

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF HOME SCHOOLING

By

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ABSTRACT

The study is an ethnographic study of home schooling in the lower mainland of British Columbia. It was conducted to increase understanding of the growing home schooling movement in the province. The information gained is valuable in assessing recent legislative changes in the new British Columbia School Act (1989) and the resulting policy changes with regard to home schooling.

The purpose of the study was primarily exploratory. The design was based on two propositions: (1) that it may be possible to build characterizations of home schooling families and, (2) that these characterizations, or portraits, may include certain reactions to the policy changes. To examine these propositions the study focused on the following four main questions:

1. Why are some families in urban areas in British Columbia choosing to home school their children?
2. What does home schooling mean to these families?
3. How are these home schooling families reacting to the new legislation on home schooling?
4. What alternatives, if any, would the home schoolers prefer?

The analysis of the study presents the finding from two different perspectives. It first provides three portraits based on stories of "committed home schoolers", those who have reached a level of certainty and comfort with home schooling as an alternative to a school system. From the characterizations developed three ideal styles are determined and diagramed. A second perspective examines the stories of "situational home schoolers", those who have moved into home schooling because of dissatisfaction with the public school system.

The conclusion of the research uses the division of home schoolers into committed and situational groups to examine recent legislative and policy changes

relevant to home schooling. Although the research is limited in its design as it is based on replication logic rather than sampling logic, it has developed theories about patterns which may exist amongst home schoolers. These theories strongly suggest that government policies with regard to home schooling need to be developed with an understanding of the individualistic nature of each home schooling situation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
PREFACE	viii
A Note on Style	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
CHAPTER	
I. The Canadian Context	1
Introduction	1
Canadian Legislation	4
A) Exemption from Attendance	4
B) Unique Cases	9
Statement of the Problem	15
Summary	16
Notes for Chapter II	18
II. The Wider Context	19
Review of the Literature	19
Identity of Home Schoolers	20
Reasons for Home Schooling	21
Discussion	26
Conclusions	33
Summary	35
Notes for Chapter II	36
III. Methods of Study	37
Overview	37

Design	38
Sources of Evidence	39
Field Procedures	41
Analysis	44
Summary	46
IV. Committed Home Schoolers	48
The Styles	48
A) Debbie and Michael	48
B) Carol and John	52
C) Peter and Jane	57
Comparing the Styles	58
The Cartesian Representation	65
Summary	67
V. Situational Home Schoolers	68
School Experiences	70
A) Conflict for the Child	70
B) Helplessness of Parents	74
C) Crises	75
D) Alternatives	79
The Transition	80
A) Beginning	80
B) View of the Child	83
C) Curriculum Style	85
Movement	86
Summary	89
VI. Policy Implications	91

Conclusion	98
Summary	101
REFERENCES	102
APPENDIX I	105
APPENDIX II	110
APPENDIX III	112
APPENDIX IV	114

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1	65
Figure 4.2	66
Figure 4.3	66

PREFACE

October, 1989, I attended a home schooling support group meeting. I was intending to introduce my study. At the meeting one woman was asking what home schoolers wanted from the schools. She was preparing to speak at the School Trustees' Association Conference and needed the information from other home schoolers like herself. I listened for a while and then decided to add my own ideas. I said that I wished that schools and parents could learn to work together. This way children could benefit from school and parents could still be involved in their child's education. My comment was followed by silence. It was as if no one could fathom why that might be the least bit desirable. These people were home schoolers.

That night was my initiation into the world of home schooling. I drove home almost in tears. Until then I had fancied myself a bit of a home schooler. I tried hard to rationalize that I home schooled because I provided extra educational opportunities for my children. My oldest child also attends school. In the end it didn't work. I had to admit that I was an outsider. I had a lot to learn.

Since that night, while collecting and analyzing the data, I have continually attempted to understand how home schoolers might sort out the information about home schooling. However, it has been a difficult process. My own background is in teaching and my interest in home schooling comes from concern about lack of parent involvement in the public school system. My six year old daughter attends public school and my two year old son spends time in daycare. Therefore I am not a home schooler by the parameters by which most home schoolers define themselves. As I have worked to seek out the topic areas which the people who choose to home school would want emphasized in a report about their culture, my own bias has

interfered. In the end I hope that my position will have contributed to making this study useful to both parents and teachers in finding a balance between home and school.

The openness of the home schooling families who participated in this study has been overwhelming. Many of them welcomed me into their homes. They talked freely about their experiences, their stresses and their dreams. Although each family was distinct, all of them shared a genuine concern for the welfare of their children. In writing the results of this study I hope that I have represented the thoughtfulness and integrity of these families.

Through this study I have learned a great deal about tolerance. In the past I have credited myself with being liberal minded and non-judgmental. Yet interviewing and working with so many families with strong views, often different from my own, has forced me to look at myself. Hopefully, in dealing with my reactions and impressions, I have begun to realize how close minded and righteous I am capable of being. This may be a small step towards being the person I like to think that I am.

A Note on Style

This has been a study of exploration and discovery, professionally and personally. For this reason I have chosen to use a personal style of writing in some sections of this paper. In The Practical Stylist (1986) Sheridan Baker recommends use of the personal approach for illustrating a specific point and for relating personal experiences. The "I" pronoun also allows for some sense of ownership of the information. Being that this study is about taking responsibility, at times it is appropriate that the writing style reflect such an ideal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As well as thanking the many home schooling parents who participated in this study, I would like to thank my committee members, Charles Ungerleider, Donald Fisher, and Jean Barman. I have appreciated their encouragement and confidence in me throughout my graduate program.

My friends have all been exceptional in their support. I thank Judi Burley, Claudie Azoulai, Judy Frankum, and especially Heather Gubbe for reading and discussing portions of my work. Their assistance has been very valuable. My family, Robert, Sarah, and Adam, also deserve a special commendation for their patience. Without Robert's financial and emotional support I would have been unable to finish this work.

CHAPTER I

The Canadian Context

Chapter one will first introduce the recent debate on home schooling in an historical and sociological perspective. Then it will outline the legislation affecting home schooling for each province and territory in Canada, moving last to British Columbia. The final section will introduce the research problem.

Introduction

The question of whether the responsibility for educating children should lie with the state or with parents is not easy to answer. Before 1840 schooling in British North America had no universal educational structure. Schools were neither compulsory nor typically supported by tax dollars. Formal education ranged from privately hired governesses or tutors for the wealthy to charity schools and Sunday schools for the poor. Although unequal in terms of both sex and class, education was not thought to be a concern of the state. Decisions regarding both type of schooling and pedagogy were strictly a matter of "family choice." Many parents, who saw no point to schooling, either chose not to or could not afford to send their children to school.

In the next three decades abrupt changes occurred. The group which has become known as the school promoters were successful in convincing the authorities to create universal, free, compulsory schooling for all children in British North America. By 1872 parents had lost the right to control their child's education. Although attendance was not universally enforced until after the turn of the century, parents could no longer decide whether or not their child would be

schooled. Often parents had little say about what or how their children were taught. (Wilson, 1982)

Over the last century the debate about family choice in schooling has not waned. It is evident in the countless battles over sex-education, censorship, and special programs as well as in the struggle over religious education in the public schools. Several authors have documented the recent growth of private education in Canada (Fisher & Gill 1985; Wilson, 1982; Downey, 1986; Shapiro, 1985). These accounts are all immersed in the debate over the separation of education and religion. They show how the provinces and territories across Canada originally developed different systems from "true denominational" (Nfld.) to "non-denominational" (B.C.) in their attempts to meet the needs of both Catholic and Protestant "publics." They note the move in the 1960s and 70s, particularly in the protestant public systems, away from religious education and religious activities to that of "secular humanism." This trend is then offered as an explanation for the growth of non-Catholic Christian schools.

Like the growth of private schools, the growth of home schooling is an issue related to family choice. Home schooling in the 1980s has had two subtly different meanings. The original, accepted use of the term referred to children studying at home through approved correspondence courses for reasons usually of illness or distance from the nearest public school. To educators it has also referred to students receiving home instruction programs because of suspension from a regular school-based program. In the 1980s the term "home schooling" took on a new meaning. It began to refer to children, often in urban areas, being taught at home for other, less conventional reasons, often without the consent or supervision of school officials.

Recent growth of the latter type of home schooling was initially attributed to "extremists"--either extreme religious or extreme secular radicals. In one of the few articles about home schooling in Canada, Common and MacMullen (1986) estimated that, of the over one thousand Canadian families who were home schooling, many were from these extremist groups or were geographically isolated. However, they also note that across Canada the movement is rapidly gaining support from other, less extreme, Christian parents.

In comparison to the total numbers of students in public and private schools, the numbers of home schoolers in Canada is relatively small. Despite their numbers home schoolers are beginning to draw attention. Perhaps this is because home schooling strikes at the heart of the education for socialization debate. Schooling in the isolation of the home lacks an identification with an accepted group or segment of society. On one side of the debate it is argued that children need to participate in social institutions in order that they can learn about and become a part of that society. Those on the other side of the debate argue that the institutions are artificial means of control, good only for reproducing the social order. This side contends that children are better off participating in society in their "natural" unit, the family. The question becomes one of control over education. Those who argue against home schooling believe that it is the state's responsibility to protect the child's right to an unbiased education. Proponents of the home schooling movement believe that parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their children receive a "quality" education including the values and morals of the home.

Canadian Legislation

A) Exemption From Attendance

To date, only British Columbia and Alberta recognize home schooling legislatively. All of the other provinces and territories in Canada rely on the legislative exemptions for pupil compulsory attendance. From province to province these exemptions state, although the wording varies, that children can be exempt from schooling if they are receiving a satisfactory education at home or elsewhere. Despite the similarities in the legislative exemptions from compulsory attendance, the interpretations vary greatly from region to region.

Quebec has the most laissez-faire policies for addressing home schoolers. The most recent school act acknowledged the right of parents to educate their children at home provided that the regional or local school board acknowledges that the child's program is "equivalent" to the program offered by the board. According to Michel Fouquette of the Private Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, equivalent is interpreted very loosely; if the objectives are thought to be the same, the program is deemed equivalent. Once equivalence is determined, full responsibility for the child's education is then given to the parents. School officials do not follow the child's progress and the child does not receive recognition or accreditation for being home schooled. There is no provincial funding provided. Resources for home schooling are not made available to parents (Michel Fouquette, Responsible for General Information, Private Education Branch, Ministry of Education, Quebec, personal communication, January 25, 1990).

The approach to home schooling in Saskatchewan is also laissez-faire, like in Quebec. The only policy of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education is that "acceptable" is determined by each Director of Education.¹ Eleanor Rourke, Deputy Minister, claims that the Directors tend to take this seriously. "They don't sign

unless they are assured that a program which fulfills the Saskatchewan curriculum is being followed." Each school district has its own forms. The local boards accept no responsibility for future access. In this way parents have no guarantee that children returning to the public system will enter at an age appropriate level (Eleanor Rourke, Deputy Minister of Education, Saskatchewan, personal communication, January 25, 1990).

In the North West Territories approval is also given at the Divisional level. The Director of each Divisional Board of Education has the authority to determine whether or not a home schooled child is receiving adequate instruction. One case was denied on that basis in 1989. Although each Director holds some responsibility for home schooled children, the government does not provide any funding for "non-attenders." The Territories do provide funding for children who are excused to "allow the child to participate in traditional native activities on the land or other learning experiences away from the community" (Sec 96 (3) (d), Education Ordinance, 1976, as ammended 1985(3), c.3). The Dene people and some Inuit groups in the eastern areas rely on this exemption to excuse their children while they travel to their winter camps. For what may be a part of each school year these children are considered by the schools to be still in attendance. Funding to the Division is maintained.

The Education Ordinance in the N.W.T. is currently being extensively revised. There is no expectation that the revised act will contain any new provisions regarding home schooling (Eric Colbourne, Assistant Deputy Minister, School Branch, Department of Education, N.W.T., personal communication, April 19, 1990).

In Manitoba a committee from the Department of Education and Training was appointed prior to 1989 to review home schooling in the province with a view to developing policy and regulations. As of January 1990 nothing has come of the

committee's report to the Minister. Parents are expected to inform the Department of their intentions to home school, the child's birth date and grade level, the reasons for choosing to home school, a program outline, and their comments on the delivery and evaluation procedures. With the distances often involved, direct supervision is not always possible although the families are requested to file bi-monthly progress reports. These, however, are not mandatory (Mr. Wood, Department of Education and Training, Manitoba, personal communication, January 19, 1990).

In Ontario there is no legislative or regulatory ruling that outlines what is acceptable. According to Malcolm Powell, the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor for the Ontario Ministry of Education, local boards rely on a nine year old memo that suggests home schooling programs ought to be assessed. The memo provides loose criteria such as that assessment should be done three times per school year.² Assessments, when they are done, are done at the local level, usually by a supervisory officer, sometimes by a consultant or a principal. If a situation is not found to be satisfactory (for example, the program does not seem to have educational content for the child) the board will have its "attendance counsellor" work with the superintendent to assist the situation. The Provincial Attendance Counsellor may be called in for exceptional circumstances. Such a person could mediate in an adversarial situation or, at the provincial level, call for a provincial inquiry into the soundness of the educational program.

Mr. Powell notes that school board attitudes with regard to home schooling vary across the province. They range from those that are cooperative and attempt to support the child to those that take a more confrontational stance. Under current Ontario Legislation, parents who home school are viewed as having opted out of the school system. "The boards therefore need not and maybe even should

not provide service. The issue is rather that the child's right to receive an education is protected, hence satisfactory instruction." The boards receive no provincial funding to support work they may do with home schoolers. The boards do receive municipal assessment tax money over and above the per pupil provincial grants. This tax is collected from all members of the community, including home schoolers and thus could cover the costs of their service. (Malcolm Powell, Ministry of Education, Ontario, personal communication, January 25, 1990; written correspondence, March 2, 1990).

Nova Scotia also has procedures designed to minimally safeguard the child's right to an education. The judgement of "equivalent instruction" is based on a comparison of the program of home studies to the current public school program. Evaluation of the student's progress is made by the Superintendent or his designate in late June of each year to ensure the progress is similar to what "he or she would have made if enrolled in a public school." As in Ontario, parents are viewed as having opted out. The attitude of school officials is one of needing to assure that parents accept some of the burden of responsibility. Peter Lawson, Director of Inspection Services, writes "the total responsibility for obtaining books, materials, and assistance during the course of the year rests with the parents who have, in fact, chosen not to take advantage of the public school system" (Peter E. Lawson, Director, Inspection Services, Nova Scotia Department of Education, correspondence, January 30, 1990).

In Prince Edward Island more formalized procedures signify an increased acceptance by the government of a moral obligation. According to Dr. Al Hammond, home schooling is allowed conditional to the Minister's approval which requires the family to meet three requirements: (1) the family must present a general plan parallel to the existing program in the schools; (2) the family must name someone

certified as a teacher in the province as a "teacher monitor" to sign periodic progress reports; and (3) the family must submit at least one progress report in each school year (Dr. Al Hammond, Director, Program Development and Implementation Division, Department of Education, P.E.I., personal communication, January 25, 1990). A 1989 circular also states that a request to home school must be written. Each authorization is effective for one year and may be rescinded at any time should the Minister come to believe that the conditions of authorization are not being met or that the child is no longer receiving efficient instruction.³ The Minister retains the right to test the student with provincial tests used in public school. Decisions about grade placement of students should they return to public school is each regional board's responsibility. Home schoolers in P.E.I. are eligible for free text books from the provincial text book services but receive no other support.

Quebec, Saskatchewan, N.W.T., Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, in that order, each increasingly imposes policy and structure on home schoolers. The Yukon Territory currently has even less policy than all of the previously discussed provinces or territories. The Yukon government acknowledges a relationship with home schoolers but has nothing official. Its school act allows for "satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere." However, as there is no requirement to register the legislation is irrelevant.

On April 23, 1990, the Yukon government tabled a new education act. This act contains a large section on home education which parallels the new B.C. legislation but goes even further. In preparing the act the government considered the moral obligation it has to ensure the rights of each child to an education. John Ferby of the Department of Education says that there is currently concern about U.S. religious curriculum, particularly social studies material, which "doesn't

fit the Canadian scene." Though not yet publicly available the new education act will likely be the most restrictive of all home schooling legislation across the country (John Ferby, Department of Education, Yukon Territory, personal communication, March 19, 1990).

B) Unique Cases

Although all of the provinces tacitly allow home schooling, some are more involved with and supportive of home schoolers than others. New Brunswick also counts home schooling as an exemption to the compulsory attendance legislation. Permission to home school requires written approval from the Minister to the school board. However, an established, elaborate, centralized procedure for obtaining this written approval has lead to an informal support system for home schoolers. On application, the family is required to file an "education form" with a description of their program. A ministry consultant, Midge Leazitt, or another appointed "home visitor" such as a local school official, principal or teacher who knows the family then visits the family to assess their reasons for home schooling. The "home visitor" submits a report making a recommendation to the Minister. Approval is based on that report. The Minister does not require that home schoolers follow the provincial curriculum but home schoolers who choose that route find that they get "quite a lot of support" from the schools. Ms Leazitt notes that there is considerable difference in the style and reasons for leaving the school system. Some want more structure and Godliness. Others feel school is not following their child's interests.

As a consultant, Midge Leazitt is responsible for all of the home schooling families in the province. Her understanding of the Ministry's attitude is that all of the school aged children in the province are the Minister's responsibility. A certain

number of children will return to the school system. Therefore, it is to the school system's advantage to keep contact and stay on friendly terms with each family. This is also best for the children involved. This friendly, non-adversarial, and centralized approach is unique to New Brunswick.

