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Teachers' Perceptions of  
Home Schooled Children

by  
Astrid Klock ©

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Education

Lakehead University  
Thunder Bay, Ontario

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## Abstract

This study examined teachers' perceptions of home schooled children's social/emotional and academic preparation for returning to the regular classroom.

Fifteen elementary and three secondary school teachers were interviewed using formal, open-ended questions.

The responses show that teachers find home schooled children socially unprepared to enter the formal school system. Teachers appeared less concerned about home schooled children's academic preparation.

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## CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine elementary and secondary school teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal school system. The respondents are teachers in a mid-sized city in the province of Ontario who have had home schooled children in their classroom. The design of the study was qualitative and the primary method of data collection consisted of interview transcripts.

### Background

Guterson (1992) defines the term *home schooling* as a misnomer: "a *homeschooler* is not really a *home schooler* at all but rather a young person who does not go to school, a person best defined by what he does not do as opposed to what he does" (p.5). Knowles, Marlow, and Muchmore (1992) note that home schooling families "tend to place the learner central to everything else that transpires in the home with the belief that 'schooling' does not automatically ensure an 'education'" (pp.196-7). For the purpose of

this study, a child is considered a home schooled child when he/she has been home schooled for at least one school year.

Historically, home schooling had been the primary method of education before the introduction of compulsory formal schooling (Audain, 1987; Common & MacMullan, 1986; Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992; Lines, 1987). Currently, home schooling is one of the fastest growing trends in education (Frost & Morris, 1988; Nikiforuk, 1993; Ray, 1989). A survey conducted by New Brunswick-based Francombe Place Research Associates (Canadian Press, 1993) found an estimated 10,000 students registered with departments of education across Canada as home schoolers. Other projections, such as those based on figures provided by home schooling associations, have the number as high as 30,000. The researchers note that eight years ago, the number of Canadian students being taught at home was as low as 2,000.

Lana Saari, chairperson of the Christian Home Schoolers Association in the city where this study was conducted, suggests that there are approximately 85 children presently being home schooled there (personal communication, November 1, 1993). Pat Aitree, an education officer at the Board of Education, provided a conservative estimate of 30 children who are currently being home schooled (personal communication,

January 19, 1994). Home schoolers are not always obligated to inform the board of education of their decision to home school, which may be the reason for the discrepancy in numbers.

In the early days of home schooling advocacy, the major proponents of home schooling were families who were geographically isolated; those families were too distanced from access to a public school (Common & MacMullen, 1986). Home schooling was also espoused largely by the more radical groups and extremists as "either extreme religious fundamentalists or extreme secular radicals" (Common & MacMullen, 1986, p.4). Thus, the earlier proponents and respondents of home schooling were not representative of the typical Canadian family.

The significant increase in home schoolers since 1985, (from 2,000 to a potential high of 30,000 in 1993) has been attributed to several factors. Mahan and Ware (1987) ascribe the increase in home schoolers to parents' dissatisfaction with traditional schools, the desire to maintain control of the family unit, and to religious reasons. The largest growth in home schooling appears to be among devout Christian parents who are unhappy with the secular nature of public schools (Common & MacMullen; Divoky, 1983; Lines, 1987).

Audain (1987) articulates several reasons why parents opt for home schooling. Firstly, she claims that parents are becoming increasingly fed-up with the politics and the instructional methods they find in public and private schools. She notes that there are many parents who prefer to give special attention to a child who is having trouble adapting to school for any of a variety of reasons. Finally, Audain (1987) asserts that in an attempt to preserve family integrity and pursue their children's best interests in the acquisition of education skills and knowledge, parents opt for the home education route.

The background information establishes a pattern in the growth of home schooling in recent years. It also suggests various reasons for the increase in home schooling. This study in home schooling examined the current status in attitudes and perceptions of home schooled children by teachers in a mid-sized city in the province of Ontario.

### Rationale

It was felt that as a result of conducting the review of literature, there was a need for further investigation of current perceptions by teachers of home schooled children. The research thus far in home schooling suggests

discrepancies in attitudes toward home schooling among various stakeholders, including teachers and public school administrators.

The growing popularity of home schooling and various responses to home schooling are discussed. Also addressed are the reasons why the public school teachers and administrators should be concerned about home schooling, and, finally, the current status of the relationship between home schooling families and public school officials.

### Growing Popularity

Knowles, Marlow, and Muchmore (1992) discovered that, as the home schooling movement continues to grow and reach an ever-widening audience, it also gains momentum and credibility. More and more parents with diverse motivations across the nation are eschewing the formal school system in favour of home schooling (Canadian Press, 1993). Knowles, Marlow, and Muchmore (1992) stated that "currently, home education has taken on a new image that is approaching respectability" (p. 206).

### School Responses

Many educators and public school officials are wary of the trend to home education (Audain, 1987; Lines, 1987; Mahan & Ware, 1987). Some

possible resistance to home schooling may be based on the belief that society's goals for education can be attained only by formal schooling (Lines, 1987). Audain (1987), who is an advocate of home schooling, notes that educators are seeing an erosion of their job security and power.

The attitudes of public school superintendents toward home schooling are examined by Mahan and Ware (1987). The results of their study show that superintendents exhibit extreme animosity toward home schooling. Mahan and Ware (1987) noted that "it appears that public school officials have a lack of knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the home-schooling issue including the benefits derived from home-schooling; thus, hostility results" (p.22).

### Why Schools Should Care

It is significant to this study that, as the number of home schooling families increases, so too does the chance that a teacher may find a previously home schooled child in his/her classroom (Common & MacMullan, 1986). Many single parents, for instance, cannot afford the time and money needed to continue home schooling their children. In this regard, home schooling has an indirect impact on formal schooling. This is further corroborated by Williams et al. (1984) who asserted that "perhaps

75% of the parents who attempt to home school end up sending their children back to school" (p. 30). Mahan and Ware (1987) cited Mulcrone, who states that

...home-schooling IS going to be an issue that many schools will have to deal with as we near the next decade. And if your school doesn't prepare for it, you will find yourself faced with a problem akin to having a raspberry seed stuck in your wisdom tooth -- it won't kill you, but it will be a constant source of irritation. (p. 22)

### Current Status

According to some researchers, it appears that home schoolers and public school officials are learning to co-operate (Audain, 1987; Holt, 1983). Public school principals are co-operating with home schoolers by allowing use of school facilities, as well as inviting them on field trips (Audain, 1987). One important reason that Holt (1983) provided for co-operating with the home schooling movement is that "it is likely to yield important ideas and methods that might help schools solve many of their most serious and intractable problems" (p. 392). The manner in which home schooling families deal with their problems may lend new insight into the traditional



problems faced by the formal school system. This is further substantiated by a public school teacher who stated during an interview that she "saw the results of home school research as a way to look at solving some of the problems of public schools" (Charvoz, 1988, p.95). The teacher noted the advantages resulting from the individualised study that a child receives at home: both the child's self-concept and cognition benefit from this kind of one-on-one environment (Charvoz, 1988).

This research is meaningful since it provides insight into teachers' perceptions of home schooled children returning to regular classroom life and reveals how the home schooled child compares with the rest of the class.

### Personal Assumptions

It was expected that the respondents in this study would have a negative perception of home schooled children returning to the regular classroom depending on their background knowledge of home schooling. It was also expected that the general attitude toward home schooling would not be positive.

From the research results on the academic effects of home schooling on the children, it was anticipated that the home schooled children in this study would be academically comparable to the formally schooled children.

