinner preparations, and/or deal with an unexpected phone call.

Most of the above did occur, but Erna very smoothly remedied any situation. The two older girls helped each other at times of difficulties and often helped Erna with the youngest.

Everyone was doing something either individually or with another family member.

12:00 PM Lunch was together.

It was lunch with reading aloud time by Erna.

1:00 – 2:00 Youngest listens to books on tape and the older girls continue with unfinished assignments or had the final choice of free reading.

2:00 – 5:00 This seemed to me to be the busiest and most hectic part of the day.

Nothing was left unturned in concern with extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular activities went as follows:

Music appreciation/activity – private piano lessons.

Art appreciation/activity – drawing and painting at an art studio.

Nature walk – Today it was at a specific nature trail in a nearby town.

It was education with a small museum before choosing the trail.

Latin Club – The two older girls attend a Latin Club where there were other home schoolers. I met many other families and children.

Science experiment or gymnastics class – If it was not the day for gymnastics,

a science experiment would be done with a group of home schoolers also. Today was gymnastics for all three girls.

Free lessons were given by the community.

Erna explained to me that this time of the day varies from day to day according to scheduled lessons and other home school group activities that are scheduled.

Also from November to March some things are replaced with ice skating one time weekly.



5:00 – 6:45 We ran errands (grocery store, bank, dry cleaner, return library books, etc.). We then prepared dinner. At this point I felt a need to pitch in. And then we did some gardening (weather permitting).

9:00 – 9:30 The oldest, Christina types, sews or may do logic puzzles four times a week. While I was there, she did all three activities, and we did go until 10:00 PM.

### Reflection

The Pae family was very much in tune with life itself focusing on every minute of it. There was a strong family relationship.

### Current Perceptions

Erna had lots of advice to give to home school parents. She plays an active role leading a support group and giving advice.

Since I lead a support group for parents who home school their children, I am often asked for advice. Often the questions are more about parenting and being a good wife than about home schooling.

Sometimes I will pray with the mothers to ask for God's guidance and Christ's mercies. Generally, though, I assure them that they know what is best for their children and remind them that no one else would know their children better than they. And so, in determining a school schedule or curriculum, they should trust their own intuition on these things, and not be pressured into some mold that doesn't work for them. I do try to encourage those with young children in particular, not to get any curriculum (other than general workbooks) before the child is in second grade. It is very rare that a parent

can't teach their own children math and reading at this age. It is more important that the parent enjoys the child and read and walks and experience life together than doing "bookwork." I also encourage Mom's with toddlers to be at home every afternoon (whenever possible) for naptime. The baby needs the nap and the mom needs the break! Too many mothers seem too busy running to activities, to be as patient and loving toward their children, as they ought. Which is better – a quiet afternoon at home or a hectic day with Mom yelling and the baby crying while the six year old plays soccer? Reality is such that many days the mother will have to go out even though the baby is crying, but each mom should seriously weigh the opportunity cost of being involved in all their activities.

### Curriculum Assessment

As regards curricula, I would encourage each parent, the mother in particular, to read some of Charlotte Mason's writings and some articles on the classical approach to help determine which direction would be best for the family (not just for an individual child). The curriculum must work for the family, not just for an individual child. Most families cannot and should not revolve around a child.

### Essence of Home Schooling

Erna concludes in a summation on home schooling and its success and worth.

The bottom-line of home schooling is that each family is responsible for educating their own children and should be able to do it in the way they

see best. I am not advocating freedom without accountability, for we all are accountable to God for all our actions.

I am committed to home schooling, because it works, and we see the results. I am also committed because I know that I must answer to God for how I raised my children, and it is the best way I know how. It is also a source of joy to our whole family and is much fun. We like learning together even amid the frustrations!

### Assessment

Erna states that there are published studies which indicate that home school students perform as well, if not better, and are more active in their community than public school students. That is a general answer. For specific confirmation, have concerned parents administer nationally – recognized achievement tests (e.g. Iowa, Stanford) to see how their own children perform in comparison to other American kids.

### Reflection

Erna's final statement to me was, "I wish you the best in your studies and pray that you know the source of all truth and that His yoke is easy and His burden is light."

### Future Goals

Erna and Bill plan to home school their children through grade twelve.

If the Lord will, I plan to continue home schooling the children through grade twelve. Christina, 10 years old, just finished fifth grade.

Ryane, seven years old, just finished second grade. Celeste, five years old, is entering Kindergarten. Our children were never enrolled in any school.

#### Case Study Five: The Bruner Family

Mary Bruner is a high school graduate. She is a homemaker. Her husband Keith is a high school graduate and completed three years of college. Keith is a mortgage banker and a contractor. Mary and Keith have six children and one on the way. The children are Daniel, Susan, Faith, Anthony, Rose and Hope. Daniel is ten years old and in the seventh grade. Susan is nine years old and in the fifth grade. Faith is seven years old and in the third grade. Anthony is six years old and in the first grade. Rose is four years old and in kindergarten. Hope is two years old. The Bruner's have been home schooling for approximately eight years. They began home schooling for sociological reasons.

#### Parent Choice

Mary has talked about the recent outbreak of violence in school systems leading to the murder of innocent children. She remarks about existing evil in the world, politically correct thinking and what she feels is immoral teaching in public schools. Her wish and also that of her husband Keith was that their children did not need to interact with unruly, undisciplined children. The remedy for just this was to home school.

While protecting my children from crazed killers has turned out to be a hidden bonus, that was not our motivation... Evil is everywhere. We simply wanted to control the environment in which our children learned. The agenda of public education with its politically correct thinking and immoral teaching

with regards to sexual education... Beyond that, however, we simply wanted to limit the interaction between our children and the undisciplined, unruly children coming from homes where biblical values – heck, any values- were no longer taught.

Mary reflects upon her initial thoughts of home schooling and her disapproval.

In the years since I first began, home schooling has gone from a little known concept much criticized by the few disapproving souls who were familiar with it to a legitimate, much heralded, legally protected, form of education. With many parents so dissatisfied with public schools, I no longer hear, “Is that legal?” Rather “Good for you!” Ironically, I was once one of the highly critical and rather disapproving “nay sayers” of home schooling.

Mary continued with her disapproval of home schooling questioning the need of a child, socialization and the instructional qualifications of the parent as a teacher.

While pregnant with Daniel in the summer of 1991, I learned that my older brother, Matt and his wife, Linda, both Christians, intended to begin home schooling their eldest child. The gossip spread like wildfire through my family. All of us found the notion crazy. After all, the child need socialization and what made them think they were qualified to teach him? I spoke to my brother one afternoon and said as much. Oh my, did I ever catch it upside the head!

Matthew, never one to shy away from speaking the truth in love (one of his many admirable traits), took me strongly to task for my worldly position and vehemently defended their decision detailing similar reasons as the ones I

mentioned above. He fervently believed it the proper thing to do in the politically correct, God-less culture of 1991. (And that was even before the eight, long morally bankrupt years we now call “The Clinton Presidency”!) Still, I disagreed citing it as “my right” and continued to think he and Linda were nuts and so would their son be one day.

When Mary became pregnant with her first child, not only did she change in her thinking, but also her entire perspective with regards to home schooling.

The next summer, 1992, was the summer in which God saved me and changed me perspective. Along with the other changes God wrought within me was the change He made in my thinking with regards to home schooling. After spending thirty-six hours in labor to bring my son into the world, five years teaching behavior and instilling values, why, oh why, would I give him over for someone else to teach? Someone whose values I didn't know. I am responsible to God for my children, and am called to teach them His words. “Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

DT. 11: 19. How could I part with him for eight long hours every day? How could I know who and what was influencing him? It just didn't make sense to dump my kids into someone else's lap. This was my parent choice to home school. BUT I was scared!