Of all the provinces Alberta's procedures are the most elaborate. The regulations pursuant to the 1988 School Act require that home schoolers notify a school board, are under its supervision, outline a program, and participate in school board programs of assessment and recommendations. The program of study is no longer required to follow the government curriculum but must be one that is approved by the Department of Education. This is a change in procedure resulting from interpretation of the Charter of Rights guarantee of religious freedom. The department is still developing guidelines for approval of programs. It conditionally approves some programs because they parallel the prescribed program. Others meet minimal basic goals. Official grade standing and recognition of matriculation is dependent on following an accredited program. Dr. Joseph North, Education Consultant with the Department of Education, says most parents go for an accreditation. Others, because of religious reasons, want to be left alone (Dr. Joseph North, Education Consultant, Guidance, Health and Special Education, Department of Education, Alberta, personal communication, Jan 22, 1990).

The particularly unique aspect of Alberta's policy is that school boards receive full funding on a per pupil basis for each home schooled student they have registered. This money is only available to public and separate school boards, not to separate private schools which are not legally able to register home schoolers (Dr. North, personal communication, March 20, 1990).

The only other province where full funding is provided to schools for support of home schooled students is Newfoundland. In Newfoundland the home schooled

child remains a pupil of the school to which he or she has been assigned. The student's name is maintained on the class register and the teacher records daily that the child is absent for "other causes." The only ruling which can be applied to home schooling allows "efficient" instruction at home or elsewhere when approval has been given by the Superintendent. The Ministry has outlined the process for superintendents in a 1986 letter.⁴ Parents are required to register in a school district. The Superintendent then investigates the reasons but tries to discourage the home schooling. Deputy Minister Dr. Fradshaw explains this policy is necessary because there is no extra money to support home schooling. The superintendents are required to support home schoolers with their own resources on a one to one basis. "The system has been set up to work with groups of children not individuals" (Dr. Fradshaw, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Newfoundland, personal communication, January 18, 1990).

As of March 31, 1990, eight provinces and both territories do not recognize home schooling legislatively other than under exemption from attendance rulings. Of those, the procedures for dealing with home schoolers are not generally supportive. The Yukon Territory and Quebec barely acknowledge home schoolers. Changes are pending in the Yukon. Saskatchewan and Ontario leave supervision and monitoring to district authorities. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick all have more centralized procedures. New Brunswick leads the way in setting up a supportive system. Newfoundland almost denies the existence of home schooling, but provides full funding to school boards for maintaining such students on school records. Until recent changes in British Columbia, Alberta alone recognized home schooling in its school act. In Alberta school boards receive full per pupil funding for home schooling students. Elaborate procedures are in place for monitoring those students.

Rationales for the policies vary from province to province. In Quebec the officials believe that by choosing to home school parents have opted out of the system. In so doing they must accept the responsibility of educating their children. No other provincial government has so completely relieved itself of the obligation to ensure each child's education. Alberta takes its responsibility very seriously. Ontario relaxed its position in 1984/85 due to uncertainty about the legislation.

In those provinces with few guidelines, figures representing the number of home schoolers were unavailable or unknown. In Quebec, the Ministry of Education has no knowledge of the number of students being home schooled. Figures are not collected provincially. Similarly in Saskatchewan, if figures are collected it is only at the divisional level. Home schooling there is not thought to be a very extensive phenomenon. In the N.W.T. Mr Eric Colbourne believes that there may be a dozen children involved, representing a half dozen families. Very few families in Newfoundland seek exemptions. In the Yukon, Department official John Ferby believes that there may be as many as 200 students in 30 to 40 families. "We don't really know who they are or where they are." Officials in Quebec, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, the N.W.T., and the Yukon all felt that there had not been any recent increase in the number of families choosing this type of education.

Provinces with more centralized procedures knew the number of students schooled at home. In Prince Edward Island records show no recent increase. There are only about seven families with thirteen or fourteen children. As of June, 1989, Nova Scotia had 74 pupils being home schooled in 30 families. This represents about 0.045% of their total school population. Manitoba estimates about 400 students are schooled at home. New Brunswick's recent figures show 40 families or 70 children. This number is up over figures from five years ago when only 20 children were known to be home schooling. The numbers of known home schoolers

in Ontario has increased significantly since 1983/84 (189 students) when the government issued a temporary directive not to proceed with truancy charges. 1987/88 figures show 783 students home schooling. Alberta records show the greatest increase. For 1989/90 the province has 1244 students identified. This is up about 50% per year since 1985/86 when 210 students were known home schoolers.

The Ministry of Education in British Columbia estimated that the number of home schoolers in the province has risen from fifty families in 1980 to over 1,000 in 1984 and to between 1,000 and 3,000 in 1988.⁵ In September, 1989, about 1,700 home schoolers registered with either independent schools, public schools or correspondence offices (Tom Elwood, Director, Independent Schools Branch, Ministry of Education, British Columbia, personal communication, March 1, 1990).

Prior to this first official registration no one knew exactly how many children were not registered in the school system. Some families, fearing prosecution, simply did not register their children. Others, perhaps with the cooperation of a relaxed local school, may have registered their children even though they did not regularly attend.

While the previous School Act (1978) did justify prosecution of parents who did not send their children to school, home schooling did not actually contravene the law. Under section 113, 2(a) a parent needed no justification for home schooling providing he or she was able, if brought to trial, to prove that the child in question was being educated by another, satisfactory means. The Act did not specify what 'satisfactory' meant and thus was open to interpretation.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Education (1988) acknowledged the policy questions surrounding the home schooling issue:

The home schooling issue clearly contains within it some of the most fundamental tensions between competing ideals and values to be found in educational and social policy today. It involves the question of parental rights in schooling versus those of the state, questions about where the public good

should supersede private interest, questions about who should be accountable for children's education and well-being, and questions about the limits of individual choice and participation in schooling. (p 204)

The Minister of Education, in the paper "Policy Directions: A Response to the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education" (January, 1989), stated that the government would move to clarify the status of home schooling by requiring that home schooling parents register their children with a public school, a funded independent school, or a regional correspondence office. Those parents who registered would have access to educational services including evaluation, assessment, authorized textbooks and learning materials, consultation, and record keeping. Both public and funded independent schools registering home schooled pupils would receive 25% of the per pupil funding which they would receive for a full time student. The new School Act (1989) has now made these proposals a requirement.

The School Act (1989) requires that home schoolers register by providing the home schooled child's name, address, birth date, and gender. Each home schooling parent is also required to provide an educational program on request. There are no restrictions on this program. Parents may design their own or purchase any prepared program. No approval or supervision is necessary. According to the Ministry, failure to register will result in a warning from the superintendent of the school district in which the home schoolers reside. After the warning the home schooling parent will then have a two week grace period in which to register the child. If the parent fails to register the child s/he will be liable to a six month jail term or a fine of up to \$2000. Although some home schoolers may be intending to notify the Ministry that they refuse to register on the grounds that the requirement contravenes their civil rights, the Ministry will be largely dependent on neighbors or acquaintances notifying them of non-registered home schoolers.

For their part schools are required to offer the evaluation and assessment services normally available to students of similar age and ability. Authorized and recommended resource material which the district school board has deemed sufficient to enable the child to pursue his or her educational program must also be available on request. School boards, at their discretion, may allow home schooled children to attend courses or participate in programs subject to terms, conditions, and fees set by the board.

Statement of the Problem

In British Columbia policies concerning home schooling seem to seek a balance between parents' right to choose an educational program and the government's obligation to protect the child's right to an appropriate education. Prior to the changes, the growing public awareness of home schooling, as was indicated by the increase in numbers of home schooling families in British Columbia, was beginning to raise questions about the government's control and responsibility in educating its citizens. Home school lobby groups such as Education Advisory were advocating the freedom for parents to educate in their own way. While the new School Act (1989) attempts to have the school system retain control for education by requiring all home schooling parents to register and therefore submit to some scrutiny, it also appears to allow the decisions about where and how much to participate to remain with the home schooling parents. At the same time, the Act suggests that decisions about allowable participation will still be open to interpretation by individual schools and districts. Therefore, whether the policy changes offer any real change is questionable.

If there is any change, it is only that both the government and home schooling parents each seems to gain some control. However this may be in

appearance only. From the home schooler's point of view a requirement to register may not be an acceptable compromise because the requirement to register contradicts many of the beliefs about freedom and non-interference on which home schooling is based. Policies which would ensure protection for home schooled children through cooperation between home and school can only be effectively developed if the needs and expectations of home schoolers are taken into account.

It may be difficult to achieve the purposes which are intended by the new legislation. Bringing together two groups of educators with radically different beliefs about schooling with no prior arena for establishing systems of working together could be chaotic.

The purpose of this study is to provide an examination of home schooling as it is currently practiced in the lower mainland of British Columbia. Through ethnographic, case study research this study will develop portraits of home schoolers. By examining the culture of the people who choose to home school we can identify some of the beliefs and values upon which the movement in British Columbia is based. With this information it will be possible to analyze the government's policies with the needs and expectations of those home schoolers in mind. If these results suggest that cooperation between home schooling parents and schools is feasible, the information may be useful in designing strategies for the implementation of effective policies.

Summary

Chapter one has introduced the research on home schooling through an examination of how home schooling is treated in the provincial legislation across Canada. Only Alberta provides full funding to school districts for home schoolers. Both Newfoundland and the North West Territories maintain some home schooled

children on school records so that the per pupil funding for those students remains in place. New Brunswick has centralized procedures which provide informal, non-monetary support.

In British Columbia new legislation for home schooling has refocused the debate on family choice in schooling in this province. The research will examine home schooling in the lower mainland to develop an understanding of the beliefs and values on which the home schooling movement is based.

Notes for Chapter I

1. Use of the terms "director" and "superintendent" vary from province to province. Both refer to the chief education officer of a school district.
2. June 8, 1981, Memorandum to the Regional Directors of Education, Directors of Education and Attendance Counsellors; Re: Determining Satisfactory Instruction, Section 20 (2) (a) The Education Act, 1974; From K.D. Johnson, Provincial School Attendance Counsellor.
3. September 18, 1989, circular no. 89-10 to Regional Administrative Unit School Boards from the Minister of Education, Paul Connolly.
4. January 17, 1986, Memo to School Board Superintendents from S. McGrath, School Attendance Consultant, Re: Exemption for Home Instruction.
5. 1980 and 1984 figures are from telephone interviews with Allan Newbury and John Walsh at the Ministry of Education in Victoria, British Columbia in May of 1984. 1988 figures are from the Report of the Royal Commission on Education.

CHAPTER II

The Wider Context

Chapter two provides a review of the literature devoted to home schooling. Keeping to the sociological perspective of the research, the review focuses on reasons for home schooling as they are portrayed in the literature. The discussion which follows the review divides the reasons into three main themes. These themes are then related to the research problem in the conclusion of the chapter.

Review of the Literature

The literature devoted to home schooling is almost entirely supportive, including the popular "how to" and "I did it" accounts. A few articles document the home schooling movement. An even smaller number are not supportive. The more radical, biased literature which in other fields might be dismissed is important in helping to understand the range of viewpoints about home schooling. From this collection of literature it is not possible to generalize as much as it is to begin to collect together some of the ideas on which the movement is based. The articles which are not supportive are important in understanding how the critics view the issues surrounding home schooling.

The majority of the writing about home schooling is American. In the United States the home schooling movement appears to be attracting an increasing amount of attention. Companies have begun compiling catalogues of resources. Private schools and colleges are setting up correspondence services. Home schooling newsletters are becoming more abundant. The most well known of these is Growing Without Schooling produced by Holt Associates. Many home schooling newsletters run stories and ideas for the home schooling families who are their contributors.

Some follow legal issues that are developing in various states. Brian Ray, from the School of Education at Seattle Pacific University, now publishes Home School Researcher, an "academic" journal about home schooling.

Although there is a Canadian Home Schooling Association and several provinces have their own provincial associations, the home schooling writing trend in Canada is relatively young. In British Columbia there have been a few small, local newsletters. A Vancouver newsletter, Education Advisory is not currently being published. Formerly it carried booklists, contact names and reviews of American material about home schooling. The new Home Education Newsletter, or H.E.N., is trying to serve much more as a forum for home schooling parents and children. It has been closely following home schoolers' reactions to implementation of the school regulations with regard to home schooling. Still its circulation is only about 100. Other small newsletters exist but like H.E.N. do not serve all home schoolers.

Identity of Home Schoolers

Although research on home schooling is becoming more common, very little research has been done into the identity of home schoolers. John Holt (1981, p. 14), an avid supporter of home schooling, answers his own rhetorical question "Who are these home schooling families?" with "it's hard to tell." Divoky (1983, p. 396) quotes Holt as saying "the beauty of the anarchistic structure of the home-schooling movement is that it spans quite comfortably a wide range of views." From this one might conclude that the home schooling movement is individualized and therefore has a nebulous nature. However a 1981 study by Dr. Gunnar A. Gustavsen is cited in Home Schools: An Alternative (Gorder, 1987, p. 12).

(Dr. Gustavsen) detected similarities in the types of parents who choose home schooling. The husband is generally a professional or semi-skilled worker, earning from \$15,000 to \$20,000. (These are 1981 figures.) Most of these parents live in small towns, and typically have two children. The mother

usually assumes the primary responsibility of teaching. The most obvious differences among the parents is their diverse religious and political backgrounds.

Overall, home schoolers are politically conservative but individualistic, law-abiding church-goers with one to three years of college education. Their home is very child-centered. They are average socializers and travel occasionally but not often.

In summarizing, Gorder states that Dr Gustavsen's profile shows home schoolers to be very normal people. For Gorder, home schoolers are people who are actively engaged in education and view their role as educator as a part of their role as parent. A study of home schoolers in Tennessee by Wynn (1989) found that the home schoolers who responded to the study were mostly married and lived in rural areas. Income level did not appear to be a factor in the decision to home school.

Reasons for Home Schooling

Common and MacMullen (1986) distinguish between two streams of home schooling: the religious alternative (followers of Raymond and Dorothy Moore) and the deschooling movement (followers of John Holt). In School Can Wait (1979) the Moores argue that the tendency to push children into school early actually harms them because "social-emotional development is best fostered, not by increased peer contact, but by the sense of self-worth and a stable value system"--attributes which are best acquired at home (Common and MacMullen, 1986, p. 6). Moore and Moore (1975 p. 370) cite Benjamin Bloom's turnabout on early school entrance and refer to his saying that parents are the child's best teacher. In Home Grown Kids (1981), the Moores propose that children at five are not physically, emotionally or intellectually ready for even half days in often poorly ventilated school buildings where large classes do not provide enough large motor activity and require children to overuse muscles needed for fine motor work. "Five and six year olds need to run free as lambs.... They should not be regimented into school type tasks." (p. 153)

Even at seven, eight, nine, or ten years old children may not be ready for formal learning. For the Moores, readiness requires that the child's senses be fully developed and that they have reached a certain level of reasoning ability. Only then do the Moores promote school attendance.

Throughout his career John Holt (1983, 1981, 1967, 1964; Franzosa, 1984) wrote about how children best learn concluding that they do not learn best at school. Learning, Holt argued, occurs from doing and the motivation for the doing must come from within the student if education is to be worthwhile. Along with Ivan Illich (1971) and Hal Bennett (1972), Holt has come to represent the move to deschool. Holt viewed schools as contrived social settings which separate children from their natural community. Set curricula and lesson plans, in this view, impose restrictions on what the students, if left to explore freely, would be innately motivated to study more thoroughly.

Although John Holt and the Moores have distinctly different reasons for supporting home schooling, the division of home schooling into two streams becomes less clear as one more closely examines the wider range of reasons for home schooling. Holt, in Teach Your Own (1981), provides several possible explanations for parents choosing to home school including incompetence in the schools, attempts to protect the rights of children, increasing the parents' role, and influencing the religious and values training of children. He claims that raising children is and ought to be the business of the parents and not that of the government; parents who choose to home school do so because they value the time spent watching and learning with their children too much to give it up to others; and that home schooling parents want to protect their children from being mentally, physically or spiritually hurt.

Expressed in this way Holt's "deschooling movement" differs little from the Moore's "religious alternative." Moore and Moore (1981) give similar explanations for why other parents choose to school their children at home. Some parents, they write, choose home schooling "for reasons of religion, moral influence and absence of ridicule and rivalry" (p. 27). They stress the value of home schooling in the younger years for strengthening religious commitments. Diane Divoky (1983), a journalist covering educational issues for a California newspaper, agrees that some parents are unhappy with the lack of religious training in schools, and the move toward "secular humanism" with which they group sex education, inappropriate peer pressure from lack of dress codes, and so on. Tobak and Zirkel (1983) in their review of legal court challenges to home schooling in the United States provide evidence of parents withdrawing from public school for religious reasons. Closer to home, in 1987, the Kelowna school board challenged a family who had withdrawn their children from public school. Cathy and Arne Straume taught their children at home for six years prior to the court challenge. The Straume children followed the Accelerated Christian Education program and the Alpha Omega program at home because their parents did not like the lack of moral values and the "heavy politics" in public school. Cathy Straume also felt that public schools are not equipped to deal with children who have special problems such as dyslexia.¹ Cheryl Gorder (1987, p. 13) agrees that religion may be the "prime motivation in the majority of cases but is seldom mentioned as the only reason."