It was also expected, according to the literature on the social effects of home schooling on the children, that there would be no difference in terms of social competence between the home schooled children and the formally schooled children in this study,

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

To help contribute to the understanding of teachers' perceptions of home schooled children, the review of literature provides background information on the history of home schooling and the research findings in this area.

The research base in home education is growing, but according to some researchers, relatively little is known about this modern version of an historically enduring educational alternative, and, it is still not completely understood by many educational practitioners and researchers (Ray, 1989; Mahan & Ware, 1987; Williams et al, 1984). Wright (1988) noted that "home school research has been conducted primarily in the last decade" (p.96).

### Attitudes Toward Home Schooling

Commonly, home schooling has been considered a subversive activity by the general public (Common & MacMullan, 1986; Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992; Lines, 1987). As a result of this, home schooling has been viewed as intimidating. The general public, lacking basic knowledge about home schooling, has traditionally avoided home schooling their children. Common and MacMullan (1986) stated that "the innovation is

resisted because it really threatens many of the assumptions (myths?) that are held to be true in education, such as children learn as a result of the teaching act" (p. 7). Divoky (1983), on the other hand, claimed that home schooling should no longer be seen as a subversive activity: "home schooling is quickly becoming a national [United States] movement with its own gurus, publications, and support networks" (p.395).

Holt (1981) in his work, Teach Your Own, answered certain objections that people, especially educators, raised about home schooling. These educators felt that compulsory schools act best as some kind of social epoxy which is needed to give people a sense of unity, and gives people something to which they can adhere, in spite of different backgrounds. Holt (1981) agreed that an adhesive is needed, although he did not agree with the type of social adhesive being used in schools. One type of social glue that Holt (1981) referred to, and which is also rampant in the school setting, is "competition." He described competition as being detrimental to the child's self-esteem. An atmosphere without competition allows the child to meet his/her own expectations rather than having to prove him/herself in a contest with peers.

### Academic Effects

Studies reveal that the home school positively influences academic achievement as well as cognitive development (Ray, 1986; Williamson, 1989). The home schooled child is able to work at a suitable pace, with few distractions and involving few people, which are some possible explanations for their positive results.

Ray (1986) synthesised research studies that compare home schooling and conventional schooling. He noted that at least 11 studies provide empirical evidence that is directly related to learner outcomes of home schooling. Ray (1986) cited the Hewitt Research Foundation, which consistently finds home schooled students to score above average results on standardised achievement tests. Ray (1986) also cited Tizard, Hughes, Pinkerton, and Carmichael who found through their own studies that home schooled children ask more questions and have a more elaborate vocabulary. Ray (1986) determined that "with respect to cognitive outcomes, then, the evidence suggests that those youth educated in the home school environment will generally do as well or better than their conventional school peers" (p.44). Ray (1986) found no evidence that home schooled children perform at a weaker level academically than formally schooled

children.

The literature reveals many varying attitudes toward home schooling, from envy to animosity to respectability. Charvoz (1988) examined the reactions of various educational practitioners to the existing home school research. The educational practitioners who were asked to react to the existing research on home schooling included a parent-teacher, a home school father and his son, and a public school teacher. Very similar sentiments between all were expressed. The public school teacher, for example, did not express any disagreement with home schools. Rather, she implicitly expressed envy at the small numbers of students that the parent-teachers worked with and recognised that home schools actually solve some of the problems that beset public schools. The parent-teacher and the home school father perceived positive aspects of home schooling, as well.

There are also some dissenting reactions to home schooling. Apprehension and animosity are the most visible attitudes found in the overview conducted by Lines in 1987. Lines (1987) claimed that some public school officials believe that only through formal schooling can society's goals for education be attained. Other public school administrators felt that home schooling is an incomplete and unsound form of education, although these views tend to be based on worst-case scenarios, including abusive

situations.

In a qualitative study of public school superintendents' attitudes toward home schooling, Mahan and Ware (1987) found that the superintendents objected to the advantages of home schooling. Data were collected using an attitude survey which included twenty statements about the benefits of home schooling. The superintendents disagreed with the literature on all but two points regarding the possible benefits of home schooling. Animosity was also revealed by the unsolicited, negative comments on the surveys.

The educators' responses to home schooling in the work by Audain (1987) varied. Audain (1987) stated that "many [educators] actively try to discourage parents from this option" (p.21), yet there are also some public school principals who "invite home education students on field trips and sports days and are available to parents for consultation" (p. 21). This is a good example of principals who are willing to co-operate with home schoolers and is also an indication that home schooling is perhaps approaching respectability.

### Social Effects

Benefits associated with home schooling include social, emotional, and cognitive development. Concerns about the social and emotional well-being of the relatively isolated home schooled child are not substantiated (Gordon et al, 1991; Holt, 1981; Williamson, 1989). Stough (1992) compared 30 home schooling families to 32 formal schooling families in terms of social sufficiency using a quasi-experimental cohort group comparison. Results from the investigation revealed no statistical difference between the children in the two groups of families. Stough (1992) asserted that "one can infer that within the educating home there appears to exist an environmental press which fosters social development and simultaneously provides a set of experiences which gives the child the needed competencies, and attitudes for success in society" (p.29).

Charvoz (1988), Mahan and Ware (1987), and Ray (1989) argue the need for further research in home schooling. Ray (1989) discusses three areas of consideration regarding the future of home schooling research including the general research domain, perceptions of home schooling as a valid alternative to formal education, and the response of conventional school advocates to home education. As home schooling gains in



popularity, the question of how teachers perceive the home schooled child demands further consideration, understanding, and insight.

### CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine elementary and secondary school teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal school system. The research design is qualitative. A criterion for selection of respondents was that the teachers had to have home schooled children in their classes. Teachers were interviewed using open-ended questions. The interview questions were piloted with two teachers. Upon completion of the piloted interviews, it was determined that revision of the interview questions was not required. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed, and the data collected were analysed by means of a coding system to illuminate the patterns and themes in the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

While the investigation was ongoing, the researcher kept a record of all thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a logbook.

#### Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to classroom life?

- 1.1. How do home schooled children respond socially and emotionally to:
  - 1.1.a. the structure of a regular classroom?
  - 1.1.b. their peers?
  - 1.1.c. instructional leadership?
- 1.2. How prepared are home schooled children in:
  - 1.2.a. reading?
  - 1.2.b. writing?
  - 1.2.c. mathematics?
2. How do home schooled children compare with other students who have always been in formal schooling?
3. What can be learned from home schooled children?

### Respondent Selection

Forty-one principals were contacted to determine which teachers had had or had home schooled children in their classes (see Appendix C). Nine elementary schools and two secondary schools had students who were previously home schooled children. One of the elementary school principals, as well as one of the secondary school principals, refused to or did not allow their teachers to participate in the study. At two of the

elementary schools, there were children who had not been home schooled for a complete year. The respondents in the sample were teachers who were teaching children schooled at home for at least one school year. Fifteen elementary school teachers and three secondary school teachers participated in the study (see Appendix B).

It was determined that the point of data saturation had been reached after interviewing eighteen teachers (Babbie, 1992).

### Data Collection

The interview was chosen as the dominant strategy because it gathers "descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96). The process was open-ended but focused, with the intention of asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words (Patton, 1990, p.281). A pilot study involving two teachers was conducted to test the interview questions. Responses from these interviews would have allowed for the revision of the questions and the elimination of redundancy, although this was found to be unnecessary.