#### Parent as Parent/Teacher

Mary was not only scared, but also unsure of her abilities, capabilities and making sure that her first child had socialization. She questioned if she could meet

the needs of her child in every aspect. She was very critical of herself, and did not want to make any mistakes.

After all, my kids needed socialization...and what made me qualified to teach them? And can I really handle being surrounded by my children day in and day out for the rest of their young lives? With no break? No free time? All of the worldly arguments I'd been making against home schooling were still ringing in my ears. Who was I to think that I was equipped to teach these children adequately? What made me think that I wasn't going to do them more harm than good?

Socialization was of great importance to Mary. No matter how hard she surveyed the environment, the more reassuring it was to home school.

However, the socialization Daniel had been receiving at our backyard fence by the children of those neighbors who found me snooty and nutty for keeping my children out of "their" school, the socialization that everyone is always so worried about, was little more than an attempt on the part of these children to introduce him to every vulgar word imaginable. Or to ask him to do inappropriate things 'for fun'. This is the socialization I used to think was essential to the well being of my children.

#### Parent as Facilitator/Partner

Jointly both Mary and Keith discussed their parent choice to home school. Keith was confident about the choice from the beginning. Mary was confident, but terrified.

Keith was adamant from the moment we started discussing it that we would home school. He knew it was the right thing and was confident. I was terrified. I'm the type of nut who has to see all the pieces of the puzzle and how they fall into place before beginning. I need to know how I'm going to get from point A to point B and back again. I don't have a spontaneous bone in my body, therefore had to envision the whole picture before I felt confident. And I couldn't envision it. What will I do with the baby? How and where will I teach them? How am I going to get my housework done if I am teaching all day? I was new in the faith, still a fairly new mom, and couldn't see how I was going to be able to do it.

### Curriculum

Mary learned to take one step at a time. She knew she had to begin somewhere, and that was what she would teach. Other than values and morals, subject matter was the real concern.

In the spring of 1994, while Daniel was three, I decided to attend a home school curriculum fair. I had met several moms with children the same age as Daniel who had already committed to home schooling, and they encouraged me to attend the fair to get an idea of what was available. One friend said it would give me confidence and peace of mind to view the curricula and see how easy the home schooling would be.

### Frustrations

There was so much material at the curriculum fair that Mary became overwhelmed. Slowly but surely things made sense.



I was surrounded by hundreds of tables from hundred of companies selling hundreds of differing curricula. If you child is "this type" of learner, try us. If you child is "that type" of learner, look over here. I was completely overwhelmed. Mayday! Mayday! I wanted out!! Still, I persevered and sat in on some of the speakers. I battled the crowds, perused a curriculum or two and selected one that was colorful, required little creativity on my part and was rather easy to follow.

To this day Mary uses Abeka Home School Curriculum and also Bob Jones University Press. Abeka is the very colorful and already creative curriculum. They both also have their own websites.

### Subjects

Still somewhat nervous about home schooling Mary needed to begin with Daniel. The compulsory school age in New Jersey is six years old. Mary wanted enough time to see if home schooling works; otherwise, still have time to register Daniel into kindergarten.

I nervously began teaching Daniel in September after he turned four. I thought it best to get my feet wet, and see if this home schooling stuff worked before Daniel was compulsory school age, which was six years old in New Jersey. If I couldn't do it, I wanted to know in time to register him for kindergarten the following September.

### Alphabet and numbers.

We set up class at our dining room table with Daniel and two year old Susan, after putting one-year-old Faith in her crib for her morning nap.

Thanks to four years of Sesame Street and some earlier reviewing, Daniel already had a basic knowledge of the alphabet and numbers. I had purchased some pre-school books for Susan, so would give her a page to color and start reviewing flash cards. I'd teach Susan the letter and Daniel the phonics sound. "I say 'i' like 'indian'." We'd recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing some songs from the PBS children's program "Barney." "There are seven days, there are seven days, there are seven days, in a week" (sung to the tune of "Oh My Darlin' Clementine). It was wonderful!

### Math

We'd use our hands as math manipulatives as I'd check for number comprehension by asking them to snap their fingers three times, or clap twice. Or we'd use crayons, as I'd ask Susan to give me three or Daniel to count out fifteen.

It was thrilling to see how much they already knew and how much more they were learning! And I would have missed it all!

Feeling more confident, Mary enjoyed her home schooling success.

Had I sent them to school, I would have missed the pride on their faces when they answered a question correctly, or the light that went on in their eyes when something finally "clicked." I wouldn't have been the one to praise and hug them for their accomplishments or motivate them to try harder. It was right that their teacher be me.

### Daily Routine

As much as Mary needed to know every inch of the way from point A to point B, she began to relax with the newfound natural methods of home schooling.

Contrary to my previous conception, I quickly found that our home school sessions did not have to last very long to be productive. I didn't have to conduct my home school with the rigid schedule I anticipated. I didn't have to keep them engaged in their studies for eight long hours. It didn't even take all morning, one hour was all that was truly necessary or practical for such wee ones. With some prioritizing, I found I had ample time for the household tasks over which I'd been so concerned. It didn't take long for me to realize that home schooling worked amazingly well.

### Phonics and reading.

Within weeks, as I'd review the phonics sounds with Daniel, Susan would chime in. I was killing two birds with one stone. She didn't have as tight of a grasp on the facts, but was learning nonetheless.

By the end of our school year the following June, three year old Susan could identify all twenty-six letters of the alphabet and knew many phonics sounds, and four year old Daniel was reading fluently both short and long vowel words.

I was relieved and joyous to see how God has blessed our efforts. By God's grace, with the aid of the wonderful curriculum I had selected, I could teach my children.

### Student Needs

Now that Mary's children are older, and there are now six of them, she manages a curriculum that fulfills the needs of her children.

Now that the children are older their studies are naturally more involved and take longer. It gets hairy juggling all of their needs, scheduling a time to work with the younger ones to teach them to read, and tending to the youngest, who is still too young to teach. I fret sometimes that the house isn't as clean as I'd like, things aren't spotless; there are often too many schoolbooks and toys out of place. Yet, it somehow always falls into place.

### Extracurricular

Having six children is somewhat of a financial strain for the Bruner family.

Because of our finances with such a large family, we can't afford private lessons of any kind such as: art, music, dance, etc. However the children are involved in community sports teams – baseball, football, basketball, tennis and soccer. They also belong to a home schoolers band in our co-op.

My husband Keith is an avid golfer. Daniel, Susan and Anthony have learned how to golf. We recently participated in the US Kids Golf Tournament. Daniel and Susan placed first in their age category in the nation. We are hoping for college scholarships some day for their achievements in golf.

### Record Keeping

Every other year I keep records on each child. I also have them take standard tests administered by a certified teacher. Their scores are well above average. Daniel has perfect scores each time. Susan becomes stressed with the time element. I normally do not give the children tests with a time frame. I now realize that this is essential in preparation someday for SATs.

### Field Trips

Nature trips for us are inexpensive and a great learning tool. We have also visited art museums, watched the making of guitars at Martin Guitar, visited the Wild West City and go on many YMCA trips including where we take swimming lessons.

### Reflection

I have been on several field trips with the Bruner's. I especially enjoyed the making of guitars. Daniel picked up a guitar and began playing. He has never had a lesson. He is gifted in intelligence and a natural musician. Daniel loves to sing, and seems to always have time to teach a song or start a sing-along.