Some parents, Moore and Moore (1981) point out, simply believe that home is a more nourishing place where children can make decisions, solve problems, cope with fewer social pressures, and work at their own pace. Divoky (1983) adds that many parents move into home schooling after personal experiences as teachers or parents working to reform the system from within, seeing things they didn't like happening,

such as too much busy work or children learning bad habits. They accuse schools of stifling creativity and promoting dullness. Pagnoni (1986), a home schooler himself, sees this as a problem for children on either end of the "average spectrum." The tutorial nature of home schooling provides extra help for slower learners. It allows bright students to do so much more. Common and MacMullen (1986) also indicate academic rather than religious concerns among home schooling parents in Canada. They found that parents' decisions to home school were based on ideas about the rise of delinquency and the decline of literacy and competence among young people. There was dissatisfaction with the push for subject and content instruction while "the essential tools of learning, such as language, logic and debate, were being ignored" (p. 5). Home schooling parents liked the efficiency of one-to-one learning which leaves time for other activities and enrichment.

Parents in the Common and MacMullen survey (1986) also valued the child's natural motivation to learn. This theme of "natural motivation" is described by David Elkind (1981), a child psychologist turned popular writer, as education which is thought to be coincident with life, not limited to special skills or concepts, and particularly not to test scores. Education as a spontaneous outgrowth of openness and curiosity, he argues, is the only valid reason for home schooling, or more precisely, deschooling. In the book Better Than School (1983), author Nancy Wallace uses this idea of natural motivation to justify her home schooling in the following passage:

...The reason they're not in school...is that we want them to be educated...And we want their education to go on till the day they die. That means self-education, and it means preserving the love of learning they were born with. We believe all children have a great desire to learn...I think it's presumptuous to try to teach children anything. They possess all wisdom within themselves, and all it has to do is unfold. The only thing we can do for them is provide the right environment for that to happen. Wisdom is something you have--and knowledge is something you get. If children can keep their wisdom, they can get knowledge any day of the week (pp. 113-114).

This thinking is common to much of the literature about home schooling. John Holt (1981, p. 166) wrote "Just about everything (children) do, they do as well as they can. Except when tired or hungry or in the grip of passion, pain, or fear, they are moved to act almost entirely by curiosity, desire for mastery and competence, and pride in work well done." This theme is also present in the Moore's writing although here it is expressed more from the parents' point of view as being natural parenting which provides a warm, loving and consistent home where children feel safe and free enough to explore and learn.

Holt (1981), Moore and Moore (1981), and Divoky (1983) all agree that home schooling parents want to retain the authority that goes with the responsibility of parenting. Many of these parents believe that they have a right to educate as they choose. Some are striving to attain self-sufficiency for themselves and their children in a society that is too technological, too institutionalized, and too professionalised. Both Patricia Joudry (1975), a Canadian playwright and home schooler, and Nancy Wallace (1983) provide examples of such thinking. Both claim that they began home schooling because it was better for their children. In both families the oldest child was not happy in his or her initial school placement. They needed freedom to explore on their own or so their parents felt. Both families continued to home school because they came to believe that the children at school were no longer the intellectual peers of their "gifted" children. Wallace and Joudry came to believe that through home education their children were learning about self-reliance, self-education, and education for life.

David and Micki Colfax (1988) began home schooling when they started to homestead. For them home schooling fit with the lifestyle they were choosing. They needed their boys to help with the farm. Home schooling allowed for that.

Home schooling provided our boys with "real world" learning experiences they would never have encountered in a conventional learning situation. Because

they have learned to value and make good use of their time, they have developed skills that most children simply do not have the time or opportunity to acquire (p. 12).²

Roland Meighan (1988, 1984a, 1984b, 1981) adds to this that home schoolers want education for self-direction and self confidence.

Meighan advocates the use of mass media and technology rather than outdated school texts. Home schooling, he argues, provides a better way to keep up with rapidly changing knowledge. Pagnoni's book on modern home schooling (1984) supports this idea. His work advocates the use of home computers in ways which school cannot afford to compete.

Maralee Mayberry (1989) summarizes the recent "academic" research on reasons for home schooling. In this small body of literature researchers present the same reasons in different words, ie., moral health of children, character development, desire for closer parent-child relationships, humanistic values disseminated in public schools, lack of religious freedom, teaching of evolutionary theory, prevalence of drugs and alcohol, etc. What is added is an analytical framework provided by Van Galen (Mayberry, 1989). The framework classifies reasons as either ideological or pedagogical. Ideological grounds are those which oppose the content of the public school curriculum; pedagogical, those which are "primarily concerned with the social and academic environments within the public schools" (Mayberry, 1989, p. 12). In this framework, home schoolers tend to be grouped according to one type of motivation for home schooling, either ideological or pedagogical. For example, those who home school for religious reasons are considered to be ideologically-orientated.

Discussion

Interestingly the framework provided relates to work on boundaries by Basil Bernstein (1975). Bernstein discusses power and control in relation to educational

knowledge through the use of the concepts of classification and framing. Classification refers to the strength of the relationships or degree of boundary maintenance between contents (ie., subjects/courses). It describes the "nature of differentiation between contents" (p. 88). When classification is strong, contents are well insulated; they become segmented. When classification is weak the boundaries are blurred.

Parents who are viewed as ideologically-orientated by Van Galen may be reacting to their view of the classification structures which exist. For example, Christian parents who object to the teaching of evolution in public school, could be said to be reacting to the blurring of science and religion. In this same way parents who want more of a "back to basics" education for their children are asking for stronger boundaries between the subjects. Parents who want more subject integration, such as whole language and thematic teaching, want fewer boundaries between subjects.

Bernstein's concept of frame refers to the boundary strength of the context in which the educational knowledge is transmitted. Where boundary strength is strong, framing is thought to be high and thus teachers and pupils lose control over elements such as selection, organization, pacing and timing. Strong framing reduces the students control in his/her own education. At the same time it increases the teacher's power over the student. High framing also limits the relationship between non-school everyday knowledge and the knowledge imparted by schools.

Parents who are described as pedagogically orientated by Van Galen may be reacting to their own view of the framing strength of the public schools. For example some home schoolers believe the child's power in controlling his or her educational setting at school is too limited or, on the contrary, not strict enough. These parents may also have concerns about the teacher's power and influence over

the student. As well, we have heard the arguments about education needing to fit with everyday life. These issues are all related to framing strength as Bernstein describes it.

Coupling Van Galen's framework with Bernstein's work highlights the issues of power and control over the transmission of educational knowledge in a sociological perspective. Bernstein uses the concepts of classification and framing as tools for determining the "identity component," the sense of membership in a particular class and the ensuing specific identity. As the boundaries of classification are strengthened the identity component is increased. In this way the social order is being maintained depending on the framing boundaries and the student's own sense of power.

These issues of class and identity are important in the education for socialization debate. As researchers and sociologists we are interested in criticisms that home schooling and/or public schooling reproduce the same social order. Ideally education ought to allow for movement between classes and changes in identity from one generation to the next.

From this perspective it is clear that home schooling parents are attempting to alter the power and control structures for their children. Knowing this, we can proceed to identify some of the beliefs upon which the home schooling movement is built and in this way gain understanding of how home schooling parents think the power and control structure ought to be changed.

As wide and dissimilar as they seem to be, the justifications for home schooling provide important information to researchers. Implicit in the reasons is a system of beliefs about what public schooling is and how home schooling is different. For example, Moore and Moore (1981) view mass public education as rigid and largely ineffective and so promote home schooling as academically and

morally superior. Micki and David Colfax (1988, p. 33) describe American schools as "industrialized -- centralized, hierarchical, and standardized"; useful for the "production of automobiles or televisions sets (but)... clearly antithetical to education." Divoky (1983, p. 397) writes that all home schoolers "share a profound belief that the public schools are not providing a healthy environment for their children...they are willing to be different, to take a socially unorthodox route to rearing the kind of children they want." Meighan (1984a, p. 276) finds schools in Britain intolerable in that they view childhood as "a period of reluctance to learn, incapability, avoidance of effort and ignorance and therefore unworthy of being granted rights in law or general consideration and respect." He criticizes the authoritarian system of schools which is not unlike the American and Canadian systems described by Wallace (1983, p. 114) when she writes "... (in the average school) they take the attitude that children are little brats who don't want to learn...Then they shove the stuff down their throats, and pretty soon they're right!"

Two streams of home schooling have been identified by Common and MacMullen (1986). Similar, but perhaps more useful, is the pedagogical-orientation versus ideological-orientation framework by Van Galen (Mayberry, 1989). Clearly reasons can be separated into one camp or another. It is less clear that people can.

Whether they base their decisions on religious doctrine or other more secular values, many home schoolers tend to view themselves as morally elite. All tend to idealize self-sufficiency, many in an anarchistic fashion. This, as well as much of what is addressed as educational concerns--the need for freedom to explore, to pace, to direct, to create--seems to be a subscription to romantic and bohemian ideals of the past.

Susan Douglas Franzosa (1984) criticizes Holt for trying to establish home schoolers as a moral elite. By calling for parents to teach their own, Franzosa argues that Holt set up a "moral imperative for parents who claim to love their children. Those who choose home schooling exemplify the highest ideal of parenthood" (p. 236). Holt refused to acknowledge that any other factors, other than strength of parental love and willingness to teach at home, influenced decisions to home school. He maintained that membership in this moral elite is simply a choice; one unaffected by class, lifestyle, special needs, or parental competence.

Moore and Moore (1981, p. 14) acknowledge the accusation of elitism in the home schooling movement with a denial. They write "(some parents) are rethinking the idea of mass-produced education and are coming up with the notion that 'custom-made' is not so elitist after all." At the same time their writing (1982, 1981) is full of references to the "social contagion" of our time, the habits, manners, gestures, vulgarities, etc., of the masses. They allude often to the strong moral character necessary for home schooling and to the parents who are not qualified to educate their own children such as those who are indifferent to a child's real needs or those who don't have the will to cope with their children. Furthermore, for those in the elite, those who choose to home school, the Moores offer the promise of superior children. "A sound work-study program is a key to moral purity...(on such a program) your children will excel academically. But this is not all. Their behavior will be superior too. And socially they will be generally outstanding" (1982, p. 13). Similarly, as was noted above, both Joudry (1975) and Wallace (1983) come to feel as home schoolers that their children at some point no longer fit into the public school system because they have advanced beyond their peers.

Franzosa (1984) argues that home schooling offers no protection to children whose parents view themselves as part of an elite and so choose to "exercise their right of educational 'eminent domain' unjustly" (p. 241). Here we again see the connection between the deschooling and the religious grounds for home schooling in which parents want to retain absolute control over their children in what may be an elitist manner cloaked in religious doctrine.

The push for self-sufficiency and self-reliance amongst home schoolers is related to the notion of elitism in that home schooling provides a solution to undesirable social association through institutions such as schools. As well, this openly anarchistic thinking is romantic in nature in that the home schooling movement encourages freeing one's self from the social bonds and responsibilities which the school system represents. Education Otherwise, the British home schooling support network, the Holt Associates, John Holt's American counterpart, and the Hewitt Research Foundation, set up by Raymond and Dorothy Moore, all condone avoiding school officials. Each advocates deschooling and supports self-culture or independent scholarship, in some cases from kindergarten through university.³

Underlying much of the educational rationale for home schooling is further evidence of the subscription to the romantic ideals made popular by the bohemians of the 1920s and again by the hippies of the 1960s. Romantics postulate that salvation is possible through allowing children to grow freely and realize their innate and special potential; that self expression through creativity and beauty is each man's and each woman's purpose in life; that living for the moment is most important, even at the expense of future suffering; and that laws and conventions which prevent self-expression or living for the moment should be abolished (Cowley, 1961; Russell, 1946). All of these ideals are evident in the "free" styles of learning

and the emphasis on art, music, creativity, and exploration that tend to be promoted among much of the home schooling community. The belief in the natural motivation of the child as the wisdom from within unfolding is a prime example.

Although these romantic ideals may seem at odds with the Christian home schooling programs which tend to promote structure and discipline for the training they provide, most Christian programs encourage parents to limit the academic portion of the day to allow for ample free play. Educationally, at least, most such programs support some degree of romantic thinking in their beliefs about the nature of childhood and the need for children to 'unfold' at home.

Another romantic ideal, which is perhaps more distinctly bohemian, the notion of "changing places," that they do things better "in Europe" or "wherever," has also become a theme in home schooling. In this case it is perhaps not done better in another location as in another cultural context, or with different peers, or in adult circles, or with artists. A good example here is in Joudry's book (1975). Her three daughters, whom she suggests learn so well on their own, do have a number of teachers. However, she insists that the teachers, because they are not professional teachers and even though they may simply be teaching, somehow do it better. Moore and Moore (1979, 1981, 1982) support this in their claim that parents, even without an education themselves, make the better, more efficient teachers. Holt (1983, p. 14) also holds to this. He writes that we should abolish "all requirements of training and certification, and let public schools do what private schools do right now--hire as teachers people they like and trust, without having to worry about their credentials--it would probably do more than any other single thing...to improve the quality of public school teachers and teaching, since many more of those people who truly love teaching and have a real gift for it...might then be attracted into the schools." The assumption here is that they teach things better if...they have a

real love of the subject, or they are in the right environment, or their personalities mesh, etc. Reducing teacher qualifications to being likeable and trustworthy confuses the concepts of children learning through modeling, valid as that is, with the different and also valid concept of teaching as a skill. The assumptions become that "teaching" is an art rather than a skill and that preparation for teaching is unnecessary.

Conclusions

Identifying many of the justifications for home schooling as being based on elitist (including religious) and romantic beliefs does not dismiss them. It is these underlying beliefs which provide the basis for choosing home schooling over any other alternate form of education such as private school, government correspondence, or tutoring. Home schoolers are home schooling because they believe that the home is a better place than school for their children to be. Through reasons which academics classify as ideological or pedagogical home schooling parents are expressing concern about issues of power and control. Using Bernstein's work we can understand this as questions about movement between and identity with various class structures. Those who believe in home schooling see it as a serious challenge to what they view as the myths of education, the beliefs that "children learn as a result of the teaching act, (that) children can be best educated in schools, (and that) teaching is a highly specialized and complex activity that can best be conducted by trained and licensed people." (Common and MacMullen 1986, p. 6).

The answers to the debate about home schooling are not easily found. The Moore's concern about early school entrance, John Holt's ideas about why children fail, recent criticism of assessments not being relevant to curriculum and the

numbers of children being assessed as learning disabled (Tucker, 1985), Canadian studies of illiteracy, Meighan's (1984b) concern about outdated textbooks not keeping up with knowledge and technology may all be real concerns and criticisms of our public education system. Home schooling, with its shortcomings, can provide educational advantages for some children, such as individualized attention, discovery learning, and a model lesson about education being self-directed from and for life; all this in ways with which classrooms cannot compete. On the other hand, economic status, education, space and other factors may make home schooling impossible for most parents. Many parents may lack the confidence to home school or value the social situations which school provides. Home schooling denies any need for or value of a 'public' education. It gives over the entire responsibility for schooling to the parents and leaves the state with no channel through which to ensure that the child is taught about his or her rights for participation in a democratic society. As well, home schooling severely limits government's ability to provide protection and choices to children with unjust and/or biased parents.

The changes to legislation on home schooling in British Columbia may be well intentioned in that they acknowledge home schooling as an alternative and provide minimal funding. This could allow for a balance or sharing of responsibility and accountability between home schoolers and the school system. However, so long as many home schoolers are choosing to home school as a reaction against participating in a public school system because of questions about power and control, these policies alone will not entice home schoolers to cooperate any more than they do now. The policies, therefore, will be ineffective. If the government is serious about ensuring the educational well being of the children who are being schooled at home, there is a need for research. We need to know what home schoolers as well as educators believe the schools can offer to parents who are

prepared to provide an alternate education for their children. Cooperation or balance between home and school cannot be imposed by law. To be effective, government policies designed to promote such a relationship must be developed with the beliefs of the home schooler in mind.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on home schooling. In examining the reasons presented in the literature for parents choosing to home school a number of structures have been utilized. Van Galen's (Mayberry, 1989) pedagogical and ideological framework has been compared to Bernstein's (1975) concepts of classification and framing to demonstrate how home schooling parents are attempting to increase their power and control in setting educational goals. Two streams of home schoolers as identified by Common and MacMullen (1986) have been meshed together. From the discussion, types of reasons rather than types of home schoolers have emerged. These reasons have been found to fit with three main themes: romantic, religious, and educational.

It has been argued that the reasons alone may not justify opting out of a public school system. However, the beliefs upon which the reasons are based cannot be ignored. Any attempts to design or implement policy regarding home schooling will need to consider these beliefs.

Notes for Chapter II

1. Bula, Frances. "Test Case on Home Teaching Denied." The Vancouver Sun. Monday, April 6, 1987. p. A 6. & "Dad Denies Guilt." The Vancouver Sun. Wednesday, April 8, 1987. p. A 15.
2. The Colfax family is renowned amongst home schoolers for having three of their four sons accepted at Harvard.
3. For more on the terms self-culture and independent scholarship see Gross, 1982; Gross and Gross, 1983 and Evans, 1972.

CHAPTER III

Methods of Study

Chapter three presents the methodology on which the study is based. It describes the design of the study, followed by a discussion of the sources of evidence used. The field procedures are documented. The conclusion to the chapter provides a discussion of the method of analysis of the data. This leads to an outline of the following chapters.

Overview

The study is an ethnographic study of home schooling in the lower mainland of British Columbia. It was conducted to increase understanding of the growing home schooling movement in the province. The information gained is valuable in assessing the new policy proposals relevant to home schooling as they are presented in "Policy Directions: A Response to the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education by the Government of British Columbia" (1989) and the School Act (1989).

Because the purpose of the study was primarily exploratory, there were no well developed hypotheses. However the study was designed on two less developed propositions: (1) that it may be possible to build characterizations of home schooling families and, (2) that these characterizations, or portraits, may include certain reactions to the policy changes. To examine these propositions the study design focused on the following four main questions:

1. Why are some families in urban areas in British Columbia choosing to home school their children?
2. What does home schooling mean to these families?