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
  - 1.1. At which level(s)? Elementary or secondary?
  - 1.2. What grade level are you presently teaching?
  - 1.3. Are you teaching at an urban or rural school?
2. How many home schooled children have you taught/are you teaching?
3. Describe the previously home schooled child who you have had/presently have in your classroom?
  - 3.1. How old is the child?
  - 3.2. What did you think about home schooling before you met this child?
  - 3.3. Has your opinion changed? In what way?
4. What are your perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to classroom life?
  - 4.1. How does the student respond socially and/or emotionally to:
    - 4.1.a. the structure of a regular classroom?
    - 4.1.b. their peers?
    - 4.1.c. instructional leadership?

- 4.2. What are your expectations at this grade level for:
  - 4.2.a. reading?
  - 4.2.b. writing?
  - 4.2.c. mathematics?
- 4.3. How prepared is the home schooled child in:
  - 4.3.a. reading?
  - 4.3.b. writing?
  - 4.3.c. mathematics?
5. How do home schooled children compare with the rest of the students who have always been in formal schooling?
6. Are there drawbacks to home schooling? What are they?
7. Are there benefits to home schooling? What are they?
8. What have you learned from the home schooled child?

### Data Analysis

In this study, the primary method of data analysis employed was the examination of transcripts of audiotaped interviews (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). The transcripts also contain observer's comments "...sections of the fieldnotes in which the researcher records his or her own thoughts and feelings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.157). Another research

design used was the constant comparative method. It "is complex and requires an ability to think analytically (categories and their properties are difficult to grasp), but it is an important way of controlling the scope of data collecting and making multiple-site studies theoretically relevant" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.74).

The data were searched for regularities and patterns with keywords being chosen to represent these patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The key words or themes were provided in the margins of the transcript.

Following a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts, three themes became apparent regarding the respondents' perceptions of home schooled children. The three themes were:

1) Teachers' Initial Assumptions, for example,

I really didn't know a lot about it [home schooling], but I understood that there were some parents that [sic] kept their kids home because they didn't like the way the education system was going, and they tried to do the best that they could for their children. (Int. 16)

2) Transitions, for example,

They [the home schooled children] did find it difficult to listen in a large group and that's natural because if you've been

instructed by one person, you know one-on-one, then it's much easier to listen to that one person than if you're in a group of 30 or 25...but as far as paying attention to our instructions or that kind of thing, there was no problem because they're all polite kids. (Int.3)

3) Individual Differences, for example,

They [two home schooled siblings] are very, very different, and I think that you could come to two different, two totally different conclusions about home schooling by these two kids, which may mess up your study....One is very outgoing....He's very friendly, social, reads very well, writes very well, enthusiastic. The other is very withdrawn, is behind in reading, [and] very, very quiet. (Int.8)

Within the first theme, the teacher's initial assumptions concerning the social and academic preparation of home schooled children are described. In terms of social preparation, the degree of variation in the teachers' responses ranged from the idea that home schooling "could work" to having had "reservations about home schooling". For example, one respondent noted:



there's not that socialisation that they [regular schooled children] have because they [home schooled children] are just limited to their siblings, but I think it [home schooling] could work if it was really structured and disciplined on the parents point of view. (Int.15)

In contrast, another respondent indicated that she had "had reservations about home schooling....especially in the early primary years, I worried that they had missed out a lot on socialisation." (Int.5) In terms of academic preparation, the degree of variation also ranged. For example, one teacher noted that, "academically, I don't see any reason why a home schooled child could not do as well as a child in a regular public school."

(Int.4) In contrast, another respondent explained:

I thought that it had its pros and cons. Pros being that it was a one-to-one; cons being that the parent would have other duties in the home besides the teaching; that the parent would not be schooled or educated in teaching, so um, in those respects, I felt it was not beneficial to the child. (Int.10)

The respondents described the home schooled child's transitions in their own classroom, which is the second theme to emerge. The teachers'

perceptions of issues and concerns are explained within the second theme in terms of social preparation and academic preparation.

The final theme to emerge from the teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children, Individual Differences, included the different levels of ability found amongst the children as well as the various coping skills. This theme includes perceptions of social and academic preparation. The following comment is typical of the data related to social preparation:

I see totally two different people like, you might think that a home schooled child might...have more difficulty socialising and that's true with one of the children that I have, but the other child, it's not true, so it'd be hard to make a conclusion as to whether or not children that were home schooled, socially, would have some difficulty fitting in. (Int.8)

A second category within the theme is academic preparation. For example, one teacher noted that:

One [home schooled child] was very, very bright and the other child, the girl is average to a little below average in some skills. Their skills, academic skills are the same as the other kids because there are some who are bright, some who are in

the middle, and some who are a little below. (Int.9)

The following chapter presents the findings including a description of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The three themes are comprised of Teachers' Initial Assumptions; Transitions; and Individual Differences. The themes are described in terms of the home schooled child's social and academic preparation. The following chapter also presents the interpretation of these findings regarding teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal school system.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS & INTERPRETATION

### The Findings

This section on the findings begins with background information on the eighteen respondents who participated in the study. This is followed by a description of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. Themes which emerged included: Teachers' Initial Assumptions; Transitions; and, Individual Differences.

#### Background Information

The respondents in the sample included 18 teachers from a public school system in a mid-sized city in Ontario. At the beginning of each interview, the teachers were asked to provide background information on: (1) their years of teaching experience; (2) the grade level at which the home schooled child was taught; (3) whether the school is considered as urban or rural; and (4) the number of home schooled children taught. The responses to these questions can be found in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1: Teaching Experience

Years. of Experience	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	>20
# of Teachers	1	4	1	3	9

Table 2: Grade Level

Grade	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
# of Teachers	8	6	2	2

Table 3: Urban or Rural School

	Urban	Rural
# of Teachers	7	11

Table 4: Number of Home Schooled Children

# of Home Schooled Children Taught	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Unsure
# of Teachers	7	5	1	2	1	1	1

### Teachers' Initial Assumptions

The respondents were asked to describe their feelings and ideas regarding home schooling, particularly in relation to social and academic preparation, prior to teaching a home schooled child. The responses varied. Four respondents (Int.1, Int.8, Int.9, Int.11) indicated that they had no opinions about home schooling before teaching a home schooled child.

One respondent explained:

when you went to teachers college, you were concentrated totally on just the curriculum and teaching kids in the school...usually in the city, there isn't [sic] that many home schooled children. There's [sic] more in the rural schools...the first time I heard about it was in the second year of teaching where, at that school, there was [sic] quite a few home schooled kids...I would hear some of the other teachers talking about it...that's the first time I heard anything about it...I really didn't have any ideas on it. (Int.9)

Three of these teachers indicated that they held no opinion about home schooling because they had never taught previously home schooled children. (Int.1, Int.8, Int.11)

The variation of the different initial assumptions by those respondents who did indicate that they had a prior notion of home schooling are explained in terms of social and academic preparation.

Social preparation. Seven respondents expressed the concern that home schooled children would lack the benefits of socialisation experienced by their peers in classrooms. (Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.7, Int.10, Int.12, Int.15) This perception is exemplified in the following quotes:

there's not that socialisation that they [regular schooled children] have because they [home schooled children] are just limited to their siblings, but I think it [home schooling] could work if it was really structured and disciplined on the parents point of view. (Int.15)

I would never think, well I'm going to keep my child at home and do home schooling with her, even though I'd probably have a better background than a lot of parents. I think what they miss out on socially, it's just not worth the academic benefits. (Int.3)

Two teachers also indicated that, "the only preconception I would have is that home schooled children would umm, be limited in the social experiences that they would have." (Int.4, Int.5)

One teacher questioned whether:

... home schooling offered that [social] aspect or if there was enough balance in a child's life as far as developing social etiquette. (Int.7)

Academic preparation. The teachers described their initial assumptions of the academic preparation of home schooled children in terms of both concerns as well as strengths. Three respondents (Int.3, Int.4, Int.15) noted that they did not object to a parent's decision to home schooling, as long as it was for the right reasons. These respondents indicated that the success of home schooling depends on the parents, the child, and the structure of the program. Concerns were also expressed regarding the curriculum which the parents used at home. (Int.14) Two respondents also weighed the pros and cons of home schooling. (Int.10, Int.13) Both seemed to agree that the parents must be committed to home schooling if it is to succeed. The concerns expressed are exemplified in the following quotes:

I have never been against it [home schooling] if the parents feel that it's something that they can help their children with more academically. (Int.3)



Another teacher questioned these issues:

how they [the parents] went about it [home schooling]....whether they had a curriculum developed, who designed the curriculum, what was the evaluation of the curriculum, was there testing. (Int.14)

One of the teachers described:

pros being that it was a one-to-one; cons being that the parent would have other duties in the home besides the teaching; that the parent would not be schooled or educated in teaching. (Int.10)

To this, she added that she "felt the cons outweighed the pros."