### Assessment

Mary's fears are still there, but her confidence level for home schooling is also present.

I am now what would be considered a veteran home schooler or as some would suggest an "expert" due to the number of children that have successfully learned to read within the Bruner compound. However, I balk at that term. I am no expert. I'm just a mom who loved her kids too much to

give them over to a stranger. A mom who tries to dot her i's and cross her t's for the sake of her kids. A mom who strives to remain diligent to the requirements of her state, who gets tired and sometimes cross. Expert? Puh!

God merely led me to something that worked the first year and gave me the wisdom to stick with it. I still become nauseous with fear every fall as we embark upon the new semester. I still continue to be terrified that I'm going to fail my children or lose total control of my other responsibilities.

### Future Goals

Keith and I have decided to home school the children through grade twelve. There is a small possibility that if any one of them would like to go to a high school for the experience, a private high school will be chosen. No one has expressed this as yet.

For sure we would like for our children to go to at least a four-year college, and even for a master's degree. We are advocates of furthering education. Unfortunately, we as parents did not. We want the best for our children, and our family.

### Differences and Similarities Among the Five Case Studies

The five case studies have provided an in-depth description of home schooling: parent choice and student needs. Each family had different characteristics in relation to size, and children's ages and sex. Their parent choice was ideological, pedagogical or sociological. Although two families chose ideological, one chose pedagogical and the last two chose sociological, each was very distinct in reasons. Student needs were met at different times in order to home school the children. All

five case study families had similarities. Family relationships were consistent with commitment, responsibility, accountability, and a strong bonded God filled family. Curriculum choices were initially stressful, rigid and structured, but soon changed after approximately one year to a natural and flexible setting. All families were involved in extracurricular activities, which were either private or given by the community. The current perceptions of the families were with regards to their home schooling success. Future goals were built on this success to home school through the twelfth grade with aspirations of higher levels of education thereafter.

### Differences

#### Families. (see Table 1)

Castello\_– 3 children, ages, 9, 6, 3, girl, boy, girl

Rieseman – 2 children, ages, 18, 17, girls

Kidman – 3 children, ages, 11, 7, 5, boys

Pae – 3 children, ages, 10, 7, 5, girls

Bruner – 6 children, ages, 10, 9, 7, 6, 4, 2, boy, girl, girl, boy, girl, girl

#### Parent choice. (see Table 1)

Castello\_– Ideological – Christian aspects of life

Rieseman – Ideological – Religious convictions

Kidman – Pedagogical – A good education

Pae – Sociological – Peer pressure, racial prejudices

Bruner – Sociological – Violence, undisciplined

#### Student needs. (see Table 1)

Castello\_– home schooled from birth

Rieseaman – home schooled from grades 4 and 2

Kidman – home schooled from grade 2 and birth

Pae – home schooled from age 2

Bruner – home schooled from toddler and remaining from birth

Table 1

Differences: Major Characteristics

<u>Family</u>	<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Parent Choice</u>	<u>Student Needs</u>
Castello	3 Children Ages: 9,6,3	Ideological Christian aspects of life	Home schooled from birth
Rieseaman	2 Children Ages: 18, 17	Ideological Religious convictions	Home schooled from grades 4 & 2
Kidman	3 Children Ages: 11, 7, 5	Pedagogical A good education	Home schooled from age 2 & birth
Pae	3 Children Ages: 10, 7, 5	Sociological Peer pressure & Racial prejudice	Home schooled from age two
Bruner	6 Children Ages: 10, 9, 7, 6, 4, 2	Sociological Violence & undisciplined	Home schooled toddler & remaining from birth

Similarities

Family relationship. (see Table 2)

Karen and Dave Castello were high school sweethearts, who knew and planned on marrying each other. They also planned on having children to complete their marriage as a family, which included God. Their marriage was sacred and committed to each other. Home schooling allowed for the family to stay together creating a strong, bonded God filled family.



Barbara and Dan Rieseman intertwined responsibility, chores and family relationships in their home school, which was their life style. Their religious convictions permeated this life style. Committed to these Christian beliefs, home schooling enabled them to receive an understanding of many things that included God in their family and lives.

Shelly and John Kidman were off to a different start when their first child entered the school system. Several transitional years were settled when home schooling set into their lives. The family was then functioning well. Having a flexible but very satisfying time with each other allowed for more all together family time. This made their family life very much fulfilled.

Erna and Bill Pae were not about to shirk the responsibilities toward their family. Their earnest commitment, responsibility and accountability to God have given them a true source of joy to their whole family. This commitment began with home schooling.

Mary and Keith Brunner, soon to have their seventh child, preferred to instill their own family values and morals in their children. It was their family and their responsibility to God for their children. Home schooling worked, making them a strong family unit.

Table 2

Family Relationships: Similarities

<u>Family</u>	<u>Major Characteristics</u>
Castello	Strong, bonded, God-filled family
Reiseman	Included God in their family and lives
Kidman	Family life very much filled
Pae	A source of joy to the whole family
Bruner	A strong family unit

Curriculum choices (see Table 3)

Karen Castello learned to tune into the natural interests of her children. This was her link to success and choice of curriculum materials. Curriculum had its initial changes, as well as the time elements of each day, which became more flexible.

Barbara Rieseman looked at all kinds of curriculum. Learning styles were met, which also included her Christian convictions. Barbara knew she had hundreds of choices in all subjects and reading having endless choices. There were continuous changes in curriculum; therefore, achieving flexibility in every day.

Shelly Kidman, who took her first son out of public school after first grade, was unsure where and which way to go. She knew that there were many choices in curriculum, but she wanted one to match his learning style. Again there were many changes in curriculum, but great choices. Shelly added more and more material in a very flexible schedule.

Erna Pae researched educational philosophies and then chose the curriculum. Her method of instruction included various attributes and devoted learning habits. A natural setting was the educational guide that Erna chose to use for her children. It was an eclectic approach lending to each child as being an individual. Her day was natural and flexible.

Mary Bruner took one step at a time. Other than values and morals, subject matter was the real concern. Curriculum fairs were of some assistance in making her choice. More relaxed and flexible, Mary is fond of her newfound natural methods of home schooling.

Table 3

Curriculum Choices: Similarities

<u>Family</u>	<u>Major Characteristics</u>	<u>Daily Schedule</u>
Castello	In tune with natural interests	Flexible
Reiseman	Individual learning styles	Flexible
Kidman	Matching the learning style	Flexible
Pae	Being an individual	Flexible
Bruner	New found natural methods	Flexible

Extracurricular activities. (see Table 4)

The Castello's were involved in private music lessons, community troops and sports teams, and field trips. They were also involved in church activities. They managed an average of five visits per month to the library, which many times let to a monthly field trip.

The Rieseman's were busy with projects, plays, talent shows, competitions and sewing lessons. They even created their own projects involving their church group and the community. Many field trips were taken with home school groups and also as a family.

The Kidman's participated in sports. Mostly, they have taken advantage of public facilities, and Parks and Recreation Programs. They were involved in tennis, T-ball, Pop Warner Football, basketball, soccer and swimming. They also took private music lessons.

The Pae's took private music lessons, drawing and painting at an art studio, belonged to a Latin Club, and took free community gymnastic classes. Nature walks and field trips were also part of their activities.

The Bruner's were unable to afford private lessons. They belonged to community sports teams – baseball, football, basketball, tennis and soccer. One parent being an avid golfer enabled three of the children to participate in the National Kids Golfing Tournament. They were given lessons by this parent. They also belonged to a home schoolers band through their local co-op group.