3. How are these home schooling families reacting to the new legislation on home schooling?
4. What alternatives, if any, would the home schoolers prefer?

Design

The design of the study is based on field research traditions as discussed in Case Study Research: Design and Method by Dr. Robert K. Yin (1984), The Ethnographic Interview by James P. Spradley (1979), Ethnography: Principles in Practice by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), and In the Field by Robert G. Burgess (1984). Yin views case study research as the preferred research strategy for posing "why" and "how" questions, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus of the research is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

For this study about home schooling the ethnographic interview provided a necessary, personal approach to what may otherwise have been skeptical, disinterested sources of information. Interviewing was chosen as the main method of data collection for two reasons. First, home schoolers, fearing legal repercussions, may have been reluctant to divulge information about their situation until a level of security and confidentiality was established. Such an atmosphere was perhaps more easily created through personal contact. Second, from the literature review it was clear that many home schoolers may be home schooling to remove themselves and their families from contact with impersonal, institutional ways of life. Therefore, the response to being personally interviewed was likely more informative than if the participants had only been asked to respond to a structured, impersonal questionnaire.

The design is a multiple-case design. The cases, informants, were drawn from families living in the lower mainland who are or have been home schooling one or

more children. By selecting from urban home schoolers, the study was limited to home schoolers who have a choice of alternatives yet still choose to home school. Initially the design defined home schooling families as those who were currently home schooling school aged children, children who had their sixth birthday before Dec 31, 1988. The intent was to limit the respondents to those families that had been home schooling for at least one year. It was assumed that home schoolers who have been home schooling for at least one year were thoroughly enculturated into the home schooling world (see Spradley, 1979, p 48). From the response it became clear that some important information was to be gained by widening that definition. Some families who were no longer home schooling responded. As well, some families who had only recently begun to home school and others who did not yet have school aged children responded. All of these families considered that they were, or had been, home schoolers. This wide variation was worth exploring.

Sources of Evidence

The study utilized several sources of evidence. A questionnaire followed by some select ethnographic interviews with home schooling families, the "informants", was expected to provide the major source of the data. The information gained from the questionnaire provided some basic background about the families. Interviews were designed to explore the issues which the participants believed were important.

Eighteen families were interviewed for the study. Of the first nine interviews, those done before the first round of analysis, five were conducted in person. These were tape recorded and then transcribed. Three of the five were conducted at the home schooling families' homes; two others at my own home. My technique for interviewing improved, and although I found it distracting to take notes at the time

of the interview, I did record thoughts and observations from the interviews as I typed the transcripts.

Four other initial interviews were shorter and were conducted on the telephone. Two of these were unscheduled interviews conducted on the spot when the respondents called. At first these respondents were reluctant to identify themselves. After talking at length, both were willing to give a mailing address to which the questionnaire could be sent. To my knowledge neither questionnaire was returned. The other two telephone interviews were scheduled interviews. These respondents preferred to talk over the phone rather than having a questionnaire mailed to them. These latter two interviews collected both the information from the first questionnaire (Appendix I) and from the first interview schedule (Appendix II). Both were conducted in late January/ early February during a transition time, just prior to drawing up a second questionnaire (Appendix IV). These interviews were instrumental in the development of the second questionnaire and in the decision to allow respondents the option of being interviewed by telephone rather than writing their answers.

The telephone interviews were not taped but written in a form of shorthand notes and then transcribed as soon as possible. Although there is discussion in the literature on ethnography about taping versus not taping, the technique here was useful because these interviews and later telephone interviews were more focused than the first five, more exploratory interviews. Because the analysis had been started already, patterns had been identified. In these later interviews the research was moving into verifying kinds of questions to determine if the patterns were consistent and then to gather more story-like examples.

Initially I attended support group meetings from a local home schooling group. I recorded notes as a participant-observer following each meeting. In this way I

have tried to record my changing awareness of home schooling and my own reactions and thoughts about it.

In this same field diary I recorded calls and correspondence from non-home schoolers who responded to the requests for participants. Several of these calls were people who were peripherally involved in home schooling circles. Often they expressed strong opinions about home schooling, both for and against. In two cases I felt that the calls were intended to check out whether or not I was a person who could be trusted with the information they might choose to reveal, particularly names of home schooling families. The field diary of the research proceedings, interview notes, observations, field notes, analysis and interpretations was maintained throughout the project.

Using multiple sources of evidence helped to ensure the construct validity of the study. For this same reason, all contacts and respondents were invited to add to the data base at any time during the project. Seven of the nine initial participants who were all interviewed in November and December, 1989, and January, 1990, were contacted a second, or sometimes third time in February or March of 1990. This latter contact was by phone, was usually casual, and allowed the respondent to provide new or revised information. The participants who were interviewed in a second round of interviews in February, 1990, tended to call back on their own. Of five, three returned calls within a day or two. As this second set of interviews was more focused, the participants may have felt that their answers were more critical. In all three cases they wanted to add to answers they had given to specific questions.

Field Procedures

Through the use of letters to the editor of community newspapers in the lower

mainland, a newspaper article in the Vancouver Sun, and discussions at support group meetings, home schooling families interested in participating were asked to contact the researcher. From the publicity, twenty-seven families in the lower mainland responded either by telephoning and/or completing questionnaires, or by accepting and returning questionnaires that were handed out at support group meetings.

Four families from outside the lower mainland also responded. Although they were not within the boundaries defined for the study, questionnaires and follow-up letters were sent to three of the four. The fourth family sent an extensive write up about their situation without having received the questionnaire. A former home schooled student in Richmond and a non-home schooling "concerned" parent each wrote letters. The information gained from these "outside sources" was useful in understanding the overall home schooling picture. At times the stories of home schoolers from outside the lower mainland were useful in focusing the research. Their stories, however, were not directly included in the analysis.

Prior to January 31 interested persons in the lower mainland received a covering letter (see Appendix III) and questionnaire #1 (see Appendix I). The letter outlined the study; the questionnaire collected basic data about the makeup of the family, the family's history of home schooling, their reasons for choosing to home school, their willingness to participate as informants in the study, and their eligibility for participating.

In early February, after a first round of analysis of the survey data, the procedures were changed. Using the information from the questionnaires and the interview transcripts, I began reading and cataloguing responses. At this time I realized the richness and detail of the storytelling in the interview material

compared to the simplicity of the questionnaire data. Much of the latter offered little insight into the patterns that were beginning to emerge from the transcript data. This led to the development of the second questionnaire (Appendix IV). Questionnaire #2 became useful in two ways. It served as an interview schedule with those participants who had already completed Questionnaire #1. Also it was used with new participants, either as an interview schedule for telephone interviews conducted at an appointed time, or as a mail out questionnaire depending on each respondent's preference.

Throughout the study families participating as informants were selected on the basis of their possible contribution to the data and the likelihood of a good informant-ethnographer relationship being developed. Initially it was unclear how many families would need to be interviewed. The first three families to respond were all eager to be interviewed. Being somewhat eager myself, I interviewed them. Gradually as more questionnaires were returned the selection became based more on choosing families whose questionnaire response showed something unique. The first two families interviewed had both removed their children from school when a crisis arose. The third family had always intended to home school. A fourth mother was selected because she had home schooled her son for one year and then put him back into school. The fifth interview, less formal, was a woman who phoned late one night, did not want to identify herself but wanted to share her experiences home schooling four children. In her case, the children had been taken out of a Christian private school because she and her husband felt it was too liberal. The sixth family was also home schooling partially because of religious reasons. They were selected on that basis. The seventh like the fifth was an impromptu telephone interview. The family was not "selected." In this case the mother had removed her gifted son from school when she felt that the school was not meeting his needs.

After the first seven interviews, as the analysis process was beginning, it became apparent that the questionnaires no longer provided enough information even to make further selection possible. I had begun to formulate ideas about two main streams of home schoolers but I still wanted as much information as possible on both streams. The eighth and ninth interviews again were not "selected." They were the result of deciding that I had to have more information from each new respondent as well as trying to back track and "interview" all of the respondents who had already completed the questionnaires. This goal was not completely feasible given the time and resources of the study, but it did change the selection process to one simply of creating two lists, one of each stream, and beginning to contact a balance of home schoolers from each list.

Out of twenty-seven respondents only one returned a questionnaire anonymously. Only the anonymous one and one other respondent were not willing to be interviewed. All the other respondents indicated that they would be willing to participate further.

Care was taken throughout the study to keep the identity of the home schooling families confidential. This precaution was taken to help develop trust between the interviewer and the families so the participants would speak as freely as possible without fear of repercussion. Each informant family was assigned a code name to identify all transcripts and notes. All real names have been replaced with fictitious names to protect the identities but keep the stories intact.

Analysis

According to Yin (1984), establishing the external validity of case study research relies on replication logic rather than sampling logic. Case study research

is designed to provide new knowledge which can be generalized to a theory or a framework for understanding real-life events, rather than to a population. In this study the data were analyzed to determine the patterns that might form a framework for understanding the culture of home schooling families. Looking for similarities helps to identify characterizations of home schoolers in general.

In retrospect, the analysis is a very cyclical process. Initially the research focused on four main questions (see overview for this chapter). By their nature these questions postulated that home schoolers might have strong views on education such as how public schooling ought to be, what public policies would benefit home schoolers and so on. They assumed that home schoolers would have a certain awareness about the public education arena. In this way they presented a vague characterization of home schoolers as a starting point for the research. In the first set of interviews the tangents and stories which led away from the planned schedule were often most enlightening in that they drew attention to material that had not been previously assumed. Patterns began to emerge as the transcripts were reviewed. These patterns led to new questions designed to test the emerging patterns. And as the patterns were verified, new characterizations were gradually developed.

The analysis was not a separate phase of the study. It continued throughout the study. As more material became available it was analyzed and added to the developing characterizations. The chapters which follow are the result of that process. They represent the characterizations in their most developed state at the point where adding "more stories" was becoming redundant.

Chapter four provides three portraits of "committed" home schooling families and a discussion of the relationship between three ideologically different styles of home schooling that they represent. The portraits are based on collections of

information from interviews with home schoolers.

Of twenty seven respondents, only nine were "committed" to home schooling before their children reached school age. The eighteen other respondents began to home school for very different reasons than the composite families presented in Chapter four. However, most of the families, as they become committed to home schooling, generally subscribe to one of the three styles as "ideals." Depending on the family's commitment to home schooling and their reasons for home schooling, for each individual family a certain style emerges. These "styles" follow two continua related to family values and the structure of the schooling.

Chapter five explores the characteristics of a large group of home schoolers in the study who had "situational" reasons for starting to home school. Most often the reasons start off as crisis intervention. Of eighteen families interviewed, eleven fall into this "situational" category. Initially this group is viewed as being ideologically different from the "committed" home schoolers described in Chapter four. Over time each situational family will likely make a shift either to return their children to a school system or to take on a commitment to home schooling as an alternative. All of the families described in chapter five are in various stages of this shift or transition.

Chapter six uses the division of home schoolers into committed and situational groups to examine policy implications for home schooling. It provides a summary and conclusion of the research including a final overview of the significant policy implications and the suggestions for further research in this area.

Summary

This chapter has detailed the methods of study used to collect and analyze the information that follows. It noted that the design is a multiple case design which

relies on replication logic rather than on sampling logic. Ethnographic interviews provided the major sources of data. The data were analyzed through a process which identified patterns. The patterns were used to form characterizations of the home schooling families who participated in the study.

CHAPTER IV

Committed Home Schoolers

Chapter four introduces the concept of committed home schoolers, those who accept home schooling as the best alternative for their children. It provides a description of three styles of committed home schooling. In a discussion comparing the styles, a two dimensional continuum is presented.

The home schoolers who participated in the study were each unique. They had different styles of home schooling. They had different reasons for choosing to home school. Some were home schooling one child; others two, three or four children. The one characteristic that most had in common was how committed they had become to home schooling as an alternative.

Becoming committed had always been a process. A few of the families were not yet fully committed. For the majority, commitment meant having reached a plateau where there was a level of certainty and comfort with the style of home schooling that had developed. This chapter is about that plateau and the variations in style that ensue.

The Styles

A) Debbie and Michael

Debbie and Michael have three children, aged five, six, and eight. Debbie admits that she had decided to home school before she had children. She had read some of John Holt's books but can't really remember what started her interest before that. She describes her own schooling as very much a waste of time. "I always did well in school but looking back on it now I found that what I really

learned was to stick to the stuff that I could do easily and not to try anything that was difficult for me."

Michael's experiences were different but with a similar result. He attended what was supposed to be a "university prep" school back in the days of streaming. His memories are of completing numerous, short projects on topics which were too general and unrelated for the students to be able to follow up any real life interests. The only memorable ones were one or two exceptions where the students were given complete freedom to do three day projects on whatever they chose.

Together Debbie and Michael believe that the public school system has a political agenda to produce people who are not too inquiring. Though this may not be the intent of many teachers, the system is designed to negate individual efforts to produce inquisitive students. Home schooling provides a simple way of "skipping" the system. Debbie and Michael believe that children under the age of ten or eleven are not really ready for a lot of formal, sit down education. Their older child does take piano lessons but is involved in almost no other structured, activity.

It is only in the last year that Debbie has begun to meet other people who are also home schooling. Now she regularly attends weekly field trips with a group of about ten other home schooling families. Once each month this same group holds a home schooling support night for parents and children. At these meetings the parents discuss curriculum ideas and have the opportunity to socialize with other home schoolers. The children are all getting to know each other although most of them do not play together other than at these gatherings. For Debbie and Michael, the most important aspect is that their children have the opportunity to play with other home schooled children of different ages.

The most common criticism of home schooling that Debbie hears is that children are not being socialized with their peers. She and Michael believe that

this is the best reason for home schooling. They strongly believe that most of the social events at school are not good for children, especially young children. The ratio of adults to children at schools today is too low. In these times when so many children have single parents and so little extended family, Debbie and Michael think that it is important to ensure that children are spending more, rather than less, time with adults. They see peer pressure as being detrimental. "People talk about it a lot but nobody sees that the main reason for peer pressure is that the kids whole social environment is the other kids. Their family means nothing anymore. They simply don't have an adult society that they are learning from."

For Debbie and Michael home schooling is more commonly referred to as home education. It is more accurately described as a way of parenting. "All it is is just going about our daily business and being alert for ways of pointing out how the world works to our children." It is a matter of being alert. The children do not follow any fixed curriculum or spend any specific number of hours sitting down to mathematic or science. Instead both parents feel that it is critical to follow each child's interest.

If a kid shows an interest in something you have to be prepared to leap in there and help them find out more about it, whatever it is. You also try and relate it to other things, things that you feel they ought to know about. You try and show them how whatever they are interested in relates to the wider world. The goal is always to expand their awareness of the world.

Last spring the oldest daughter took an interest in folk tales. Debbie took her to the library to take out books of folk tales. They read several stories and learned about a number of characters. Together they played and imagined with the characters. Although it was geared to her being just seven years old, Debbie feels that her daughter did learn much of value. She was also reading and creating stories of her own.

The parents take some control over what their children learn though mostly in subtle ways. Math skills can be learned by having the children cook and measure. Science happens all around and the parent only needs to take advantage of a child's natural curiosity. When one of the children opens the window and the curtain billows out the parent has the opportunity to give a lesson on air pressure. If the child shows a keen interest then any subject can be pursued at a deeper level.

Both parents are avid readers. They encourage their children to look at books and magazines. The family owns a boat on which they spend blocks of time. They also enjoy travelling by car. This time away makes it easy to provide the children with a great deal of quiet time.

Last summer they travelled across Canada visiting all of the capital cities. As a family they took an interest in the history of the Voyageurs. Together they made a Voyageur canoe complete with (fake) beaver pelts and tied up "goods." Then they paddled some of the original routes.

The two older children are both keen to learn French. Debbie and Michael use it for their private conversations although Debbie feels that her own French is not very fluent. They joke about switching to German once the children are able to understand French.

For Debbie's older two children reading came easily. They learned the alphabet first and began to sound out words and read. For both children it seemed a natural, easy process. Her third child at five does know the alphabet but shows no interest in reading. Debbie hopes to be able to avoid pushing him to read but feels that it will be hard to stand up and say "yes, I'm home schooling. My child is nine and he doesn't yet read."

Every morning Debbie reads to the children before they have breakfast. In the evening Michael reads bedtime stories. The rest of the day is pretty much

unstructured. Together they do housework and shopping. The children have lots of time to play. "The day's certainly are full enough. There is no trouble filling the time." Once two summers ago Debbie remembers the older girl complaining about being bored. Debbie responded with "well that's good for you." She hasn't heard the same complaint since. "Feeling bored is good for them," Debbie explained. "It really stretches their minds."

The family does have a television but seldom watches. This helps the children to depend more on their internal resources rather than, like other, schooled children, expecting to always have external stimulation.

Debbie is currently starting a business from home. She works on it several afternoons and most evenings each week. Michael works for a computer firm. In the past his job has required that he go into the office. He has gradually increased the amount of work that he can do from his home.

B) Carol and John

Carol and John are home schooling to help strengthen the family unit. As Carol explained it "we're all doing everybody else's work nowadays. The government raises our kids. Someone else cleans the house." The family unit is gradually being eroded. Home schooling ties the family together. By spending time at home, their children are learning that they don't always have to have friends about. Their play has become very creative.

Carol worked as a teacher in the public school system for four years before she and John had children. She enjoyed teaching, believing that she had a real gift for organizing and motivating her students. With the arrival of her son Carol wanted to stay at home. Her husband was secure in his own business, was making

a good income, and shared her belief that full-time mothering of their new infant was a valuable undertaking. Two years later Carol and John had a daughter.