The other teacher said that she had had "quite a few discussions" concerning "the pros and cons:"

I think that if somebody is doing it [home schooling], they have to be committed to it for its own sake, not as an anti-school thing, but as a pro-child thing. (Int.13)

One-to-one attention is a strength described by two respondents.

(Int.6, Int.12) They perceived home schooled children to be stronger academically because the students would receive one-to-one attention at home. This strength is represented in the following quotes:

I had done a little bit of research myself on it so I had an idea that kids who have been home schooled are usually stronger academically cause they've received more one-to-one attention. (Int.6)

Another respondent explained that:

actually, I had the assumption that they [home schooled children] would be farther ahead academically, but that they would be socially different than their peers. (Int.12)

Teachers had other ideas of home schooling before teaching a home schooled child, such as the belief that home school parents preferred to focus the child's efforts in a certain area:

that it would probably be a parent who would like to have the child at home and would like to cover a certain course and...maybe give their child more experiences, like taking them out to certain places, and...keeping more of an eye on them at home. (Int.2)

Another respondent thought that the parents did not approve of the current school system, stating that:

I understood that there were some parents that kept their kids at home because they didn't like the way the education system

was going. (Int.16)

Similarly, this respondent thought that a family chose to home school when they found themselves "in a situation where regular class and that weren't available or weren't very high standard." (Int.18)

Finally, a respondent said that she did not consider home schooling "positively" because "many of them followed a fairly, you know, specific course of study and that at home." (Int.17) This teacher believed that the home schooled child lacked an education in areas such as writing. According to this teacher, the home schooling parent would place too much emphasis on one or two subject areas and completely omit other important subject areas.

### Transitions

There were four respondents (Int.1, Int.8, Int.9, Int.11) who did not have an opinion of home schooled children prior to teaching one in their classroom. They were asked to provide their perception of home schooled children after having taught one. One respondent said that he still does not have a perception of home schooled children because he has not had enough experience with them. (Int.1) Another respondent said that he has taught two completely different home schooled children. (Int.8) He stated

that it was difficult to make a decision regarding home schooling based on the two different children. The third respondent expressed concerns about the social aspect of home schooling (Int.9), and the fourth respondent expressed concerns about the parents' skills and resources. (Int.11)

The other 14 respondents were asked how their opinion of home schooling had changed since teaching a home schooled child. Six respondents who answered the question directly said their opinion of home schooling had not changed. (Int.2, Int.5, Int.6, Int.7, Int.12, Int.14) The other 8 respondents indicated that their initial assumptions about home schooling had changed in relation to social and/or academic preparation.

Social preparation. Respondents described a variety of perceptions of home schooling after teaching a home schooled child. The teachers' perceptions of the social preparation of home schooled children include: the child's response to the structure of the classroom and the classroom environment; the child's response to leadership; and response to forming relationships and social development.

With regards to the classroom environment, four of the respondents said that home schooled children would benefit from not being exposed to the "bad influences" (Int.8) or the "rabble rousers" (Int.1) and "some of the violent things" (Int.15) at school. They believed that there was a benefit to

missing that social aspect of school. One of the teachers also believed that the children benefited from:

missing out on some of the social things that kids go through;  
some of the little getting at each other's throats and that sort of  
stuff. (Int.12)

Another teacher thought that the child learned some qualities at home "that some of the other students may need to work on." This student was "very willing to share" and a "very caring person." (Int.7)

Six respondents noted that the home schooled child had "no problem" with the structure of a regular classroom (Int.1, Int.4, Int.6, Int.15), or adapted well. (Int.8, Int.14) One respondent explained:

I certainly don't see any indication at all that returning to school and having to deal with the structure and the expectations of a regular classroom would be difficult for them. (Int.4)

Another noted:

I think she sort of welcomed it [the structure of a regular classroom] because she knew exact things that I expected in formats and things like that. (Int.14)

Eleven of the respondents felt that home schooled children did not

respond well to the structure of a regular classroom. (Int.2, Int.3, Int.5, Int.7, Int.9, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.13, Int.16, Int.17) Those who mentioned difficulties of adjustment cited three problems. One problem concerned "getting the rules straight." (Int.3) A child was "used to doing whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted at home," (Int.5) or he was "overwhelmed by so many students." (Int.9, Int.10, Int.15, Int.18) A second problem was that home schooled children "don't know all the little, hidden agendas" (Int.13), for example:

their [formally schooled children's] ways of getting along and their ways of fixing things, communicating, their little games, [and] their little routines. (Int.13)

A third problem was cited in terms of concentration and organisational skills. Three of the respondents believed that the home schooled child needed more of the teacher's attention, as in a one-to-one ratio. (Int.5, Int.10, Int.11) According to one of the teachers, the home schooled children she taught were "not as advanced," academically, as she had originally thought they would be receiving instruction on a one-to-one basis. (Int.10) Another respondent found a home schooled child to be very easily distracted:

He has to hear everything that's going on. If one thing

happens, even if one minor little thing happens, he's completely off task. (Int. 11)

One of the respondents indicated that a home schooled child was having difficulties making friends because of her size and height, and added that the child "wasn't quite as competent about getting up and reading in front of her peers or even in a group situation." (Int. 14)

Eleven of the teachers in the study agreed that home schooled children have "no problem" responding to the teacher and instructional leadership. (Int. 1, Int. 2, Int. 3, Int. 6, Int. 7, Int. 8, Int. 12, Int. 13, Int. 14, Int. 15, Int. 17) Instead, home schooled children "have a positive attitude" (Int. 1) and are "very co-operative." (Int. 2) One of the respondents claimed that the home schooled children responded well to instructional leadership because:

they're used to...dealing with adults being at home and having an adult instructing them. I think they find it easier to get along with you as a teacher than they would their own peers.

(Int. 15)

According to 11 respondents, the home schooled children responded well to instructional leadership. The remaining respondents noted the home schooled children needed more one-to-one attention in the

classroom. A reason which was provided for the stronger need of the teacher's attention was that:

he's used to the one-on-one situation....If he were more used to the classroom situation [he would be able to] fulfil expectations without my direct supervision hovering over him.