Table 4

Extracurricular Activities: Similarities

<u>Family</u>	<u>Major Characteristics</u>
Castello	Private lessons, community sports, field trips, library
Reiseman	Projects, plays, talent shows, competitions, sewing lessons, Field trips, church and community
Kidman	Sports, public facilities, parks and recreation programs
Pae	Private lessons, community lessons, field trips
Bruner	Community sports, band, parent golf lessons

Current perceptions. (see Table 5)

The Castello family regarded home schooling as a complete success. It was a family lifestyle that they could not change. The children were happy and well adjusted. The family was a unit that was closely bonded with God. Home schooling was their parent choice, which met the needs of their children.

The Rieseeman family, who never thought that home schooling was for them, would do it again without even a question. What it did for Barbara, her daughters and the entire family is something else.

The Kidman family learned how to home school by trial and error. They can now give advice to anyone who is considering home schooling. Their commitment to home schooling was definitely a sacrifice, but it had its many rewards and success.

The Pae family had lots of advice to give to home school parents. They played an active role leading a support group and giving advice. Their summation concluded with the success and worth of home schooling.

The Bruner family talked about their large family success. Although there were parental fears of making sure the children were on target with their learning, they were very proud of their home school success with a high confidence level.

Table 5

Current Perceptions: Similarities

<u>Family</u>	<u>Major Characteristics</u>
Castello	Complete success, a family lifestyle
Reiseman	Would do it again
Kidman	Many rewards and success
Pae	Success and worth it
Bruner	Success with high confidence level

Future goals. (see Table 6)

The Castello's wanted to home school through grade twelve.

The Rieseman children were now in college and nursing school.

The Kidman's intended to home school their children through grade twelve.

The Pae's planned to home school their children through grade twelve.

The Bruner's decided to home school their children through grade twelve.

All home school families expected that their children would further their educations through college and some beyond.

Table 6

Future Goals: Similarities

<u>Family</u>	<u>Major Characteristics</u>
Castello	Home school through grade twelve
Reiseman	Now in college and nursing school
Kidman	Home school through grade twelve
Pae	Home school through grade twelve
Bruner	Home school through grade twelve

## Summary

The patterns that emerged within the case study families were consistent with the interview families that were discussed in Chapter Four. In each case study family the differences were basic demographics: the family size (number of children and ages of children), the parent choice (initial concerns) – ideological, pedagogical or sociological, the student needs (when home schooling began). Many patterns emerged as found in the coding categories: family relationships, family adjustments, parents as parents, parents as teachers, parents as facilitators, parents as partners, curriculum choices, curriculum problems, curriculum specific, student needs, student abilities, student flexibility, learning styles (visual, kinesthetic, and auditory), community volunteers, community involvement, extracurricular activities, apprenticeship, future planning, school as a life style, record keeping, goals, and current perceptions.

The most common and similar patterns that emerged were: family relationships, curriculum choices, extracurricular activities, current perceptions and future goals. Family relationships very clearly focused on the family unit being a strong bond that was God filled and committed to the joy of the whole family. Curriculum choices that were initially rigid and structured, soon to become natural and flexible. Extracurricular activities were outside of the home and into the community. Current perceptions expressed the home school lifestyle as success. The children were happy and well-adjusted. Home schooling was their family lifestyle. Finally, future goals for each family was to home school through grade twelve with aspirations of the home schoolers to continue their education through college and possibly beyond.

Chapter Six will discuss the purpose of this study explaining the goals, motivations, and perception of home schools from the participant's perspective. A summary of the study will be explained and consistent with previous research. Each research question will be responded to in summation according to findings of the research. The conclusion will be consistent with those researchers of today. The outcome of this study will be its implications, followed by the recommendations for further research and concluding remarks.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explain the parent choice to home school and student needs. The research for this dissertation explains the parent choice, which includes the initial decision to home school and for what specific reason. It investigates the varied reasons for this very decision. Along with the choice to home school is also the choice of curriculum and the number of years to home school. The study sought to find out the motives, goals, perceptions, and curriculum implementation of the home school. The study then sought to determine student needs and how they were met in terms of academic achievements and social values as a result of parent choice. This was a qualitative study.

A demographic survey was used to examine 25 families. From these families, 8 home school families were interviewed from which 5 families were presented as in-depth case studies. Using an interview format, questions were asked about why the family originally decided to home school, what curriculum choices were made and used, and how these choices changed from year to year. This study explains why they continued to home school, what their current perceptions were, and what materials they were currently using. The interview also included questions concerning the children of these families. The responses to these questions explain

the needs of the children, a typical home school day, likes and dislikes that a curriculum might impose, their social life and future goals.

In Chapter I, of this study, the researcher presented background information, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, definitions of terms, and the significance of the study. Within Chapter II, the researcher presented an overview, government, legislative and judicial influences on home schooling, attitudes toward home schooling, and issues surrounding home schooling. Chapter III addressed the methodology, including an overview, research design, subjects, instrument development, pilot study results, data collection and data analysis. The research findings were discussed in depth in Chapter IV. This included reasons why families originally began to home school. The three main categories that were precisely noted according to the interviews of eight families were: ideological, pedagogical, and sociological. Demographics of 25 families were provided which included: father's education level, mother's education level, father's occupation, mother's occupation, family income, number of children, grade level of children, number of years home schooling, number of visits to the library per month, dollars spent per student per year and religious affiliation. A summary was provided for each followed by frequencies presented in bar graphs and pie charts. The summary addressed the eight interviewed families and their choice to home school. Chapter V presented an in-depth look at five families that have home schooled from the birth of their children, early childhood years, or have taken their children out of the school system. These five case studies focused on the parent choice to home school, and what curriculum best fit the student needs. Transcriptions, field notes and reflections

were included in the excerpts for each case study. Chapter VI will present a summary, conclusion, and implications of the study as well as recommendations for further research.

### Summary of Study

Home schooling is establishing itself as one of the major alternatives of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Home schooling is more common and more widely accepted. American families from diverse backgrounds report to home schooling for varied reasons and concerns. These reasons and concerns are ideological, pedagogical or sociological. The great majority of home schooling families are not separatists and isolationist, but active members of civil society (Lines, 2000). Their goal is to raise and educate their children in a strong family unit. At best they are an inspiration for the renewal of American education preserving values and morals within the education system.

Home schooling is here to stay. Its numbers continue to grow. Home schooling produces literate students with high levels of achievement with minimal government interference at a fraction of the cost of any government program. They use this freedom well and wisely. Home schools and households are managed simultaneously. Home schooling is a way of life. As Martin Luther King III said at a home school convention, "The kind of things home schoolers are doing may be the saving grace of our nation" (Martin Luther King III as cited in Lyman, 1998).

The family unit is a major factor in many parents' decisions to educate their children at home. Home schooling promotes stronger family relationships, which are important for the well being of children. Once strong family relationships are

established, the confidence to explore the world is met whether it is challenging or unconventional. The children are individuals learning at their own pace maintaining high levels of achievement through curiosity and intense learning processes. The parents know their children and their learning styles. They are aware of what their children already know and what the next step is to be learned. Student needs are met, therefore being more demanding and intensive. This in turn promotes a lifestyle of raising children to make their own choices in life. These parents raise and educate their children to make informed and reasonable choices about their lives.

As individuals, everyone is unique in their style of learning. Individuals differ from one another in terms of what they want to learn, and how, when, where and why they learn (Priesnitz, 2001). Some children learn best pursuing their own interests at their own speed, others learn with prescribed course of study. Home schooling can be eclectic, flexible, curriculum driven, or a combination of some or all. The bottom line is children should not be a product of a system or philosophy. This is the essence of home schooling. It is the working together to ensure the gradual, continuous growth of all children so that they can live productive lives to day and tomorrow. The child of today is not educated with the methods of yesterday.