Throughout the years that Carol's children were growing from infant to toddler to preschooler, Carol's cousin was home schooling her own four children. Carol had watched with interest. As their children gradually reached school age, Carol and John began to think that their children would benefit from being taught at home. Together they explored some of the literature on the subject, particularly the books by Raymond and Dorothy Moore. Still unsure, but with her cousin's support and encouragement, and with help from a local home schooling group, Carol started out.

Five years later Carol is a home schooling professional. She no longer attends the larger support group meetings but does meet with a few other home schoolers on a regular basis. "What I really needed was curriculum ideas. After a couple of years I found that all of the ideas in the group were coming from me." Now a small part of that larger groups meets bi-weekly for planned field trips. They often schedule their projects together so that the field trips can relate to themes or units which all of the families are studying.

Carol tried using regular curriculum material initially but found it tedious. Gradually she began to explore other options. She has purchased two complete programs over the years. The first was a kindergarten program from Hewitt-Moore. It was good because it had a wide variety of projects which it also related to bible stories. Carol liked the religious connection of the material, although belonging to a cross denominational church she found the Seventh Day Adventist philosophy of the material a bit strong. She used the program with each child in their kindergarten year. At the start of her son's grade one year Carol experimented with less structure. Later she purchased another packaged curriculum. It provides a program for kindergarten through grade six based upon numerous

themes. Today she still uses that book as a resource although she prefers to incorporate only those things which are important into her daily routine.

The children are allowed to sleep in every morning. This is important as they both have allergies. Carol believes the stress of having to rush would be hard for them. About 9:00 the family usually gathers together in the bedroom for their morning dedications. They read scriptures and pray together. Following that is morning chores and then breakfast. Carol's logic for the morning routine is that it gets the most important things of the day done first. Then the family is freed up to allow for the unexpected to happen during the rest of the day.

The school part of the day follows breakfast. There are two school desks in the family dining room alongside wall maps and piles of books. On one wall is a hand drawn map of B.C. with travel pictures glued onto the appropriate areas. The morning session can last from one to two hours and includes up to half an hour of math. The daughter finds math challenging but accepts the work partly because her mother's expectations are clear. For effort the child is rewarded by being allowed to do only that which is necessary. This year the family is working on the theme of farming. The children are encouraged to learn everything they can about the year's theme. For the project the family is setting up a mini hobby farm which they will probably not continue once the study is completed. The children are breeding horses, goats, and chickens. They are learning about vegetable gardening by preparing their own garden. The preparation includes research about equipment and seed types. As well each child is studying three different farm animals. Together they are preparing a model of a farm. The children are interested in farming and so are excited about doing the work which includes chart making, maps and lots of writing, as well as chores. Science projects on recycling, pollution and how to protect the environment are all able to be related to the farm project.

Other subjects are less integrated. For art the children receive some private tutoring, sometimes arranged for free with friends of the family. Carol takes courses herself so that she can provide instruction. Last year she enrolled in a spinning course. This year her daughter is learning to knit from her grandmother. As the daughter especially loves to draw and paint Carol makes sure that she provides her daughter with the special materials she needs. Currently she is being privately tutored in ceramics as well. The son loves to ride horses and so has had some private riding lessons.

English is one of Carol's special loves and so the children are encouraged to write daily in journals and to read both independently and orally. Carol also spends time reading to them each day.

Physical education is more structured. One full hour of P.E. follows the morning school work each day. For this the children have a card file box from which they can choose an activity. They are required to do a certain number of lessons under each category throughout the year. Carol wants to ensure that they grow up experiencing everything from archery, to canoeing, to gymnastics and walking. About fifty percent of the activities are very independent. For example the children might choose to go off on a neighborhood walk and then come back and draw a map of their route or write a description of the flowers they saw. Something else, like a lesson in gymnastics, might require that Carol participate in the activity with them. Archery, too, requires her skill and expertise for instruction. John is an active participant in this subject area as well. He takes the children swimming regularly and is involved in weekly skating expeditions.

This year John has been able to be home most days until 1:30. He is now able to be more involved in the home schooling than he has been in the past.

The regular afternoon schedule begins with an hour of reading, one hour of craft time, followed by kitchen time. This last activity allows the children to learn the home making arts: canning, bread making, table setting, baking, etc.

The daily schedule is not so rigid as to discourage spontaneity. Some days the group decides to have an outing or visit friends. They occasionally visit hospitals or older neighbors. Carol believes the children are learning to relate to their elders who have a lot of wisdom to share. One afternoon a week the daughter babysits a small child to allow a friend a bit of extra time for house cleaning.

At home the environment is quiet and not distracting. The children are able to get their work done quickly. When they've finished they go on to something else. The family does not have a television and Carol believes that home schooling would be almost impossible with one. "Instead" she says, "the children have to be creative about what they do."

Critics of their methods say that they are sheltering their children; that they won't fit in. Carol and John believe that all parents should home school their children at least for kindergarten and grade one. "Their eyes aren't ready and they can't take the long days. It would be quite a different world if mothers realized how much their kids really need them at home." Through home schooling Carol thinks that the children are learning to be happy and content spending time in the home. It teaches them that they can be happy without a career. "Not that they shouldn't have a career if they want one, but that they need to be able to keep life simple. Life should be based around the word of God. At home they are growing up in a secure environment. They can be strong if they have their own convictions. From this they will be leaders."

C) Peter and Jane

Peter and Jane describe themselves as a Christian family. Like Carol and John, Peter works outside the home while Jane runs the home school. Each morning the family begins their day with bible study and prayer. The children have a classroom in the house where they spend part of the day doing school work. The afternoons are usually less structured as the children do other activities with their mother. Together they do the cooking and the cleaning. They play pretend games and go outside for walks. The family meets with other home schooling families for special outings once each week.

However, for Jane and Peter there is an important difference in their home school. For them home schooling is a religious decision. They believe that the structure, content and the methodology of public and many private schools is harmful to their children. "Truth" is absolute and must be reflected in what their children are experiencing in every aspect of their lives. Scriptures and the Bible are viewed as the locus and final arbitrator of knowledge and truth. They are taken as historically accurate, as not being at variance with true science.

Peter and Jane rely heavily on Christian correspondence programs from schools in the United States. Jane explained that these programs approach teaching with a methodology that is also consistent with her Christian philosophy. For example math needs to be taught in absolutes. A child ought to learn that one plus one equals two, not because s/he has experienced that, but because it is true. One plus one equals two whether you have experienced it or not.

Likewise, in Reading phonics is important. In Christianity, when the heart is changed, the attitude changes. In other words, change comes from the inside. Reading must also be approached from the inside to the outside. It is thought to

be important to learn the internal aspects of the words, the parts, first. The child then learns to put these parts together to build words.

Jane and Peter view this principle approach to education as being in opposition to today's modern approaches used in public schools. Too often children are taught that they are the final arbitrator. There are no absolutes. Instead children are learning to live by the motto "if it feels good, do it." They are left thinking that the truth is up to them. They have no role models, heroes, or great people to guide them. Through a structured, Christian home schooling program Jane believes that their children are being educated as true Christians.

Comparing the Styles

As a newcomer to the home schooling world the two streams of home schooling as described by Commons and McMullen (1986) seemed very separate. For example the monthly Home Education Newsletter (H.E.N.) lists support groups. The descriptions for several of the groups often includes a reference to being a Christian home schooling group. As a researcher I had very much expected to find a great difference between "religious home schoolers" and "romantic home schoolers." In discussions with non-home schoolers about my research several people mentioned that they believed that most home schoolers were doing it for religious reasons. One out of town home schooler wrote that "the fundamentalist Christian home schoolers, are extremely well organized and act as if they are, or speak for, the majority of home schoolers." She believes that the negative opinion and fear of home schooling as being a breeding ground for bigotry and ignorance stems from the wide belief that home schoolers home school for religious reasons. In one letter she wrote "I think that in B.C. and elsewhere, people who would naturally have negative or uncertain opinions about home schooling get those

opinions abundantly confirmed by some of the unwise rhetoric of the Christian home school lobby."

Certainly the Christian home schooling movement has influenced public opinion. But in Canada this may be somewhat sensationalized. Out of twenty-seven respondents fifteen identified a religion as a part of their cultural and/or religious background. Two other respondents identified themselves as either atheist or non-religious. Of those who identified themselves as Christian, most did not include any reference to religion in a description of their reasons for home schooling. Like the portrait of the second style, religion was important in the family values but was not the reason for choosing to home school. One of the families upon which the story of Carol and John is based responded to the question about reason for home schooling with simply "we didn't start home schooling because of religion." This particular family did however, like Carol and John, begin by reading the books by Raymond and Dorothy Moore. As has been discussed in Chapter two, the Moores do base much of their philosophy on Christian values. Without that as a personal background it might be hard to accept much of what the Moores purport.

The third style, represented by Jane and Peter, may be the style of many "Christian" home schooling families. However, the data collected for the study did not show this position as being common.

Of all of the respondents, only five families referred to their particular religious values in justifying their decision to home school. One of those respondents began her answer by saying that "some of it was for religious beliefs but also for my son's second language..." Only four of the families used religion as the main factor. One of these families wrote the following strong statement as its reason for home schooling:

We do not agree with the present philosophy which dominates not only education, but virtually every aspect of our culture. It is the false

materialistic view of final reality versus the Judeo-Christian world view which are in conflict. We cannot commit our children's hearts and minds to an educational system based on false suppositions.

Initially after interviewing this particular family I had expected to find that they would most closely represent the "Christian home schooling style." This was not the case. However, it may be that the data were not representative in this respect. One of the four families for whom religion was a main factor was reluctant to give information that might identify her family in any way. She expressed concern about the people "out there" who want to come and take the children away. Another caller, who was not a home schooler but worked as a teacher amongst "many Christian home schoolers," told me that she would pray to God for guidance in deciding whether or not to work with me on this study. She never called back. A second caller, also not a home schooler herself, informed me that many of her fellow Christians felt that they had to protect themselves from people who did not understand their position. The point here is that in conducting this study I may not have earned the necessary trust to gain access to a different view of Christian home schoolers.

All but four of twenty-seven families included in the study tended to a more relaxed style. In this way all of the other twenty-three families were similar in that they were home schooling for reasons which were not based on strong religious grounds. All of the families generally did believe that their own personal values were important. In over half the cases those values were probably religious in nature. The families agreed that home schooling was a way of helping to pass values on to their children. However, most of the families did not seem to see society in general and the school system in particular as being based on false values.

The differences between much of what Carol and Debbie do are not glaringly obvious. Both families believe that children need lots of time to play, that television is not useful, and that the home environment is important. However there are subtle differences.

Carol has structured the children's day even though it is not structured so much around schoolwork. Her philosophy is indeed that the children are being "schooled." She relies on prepared curriculum material some of which she prepares herself. In this way her Christian values are reproduced. There is order and structure to the children's lives. They have duties and chores to perform. Community service and "giving of themselves" is vital.

Debbie's style is considerably more relaxed than Carol's. Debbie avoids structure, rejects any prepared curriculum and places more emphasis on free play. For her home learning is not comparable to schooling. Schooling represents an archaic system which deters from individuals realizing their potential. Home learning is about education which allows for individual differences and which follows the development of each person.

Both families believe that home schooling is particularly important for very young children. Carol and John are less likely to continue home schooling than are Debbie and Michael. Already Carol and John are considering other options. When their children enter a school system at grade six or seven they will attend a private Christian school. Debbie and Michael see no reason to ever consider a school system at the present time. When their children are at high school age they will be permitted to attend a public school if they choose. As circumstances change, if career interests change, or the children are eager to try school, Debbie and Michael may rethink their plan.

Both families believe that by home schooling they will pass much of their own value system to their children. Success was not spoken of in terms of money and class but in terms of children fulfilling their potential and living a "good" life. However, the respondents from whom the composites were created tended to be well off (had gross family incomes of more than \$30,000) and/or were successful scholastically (held Bachelor's degree or higher). Of twenty-seven respondents, five families did not identify their gross family income. In two of those cases one parent is a graduate student while the other, in one case stays home and in the other case has only recently begun to work. Likely both of these families have low incomes. In two other of the families where no income was identified, the families have small family businesses. In one of these families the father holds at least a Bachelor's degree. In the fifth, the father teaches and the mother is at home. Of the other twenty-two respondents, ten identified their gross family incomes as being between \$30,000 and \$45,000. Only two were lower. One was given as less than \$15,000. (This same parent listed her education as some university, did not want to be interviewed, and chose to return the questionnaire anonymously.) One other was given as between \$15,000 and \$30,000. In this case the father held a Master's degree. Six respondents identified incomes between \$45,000 and \$60,000 and four stated that their incomes were more than \$60,000. It is likely that the success of the respondents gives them the self assurance to agree to participate in the research.

Although most of the identified incomes were on the high end of the scale, they did include incomes across all five of the given categories. In this way the research supports what many home schoolers will argue--that money doesn't make the difference. Memberships to Science World and the Aquarium, subscriptions to newsletters and magazines, and curriculum materials and supplies are all costly.

Having money makes it easier to home school even though some families have found it possible on a low income. Being easier because of fewer financial constraints may make it easier for families to become committed to home schooling as an alternative.

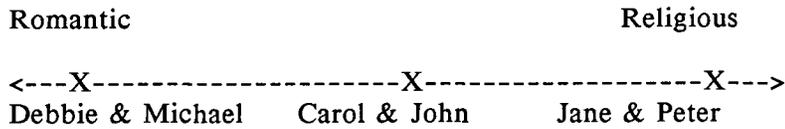
That the families which based their schooling on the religious style treat their daughters differently from their sons was not adequately represented in the composite portraits. Although many taught home skills, cooking, sewing, and cleaning to the sons as well as the daughters they emphasized the importance of the girls learning these skills. The sexism was often unquestioned. The women who were interviewed accepted the home as their domain. Eleven out of fifteen respondents who identified their religion as Christian had either not had a career or had given it up to remain home. Of the four that identified an occupation, one labeled herself a self-employed homemaker. Two others listed occupations as a veterinary surgical assistant/homemaker and homemaker/bookkeeper. A fourth was identified by her husband as a homemaker. Then he added "she also teaches at the community center but only as an extra something to do."

In all but four of these families the fathers are considered to be involved in the home schooling program. However the involvement is often minimal. "Mostly in doing activities with the children." "Reads daily to the children. Supports disciplinary action; substitutes when asked. Is willing to involve children in household projects and outdoor projects." "Father provides support/ catalyst/ ideas person." "'Principal' support person, substitute teacher, helps to resolve difficulties." "Father answers question re math and arithmetic; for science answers technical questions." "Father teaches science." Only two respondents described the father as more involved in all of the home schooling program. "When at home he helps with any subject areas that are happening." Another wrote simply "all areas."

Sexism is not as obvious in the twelve families that did not identify a religion (or specified atheism or non-religious). Although in all but one case the mother responded to the study, eight of the twelve respondents included the father as part of the home schooling plan. Only one of these described typical roles for that involvement. "Father assists in car maintenance, financial management, work experience, welding, fabricating, and boating." One wrote simply that the "Father, as a parent is always teaching her anyway." Four of the others described the fathers role as one of sharing in all of the home schooling as much as they were able. One mother wrote "(the father) uses his talents, insights and experience to help guide and direct the children the same as I do." Another replied that "the father is home a great deal of the time and so is able to supplement the "teaching" by initiating and doing projects, playing games, discussing, etc." In all but two cases the mother is at home more than the father.

In seven out of these same twelve cases the mother works at work other than homemaking. One respondent in this category left the space for occupation blank. In one exceptional case the mother is only minimally involved in the home schooling which is mostly carried out by the father. Four of the seven working mothers work from the home. One runs a family daycare; one writes and two are self employed business women. Except in the one exceptional case, the fathers all work outside the home at least part of the time.

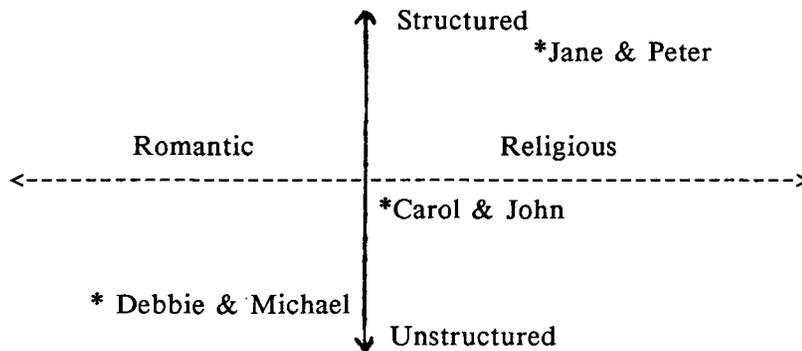
The differences are subtle, but generally the families in the study that did not specify a Christian religious orientation are less tied to the traditional sex role stereotypes than the families that did specify a Christian religion. More of the "non-Christian" mothers work and those fathers are involved in a greater range of activities as a part of the home schooling program than the "Christian" fathers. In both groups the main home schooling parent is most often the mother.



(Figure 4.2)

The second axis or dimension of the Cartesian representation would represent the amount of structure which the family imposes on the learning experience. By representing structure this continuum also represents the strength of the classification as conceptualized by Bernstein (1975). Those families taking a more extreme stance are more carefully segmenting the contents of instruction. In this way the continuum is also representative of the reasons why home schooling families have come to be committed to home schooling as an alternative.

Creating a two dimensional system of classification provides four possible types of home schoolers. The composite portraits fit into three of the four possible quadrants as follows: Debbie and Michael/romantic unstructured, Carol and John/religious-unstructured, and Jane and Peter/religious-structured (see Figure 4.3). The fourth quadrant, the romantic-structured quadrant, is theoretically possible as diagramed below. However, practically it is an enigma. The terms romantic and structured are too inconsistent for that quadrant to contain anything other than an empty set.