(Int.11)

One of the respondents also indicated that his student:

does have a certain expectation that her needs need to be addressed...or at least put at the top of my priority list. (Int.4)

There is a wide range of perceptions regarding the home schooled children's social and emotional response to their peers and forming relationships. The range extends from the perception that the home schooled child "fit in quite well" (Int.1) to the perception that the home schooled child was "really withdrawn." (Int.15)

There were six respondents who stated that the home schooled child didn't have any difficulties making friends or relating to the other children in the classroom. (Int.1, Int.4, Int.7, Int.11, Int.13, Int.16)

All of the respondents, except for one, (Int.14), mentioned the lack of social contact with children their own age to be a drawback to home schooling. The respondents noted that home schooled children are socially



less developed than formally schooled children of the same ages. The degree of variation ranged from "she was a little shy" (Int.6) to "socially, they have a big problem." (Int.3) The respondents encountered home schooled children who had difficulties relating to their peers. One teacher said that the home schooled child she taught was "a little bit reticent, a little bit unsure of himself," (Int.12) while another teacher explained that:

The [home schooled] boy was very demanding and still very selfish 'cause he didn't learn how to share. The [home schooled] girl this year does know how to share but she's just very withdrawn, so it's hard for her, or it's hard for the other kids, like they'll ask her, would you like to play and she won't say anything. The kids don't know what to do. They'll just say, oh, she didn't say anything. She won't respond. What do we do? And I'll just say, oh, just leave her alone. she'll come around when she wants to. (Int.9)

A secondary school teacher also agreed that home schooled students had difficulties relating to their peers:

There is for the most part a real problem relating to their peers; accepting of others. They don't like to relate to the peer group to a great extent....If you can't, you know, cooperate or

discuss or even have somebody differ from your ideas, I mean you're creating a slightly limited adult on this as well, in the end. (Int.17)

These teachers felt that children can learn just as much from their peers as they can from the teachers. According to one of the respondents, children learn "life skills from their friends":

They learn how to share, they learn how to stand up for themselves, they learn how to co-operate....or they learn what it's like when another child is mean to them. (Int.3)

One of the respondents indicated that the home schooled child was having difficulties making friends because of her size and height:

I just felt sorry for her because she had one or two really good friends and it was difficult for her to blend in, and in her case too, this has got nothing to do with home schooling or anything but she was a very tall girl, quite large, big for her age, not large, big for her age and the kids at that age, especially at the junior age, I think they try to sort of blend in. She felt that she couldn't. (Int.14)

Academic preparation. Responses to the question of academic preparation varied greatly. Three of the respondents indicated that the

home schooled child is academically well-prepared. (Int.4, Int.6, Int.18) In contrast, five of the teachers (Int.5, Int.9, Int.10, Int.11, Int.15) felt that the home schooled children returning to school "are lacking in a lot of things...a lot of the skills aren't being touched upon." (Int.15) Two said that the academic preparedness depended on the home and the child. (Int.2, Int.7)

Most of the respondents noted the benefit of the "one-on-one" attention which home schooled children receive. (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6, Int.10, Int.11, Int.14, Int.15, Int.17) With a ratio of one-to-one, the home schooled child is provided with "instant feedback." (Int.1) The other advantage to this ratio is that the parents can work "at their [the home schooled child's] pace instead of waiting for the rest of the class." (Int.5)

Six of the respondents found that the home schooled children read very well. These respondents indicated that the home schooled children were reading at the same level or higher than the formally schooled children. (Int.1, Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.13, Int.17)

Eight of the respondents had found the home schooled children to be reading at a level which was lower than grade level. (Int.2, Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.14, Int.15) One teacher noted that the home schooled children she was teaching were "reading two grade levels behind." (Int.10) Three teachers provided their reasons for the poor level of reading. One

teacher said that the parents had been waiting until the child was ready to learn to read:

they hadn't done anything with her [the home schooled child] outside of what she wanted to do....She showed no interest in that [reading or writing] so the parents didn't do it with her.

(Int.3)

The responses to how prepared the home schooled child was in writing were consistent with the responses concerning the child's preparedness in reading. Six of the respondents found the home schooled children to be average or above average in writing. (Int.1, Int.2, Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.8) One of the respondents recalled the home schooled child he had taught as "an excellent story writer." (Int.1) Another respondent attributed the home schooled child's academic strengths to her "European background." This respondent also added the following:

I don't mean to stereotype but I guess I am. In that particular family, there's a very strong expectation that...students are going to do well in school....She's bilingual....She, I believe, can read and write in German....She certainly doesn't have any academic weaknesses. (Int.4)

One of the respondents referred to the home schooled child she was teaching in the first grade as "one of the elite children...however [he] reads in single words." She also added that:

he can readily get individual words, but not join them which kind of puzzles me because I sort of would've thought that in home schooling, that's about the most natural setting there is for learning. (Int.13)

Concerns about the students' preparation in writing were noted by nine respondents. (Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.14, Int.15, Int.17, Int.18) The secondary school teachers noticed a definite difference in writing between home schooled children and formally schooled children, particularly in the length of response which is required for an essay question. Two of the secondary school teachers said that "exam and test answers were short and, therefore, were not...worth full marks." (Int.18) One of the reasons the teachers gave for this behaviour was that:

they [the home schooled children] haven't been expected....[to] develop an essay, at least a 5 paragraph style answer where you're setting things up, proving and working through your proofs in the centre of the body, and then concluding. (Int.17)

An elementary school teacher also described a problem he encountered in writing. It concerned the amount of time it took the home schooled child to come up with an idea and then to start writing:

when he first came to me, he would take maybe 15 minutes to write one word, maybe two or three words....today, they had to come up with some ideas on their own in writing. I really don't think he wrote anything...I think there's a little bit of laziness that comes into it....Maybe her [the child's mother] expectations were less. (Int.11)

Mathematics, in particular, was an area in which the teachers found the home schooled children to perform quite well. There were seven respondents who indicated that the home schooled children were stronger in mathematics than in the other subject areas. (Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.9, Int.12, Int.14, Int.15) One teacher also indicated that her home schooled student was "average in math and...below average in the others." (Int.12)

A respondent provided the following reason for the stronger performance in mathematics:

maybe it's easier to teach math because there's a right or a wrong answer...'cause the math, I found, would be the strongest of all the subjects. (Int.15)

One of the respondents stated that the home schooled child was "at the top of the class [in math], if I remember." (Int.14)

There were six respondents who found the home schooled children to be weaker in mathematics. (Int.1, Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.16) One of the respondents felt that children should be taught by properly trained individuals. She believed that home schooled children are not performing so well in mathematics, or in the other subject areas, because they have not been properly instructed at home. For example,

one little guy had addition, not bad, but subtraction had not been started at all, whereas here, the way I was doing...the facts that added up to 5, they knew the takeaway facts from 5, too....That whole philosophy of teaching math, and you get that from going to teachers college...parents don't innately do that.  
(Int.5)

In discussing the home schooled child's academic preparation, teachers expressed concerns about the curriculum, the parents' knowledge of content and methods, and the status concerning resources. The concerns are exemplified in the following quotes:

If you're going to home school, you really have to make sure that you're providing all the things that the child needs

academically....making sure that it's a well-rounded program.

(Int.12)

Other respondents feared that home schooling families neglected to cover all of the subject areas. The parents may be teaching math and history, but omitting science or geography. One teacher said:

the students are not introduced to a wider, to a wide variety of subjects. (Int.1)

The qualifications of home schooling parents were questioned, and whether or not the parents have been "trained" to teach a child. (Int.11) One teacher wanted to know:

what background does the...parent or parents or guardian have to prepare this child for home schooling. (Int.7)

A respondent also wanted to determine the parents' "knowledge of child development and psychology and all this that ordinarily doesn't come to parents." (Int.10)

Other concerns mentioned were "the possible lack of materials and textbooks," (Int.1) or inadequate resources:

the resources that they [home schooling parents] used are substandard....They don't have the access to the materials that



we have to the good readers; the good small reading books;

the little theme related books that are at the kids' level. (Int.5)

These teachers questioned whether or not the home schooling families had sufficient resources to teach the children at home. They believed that without the proper resources, the children would not be learning so well at home as they would be in a classroom situation.