Life is an education in itself (Ko, 1998). Home schoolers create the love for learning. Their interests and passions are fulfilled productively, creatively and positively. Student needs are met. Through parental and family encouragement they learn what they need to know and more. They have the confidence to meet their challenges, try new things, explore, think, and play at anytime and anywhere. Home schooling is a lifelong learning every day. There are no restrictions. Being involved

in daily life and activities teaches children to treat others respectfully, to be involved in the community and to contribute to society.

Religious reasons for home schooling remain important, but are not a controlling factor or entity. The dissatisfaction with the quality of education in school systems, peer pressure and violence is the plurality of families who are turning to home schooling. In a Department of Education survey sent to home schoolers for over a decade, the findings were:

Until 1994-95, the majority of families named 'religion' as the reason why they chose home schooling. This shifted in 1995 when for the first time; the single most important reason for home schooling became "dissatisfaction with the public school instructional program." Thirty-seven percent of parents gave this reason, compared to 29.6 percent who cited "Religious Reasons" that year. In 1995-96, the last year in which this survey question asked, 42 percent of families cited dissatisfaction with the public school environment – especially, safety, drugs, and adverse peer pressure. Religious reasons trailed at 27 percent, dissatisfaction with public school instruction at 16 percent, and other reasons at 15 percent (Lines, 2000).

Home school children are not sitting around praying followed by structured lessons at the kitchen table. No day is a typical day. Most home school children spend time at museums, libraries, churches, community colleges, department of parks and recreation, field trips to factories, nursing homes and major corporations. Many are members of home school groups and co-ops preparing for competition, talent shows and plays. Parents and children organize their own independent day. It can be

structured or unstructured. It can be private or shared lessons with other home school families.

Thus this study was designed to qualitatively analyze families that had home schooled for at least three years. The researcher learned why these families chose to home school making home schooling a way of life. The focus was on parent choice and student needs. The researcher compared the materials the families chose to be used the first, second and continued years of home schooling. The researcher found out how they made these curricular choices, actually implemented the curriculum and met the needs of the student.

To accomplish this task, the researcher developed a written survey instrument that strictly dealt with demographic information for 25 participating families. In addition, interviews were conducted with eight families selected from the original twenty-five based on demographic information of the families. This selection was both heterogeneous according to socio-economics and homogeneous according to categories. Finally, 5 families from the 8 were the researcher's case studies. The researcher conducted weekly visits to these families and participated in home school events with the children.

#### Findings of the Research

Research question #1 found that home school families did in fact offer an alternative education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The families in this study that home schooled from the beginning wanted to home school, and the families that pulled out their children from public education saw home schooling as an alternative means of

education. Each of these families had religious, academic or social concerns that they believed could not be addressed satisfactorily at school.

The research is consistent with the findings of Rieseberg (1995) that the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be one of multi-abilities and multi-generations – a place where students who conform with their peers will struggle to compete, while students who develop personal expertise and independence, will find opportunities.

In research question #2, the question posed was, “What choices were made the first year?” These choices varied from one home school family to another. In some situations the immediate mimicking of a school day was set up, but did not last very long. Others were rigid and scheduled, again only for the first year. Some took a natural approach, while others were eclectic. The research is consistent with the findings of Ko (1998) that life is an education in itself. There are no restrictions. In some instances trial and error marked the first year actually resulting in some frustrations and fears.

Taking a look at the first year in research question #3 resembled rigidity and structure, which soon changed to a natural and flexible environment. The research is consistent with the findings of the Homeschool Information Library (2000) that home schooling is simply the way they live their lives – children and adults living and learning together with a seamlessness that would challenge an observer to determine which was ‘home’ and which was ‘school’. The “school at home” approach first did not work at all. Until the parents realized that their children had natural instincts, the parents relied on copying what the schools do. Within the first year all parents

learned to build on their natural instincts. Things flowed naturally once the parents were in tune with their children's timetable.

During the second year of home schooling, which responds to research question #4, parent choices were endless. The research is consistent with the findings of Priesnitz (2001) that individuals differ from one another in terms of what they want to learn, and how, when, where and why they learn. Either through home school groups, co-ops, conventions, fairs, and conferences, the parents made specific choices in curriculum, and implementation. During the second year, definite changes were made, as well as the time elements of each day. Individuality was the key link to each child's learning style. What worked for one child may not have worked for another. Subject matter was just a small part of curriculum. Curriculum was the everyday activities from morning until night.

Research question #5 increased the findings in choices made from year one, to year two and finally during the continued years of home schooling. The continued years of home schooling included a variety of extracurricular activities. The research is consistent with the findings of Mooney (2001) who recently wrote an article that claimed a team of eight home schooled students from South Jersey made the state finals of New Jersey's High School Mock Trial competition. These activities ranged from numerous field trips, visits to libraries, museums, talent shows, plays, competitions, private art and music lessons, self-created projects, community service, apprenticeships, part-time jobs and many community organized teams and sports teams. A certain weekday may have even been set-aside for family day making for only just four days of instruction. Vacations were planned when the least amount of



tourists were expected in the off-season and prices were lower to travel. The flexibility of home school life gave unity and strong family relationships a high level of competency, morals and values.

Current perceptions of the home school parents regarding their choices and the needs of their children in research question #6 were appropriately documented in meticulous record keeping. This record keeping was kept on an annual or every other year basis. Each record keeping gave its own assessment and current perceptions as complete success in a family lifestyle that they would not change. The family was a unit that was closely bonded and filled with God. The children were happy and well adjusted. Home schooling met everything their children needed. The research is consistent with the findings of Lines (2000) that in 1995 when for the first time, the single most important reason for home schooling became "dissatisfaction with the public school instructional program."

Research question #7 examined the exact view of what each family's home school looks like now. The research is consistent with the findings of Pawlas (2001) that most parents will comment that one of their goals is to facilitate the development of intellect and character, not merely to prepare students for college and a career. It is natural. It is flexible. No day is a typical day. Responsibility, chores and family relationships are intertwined in a very full day. The luxury of having flexibility is the difference. Home schooling is a way of life. It is a commitment and a sacrifice filled with many rewards.

Research question #8: Why did parents decide initially to home school? The reasons families originally began to home school varied, but fell basically into three

main areas: ideological, pedagogical, and sociological. These categories have been precisely noted in previous research. The reasons why parents decide to home school their children usually fall into the three categories: ideological, pedagogical, and sociological (Lines, 1996). The ideologues are usually religious fundamentalists who are unhappy with the public school's secular humanist curriculum, and the pedagogues are typically parents who are dissatisfied with the large classes, rigid curricula, and conformity found in traditional schools (Avner, 1989; Wikel, 1995, as cited in Masters, 1996). The sociologies are parents who are dissatisfied with peer pressure, racial prejudices and violence (Lockwood, 1996, as cited in Masters, 1996).

In research question #9, the study found that the curriculum initially chosen was at times mimicking the school system with rigidity and structure. However, this soon changed with each and every home school family. Such curriculum as Abeka, Sonlight and Bob Jones University Press were used but not alone. Intuitively parents chose and created their own to best fit the student needs. The research is consistent with the findings of Lawrence (1994) that public school curriculum has not only been 'dumbed down', but must teach everything from health to consumer affairs. Core curriculum is less than a half of a school day in a student's life in a public school.