(Figure 4.3)

Each home schooling family's situation is different. Although families begin at different times, for different reasons, as they determine how they will home school and why it works best for them, they become committed to a certain style of home schooling. In this way most seem to move to a place in one of the quadrants described above. They develop a style of being structured or unstructured, romantic or religious. In this way the families locate themselves as they each become committed to home schooling as an alternate way of educating their children.

Summary

Chapter four considered parents who have become committed to home schooling as an alternative to school. Three distinct styles have been identified: romantic-unstructured, religious-unstructured, and religious-structured. From the collections of stories from home schoolers who participated in the study three composite portraits have been developed to illustrate three of four possible styles.

CHAPTER V

Situational Home Schoolers

Chapter five examines a second group of home schoolers who are not initially committed to home schooling as an alternative. This group, situational home schoolers, begin home schooling after their children have already begun to attend school. This chapter examines the similarities of the families which make up this group and details the process through which they move as they choose to home school.

Chapter four presented a Cartesian representation of three styles of home schooling of committed home schoolers. The two continua represented suggest that the division between three types of home schooling families is not distinct in the lower mainland. Rather, the difference in the styles follows two continua based on family values (religious or romantic) and desired structure of the learning environment.

The families created for the composite portraits in Chapter four had all made the decision to home school their children before the children reached school age. In the data from the study this happened in only nine of the twenty-seven families. For two-thirds of the families home schooling was not the original intention. For them commitment was a very different process. Eighteen families had started their children in kindergarten intending them to have a normal school experience. Then, at some point, these parents found cause to take their children out of school. For half of the eighteen this occurred when the children were still in the primary grades.

For families with more than one child the decision to home school was almost always based on the experiences of the oldest child. Sometimes other events, crises or episodes that involved younger children added to the parents' rationale for home schooling. However, in all of the families except one, all of the children came out of the classroom within three or four months of each other.

Using solely the difference of taking one's children out of a school system rather than having decided to home school prior to the first child entering school, I have created two categories of home schoolers. Originally committed home schoolers are those home schoolers who home school from the beginning. Situational home schoolers are those who begin along the way because of problems with or at the school. Theoretically there may be a third group, home schoolers who have always agreed with home schooling, perhaps intended to home school, but who initially started their children off in school.

This chapter is about the situational home schoolers. In it I will explore the common characteristics which make these families a group.

As was stated above, eighteen of the twenty-seven families who participated in the study belong or have belonged to this group of situational home schoolers. Of the eighteen, eleven were interviewed. Of the eleven, two had withdrawn their children from private religious schools. These two families have chosen to use very structured, religious correspondence courses from the United States.

The other nine of the eleven families had withdrawn their children from public school. One mother, Shelley, used the British Columbia correspondence program for her grade three son. She has since returned her son to a public school. All eight others developed less structured styles than their children had experienced at school.

Although all eleven families did make the schooling/ home schooling transition there is a clear distinction between the two and the group of nine. The initial choice of private school over public school most clearly speaks to the difference. The two families both chose private school because of their strong religious faith. In both cases the family's problem with the school was that it was too liberal. One parent, Paul, explained that his religion represented the truth.

It is hard to understand if you are not Roman Catholic. Even harder if you are not a Christian. You have to understand how the influence of the modern world has infiltrated the church. This is part of the difficulties of our faith.

Paul believes, as does a faction of people who uphold the Catholic faith, that Catholicism is being watered down. By home schooling he and his wife are able to uphold their responsibility to pass on their true faith to the children. In passing through the situational phase of home schooling, these two families moved toward the more structured, religious style.

In some ways the stories of the two religious families were consistent with the nine "public" situational home schooling families. In this chapter some of those more consistent characteristics are identified. However, for the most part, because of my own interest in public education and the relationship between parents and the public schools, this chapter is mostly concerned with the situational home schooling families who chose to opt out of the public system.

School Experiences

A) Conflict for the Child

Almost all of the parents noticed an undesirable change in their child or children once they started school. Bernice claimed that she can even tell the difference on a beach in Mexico between schooled children and home schooled children. "Home schooled children don't have the regular barriers that children

usually have." She explained that at school children learn to avoid looking adults in the eye. They become "closed." Home schooled children continue to speak to adults the same as they speak to other children. They don't develop the timidity of schooled children.

When her first son started school Bernice was told that her son was tattling at school. As Bernice explained, "he was used to having a mediator, someone that listened fairly to both sides and then helped his sister and him decide how to settle the matter." At school he was expected to "fight it out."

Bernice was shocked at the viciousness of the children. "Kids would step on his lunch. Not just his; they'd step on other kids' too. One day a boy peed on his jacket." Trying to help her son fit in, Bernice stayed at school each morning until the bell rang.

I would take (my son) to school and walk him down the hall. Then the parents would have to stay on guard so the children wouldn't smash each other. They were facing a closed door, waiting in line; waiting for the door to be opened. They were of the convict mentality already.

Ruth also complained of the effect of peer pressure even though her children were enrolled at a Catholic private school.

We have found that a lot of negative influence rubs off on our own children. There is a lot from the single parent families and so on. It would just cause those problems to start to show up again in our own home. It's like a growing tree. It has to start off straight and you have to prune it and take care of it. If it starts to bend, like a tree on a cliff continually pushed over by wind, you can't straighten it out.

Some parents described their children as being in conflict over these differences in values apparent both on the playground and in the classroom.

The eldest enjoyed school. She does not succumb to peer pressure. She knows right and wrong. But in school she was losing respect for that. (Kathleen)

Kathleen believed that her child was aware of contradictions in the teacher's behaviour. Her daughter complained of being shown movies at school that her

parents would not have wanted her to watch. For example, one movie had coarse language that the teacher did not approve of yet she chose the movie. "She was just learning to lack respect for the teacher and in this case she was right." The difference in values between home and school made Kathleen uneasy.

In a similar case Selene described how she felt that her children's values about learning were being eroded at school; that they were being "intellectually damaged." Their school work was always messy and incomplete. They seemed to be pretending they didn't know answers.

We had spent time helping them have a good attitude about learning, about school. Then they had to start pretending that they didn't have the knowledge that they had, they thought they had to be messy and so on. They were learning that it is a curse to be "smart."

Criticism of individual teachers was common although most of the parents did also refer to the problem of the larger system in which teachers were caught. A mother of four children, Linda, described any schooling experiences as "mostly negative." Her older boy had had two good teachers in eight years. Her third son only attended for parts of kindergarten and grade one. In kindergarten he had "not a nice teacher." Linda was shocked by the teacher's assessment of the child. "She could only see the things he couldn't do. He even began to see himself that way."

Some parents viewed the changes in their child as a problem with the school or the teacher. Others viewed it more as a problem for their child. Mary described how she saw her child change from being a bubbly, happy child to a distraught, withdrawn one.

When she was in school I felt it was a little like her being in a box. When I saw her there I saw that she was going crazy. She was becoming miserable, really seriously depressed.

Similarly Shelley described how she had watched her son fall behind in kindergarten, then grade one and finally grade two.

He wasn't having a problem behaviour wise. He was going by the wayside. He's a wallflower type. He doesn't attract attention to himself. He's not one to throw erasers across the room or anything. He doesn't get attention. He avoids it at all cost. So he'd just gone by the wayside with nobody really assessing where he was at. When he was in grade one he ended up in a really fast paced class and he's not a fast child. I thought he was average at the time. But he ended up in a class with children that could read really well. They set the pace for the class. They were through the grade one reader, Helicopter and Gingerbread, by January 15 and they were starting to work ahead with the grade two work. So he was just way behind. He had never comprehended those grade one readers and yet supposedly they were mastered, not well, but supposedly that was over with. I was seeing that in grade one. He was having a hard time. I think his attitude got formed a lot there in grade one as to the fact that he couldn't measure up, couldn't keep up.

For some parents failure is viewed as the result of the child's own conflict with contradictions at school. Linda gave the following example:

A typical thing just as an example was that the teacher in one of the younger grades had asked for a list of books that each of the children had read. (My son) wouldn't give his list because he hated school and he liked reading. I think he felt like it was giving up a part of himself. Even though he had read a lot of books he wouldn't hand in a list. He got a zero but he'd rather that than give up what he loved.

Initially parents accept this as failure on the child's part.

Despite the rationale, the school itself was often described as the mold into which parents believe their child must fit. The situational home schooling parents in the study all began by tolerating and perhaps even expecting some change as their children adjusted to school. No one talked of expecting their child not to fit. At the very least the parents had thought that their child would be normal. For these parents the process of realizing that their child did not fit the mold was painful and took some time. Mary explained it well.

At school (my daughter) was having trouble. She was stubborn, she just wouldn't do what she was supposed to do. Like writing. In Kindergarten she was supposed to print the letters. She wouldn't do it. The same in grade one. All the other kids were doing it but she wouldn't....It's interesting because people, strangers, would say to me that she was a gifted child. They'd see her on the way to school examining all the flora and stuff. Looking at everything. But she just didn't fit in (at school)... But from the school's point of view she was backward, stubborn, lazy, a brat. And she was because she didn't fit into the program.

Initially the parents in the study accepted the school's view of their child. If the school said a child was lazy, parents tried to push the child to not be lazy. If the school said the child was not learning enough, the parents tried to help him or her learn more. In general, the parents' first reaction was to try to help their child fit.

B) Helplessness of Parents

Each of these stories is different in its content. But each story shows the parent's frustration at watching the child struggle with new problems in the school system. The parent, removed from the classroom, feels helpless to change or even, in some cases, understand the problem.

I had contact in the sense that I was the mother out in the hallway. You know, along with a zillion other moms. I was realizing that he was having difficulty but I was not getting absolute straight talk from his teacher. So I was asking "should I hire a tutor?" And she said "No, no it's not that kind of a problem. You don't have to hire a tutor. Don't worry about it." So we went along merrily to the end of the year when the teacher approached me and said "I think you should hire that tutor." This is in June and I had asked originally before Christmas. "Should I hire a tutor?" Which I was willing to do. I was willing to do anything to help this kid get through. (Shelley)

In previous years Shelley had been involved directly as a volunteer in her son's classroom. She knew he was having difficulty, had been encouraged to "work with him at home," but still felt helpless. She felt uncomfortable with what she was doing and her son seemed reluctant to have her help.

Bernice had asked her son's grade one teacher if she could help her son at home, maybe with phonics. Her son had been upset that he wasn't doing well at school. The teacher curtly replied that it wasn't time for phonics yet. Phonics wouldn't be taught until after January.

Selene tells of how her daughter tested at a grade 3.4 level on the Woodcott test at the beginning of the kindergarten year.

The tester told me that whatever I was doing to stop. Her own experience trying to help her own son, he skipped a year, was so unpleasant that she had come to believe that no child should be taught beyond their years.

Selene felt angry and frustrated by the schools response to her child's score. Instead of looking at how to provide enrichment the teacher wanted to help the child conform.

Teachers often were described as not willing to work with the parents. Kathleen described how she had always tried to be involved in her daughter's school. When her daughter started grade three Kathleen approached the teacher about coming in as a volunteer. "The teacher was reluctant. He said 'you'll hear me yell.' I said 'I yell too'. He didn't seem to understand that you don't go in there to condemn but to encourage."

Over and over again, the stories are of concerned parents who try to help but get rebuffed. They are stories of teachers who do not help guide eager parents into appropriate helping roles. In this way, in all of the cases, barriers were created between the home and the school. At first the parents tried to help but then at some point they gave up trying. They no longer feel that their children ought to be forced to conform to a norm which obviously doesn't suit them.

The school was not meeting her needs or rather, she was not meeting their's. They just didn't click. She didn't fit at all. (Mary)

In this way the parents begin to question the schools' interest in individual children.

C) Crises

Each of these parents has at least one story about the "final crisis" which forced them to make the decision to home school. For Diane's son Tom the crisis started when Tom came home in grade three complaining that the teacher "was going to have them grow beans again." He reacted strongly to this, deciding that

he was not going to go to the class anymore. After a week of going to school but refusing to go into his classroom the principal recommended Tom stay home sitting on his bed during school hours until he was willing to work out a solution. This immediate crisis was finally resolved and it was decided that Tom ought to be tested. Results showed that he was "gifted." It was recommended that he have a mentor. However the school year finished without any extra program being provided. The following year, still no mentor but the family was planning a trip away in October so Diane decided to wait until they returned. Back from the trip and a phone call to the School Board personnel in charge of the mentor program revealed that still no money was available. Her son was on a waiting list. Through the rest of the Fall and into January Tom became less cooperative. He was beginning to influence others in the class as well. In February of that year Diane was at the school on a Friday afternoon. She walked into the office to find that Tom had just struck out at a counsellor. He was about to take on the principal. That weekend she and her husband decided to home school.

Mary has a similar story of how her child's delight with learning and projects was being squashed because she wasn't fitting into the teacher's program. This crisis was not as explosive in manner but, in the parent's eyes, equally damaging to the child.

Here (my daughter) had written out all this stuff from a speaker that they'd had on nuclear physics. She was so excited she covered this whole manila tag sheet, 9 by 11. And this was a kid that would never write anything. She worked on it all that evening and then she got up early the next morning. She was so excited. When I went to pick her up from school at 3:30, she was always getting out late because she hadn't finished her work, she was sitting in her desk crying. I asked what was going on and she just screamed, "what's the use, what's the use." Well she hadn't been allowed to show it because she hadn't copied her spelling words off the board. And this was happening all the time.

Stories like this about events which the parents felt were damaging to their child's self-esteem were paramount.

One day he came home and said that he thought that he was the worst boy in the world. He said the boys and girls in his class had been separated for gym. The boys were supposed to be in the cloakroom getting ready and because they were noisy they had been ridiculed around the school. Some of them had been put up on the stage. I just told him that he wouldn't be going back. I didn't know what I was going to do but I said that I'd fix it. (Bernice)

In another example Susan felt that the lack of respect for the child even endangered her physical health and was contrary to Susan's own specific request.

The kids had to go out at lunch. They had to go out no matter what the weather. She had been out of school with bronchitis. And she had just come back. I had told her not to go out because she had been away sick. Just to tell her teacher that she wasn't to go out. She didn't have any boots at school or a warm enough coat. She was just wearing a skirt and running shoes but the teacher made her go out. She didn't even have a raincoat and it was raining so she really got soaked. Apparently she needed a note to stay in. Her word wasn't good enough anymore. The school had decided that but I didn't know.

Obviously this presents a dilemma. The school chose to enforce its policy. The parent then felt that her power had been usurped.

In another case the damage was not to the child's self esteem or physical health so much as a question of challenging the values that Selene felt she was trying to instill.

On this particular occasion she had decided to swing on the swings for a while after the bell. The principal saw her and started galloping out to catch (my daughter). She disappeared and was next found in the library, reading a book. She claimed she had been there all the time. Her teacher had told her she could read a book. The principal's starting to go crazy because the principal had seen (my daughter) with her own two eyes and the child is looking her straight in the eyes saying "oh no, no, you've got me all wrong." The principal called my husband. She couldn't catch her breath. She was so angry. The teacher didn't really take the roll; he didn't know who was there and who wasn't there. Well, the humour of it comes back to me now. Now I can laugh about it. At the time I was most concerned because generally speaking our kids will tell the truth.

At the time Selene had felt angry that her daughter had been put in such a compromising position.

For Shelley, who had wanted to hire a tutor for her son, the crisis was much less confrontational. She did hire that tutor over the summer and the tutor was

shocked at how little Shelley's son knew. The tutor felt that returning to a grade three class in September was going to be hard on the boy. She suggested home schooling to Shelley. Shelley recalled the agony of the decision. She spoke to friends, found a few other home schoolers, and checked into correspondence courses. Finally she decided that it was the best thing for helping her son get caught up. She "feared" putting him into a regular grade three classroom to struggle all over again. As she explained to the superintendent of the school district, she did not want him labeled yet "as a child who couldn't learn."

Gwen and her husband had begun discussing home schooling between themselves because they felt the courses at the private Catholic school their children attended were too liberal. One Saturday night they took the family out to a nice restaurant to approach the children with their ideas. The third youngest apparently burst into tears and cried "I hate school so much. The teacher always tells me I'm stupid. There isn't a day I go without crying." That confirmed the parents' plan. Two days later they withdrew all four children and began teaching them at home.

In each family the actual decision is usually made around one final event. However, the final event itself is not the critical factor. What is important is that in each case the event is symbolic of the string of events that has led to the parents feeling of frustration and of lack of control.

Feelings of frustration were not isolated to the parent/teacher relationship. Home schooling parents often discussed their reactions to the structure of schooling. As they came to believe that their children did not fit into the school many of these parents describe feeling that the schools actually didn't want their children. Some parents also discussed their frustration over feeling that the school discouraged their involvement. Many of these parents seemed frustrated at being

cut off from participating in their children's education because participating didn't fit with the system of the school.

D) Alternatives

Criticism of the schools, as was noted, is not the sole reason for home schooling. As Mary stated, "I've never met anyone who is home schooling because they can't stand the school system. They do it because they are interested in their child's education." Yet there is still more to it. Situational home schoolers are also rejecting private school education. In the lower mainland there are many private alternatives: the established academic private schools such as Crofton House and St. George's, Christian schools, Montessori schools, Waldorf schools and other independent alternative schools such as Choice or Wondertree.

A few parents were unfamiliar with some of the range of private schools. Others felt they could not afford the extra cost or that as taxpayers they should not have to pay to have their children educated.

Crofton House would be great. But the commuting and the cost would be too much. (Susan)

Shelley had already had her son in a private Catholic school, even though the family was not Catholic.