There was one respondent who was afraid that parents were home schooling as "a sort of a convenience thing." (Int.1) Parents may be keeping their children at home because of their own personal needs.

### Individual Differences

In this study 10 respondents had taught more than one previously home schooled child. (Int.3, Int.5, Int.8, Int.9, Int.10, Int.12, Int.13, Int.15, Int.17, Int.18) These respondents often found that the home schooled children responded differently from one another to the social and academic aspects of the classroom.

Social preparation. According to the respondents, the home schooled child's social and emotional response to peers in the classroom varied a great deal. Even amongst home schooled children from the same family, the siblings responded to peers differently. Where one child may

have had no difficulties at all socialising, the sibling may have been very shy and withdrawn.

One of the respondents who taught two home schooled children from the same family made the following remark because the two children were different in terms of social preparation. One had some difficulty socialising; the other was gregarious. He noted that,

it'd be hard to make a conclusion as to whether or not children that were home schooled, socially, would have some difficulty fitting in or blending. (Int.8)

Another teacher, who has taught four previously home schooled children, also stated that the manner in which children relate to peers "depends on the child. Some of them adapt quite easily." (Int.3) One of the secondary school teachers who has taught two unrelated home schooled children also said that each responded "differently" to their peers. One of the students "seemed to fit in very well." With regard to the second student, the teacher stated that "it's clearly been a much more difficult transition for her in socialising." (Int.18) This teacher also found these students to have responded to the structure of a regular classroom in "different ways." While one of the students "responded quite well," the other:

thinks she'll go back on home schooling next year

because...it's a lot better and you can manage your own time.

(Int.18)

Finally, the secondary school teacher found that the two students responded differently to instructional leadership. One student tended "to respond very well"; the other student "responded better in the beginning and then became a little... contradicting...or challenging." The teacher added that she was not a discipline problem, "it was more on a one-to-one basis that I noticed that kind of resistance." (Int.18)

Academic preparation. The teachers' responses to how the home schooled compared with formally schooled children varied significantly, although many of the teachers compared the children academically. In comparing them academically, seven of the respondents found the children to be similar:

Their skills, academic skills are the same as the other kids because there are some who are bright, some who are in the middle, and some who are a little below. (Int.9)

Two of the respondents found the home schooled children read at different levels of ability. (Int.8, Int.9) One respondent stated that:

the boy...was above average. He did really well. That

[reading] was something his mother did a lot with him....The girl that I have now, she's reading below average at this point, below grade level, but it's coming along. (Int.9)

Another who taught siblings stated that:

the girl...is at least a year behind,...but her mother was instructing her in French reading and not English reading....[the other child was] a little ahead of grade level. He's better at being more independent about acquiring reading materials and reading it and reporting to me on stuff he's read. (Int.8)

One of the respondents, who had taught two unrelated home schooled children, indicated that they were writing at different levels of proficiency. One "did really well....His writing was very expressive." This teacher also said that the mother "asked him to write a lot." The other home schooled child that this respondent taught was writing at "a little below [average], but it's coming." (Int.9)

One of the secondary school teachers found the home schooled child he taught to have some problems in mathematics, although he also stated that the problems were similar to those which the other students in the class

experienced:

saw a little bit of difficulty when it came to doing the math problems but it isn't anything that I haven't seen from any other kid. (Int. 16)

Ten teachers had taught more than one previously home schooled child. In terms of social preparation, 2 teachers found the students to respond differently. When the teachers compared the students academically, 7 teachers found the home schooled children to be comparable to formally schooled children.

The following section presents the interpretation of the data regarding teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal classroom.

### Interpretation

This study explored teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the regular classroom. Three themes emerged from the teachers' perceptions of home schooled children. Within each theme, the teachers' perceptions of the child's social and academic preparation were described. The following is an analysis of the findings.

They are arranged under the following headings: (1) Teachers' Initial Assumptions; (2) Transitions; and (3) Individual Differences. A summary of the findings, interpretation, and implications can be found in Table 5.

THEME	FINDINGS	INTERPRETATION	RECOMMENDATION
<p>Teachers' Initial Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Opinion</li> <li>• Social Preparation</li> <li>• Academic Preparation</li> </ul>	<p>⇒ 4 teachers had no opinion (Int.1, Int.8, Int.9, Int.11)</p> <p>⇒ 7 teachers believed that home schooled children would lack the benefits of socialization (Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.7, Int.10, Int.12, Int.15)</p> <p>⇒ 2 teachers thought that home schooled children would be academically ahead of their peers (Int.6, Int.12)</p> <p>⇒ 3 teachers said the success of home schooling depended on the parents, the child, and the program's structure (Int.3, Int.4, Int.15)</p> <p>⇒ 2 teachers weighed the pros and cons of home schooling (Int.10, Int.13)</p> <p>⇒ 1 teacher had questions concerning the existence of a curriculum, who designed the curriculum, and the evaluation of the curriculum for home schooled children (Int.14)</p> <p>⇒ 1 teacher believed that the parents preferred to keep the child at home to cover certain courses (Int.2)</p> <p>⇒ 2 teachers understood that parents who chose to home school were dissatisfied with the education system (Int.16, Int.18)</p> <p>⇒ 1 teacher believed that home schoolers followed an unduly specific course of study (Int.17)</p>	<p>There is still a lack of understanding about home schooling.</p> <p>Unlike previous research about negative opinions, teachers expressed concerns related to curriculum, parents' background, and resources.</p>	<p>There is a need for the Home Schooling Association to develop an information package with literature on home schooling for parents and teachers.</p> <p>Teachers should be informed about the children's backgrounds. They might set a parent-teacher-child conference prior to the beginning of the year and keep in touch.</p>

Table 5: Interpretation of Findings

THEME (continued)	FINDINGS (continued)	INTERPRETATION (continued)	RECOMMENDATION (continued)
<p>Transitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Preparation</li> </ul> <p>Structure of Class</p> <p>Response to Leadership</p> <p>Social Development</p>	<p>⇒ 4 teachers indicated that home schooled children would benefit from not being exposed to bad influences (Int.1, Int.8, Int.12, Int.15)</p> <p>⇒ 6 teachers indicated that the home schooled children had no problem with the structure (Int.1, Int.4, Int.6, Int.8, Int.14, Int.15)</p> <p>⇒ 11 teachers indicated that the home schooled children did not respond well to the structure (Int.2, Int.3, Int.5, Int.7, Int.9, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.13, Int.16, Int.17)</p> <p>⇒ 11 teachers indicated that home schooled children responded well to instructional leadership (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.6, Int.7, Int.8, Int.12, Int.13, Int.14, Int.15, Int.17)</p> <p>⇒ 3 teachers indicated that the home schooled children needed more of the teachers' attention (Int.4, Int.5, Int.11)</p> <p>⇒ All of the teachers except for one (Int.14) mentioned the lack of social contact to be a drawback</p> <p>⇒ 6 teachers indicated that the home schooled children did not have any difficulties making friends (Int.1, Int.4, Int.7, Int.11, Int.13, Int.16)</p>	<p>Similar to previous research about attitudes toward home schooling, teachers expressed apprehension and doubt regarding the social preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal classroom.</p> <p>Previous research suggests that there are no differences in social sufficiency between home schooled children and formally schooled children.</p>	<p>Children may need to be better prepared in terms of social development.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Preparation</li> </ul>	<p>⇒ 6 teachers indicated that home schooled children read well (Int.1, Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.13, Int.17), while 8 said that they do not read well (Int.2, Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.14, Int.15)</p> <p>⇒ 6 teachers indicated that home schooled children write well (Int.1, Int.2, Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.8) while 9 said that they do not write well (Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.12, Int.13, Int.15) and 2 teachers found large gaps in writing (Int.17, Int.18)</p> <p>⇒ 7 teachers indicated that home schooled are strong in math (Int.4, Int.6, Int.7, Int.9, Int.12, Int.14, Int.15) while 6 said that they are weak in math (Int.1, Int.3, Int.5, Int.10, Int.11, Int.16)</p>	<p>Children demonstrate a range of levels of ability. Previous research on the academic effects of home schooling suggests that home schooled children do as well as formally schooled children.</p>	<p>Parents need to be informed about the curriculum. They are responsible for developing programs which address all of the areas of the curriculum.</p>