Research question #10 supported the choice of curriculum that changed over time, from an abrupt school day to a naturalistic intense and committed learning style with lots of flexibility. The research is consistent with the findings of Moore (1994) that the home school parent responds warmly to their child/children, consistently providing good values, teaching only tasks for which the child is ready and encouraging their child/children to explore their own interests and to work out their

own imagination. Although many of these families were religious, it never altered or controlled the parent choices and the student needs in their home school way of life. Learning styles such as: visual, kinesthetic and auditory were used. Curriculum became the parent choice and the student needs. At times there were few changes in approach those first years. The greatest changes came when there was more than one child to teach at the same time. Many times the approach was eclectic holding the merits of a classical approach to home schooling.

The student needs that were met the first year, as found in research question #11, were immediate. They were from the standpoint of ideological, pedagogical or sociological reasons and concerns. Ideological encompassed views, concepts ideals and religious beliefs incorporated in a specific way of life. Pedagogical was strictly in concern with learning and patterns of learning related to growth and development from day one. Sociological was the relationship with others such as: family, siblings, relatives, friends, colleagues and the world – diversity. Student needs were met initially by the parent choice, obviously curriculum changed, but their goals and motivation remained steadfast. The research is consistent with the findings of Cloud and Morse (2001) that parents of today are religious, but do more than only instill values.

### Conclusions

Prior to the 1980's home schooling was not legal in all states. Since then home schooling has emerged stronger than ever, and *is* legal in all states. In the past twenty years parents are making the choice to home school in order to meet the needs of their children. They want the best education they can possibly give to their

children. In a broader sense this education is not just book learning. It includes an array of well being attributes. Although many home school families are religious, it does not alter or control the parent choices and the student needs in their home school way of life. Consistent with present day research, the home school parents of today are religious, but do more than only instill values (Cloud & Morse, 2001).

Today's home school parents are not "religious weirdos" who could not deal with the outside world. They are not isolationists or extremists either. This study received demographic questionnaires from 25 home school families. The researcher found a wide variety of types of parents who home school. Nationalities were diverse: Caucasians, Hispanic, Asian, African American and other. Parent education levels ranged from high school to doctors. Occupations were extremely diverse. Family incomes ranged from \$20,000 to over \$50,000. The number of children was 1 to 8, whose grade levels were pre-K to grade 12. Parents were home schooling from 3 years to 18 years. Religions were Catholic, Charismatic, Christian, Jewish and non-affiliated. None of the above was in particular to outweigh the others. No matter what the makeup of the family was, it was a strong family unit in a home school lifestyle as lifelong learners.

So very natural and flexible are these loving parents. The research did find that these parents were not perfect. Some had fears and frustrations. Some experienced not knowing where to begin or where to go. Some managed through trial and error. But most of all their commitment, their sense of responsibility and their daily sacrifices made them the open-minded and dedicated parents that they were for their family. Their goals, motivations and perceptions allude to that of their children.

Not only are these children active learners, but they are also active citizens taking part in many community activities and services.

No longer home schooling an isolated learning experience; many times difficulties are quickly remedied by other home school families. There now exist home school groups and co-ops. Learning is shared whenever needed. These support groups are totally unbiased and very willing to include anyone who wishes to. In this study, the children belonged to many home school clubs and activities. Parents went to conventions, conferences, workshops and lectures.

The home school community is here, and here to stay. It offers an alternative education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More will come as the numbers continually increase. The current perception of the home school parent is success. With average SAT scores of 1100 in the year 2000, compared to the 1019 for the general population (Cloud & Moore, 2001), school systems need to take a look at this and also make a choice and meet the student needs.

#### Implications

A greater number of children are being home schooled today. "The principle of home schools is firmly in place" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mueller & Brunetti, 1989, p. 325). There are an ever-greater number of parents opting to home school their children. The freedom to develop a curriculum, choose textbooks and materials can be accomplished with little or no difficulty. "A less obvious problem is meeting standardized test requirements of state and local authorities" (Mueller & Brunetti, 1989, p. 325). This is a periodic check to assure that home schoolers are up to grade level in basic skills. "Most studies show that students who are taught at home

perform above the national average” (Sullivan, 1993, p. 29). Their scores are significantly higher in reading, math, language, arts and science. Test scores are above the 80 percentiles. “Test scores remain between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles regardless whether their parent-teachers have a college degree or are high school dropouts” (McLean, 1998).

Test score averages of home schoolers are identical regardless of race/ethnicity, which are represented by white Caucasians, Indians, African-American, Hispanics and Asians. The majority do, however, represent themselves as Christian. Scores are significantly higher than the public school counterparts. “. . . Homeschooling enthusiasts insist that children taught at home score higher on tests and get into better colleges. . .” (Pfleger, 1998, p. 11). Test security and administering the test is the parent commitment to educational growth of their children. Testing environment may vary, and it is up to the parent to make it flawless. Achievement test results of home schoolers are of significant higher percentiles. “One-on-one tutorial learning is the most effective, but the key to an excellent education, whether home or institutional is simple: hard work and parental involvement” (McClean, 1998).

#### Recommendations for Further Research

“For all the obstacles that home schoolers still encounter, the signs of the times indicate the home schooling movement will continue to gain momentum” (Sullivan, 1993, p. 29). A considerable amount of resources are available for parents to formulate and create a viable curriculum. Other than books, magazines, on-line curriculum, there are support groups and organizations for guidance and support.

School districts are allowing access to their libraries and forming partnerships along with dual enrollment. The home schooler can participate on varsity teams. As an alternative form of education, the home schooler is off setting the failing public schools. Home schooling is innovative and decentralizing, giving opportunities to what is currently taking place in the workplace.

The willingness to support alternative forms of education is also evident in charter schools, magnet schools and voucher. "It is quite possible that taste for experimentation and innovation in education will embrace more meaningfully the notion of individualized learning" (Monasco, 1996, p. 22). "Performance grants" will soon be provided directly to parents. "The grants, which would be linked to annual examinations and available to any family whose child or children did not attend public school, would allow the family to actively choose the learning services it finds most suitable" (Monasco, 1996, p. 22). "Microvouchers" based on family income will be another option. "Educational savings accounts" will enable parents to deduct money from their local tax liability for each child who does not attend a public school.

#### Concluding Remarks

The home schooler is a lifelong learner never ceasing to be educated, innovative and creative. The future economic era stresses entrepreneurship continuously upgrading knowledge and skills to all levels. The new economy rewards the home schooler for just this very passion and ability to be creative with initiative and independent thinking. Today's public schools and its classroom discourage this individual development. It is time for the government to fund a home

schooling national K-12 curriculum, which embraces technology and individualized learning.

There are home school support groups in most communities where they can interact with other home schoolers. Many support groups focus on gathering their children together. The increased trend is to gather home school students to go on field trips, join in on special classes, have park days, youth groups, home school sport teams, and home school proms. Home school workshops are designed for thoughtful conversation, participation, sharing resources, and gathering for activities and discussions.

The focus is interaction with home school parents and children; therefore, socially home school parents do not isolate their children. They can easily be involved in an array of extra-curricular activities such as Scouts, 4-H or sports teams. Marchant and MacDonald (1994) support this positive social interaction with less negative peer influence, different aged children, real-world learning, parents, security and comfort. Home schoolers are not isolationists or separatists. Marchant and MacDonald (1994) confirm that home schoolers therefore make use of community resources such as "the library, museum, art gallery, theater presentations, parks/woods, zoo and church." Rieseberg (1995) adds that the personal computer contributes to a typical home schooler's network of resources which are so diverse, making home learning a rich and active process involved in the world's primary media.