I had originally put him in private school thinking that was the best thing for any child to have an atmosphere that was strict, and the uniforms and the whole bit. It was a Catholic school. And we're not Catholic so that was going into something that I wasn't familiar with but I thought that, you know, wanting the best for my child. I thought that the uniforms, the fact that they wouldn't be competing, and a little bit of religion. I mean, I wasn't religious at all but a little bit of religion wouldn't do anybody any harm. That was my attitude. And the fact that these people, they weren't sisters anymore in that school but they would definitely, I thought, have good attitudes and everything.

When her son began to have trouble Shelley switched him to the neighborhood public school and then chose to home school him after that. Mary, a teacher

before staying home to raise her daughter, felt that the quality of the private schools she explored was not any better than what she was doing "temporarily" at home.

The Transition

A) Beginning

Often the home schooling is viewed initially as a temporary measure to deal with the immediate crisis. The child needs to be removed from the school but going back is not ruled out. Selene's husband described how at first his interest in teaching his daughter was just a sort of "head start." It began with his oldest child as she reached a more curious, outgoing age while his wife was pregnant with their second child. Together the father and daughter invented a play school which they even named. Later when the family had cause to take their children out of the school system teaching them at home was a temporary backup. In both this case and another, the parents felt that they could easily put their children back in school if the home schooling was not working out. The other mother, Linda, didn't actually intend to home school at all. She was just filling in time while she checked out private schools. After several months of looking she realized that private school was going to be expensive and that, from what she had seen, she could do just as well at home.

Shelley, who was interviewed for the study although she is no longer home schooling, did actually home school with the intention of doing it for just one year.

I was doing it with the intention of trying to get my child caught up. It was just strictly to help this child get caught up to a level so that when he went into a classroom he wasn't going in as the low child in the class. You know, I wanted him to go in as an average child. I just wanted him to go in feeling "I'm O.K.."

One year later Shelley did put her son back in school. He is still having some difficulty but both Shelley and her son feel that the year was well spent.

Initially for public, situational home schooling families, home is seen as a "detox center." The children need to spend time relearning how to learn for themselves. Mary's daughter spent the first month of her home schooling sitting on the living room couch reading medical journals from cover to cover. She reveled in the "freedom" that Mary claims is a one word description of home schooling. Home schooling allows for change as the child's interests change. It takes many forms, depending partly on the stage of the "transition." The children learn what they want when they want it. The demands of school are taken away.

When we asked him at the end of August, or we had explained to him what we were going to do, he had absolutely no problems with it which I thought he would. I thought he'd really have problems with it. He was almost relieved. It was almost like a sigh of relief not to have to go to school. That was how bad it had gotten for him. So he was relieved to be staying home. (Shelley)

Bernice, the mother who felt that, by grade one, the children were developing a convict mentality, found that her son also was relieved to be out of school. At first she tried teaching him but found that he already had very set ideas about what he couldn't do. So she stopped altogether. After a year or two, when his younger sister started to read her son decided that he wanted to read too.

After taking her children out of school in February of 1988 Selene noticed that the personalities of all four children changed. She feels that now they are calmer and quieter than they were when they were in school. They don't bicker as much. "They are not angels, but they seem more mature."

Linda, also a mother of four, described the sense of relief she felt when she and her family decided that the older children would home school. She believes the children felt it too.

Generally I think that it was like escaping from East Germany. Exhilarating. They were both feeling very free. Nobody was constantly reporting on them, no report cards, nothing to say that they're good kids or bad kids. (The oldest) immediately started to read a lot. He had been a reader before and then quit. (The second son) had never been a reader. He used to say that he got headaches. At first when he was home he started reading comic books. At home he was more relaxed and the reading just gradually came.

They did also miss school. Sometimes they didn't know what to do. "Every once in a while (the second child) would say that he wanted to go back to school. I just said he could but then he just didn't."

With just one exception the children in these families are always described as happy to be home. In Susan's family the daughter began home schooling in March, 1989. Then in September, 1989, Susan's older son, aged 12, just didn't seem to be able to decide where he wanted to go to school. Most of his friends had moved to different schools and he was "uncomfortable" and unhappy about starting anywhere. In the end he just didn't go back. Until early in March, 1990, he was still complaining that he was missing out.

I think he thinks that if he went to the neighborhood school that he'd suddenly have all these great friends just like the ones he used to have. He doesn't understand that it might not happen that way. He complains about the workload and I tell him that it's nothing compared to if he were in school.

Susan is currently considering a private, alternate school for her son.

For all nine public, situational families who participated in the study this first period of being at home was an important time. It was during this time that the family usually made the real decisions about home schooling. They decided who would be the primary home schooler; how home schooling would be accommodated into their lifestyle; and they began to learn or decide how the schooling would occur. Some families started off with some structure from which they soon departed. Others started with no structure and gradually added a program as the need arose. Each case was individual. One common thread is that in each case, during this transitional period, the parents readjusted their view of the child.

B) View of the Child

As has been discussed, families who begin home schooling in this situational manner often have been through a process of initially viewing their child as normal. Then as problems surface at school, many try to accept a new view of their child from the school's point of view. They try to deal with problems, to seek help and finally, in frustration, resort to home schooling. The beginning stage of this situational type of home schooling then necessitates a readjustment of the parent's own view of the child. The view changes from the negative "not fitting in" view of the school to a more positive reframing. In some cases the child is seen as excelling and needing more challenge. Sometimes the child is viewed as unable to keep up. In a few cases the child is seen as both excelling and unable to keep up. Louise wrote that both her children are very bright and also learning disabled. "In fact my eldest son is gifted and dyslexic." The parents' view of their child as being different and having special needs is an important factor in choosing to home school.

We have a farm and he loves it. He has a short attention span. At home we can approach everything in different ways. In the last few months he has really settled down. Developmentally he's getting better. (Kathleen)

They view the home as the best place for the child to be.

Selene had tested her own children for I.Q. scores and found that they all measured in the "gifted" scores. As she believes that intelligence comes from opportunity, she very much wants them to continue getting what they have had in the past before they attended public school. Selene views her children as unable to survive in school. Physically the children are small. They have been taught at home not to fight and so did not cope well with playground rules.

Mary described her child as being immature both socially and emotionally, but very advanced intellectually. At nine years old Mary's daughter loves learning. Her special interests are medicine and the formation of the earth. Already she has memorized detailed information about processes of the body, not just circulation, respiration and digestion, but the chemical processes to do with immunity and other more complicated systems.

Diane described how her "gifted" ten year old son, Tom, switches back and forth from the adult to the child.

We were in McDonalds. He's playing with a Garfield push thing and he says "And what do you think about this Noriega thing?" And then he started discussing this while he's eating his french fries and playing with a Garfield toy. People were looking at him. He had adult things to say about it. He was really concerned that Noriega could go about beating up his opponents while still maintaining that there was a democratic vote going on. It hit me as so odd. And then the conversation stopped and he started being a kid again. "Can I have ice cream?" He can be very intuitive and really know his subject. He'll talk to you on an adult level and then the next minute you have to remind him to brush his teeth and he will try, like any other kid, to get out of it.

All of these parents share a tolerance for their child's uniqueness. They each seem to appreciate the immaturity with the maturity.

Some home schooling parents view their children as physically unable to cope with the pressures of regular school although this was never presented as the only reason for choosing to home school. At the beginning of grade one Bernice's son developed a spastic colon which Bernice described as the equivalent of an adult ulcer. Her son also began to wet his bed and bite his nails. Like Bernice, Mary had had concern's about her daughter's health even when she attended school. Now, with her daughter at home, her concern has increased.

If I put my kid in that brick building now I think she'd die. She'd wither. She's not a strong child. She couldn't handle it. That was part of why we took her out. She just couldn't handle it when she was at school. She was tired. She just isn't a normal robust kid. She was wiped out.

Shelley hadn't realized much about her son's health until she began spending whole days with him. From home schooling she learned that he usually has much better mornings than afternoons and that he is often bothered by sinus headaches. As well, he is much worse in the Spring and in hay fever season. Shelley's empathy has increased now that she realizes how hard it is for her son to concentrate and absorb the material when he isn't feeling well.

In some cases these "feelings" have been backed up with tests.

We discovered later that she didn't have the feeling between her fingers in her hand. She couldn't hold the pencil to write. She just wasn't ready neurologically. And we discovered too, she was supposed to copy the words off the board and she wouldn't do that, well she couldn't see more than two feet in front of her. She just couldn't see well enough. The school system doesn't get into the details of each child the way the family does. I didn't twig as a parent so how can a teacher? (Mary)

Being at home allows both the parent and the child to suit the environment and the demand to the individual child in ways which schools cannot do. All of the situational home schooling parents who were interviewed held views of their child as having special needs which were unable to be dealt with in a school setting.

C) Curriculum Style

For all nine families viewing the child as different necessitates varying the program. Mary explained "there is no point trying to be the same as the school or she might as well be there." Home schooling is viewed as different from schooling. With home schooling, the parent and the child can have some control over the group experiences that the child becomes involved in. With home schooling every group experience becomes a positive one for the child.

Whereas freedom was often considered the key, Diane did note the importance of consistency for her home school. She felt strongly that making day plans and having usual routines was very important. However choice still played a vital role.

Choice was important to many families. Linda tried to give the children total choice when she began to home school over six years ago. Recently she has begun to see a need for more structure for her younger children so that they are caught up to their age level. Other parents try not to worry about age level. "Teaching is keeping your hands off until they're ready and then handing them the stuff" (Bernice). This style entails schooling as acquiring life skills. The children participate in daily events and through this they acquire the interest to learn academics as well.

In many ways the curriculum styles of these parents reflected the committed home schooling parents as discussed in Chapter four. However for all of the parents in this transitional phase there is a degree of uncertainty. Styles tend to change throughout the year. Basically there is a belief that parents are capable of teaching. "Teachers don't really learn subject information just how to teach large groups. The subject material they learn as they go just as a parent can" (Bernice). Always, there was stress around this issue for the situational parents. Susan, a qualified college instructor with a Master's degree, felt that she may not be qualified enough to teach her own children. Other mothers agreed.

You keep hoping you're doing it right. (Bernice)

I'll feel better for the younger two when they are at grade level. You always worry about if you suddenly had to go back to work, out of the home, or you were hit by a bus or something so that the kids had to go back to the school. It does depend on them being able to be at grade level. You wouldn't want them to be devastated by being held back. You don't want them to be embarrassed. (Linda)

All of the public, situational home schooling parents who were interviewed seemed to share this concern.

Movement

For all of the home schooling families discussed in this chapter, the transition

is a phase through which they will move or have already passed. At some point most situational home schoolers adopt the position of the committed home schoolers, often even coming to believe that their children never should have been schooled away from the home. Some admit that they may eventually send their children back to school as do the originally committed home schoolers.

In most of the cases the future is uncertain. Most parents were not clear that they would ever return their child to a school system, either public or private.

It really is an experiment. I don't know where it will lead. It's o.k. for now but when she hits reality out there she'll have to get a job, be able to work. I look at it and say well I'm doing her no harm. The school system was.
(Mary)

Diane, after one and one half years, seems content to move her style of home schooling towards the more unstructured committed style. She feels strongly that unless Tom insisted that he wanted to go back to public school, she would allow him to continue home schooling through to grade twelve. Allowing the child some choice over the future is common. In Bernice's family the older son is still home schooling while the daughter is now attending a neighborhood public school after five years of home schooling.

For most families the cost of home schooling is not thought of in monetary terms, but in terms of a balance between parental stress and the good of the child. Some felt it was a positive experience all around.

It's been positive. It's given us all a boost as far as being in control of our own lives. From having the kids be in control it's freed us up from having to control them. (Bernice)

For most of the mothers the home schooling had been a growing time for them personally.

It has probably taught me more than the children. It has enabled me to be more. Every year I try and stretch myself. All along I've been telling the children "children you can do anything you want." But it took me all this

time, six years, to learn that myself. When I watched them learn to read, I kept saying it but I didn't really know it for myself. I've just grown myself. I'm so much bigger now than I was. (Bernice)

Bernice has recently begun her own business, something she claims she never would have done without having had her home schooling experience.

Well I personally did a lot of growing with the stress. A year ago I would have seemed aggressive. Now there is more inner peace. Only recently have I stopped seeing myself in other people's eyes. I don't feed off my baby the way I did before. Even with my husband I don't need so much.

Similar ideas about how home schooling had stimulated personal growth were common.

My own feeling is just about being able to stand up to a big system. I was always the kid who was timid and didn't want to anger the teacher. And so it was satisfying to see what was wrong and not be intimidated any longer. I think we've all learned not to just take anyone else's word about how things ought to be. To make our own decisions. (Linda)

A number of mothers also mentioned the disadvantage to themselves in terms of their own lives, getting on with careers or other interests. Selene had temporarily given up her graduate studies to home school her children. She was impatient to return. For others it was just a general impatience with getting on with one's life.

I had to try to keep on track for my own sake too to get through the day. I had had a baby that April so it was a bit of a challenge. And it is hard lots of times because I was taking on a commitment to help my child. At the same time it wasn't my favorite thing in the world to be teaching. I mean if I had wanted to teach I'd have gone and taken the training. Right? So it wasn't like I was doing something that was up my alley particularly. (Shelley)

There is a stress on the parents. There are times I wish she were in school so I could do the things I want. She's a "self-learner" but she's very hard to live with. (Mary)

Having not originally intended to home school, these parents most often begin their experience in desperation. They are ill prepared and need time to come to terms with the changes in their lifestyle that home schooling necessitates.

As the term suggests situational home schoolers begin their home schooling because of circumstances where they feel that they have no alternative. They feel that their child is unique; that their child or children need special help. They are unable to provide that help or have it provided in a school setting. Home schooling becomes the only realistic alternative. Usually these home schoolers move through a transition period. Eventually most become indistinguishable from originally committed home schoolers. The amount of time in which this transition occurs varies from one family to the next.

Three of eighteen situational home schooling parents in the study identified themselves as educators. The rest were "ordinary parents." As described previously Shelley said it well. "I was the mother out there in the hallway, you know, along with a zillion other moms." In many ways one could argue that situational home schoolers are like any other mom. They put their children into school expecting the best. They want their children to do well. They try to get involved, to help. They are, however, unique in that they are "able" to do something about what they see as a problem by removing their child, or children, from the school system. In doing so they often are left with strong views about what went wrong and how things might have been different.

Summary

Chapter five has described the common characteristics of situational home schooling families. These families are defined as those who do not initially expect to home school as their children begin kindergarten. They begin to home school after their children have started in a school system because of problems with their children and/or the school system. Situational home schoolers comprise a group in

that their reasons for home schooling are similar as is the transition through which they move as they become committed to home schooling as an alternative.

CHAPTER VI

Policy Implications

Chapter six provides the conclusion to the research. It reviews the recent policy changes with regard to home schooling in British Columbia and the response to those changes by both committed and situational home schoolers. The final section of the chapter uses the division of committed and situational home schooler to examine how policy and further research might be designed to meet the needs of home schoolers.

Chapters four and five have categorized and described two types of home schoolers. Committed home schoolers are those who have come to believe that home schooling is the right alternative. They have worked out a style that works for them and the children involved. That style is related to the family's reasons for choosing to home school and the classification strength, the amount of structure and content differentiation necessary.

Committed home schoolers may have been originally committed to home schooling before their children reached school age or may have become committed after a period of transition. The period of transition is characteristic of situational home schoolers, those who begin home schooling because of dissatisfaction with their children's school experiences.

As a group, the situational home schoolers who have opted out of the public school system are useful as a focus for research because of their past experiences with the public schools. These parents are most often parents who have tried to work with the schools. They have strong opinions about what schools are and what they ought to be. Some, who are not yet committed home schoolers, still have a

strong investment in creating change so that they can return their children to school. They are the home schoolers who are most interested in creating policies which would encourage cooperation between home and school.

The School Act (1989) in British Columbia mandates minimal assistance for home schoolers on the part of the schools. Schools must accept a registration. They must offer normally available evaluation and assessment services and supply those authorized and recommended resources which the district board has deemed as sufficient to enable the child to pursue his or her educational program. They need not offer any other assistance.

Some school districts have elected to offer home schoolers access to some courses for a fee. Two sample draft policies circulated by the British Columbia School Trustees' Association in November, 1989, demonstrated that at least two districts were considering such policies. One such sample policy allows for elementary level home school children to register for a course when it is a completely separate unit and not a part of an integrated course or series of courses. Secondary level students may register for a single course in each semester when space is available. In both cases a fee equivalent to one-eighth of the approximate average cost per pupil for the District will be charged. This fee will be determined each September. A second sample policy also allows access to programs, subject to space and availability. The draft does not specify which programs but does outline a fee structure based on the number of hours of attendance per week: zero to five hours per week would be free of charge; six to ten hours per week would cost \$600.00 per year; eleven to fifteen, \$1200; and sixteen to twenty, \$1800. Students would be required to attend on a regular basis and obey all rules while in attendance.

As the policies and regulations were new for the 1989/90 school year, most districts did not yet have policies in place as of October, 1989. This meant that home schoolers in the lower mainland were greeted with a wide variety of reactions when they went to register prior to September 30th. Home schoolers in one district were asked to complete a two page form detailing their proposed program. Others were referred to specific schools. In some cases schools simply asked them to come back later when they knew what to do.

For most of the home schoolers this disorganization simply reinforced their own ideas about not needing school involvement. As school districts were working out their policies, home schoolers were trying to come to terms with what the new Act really intended. Some felt that because the schools were now receiving some money they ought to be obliged to provide services. Some felt unsure about the impending changes, certain that it would impose on their style.