THEME (continued)	FINDINGS (continued)	INTERPRETATION (continued)	RECOMMENDATION (continued)
<p>Individual Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Preparation</li> <li>• Academic Preparation</li> </ul>	<p>⇒ 10 teachers had taught more than one previously home schooled child (Int.3, Int.5, Int.8, Int.9, Int.10, Int.12, Int.13, Int.15, Int.17, Int.18)</p> <p>⇒ 2 teachers found the two home schooled children to be different in terms of social preparation (Int.8, Int.18)</p> <p>⇒ 1 teacher said that social preparation depends on the child (Int.3)</p> <p>⇒ 7 teachers found the home schooled children to be academically comparable with formally schooled children (Int.3, Int.8, Int.9, Int.13, Int.15, Int.17, Int.18)</p> <p>⇒ 2 teachers found the two home schooled children to read at different levels (Int.8, Int.9)</p> <p>⇒ 1 teacher found the two home schooled children to write at different levels of proficiency (Int.9)</p>	<p>Home schooled children range in their levels of ability . This is similar to previous research about the academic effects of home schooling.</p> <p>Home schooling and success cannot be related in a causal way.</p>	<p>There is a need for teachers to assess and address the instructional needs of students through a range of methods.</p>

### Teachers' Initial Assumptions

Within the first theme, *Teachers' Initial Assumptions*, there were 4 respondents who expressed that they had no opinion of home schooling prior to teaching a home schooled child. Many people, including educators, still do not know enough about home schooling to provide a valid opinion on the various aspects of home schooling. Home schooling is still a relatively new issue (Wright, 1988).

In terms of social preparation, it was found that 7 respondents had concerns regarding the home schooled child's social development. They believed that home schooled children would lack the benefits of socialisation. The preconceived ideas correspond with the literature on home schooling which reveals that concerns are born from a lack of knowledge and understanding of home schooling (Mahan & Ware, 1987).

The respondents' initial assumptions of home schooling revealed that academic preparation was not an area of concern; however, the social preparation of home schooled children returning to school was a concern. Two teachers expressed the thought that home schooled children would be academically ahead of their peers. Three teachers said the success of

home schooling depended on the parents, the child, and how the program is structured. Another teacher had questions concerning the existence of a curriculum. Unlike previous research which revealed negative opinions (Lines, 1987; Mahan & Ware, 1987), the respondents expressed concerns related to the parents' backgrounds and their understanding of teaching. A concern was expressed that the parents had not been educated in teaching. The respondents also expressed concerns related to the curriculum and the parents' use of proper resources.

### Transitions

Within the second theme, Transitions, the respondents provided their perceptions of the child's response to various social aspects of the classroom including the structure, leadership, and development. The analysis of data revealed that the majority (11) of the respondents perceived home schooled children to have difficulties with the structure of a regular classroom. It was suggested by the respondents that home schooled children are not familiar with the rules nor the covert agendas of the students at a regular school. This is consistent with previous research about attitudes toward home schooling in which educators expressed apprehension and doubt concerning the social preparation of home

schooled children returning to the formal classroom (Lines, 1987; Mahan & Ware, 1987). This finding suggests that the students may need some form of orientation to the school culture. Teachers may need to be explicit in articulating their expectations, school rules, and routines.

All of the respondents except for one (Int. 14) mentioned the lack of social contact to be a drawback of home schooling. Less than half of the respondents (6) indicated that the home schooled children did not have any difficulties making new friends. This is different from Stough's (1992) investigation which determined that there was no difference in terms of social sufficiency between home schooled and formally schooled children. This would appear to indicate that teachers may need to develop cooperative learning strategies to promote positive attitudes among peers. The time necessary for the children to learn positive social attitudes will likely be a factor.

Within the second theme, Transitions, the respondents were asked questions regarding the home schooled children's level of preparedness in reading, writing, and mathematics. It was found that the home schooled children were similar to the formally schooled children. The children who were home schooled demonstrated the same range of abilities in reading,

writing, and mathematics as do children in any formal classroom. That is to say, some were successful and others were experiencing difficulty. This is similar to Ray's (1986) meta-analysis of research studies on the academic effects of home schooling, which determined that home schooled children do as well as formally schooled children. Two of the secondary school teachers noticed a gap in writing between home schooled children and formally schooled children. The home schooled children's essay answers lacked the proper paragraph and essay style format. The essay answers were much shorter than expected. It also took a home schooled child much longer than expected to come up with an idea before beginning to write. This is unlike previous research on the academic effects of home schooling. This would appear to indicate that there is a need to organise information sessions for parents on how to teach essay writing skills, and for teachers to address this as well.

### Individual Differences

There were several respondents (10) who taught more than one home schooled child (see Table 4). One teacher had taught two home schooled children from the same family. This teacher found the two children to be socially different from each other. One of the children was very withdrawn,

whereas the other child was very social. Those respondents (10) who taught more than one home schooled child found that the children responded differently to the structure of a regular classroom or to their peers. The respondents detailed the polarity of experiences with some home schooled children having responded well where others encountered difficulties. This raises the question of how the transition might be made more smoothly. For example, teachers could begin orienting students to expectations and cooperative learning early in the school year.

Within the third theme, Individual Differences, 7 of the 10 teachers who had taught more than one home schooled child indicated that the children were academically comparable to formally schooled children. The findings are similar to those within the second theme, Transitions. It was established again that the children who were home schooled demonstrated the same range of academic abilities as would children in any formal classroom. Some were successful and others were experiencing difficulty. This is similar again to Ray's (1986) meta-analysis of research studies on the academic effects of home schooling, which determined that home schooled children do as well as formally schooled children. This suggests that home schooling and academic success cannot be related in a causal way.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Study and Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary and secondary school teachers' perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to the formal classroom. Eighteen teachers were interviewed using open-ended questions. The data collected were analysed by means of a coding system to illuminate the themes in the data. The themes which emerged included: Teachers' Initial Assumptions; Transitions; and Individual Differences.

Within the first theme, Teachers' Initial Assumptions, it was found that four respondents did not have an opinion of home schooling prior to teaching a home schooled child, and seven respondents had concerns regarding the home schooled child's social development. They believed that home schooled children would lack the benefits of socialisation.

In terms of academic preparation, there were two teachers who indicated that home schooled children would be academically ahead of

their peers. Three teachers said the success of home schooling depended on the parents, the child, and how the program is structured. Two teachers weighed the pros and cons of home schooling, and one teacher had several questions concerning the curriculum. This would appear to indicate again that an information package, including literature on the academic practices of home schooling, is needed for teachers.

After teaching a home schooled child for at least one year (see Transitions), the majority (11) of the respondents perceived home schooled children to have difficulties with the structure of a regular classroom. It was suggested by the respondents that home schooled children are not familiar with the rules nor the covert agendas of a regular school. Seventeen respondents also indicated that the lack of social contact would be a drawback of home schooling.