The traditional form of education, which is a uniform education, is incapable of supporting and enhancing individual talents, skills and abilities. "Different styles



and profiles of intelligence cannot be addressed without individualizing the learning process" (Gardner as cited in Monasco, 1996, p. 24). The more the function and operation of public schools is questioned, the more the push for alternative and diverse forms of education will develop and therefore benefit the children of the future. This is happening now and will exist in the not too far future. "As corporations and other organizations push for radical changes in schools (e.g., New American Schools Development Corporation), and as such schools are designed and implemented, those who home educate their children are able to offer important insights into the local and national debate and discussion" (Knowles, Muchmore & Spaulding, 1994, p. 242).

Looking at the history of the workplace, it foreshadows a very different workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Corporate restructuring is the trend in this new workplace, enabling firms to better compete in a global marketplace. Job security, benefits and pay are unpredictable. It is not expected to have a lifelong employment with a single company. The strategy for the worker includes "entrepreneurial skills with flexibility, initiative, independence, and a lifelong learner's desire to anticipate and master the skills required to compete for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Rieseberg, 1995, p. 16). Home schooling encourages these entrepreneurial skills. It is a virtual workplace providing children with more flexibility with a greater opportunity for in-depth study as needed or desired. Advances in technology and out-sourcing are the corporate trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the home schooler is fully competent. "Home schooling is an opportunity for independent thinking and self-confidence, not imitation and conformity" (Lawrence, 1994, p. 10).

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**  
**Adult Interview Questions**

## **HOME SCHOOLING ADULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Opening statement:** During the course of this interview, I will be asking you about why you decided to home school your child or children. I will be asking you about the curriculum you have chosen, whether or not this curriculum has changed over the years, and if this curriculum meets the needs of your children.

This information is for my dissertation. Most of all, it is especially to inform the educational community about home schooling and its success. The purpose of the interview is to find out how home schooling works, how it affects the family and the children, and how it offers an alternative education.

The interview will be taped and then transcribed by the researcher. Names will remain confidential and changed. The tapes will remain private in my possession only. While taping, if you decide to take something out or change your response, this can be done.

The first set of questions is to find out about your background and experiences. The purpose of these background questions is to help us find out how different kinds of people have come to the decision to home school their children.

1. How long have you been home schooling?
2. What was it about home schooling that attracted you to it?
3. What were your goals and objectives when you started?
4. What was your most important concern?
5. How old were your children?

6. I am interested in learning more about you as a person and your personal involvement in home schooling. What led you to become a home schooler?
7. In most decisions we make there are other people who have some influence on what we do. Was there anyone in particular who influenced you to join the home school community?
8. Having made this choice to home school and actually starting the instruction, how did you believe your children would learn best?
9. How long did you intend to home school when you started?
10. Describe your very first steps in home schooling. How did it go for the first year? Was there actual formal schooling? What was a typical home school day?
11. After year one of home schooling, what were some of the changes made in your curriculum?
12. Comparing the first two years, what were the similarities and what were the differences? Was more time spent with a specific curriculum? Did you spend more or less time with them each day?
13. Now lets talk about the present. What is your day like from early morning to the end of the day? Take me through this day telling me what the children are doing, what you are doing and what is happening.
14. What advice would you give to parents who are considering home schooling? Would you tell them about choosing and using curriculum?

15. Do you have anything to add, change or clarify before we stop talking today?
16. You are clearly committed to home schooling. What makes you completely sure of this choice?
17. How would you suggest parents reassure themselves that home schooling provides everything their children needs
18. Do you have anything to add, change or clarify before we stop talking today?

**Appendix B**  
**Demographic Questionnaire**



### Demographic information for Participating Families

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years home schooling \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name/Age/Grade of children being home schooled:

M/F \_\_\_\_\_ M/F \_\_\_\_\_

M/F \_\_\_\_\_ M/F \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you remove your children from public or private education or start from K? (please be specific) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you plan to home school your children through 12<sup>th</sup> grade?

Y/N Comment \_\_\_\_\_

4. Is the father the main support for the family? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation or profession \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have your own business? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Is the mother a homemaker and home educator? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

Mother works outside home? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how many hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Highest Education of Parents: Father \_\_\_\_\_ Mother \_\_\_\_\_

7. Family Income: Under \$20,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 - \$30,000 \_\_\_\_\_

\$30,000 - \$40,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 - \$50,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50,000 and up \_\_\_\_\_

8. Average amount spent per child per year on curriculum \_\_\_\_\_

9. Religious affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ How often per week attend church? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Own computer? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ Use for educational purposes? Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

11. Average number of visits to library per month \_\_\_\_\_

12. Formal instruction is taught primarily by: Mother? Father? Other? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Either parent have a teaching degree? \_\_\_\_\_ Who? \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Major \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C**  
**Home School Worksheet**

## FAMILY WORKSHEET

By, Debra Bell

This Family Worksheet is a tool to help you and your spouse make a wise decision about homeschooling.

### Homeschooling: Is it for Your Family?

1. Evaluate your relationship with your spouse.

       Excellent. You have a common vision and goals. You are able to move quickly to resolve conflicts that arise.

       Good. You communicate well about your differences in vision and goals. You seek out wise counsel to resolve conflicts when necessary.

       Fair. You are Christians. You eventually make peace about your differences. You rarely lose control of your emotions when you experience conflict. You do not seek help in resolving conflict.

       Poor. You disagree strongly about your vision and goals. You have a great deal of conflict, and you resolve it in a destructive way.

2. Evaluate your relationship with each of your children.

       Excellent. This child is highly motivated by your praise and has a strong desire to obey his or her parents.

       Good. This child can be motivated by your praise, and you are making steady progress in his or her willingness to obey you.

       Fair. This child is challenging and you are often overwhelmed by him or her. You and your spouse do not have an agreed-upon plan for training the child. You do not believe God can sustain you.

       Poor. This child is wearing the pants, and you gave up a long time ago. You feel like a failure as a parent. You aren't getting help and you have no hope that things are going to change.

3. Evaluate the atmosphere in your home. Circle all that apply.

**Positive:**

Peaceful  
Secure  
Fun  
Hospitable  
Spontaneous  
Stable  
Organized  
Encouraged

**Negative:**

Stressful  
Insecure  
Somber  
Isolated  
Rigid  
Unstable  
Chaotic  
Discouraging

4. List all other responsibilities and commitments you and your spouse have beyond maintaining your home and caring for your children.

Employment      Church      Volunteering      Hobbies

5. What plans do you have for limiting other responsibilities and commitments in order to homeschool with integrity?

6. Evaluate your home as an educationally stimulating environment.

- a. How often do you use the library?
- b. How many hours a week is your television set on?
- c. How many books are in your home?
- d. What types of presents do you usually buy for your children?
- e. What magazines do you subscribe to?
- f. What interests do you share with your children?
- g. What kinds of topics do you discuss as a family?
- h. Are pencils, paper and art supplies readily available to your children?
- i. Do your children have an adequate place to play outside?

7. Can you commit a minimum of four hundred dollars per year to homeschooling?

8. Rate yourself on initiative by asking yourself those questions and circling one of the words that follow. Are you a learner? How many books a year do you read?

Excellent      Very Good      Good      Fair      Poor

9. Rate yourself on discipline. Do you finish a job? Can you set goals and achieve them? Do you get up and go to bed on time? Do you fulfill your obligations?