Now I know they can come into my home and test if they want. I keep track. I do a little bit of testing so that I'm prepared to show where they are at. Mostly it has made me be accountable. (Sheila/ Initially Committed)

With home schoolers now being registered it is my opinion that they will be very critically and intensely looked at. (Kathleen/ Situational)

Many felt suspicious of the intentions of the new Act.

My interpretation of the Ministry's move to register home schoolers is not so much to be of service to home schoolers but rather to monitor this rather unruly and independent group of parents. The School Act will not be able to address the valid concerns that a percentage of home schoolers are reactionary and/or may not be doing an adequate job. (Jenny/ Initially Committed)

As well they were unsure what this meant for the future of home schooling.

At present with a government that is relatively sympathetic to the concept of home schooling, all may seem well. However the door to increasing control is open via the demand for registration. The possibility of a government that is not sympathetic, to control and regulate the curriculum of home schoolers is now a greater threat than before. (Barbara/ Initially Committed)

While this concern was common, there was still excitement about what possibilities were opening up. Kathleen, a situational home schooler, felt that now home

schoolers could come out of the "closet." Cathy, also a situational home schooler, thought that there would be more contact among home schoolers because they would be recognized and accepted as legitimate. A third situational home schooler, Helen, wrote, "I will not have so many people shocked at our lifestyle." Overall, there was some sense of relief that home schooling is being recognized as an alternate method of schooling.

The majority of the home schooling families that participated in the study believed that the new Act would have very little impact on their own situation. Most felt that it provided no real assistance that they would require.

We have no use for texts and tests which the schools are now, theoretically, obliged to provide. (Joyce/ Initially Committed)

Although little change was expected, some appreciate the beginning of a relationship between home schoolers and the schools.

The general overall attitude of "we are with you, not against you" is very encouraging for me, as well as the open door policy in being able to work with the principal and teachers of the school we register with. (Irene/ Initially Committed)

As of now, the particulars of the school act have not been handed down to the local school at which we are registered. However, I appreciate access to textbooks and feel this will better enable us to evaluate our level of achievement as compared with public school students. (Heather/ Initially Committed)

The ability to use texts etc. from our local school is good. Unfortunately, the local school is not sure how far this service extends, ie. to photocopying, etc. (Elaine/ Situational)

The desire to maintain complete control of the schooling process was unanimous. Most also felt that the policies did not go far enough in providing what home schoolers might find useful. There was some anger expressed that the schools received money with which they would do very little.

Make the 25% funding meaningful. The money given to the districts now will be, I believe, wasted in terms of actual benefits to home schoolers. I know, personally, there is no possibility that my family will receive anywhere near

\$2000 (\$1000 approx x 2) in benefits this year. The schools are required to provide us with so little. (Helen/ Situational)

Some parents felt that rather than just receiving resource material, home schooling parents also need access to facilities, teachers and equipment, particularly computers and science equipment.

(We need) access to all facilities and equipment AND reasonable interaction with teachers. (Selene/ Situational)

Being able to choose to have their children participate in some, but not all school programs, was often appealing to the home schooling parents who participated in the study. As far as being required to pay a fee for this service, most felt that they were being taxed enough. Many were in support of a voucher system so that the extra 25% funding would come directly to them. This would allow them to spend it on the programs they choose.

For the committed home schoolers, the need to establish a relationship with the schools is minimal. These parents have clearly chosen something different. If at a later date, should they choose to put their child in a school, they will "shop" for what they require.

Unlike committed home schoolers, situational home schoolers are often still thinking about school. Often they are critical of the system because they have found their children to have "special needs" which the school system has been unable to meet. In almost all of these cases the parents believe that their children had not been recognized as having special needs by the school in which they were enrolled. This holds true for cases where the child is viewed by the parents as having learning problems or disabilities, physical problems, behaviour problems and/or giftedness. Some would argue that this covers the realm of all children, except perhaps the very middle, average group.

The curriculum is written for the average child, at an average speed of learning, an average amount that a child can take in. There is so little

incentive for a kid to look beyond that, to say "this is interesting. I want to learn more." (Mary/ Situational)

This group is critical of the school system because it appears to teach to a very select middle group of children, ignoring the "individual needs" of other children.

For this situational group of home schoolers, home schooling starts for reasons related to their children's personal struggles with school. The families most often know someone who is already home schooling, are supported for home schooling by family and/or friends, reject private school options, find a way to make it economically feasible, feel capable, and then see some immediate change or success with their children.

From that point, each family can take one of three routes. It can stay suspended in the transitional phase inevitably, waiting for some clue or procrastinating as to the next move. The parents can find that home schooling works for them and so gradually make a shift to the stance and style of committed home schooler. (This stance may include allowing a child to return to a school as the child chooses to.) Or third, the parents can find home schooling difficult and/or no longer necessary so to justify reentering their child or children in a school system, either public or private.

Parents who choose to proceed along one of the first two routes are likely to avoid or be disinterested in having future contact with the schools (except as noted above). Of five public, situational home schooling parents fitting this description who discussed registering, two admitted to not having registered with a school. Both parents believe that the school board in their districts are aware of their status. Both feel that some level of government ought to be responsible for contacting them. Both women, as were many others, were suspect of the governments intentions.

As soon as they make a public statement about it then I'll register. They have to be very public, like run a flyer. I don't think they did yet because they don't really want to know about us. (Bernice)

For those parents who did register there was always consideration over where to register. Two chose to register at public schools. Mary chose a secular, private school.

I decided with a group. Quite a few of us felt that if we could register at the same school, if we supported one private school then because of the funding that school would be in a better position to give us some support, a seminar or a workshop. Not for the kids but for the parents, speakers or something. We haven't really done anything about it. I didn't expect anything. I don't want anything from the schools. I guess being a teacher makes a difference. Some people might need more direction. I do like to keep my options open or if I feel in the future that (my daughter) would benefit from a school system.

Her reaction is typical to the first of the three types of situational home schoolers. Because she feels that home schooling works for now but is unsure of what will happen in the future, keeping her "options open" is important. Diane, another parent in this same group, did accept text books from the public school she registered with but has not found any other need to associate with the school.

Of the nine families in the public situational group discussed in chapter five, three families clearly want a connection with the schools. These parents are on the third pathway. Two are interested in having their children return to a school system at some time in the future and are more eager for contact and support. The third, Shelley, has returned her son to school but is eager to stay involved. This group, more than any other, still has a vested interest in affecting some change. This group is perhaps the most reactive and critical of the schools of all of the home schoolers in the study. In Selene's case, this reaction was expressed in anger at the local school board for not being supportive. Selene quite desperately wants to put the children back in school. She registered her children with a public school believing that she ought to support the public system. In

return she has been refused access to the library and has been given only the minimal access to authorized and recommended material. The school, she feels, has made it abundantly clear that she is not even to talk to the teachers.

My initial thought was that I was going to work with the school to try to figure out how we could best take advantage of what we've got. Should my kids go and sit down in the classroom at the beginning of the day and write a list up. You know they do that in some schools. They call them contracts or something. So if I could find a school and classroom where that type of activity is already on going and then that would obviously be a start. I don't know what to do now cause it looks like we're not supposed to even talk to the teachers.

Yet what Selene wants, what she is unable to make the school understand, is that before she can return her children to the system, she needs to feel certain that the school is treating her children as individuals. She wants them assessed and then treated with respect for what they do know. To do this, a school will need to not only address the children but also be sure that Selene stays involved.

Conclusion

This study is limited in that it relies on replication logic rather than on sampling logic. Using a multiple case design it has found patterns and similarities amongst the twenty-seven families that participated in the study. The patterns have been used to form a framework for considering the needs and reactions of these home schooling families. In theory these patterns may apply more generally to other home schooling families. In practice the patterns would need to be demonstrated with further research.

In beginning to mandate policies for home schooling the provincial government has clearly taken a stance on the state/family responsibility debate. It has acknowledged that as a government it has an obligation to protect the child's right to an appropriate education. Acknowledging this means that the government has assumed an obligation to ensure that assistance is available.

As we have seen, home schooling in the lower mainland has two camps. Committed home schoolers believe that home schooling is very much what they want. Their beliefs about parenting, importance of home and family, the role of school, and the meaning of education are all very set. Situational home schoolers, on the other hand, are often initially confused. They begin home schooling only after unsuccessfully trying to make their children "fit" a school system. As they embark on the home schooling route their beliefs are often in turmoil. For this second group the schools have failed.

The new legislation does very little. For committed home schoolers, who want nothing to do with the schools, it almost demands too much. This group generally is content with the requirement to register in return for minimal resources as long as the parent retains full control. The committed home schoolers who participated in the study are very literate and attentive to policy changes with regard to home schooling. As a group they are concerned about the possibility that future legislation will be more intrusive.

Situational home schoolers need something different. In the first place, they need ways of preventing their dilemma from having occurred. This does not speak to home schooling legislation directly but rather to future policies and research which might find ways to allow and encourage more interaction between home and school. Such policies might allow exceptional and other children room to be outside the classroom. Successfully implementing the new primary program with its focus on individualizing could be beneficial in this regard. Research and policy planning might also consider how teachers might better include parents in planning and implementing educational programs which address the whole child. These policies may be directed at attendance requirements, such as those in the Northwest Territories which allow and encourage children to participate in family events at no

cost to the school district. Similarly they might be directed at teacher training requirements so that teachers will be better prepared to effectively and non-defensively work with parents.

For parents who still choose to bring their children out of the system, policies could be better designed to provide more support. Both the New Brunswick and the Alberta systems are exemplary in this regard. In New Brunswick, children who are being withdrawn from a school to be home schooled are still viewed as ultimately the Minister's responsibility. Each situation is looked at separately. Parents are interviewed and assisted either in leaving with knowledge of "how to" or in finding alternative ways to address problem situations so that the child can remain in the system. Contact is maintained so that parents can easily choose to return their child to the system. Alberta may be criticized for monitoring and restricting too much. However in providing full funding to the school districts the government is able to ensure that support is available when it is necessary.

Recognizing that home schooling occurs for different reasons and in different styles is important in developing policy. In this way understanding the different styles of home schooling and the committed and situational division is useful in helping to identify the need for assistance. For example, for committed home schoolers who have little or no need for association and/or support, the 25% funding is a waste of public money. For situational home schoolers the amount is inadequate.

In terms of the new regulations meeting the government's self-set obligation for protecting the child's right to an appropriate education, there is no real change. Committed home schoolers are not necessarily choosing to register. When they do, they are not being required to demonstrate any level of appropriateness. Those situational home schoolers who are asking for help to attain a level of

appropriateness are receiving little in return. To be effective policies will need to treat home schoolers as individuals. In this way they could begin to tailor support and assistance to real needs as they arise.

Summary

This chapter has considered the division of home schoolers into committed and situational groups in examining recent policy changes relevant to home schooling. It has stated that although the research is limited in its design, it has developed theories about patterns which may exist amongst home schoolers. These theories strongly suggest that government policies with regard to home schooling need to be developed with an understanding of the individualistic nature of each home schooling situation.

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QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. How long have you been schooling children at home?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> four to five years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 months to one year | <input type="checkbox"/> five to six years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one year to 18 months | <input type="checkbox"/> six to seven years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 months to two s | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 7 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> three to four years | |

2. How many of your children are you presently home schooling?

3. It will be helpful to have some description of the children being schooled at home.

Please complete the following chart.

Gender	Date of Birth	Home school history From (date) To (date)
Child 1		
Child 2		
Child 3		

Please list additional children on back.

4. Do you have other children attending school outside the home? Yes No

5. If yes, what kind of school do they attend? Public Private

6. Do you have children other than your own being schooled in your home? Yes No

7. If yes, please complete the following chart for those children.

Gender	Date of Birth	Home school history From (date) To (date)
Child 1		
Child 2		
Child 3		

Please list additional children on back.

8. What is your gender? Female Male
9. In what year were you born? 19 _____
10. How many years of schooling have you completed?
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 years or less | <input type="checkbox"/> some community college or technical school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 years | <input type="checkbox"/> completed community college or technical school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 years | <input type="checkbox"/> some university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 years | <input type="checkbox"/> completed Bachelor's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> some professional or graduate school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 years | <input type="checkbox"/> completed professional or graduate degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> completed high school | |

11. In what community do you now live? _____

12. Every person comes from a different background in terms of family origin, culture, nationality and religious beliefs. Also, each person may have their own sense of who they are. Please indicate what you feel your own cultural and/or religious background is in terms of the group or groups to which you belong.

Some example of cultural and/or religious groups are as follows: English Canadian, Native Indian, Buddhist, Argentinean, Sikh, Christian, Chinese Canadian, Filipino, Jewish, German Canadian, etc.

I belong to the _____ cultural and/or religious group(s)?

13. It will be helpful to get some information about your usual job or occupation. Don't try to mention all of the work you may have done. Simply indicate your typical work.

Some examples include the following:

Owner/manager, electrical appliance sales, employing 7 people
 Restaurant worker, waiting on tables
 Heavy equipment operator, self-employed
 Homemaker
 Salesperson, real estate, residential homes

My usual occupation is _____

14. Are there other adults involved in your home schooling program?

Yes No

15. If yes, please complete the following chart to provide information about those adults.

Gender/ Birthdate/ Occupation/ Education/ Relationship to/ Involvement in Children Home School
Adult 1
Adult 2
Adult 3
Please list additional adults on back.

16. Describe the make up of your "family". (ie., mother, father, 3 children; or father, 2 children, other adult female not related; etc.)

17. Circle the amount of your annual, gross, family income:

under 15000 15000-30000 30000-45000 45000-60000 over 60000

o

18. Why have you chosen to home school?

19. Are you familiar with the regulations on home schooling in the New School Act? Yes No

20. If yes, what impact do you think the new School Act will have on your home schooling situation? Please explain.

21. What policies do you think would be most beneficial to home schoolers?

22. Would you be willing to participate further in this study by being interviewed about your home schooling experience?

[] YES, I would be willing to be contacted for an interview.

[] NO, I do not wish to participate further.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ONLY IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE FURTHER.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number(s) _____

Please indicate if there are times which are most convenient for the researcher to contact you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX II

Interview Schedule

1. Reasons for home schooling.

What made you decide to home school?

How did you get started?

Why did you choose home schooling?

How does home schooling fit with your beliefs about education?

How does it fit with your religious beliefs?

How does it fit with your political beliefs?

2. Description of home schooling.

What does home schooling mean to you?

How do you home school?

Describe a typical home schooling day?

What do your children do differently at home than they might do at school?

3. Attitudes about public (or private) schools.

What was public school like for you?

What was it like for the other adults involved?

What experiences (if any) have the children involved had with public schools?

Are there things that you particularly dislike about public schools? If so, what?

Are there things that you particularly like about public schools? If so, what?

4. Policy changes.

How familiar are you with the recent Royal Commission on Education in B.C.

Did you participate in any of the Commission's hearings? If so, how?

How familiar are you with the new School Act?

In the survey you described the impact that the Act would have on you as a home schooler. Could you describe that in more detail?

What effect do you believe the government intended the new Act to have?

What kind of policies would you like to see in place? What kind of relationship, if any, would you prefer to have with the public school system?

How realistic or practical is that?

How could the public school system help with the education of your child(ren)?

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Name: M F

Phone number:

Community:

1) Family makeup: (ie. mother, father, two children; or father, 2 children, other adult female not related; etc.)

2) Are you currently home schooling? Yes [] No []

(If you are not currently home schooling but have home schooled in the past please continue to answer the following questions about the time that you were home schooling?)

3) How long have you been home schooling?

4) Tell me about the children that you are home schooling?

5) Has (have) your child (children) ever attended school?

Yes [] No [] Comment:

6) If yes, what was school like for your child (children)?

7) Why are you home schooling?

8) Why have you chosen home schooling over private school alternatives to public school?

9) Do you have other children that are not currently being home schooled? If yes,

please explain.

10) How did you start home schooling?

11) If your child (children) started off in public school and are now being home schooled, what (if any) changes have you noticed in him/her (them) since being home schooled?

12) What curriculum (materials) do you use?

13) How much choice does (do) your child (children) have in what they are learning?

14) Describe a typical day (if such exists).

15) Are there other adults involved? How are they, and particularly the other parent, involved, if at all?

16) Does (Do) your child (children) participate in activities outside of your home? If yes, please describe these.

17) What about television? Does (Do) your child (children) watch television? Is that controlled in any way? Is it a part of your home school?

18) What role models does (do) your child (children) have?

19) Who would you consider to be your child's (children's) friends? Are these others in the same age group?

20) Home schooling seems to have different effects on different families. How does it affect yours?

21) Is there stress involved? Yes [] No []
Comment:

22) Do you feel that you have support for yourself as a home schooler? If so, how? If not, why not?

23) What are your future plans for home schooling? (Do you intend to continue? For how long?)

24) What books on home schooling would you recommend to someone wanting to learn about the subject?

25) Are you familiar with the regulations on home schooling in the New School Act?
Yes [] No []

26) If yes, what impact do you think the new regulations will have on your schooling situation? Please explain.

27) Did you register with a private or a public school?
Private [] Public [] Didn't register []

28) How did you decide where to register?

29) What policies do you think would be most beneficial to home schoolers in the future?

The following background information would also be helpful:

How many years of schooling have you completed? _____

How many years of schooling has your spouse completed? _____

What cultural and/or religious groups do you consider yourself a member of? (eg, English Canadian, Native Indian, Jewish, Buddhist, etc.)

With what group does your spouse identify him/her self?

What is your usual occupation? _____

What is your spouse's usual occupation? _____

In what category does your annual, gross, family income fall:

under 15000 15000-3000 30000-45000 45000-60000 over 60
In what year were you born? _____ Your spouse? _____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!