Excellent      Very Good      Good      Fair      Poor

10. What are your reasons for homeschooling? Is this a biblical conviction?

11. How supportive of homeschooling is the father?

Very Supportive      Supportive      Neutral      Not Supportive

12. What role will the father be able to play in your homeschool?

13. What support system is available to you: Your husband? Your family? Your Church? A homeschool group? A friendly teacher? A Christian school? A library?

14. Are you willing to go to seminars, attend support group meetings, read books, etc. in order to always be improving your teaching skills and your homeschool?

15. Evaluate your willingness to seek help.

\_\_\_\_\_ I readily seek help from others who have a strength in the area I am struggling with.

\_\_\_\_\_ On occasion, I do seek outside help if things get pretty bad.

\_\_\_\_\_ I prefer to make things work on my own.

16. Having prayerfully weighed the cost of homeschooling, are you prepared to commit yourself to home educating for one year before reevaluating your decision?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**  
**Coding Categories**

### CODING CATEGORIES

Frel	Family Relationships	LSv	Learning Style – Visual
Fadj	Family Adjustments	LSk	Learning Style –
	Kinesthetic		
		Lsa	Learning Style –
	Auditory		
P-P	Parent as Parent		
P-T	Parent as Teacher	ComV	Community Volunteers
P-Fa	Parent as Facilitator	Com I	Community Involvement
P-Par	Parent as Partner		
P-L	Parent as Learner	ExtC	Extracurricular
		App	Apprenticeship
CChc	Curriculum Choices	Fut	Future Planning
CPr	Curriculum Problems		
CSp	Curriculum Specific	LfSt	School as a Life Style
		G	Goals
SN	Student Needs	RK	Record Keeping
SA	Student Abilities	CP	Current Perceptions
SF	Student Flexibility		



**Appendix E**

**Approval Letter From Institutional Review Board to  
Conduct Research**

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
1 8 5 6

June 19, 2001,

Ms. Adrienne Tator  
One Hillview Terrace  
Summit, NJ 08901

Dear Ms. Tator:

At its May meeting, the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research reviewed and approved as submitted your proposal entitled "Home Schooling: Parent Choice and Student Needs." Enclosed please find the signed Request for Approval form for your records.

The Institutional Review Board Approval of the project is valid for a one year period from the date of this letter. Any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the committee prior to implementation. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for the success of your research.

Sincerely,

*Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.*  
Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.  
Acting Chair  
Institutional Review Board

cc: Anthony Colella, Ph.D.

Office of Grants and Research Services  
Presidents Hall  
Tel: 973.275.2974 • Fax: 973.275.2978  
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2641

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR  
RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

PROJECT TITLE: Home Schooling: Parent Choice and Student Needs

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:**

In making this application, I (we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects, and that I(we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board involving Human Subjects and to the Director of the Office of Grants and Research Services, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

Adrienne Tator  
Adrienne Tator  
RESEARCHER(S) OR PROJECT DIRECTOR(S)

May 8, 01  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out name below signature\*\*

James J. Lee  
RESEARCHER'S ADVISOR OR DEPARTMENTAL SUPERVISOR

5/8/01  
DATE

\*\*Please print or type out name below signature\*\*

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research May 8 meeting.

The application was approved not approved by the Committee. Special conditions were were not set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

Mary J. Runjick, Ph.D.  
CHAIRPERSON, SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

6/19/01  
DATE

**Appendix F**  
**Solicitation Letter**

*Adrienne Tator*  
*1 Hillview Terrace*  
*Summit, New Jersey 07901*  
*Phone: 908-273-3066*  
*E-mail: [atator@rocketmail.com](mailto:atator@rocketmail.com)*

June, 2001

Dear Home School Parent,

I am currently engaged in a doctoral study at Seton Hall University as I work towards an Ed. D. degree in Educational Administration and Supervision. I am conducting research, and I invite you to participate in my study. In this study, I am seeking to learn more about home school families as to why you decided to home school your child or children. I will be asking you about the curriculum you have chosen, and whether or not this curriculum has changed over the years.

This information is for my dissertation. Most of all, it is especially to inform the educational community about home schooling and its success. The purpose of the interview is to find out how home schooling works and how it affects the family and the children.

With your permission the interview will be taped and then transcribed. I will transcribe the tapes. Names will remain confidential and changed. The tapes will remain private in my possession only. While taping, if you decide to take something out or change your response, this can be done. I will also be taking notes in my journal and writing my researcher's field notes.

The first set of questions in the interview is to find out about your background and experiences. The purpose of these background questions is to help us find out how different kinds of people have come to the decision to home school their children.

Also included is a survey representing demographic information for participating families. This survey should take no more than 5-10 minutes. This data is also a relevant part of the study.

Both the interview questions and survey will be sent to you prior to my visit and/or phone conversation. All tapes, journal and surveys will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Services Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2975.

Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. If you have questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (908) 273-3066.

If you choose to participate in the interview and survey, please complete the attached interview and material request in the envelope provided. Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation in this research project.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Tator

**Appendix G**  
**Interview or Material Request**

*Interview or Material Request*

\_\_\_\_ 1. I would like to be interviewed by the researcher of this study so that I can further explain my views. I understand the interview will be taped; my remarks and comments may be used in the research but that I will remain anonymous.

\_\_\_\_ 2. I would be interested in receiving a summary of the findings of this research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix H**

**Participation Acknowledgment Letter**



*Adrienne Tator  
1 Hillview Terrace  
Summit, New Jersey 07901  
Phone: 908-273-3066  
E-mail: [atator@rocketmail.com](mailto:atator@rocketmail.com)*

July, 2001

Dear Home School Parent,

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in an interview concerning your decision to home school your child or children, the curriculum you have chosen, and whether or not this curriculum has changed over the years. As you know, I am conducting research on home schooling. Your input into this topic will bring a richness and vitality to my qualitative research. To help you prepare for the interview, I have enclosed a copy of the questions that I will ask. I will estimate that the interview will take approximately thirty to forty minutes. You will also receive a survey for demographic information for participating families, which will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Please know that the information that you share will be confidential. With your permission, I would like to tape record our interview. I will destroy the tape at the completion of my research. For the purpose of my paper, I will be transcribing our interview. In no way will you be identified.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Services Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subjects' privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2975.

Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time. If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (908) 273-3066.

I will be in touch with you in several days to arrange for a convenient time for us to do the interview. If you would like to complete the survey beforehand that is perfectly fine also. I truly appreciate your taking the time and effort for us to meet and for me to have the opportunity to explore your home schooling lifestyle. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Tator

**Appendix I**

**Informed Consent Form (Parent)**

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PARENT)

The following has been explained to me and I understand that:

1. I am being asked by Adrienne Tator, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University, to participate in a study that seeks to learn more about home school families as to why we decided to home school our child or children. The researcher will ask me about the curriculum I have chosen, and whether or not this curriculum has changed over the years.
2. Because my individual information is anonymous, and thus not identifiable, I will gain no direct personal benefit from this research. However, participation may help researchers inform the educational community about home schooling and its success.
3. There will be no identifying information during the interview and the completion of the demographic survey, thus my responses are completely confidential. Results of this study will be reported collectively and anonymously.
4. The project director, Adrienne Tator, or her advisor, Dr. Anthony Colella, can answer any questions about this research project. Adrienne can be reached at [atator@rocketmail.com](mailto:atator@rocketmail.com) or (908) 273-3066. Dr. Anthony Colella can be reached at [anthony130@aol.com](mailto:anthony130@aol.com).
5. Participation is completely voluntary. I may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.
6. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Services Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard all subjects' privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services at (973) 275-2975.

I have read the above material and any question that I have asked has been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

---

Participant's Signature (Please print and sign your name)

Date