Recommendation: The Home Schooling Association needs to develop information packages, although teachers should also be informed about the children's backgrounds. They might set a parent-teacher-child conference prior to the beginning of the year, and then maintain contact.

Within the second theme, Transitions, it was found that home schooled children demonstrate a range of levels of academic ability as do



formally schooled children, although two secondary school teachers noticed a gap in writing. The home schooled children's essay answers were much shorter than expected, and lacked the proper paragraph format.

Recommendation: Children may need to be better prepared.

Parents need to be informed about the curriculum. They are responsible for developing programs that address all of the areas of the curriculum.

Ten respondents taught more than one home schooled child (see Individual Differences). There was one teacher who also taught two home schooled children from the same family. This teacher indicated that the two children were socially different from each other. Those respondents (10) who taught more than one home schooled child found that the children responded differently to the structure of a regular classroom or to their peers. It was suggested by several of the respondents that the manner in which the home schooled children responded socially and emotionally to the various aspects of the classroom situation is dependent on the child. It is a matter of individuality. Each child is different; therefore each child will respond in his/her own way to various situations. The social/emotional response by home schooled children to the structure of a regular

classroom, or to their peers, may depend on the child, and not on home schooling.

Within the third theme, Individual Differences, seven of the ten teachers who had taught more than one home schooled child indicated that the children were academically comparable with formally schooled children. This suggests that home schooling and academic success cannot be related in a causal way. Children are individuals. Each child has his/her own level of ability whether home schooled or formally schooled. The question we need to ask is how to facilitate the transition.

Recommendation: There is a need for teachers to assess and address the instructional needs of students through a range of methods.

Two important points appeared from this study of the perceptions of teachers of home schooled children returning to the formal school system: the first is that seventeen teachers had expressed concerns regarding the social aspect of home schooling; the second is that teachers did not find the home schooled children to differ from formally schooled children in terms of academics; however, several teachers mentioned gaps in the home schooled children's knowledge, particularly in relation to writing.

### Instructional Recommendations

The following list of instructional recommendations is based on the findings of this study.

- Teachers must address the students' social needs and then determine how to integrate the students into classroom life.
- Teachers should inform the students and their parents of the expectations early in the year and provide feedback to the students and parents.
- Teachers need to communicate regularly with all parents to inform them of the students' progress.
- Teachers should monitor students' progress carefully and address students' instructional needs.
- There is a need for the Home Schooling Association to develop an information package with literature on home schooling for parents and teachers.
- The Home Schooling Association should organise information sessions for parents on what and how to teach concepts, strategies, and skills.

## Significance

This study describes teachers' perceptions of home schooled children and the ensuing implications for teaching. The research provides insights of how teachers view the students' entry into formal schooling prior to and after teaching home schooled children. It suggests some strategies by which the Home Schooling Association might inform parents and teachers. It also points out the need for teachers to address students' social, emotional, and academic needs in the same ways as they would children who have always attended a formal school. Further research on teachers' perceptions of the preparedness of home schooled children in the classroom will provide information which may help enhance the effectiveness of the formal school system.

## Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, future research might address the following areas:

- the process by which home schooling parents' develop and implement curriculum for their children, in particular, how parents become informed about curriculum and teaching strategies, the courses the

parents teach at home, the strategies they employ, and how they monitor their children's learning.

- the children's perceptions of their home schooling experience and their transitions to the regular classrooms.
- home schooled children's social preparedness and transitions to the regular school culture.
- the strategies teachers use to address the particular needs of home schooled children in their classrooms.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
  - a) At which level(s)? Elementary or secondary?
  - b) What grade level are you presently teaching?
  - c) Are you teaching at an urban or rural school?
2. How many home schooled children have you taught/are you teaching?
3. Describe the previously home schooled child who you have had/presently have in your classroom?
  - a) How old is the child?
  - b) What did you think about home schooling before you met this child?
  - c) Has your opinion changed? In what way?
4. What are your perceptions of the preparation of home schooled children returning to classroom life?
  - a) How does the student respond socially and/or emotionally to:
    - i) the structure of a regular classroom?
    - ii) their peers?
    - iii) instructional leadership?
  - b) What are your expectations at this grade level for:

- i) reading?
    - ii) writing?
    - iii) mathematics?
  - c) How prepared is the home schooled child in:
    - i) reading?
    - ii) writing?
    - iii) mathematics?
- 5. How do home schooled children compare with the rest of the students who have always been in formal schooling?
- 6. Are there drawbacks to home schooling? What are they?
- 7. Are there benefits to home schooling? What are they?
- 8. What have you learned from the home schooled child?

**Appendix B: Cover Letter for Board of Education**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. My thesis topic looks at teachers' perceptions of home schooled children.

In order to research the teachers' perceptions of home schooled children, I would like to interview those teachers who have had home schooled children in their classrooms. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. All information gathered will remain confidential.

My goal is to analyse the data from the interviews in order to better understand teachers' perceptions of the preparedness of home schooled children in their classrooms. The information gained may provide new insights into teachers' concerns about the social and emotional needs of these students. The information acquired may also provide strategies to address these concerns and promote students' learning. Finally, a better understanding of alternate approaches to learning may be achieved.

Teachers may withdraw from the interview process or they may have specific excerpts deleted.

The thesis will be made available in the library at the Faculty of Education once it has been completed.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Astrid Klock

Appendix C: Sample Cover Letter for Principals

November 30, 1994

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. My thesis topic looks at teachers' perceptions of home schooled children.

In order to research the teachers' perceptions of home schooled children, I would like to interview those teachers who have had home schooled children in their classrooms. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. All information gathered will remain confidential.

My goal is to analyse the data from the interviews in order to better understand teachers' perceptions of the preparedness of home schooled children in their classrooms. The information gained may provide new insights into teachers' concerns about the social and emotional needs of these students. The information acquired may also provide strategies to address these concerns and promote students' learning. Finally, a better understanding of alternate approaches to learning may be achieved.

Teachers may withdraw from the interview process or they may have specific excerpts deleted.

The thesis will be made available in the library at the Faculty of Education once it has been completed.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Astrid Klock



**Appendix D: Cover Letter and Consent Form for Respondents**

To respondents in this study:

I am a graduate student at Lakehead University. The subject of my masters research is: "Teachers' Perceptions of Home Schooled Children." I am planning to interview teachers who have in their classrooms a student(s) who has been schooled at home for at least one year in the your Board of Education at both the elementary and secondary school levels.

As a part of this study, you are being asked to participate in an interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. You will receive the general questions in advance. Each interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed.

You may withdraw from the study at any time. All information you provide will remain confidential. Written and oral data will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis.

The thesis will be available to you in the library at the Faculty of Education once it has been completed.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Astrid Klock

Consent Form

I agree to participate in the study by Astrid Klock, on TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOME SCHOOLED CHILDREN. I understand the following:

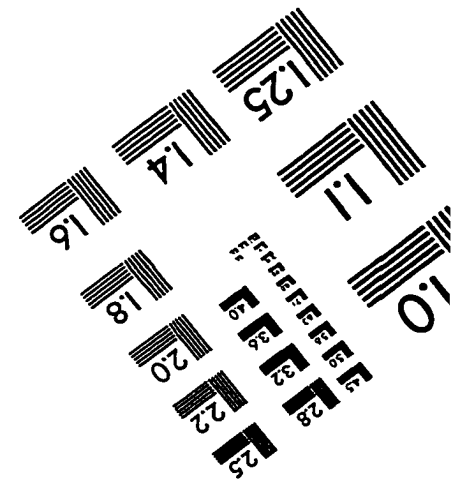
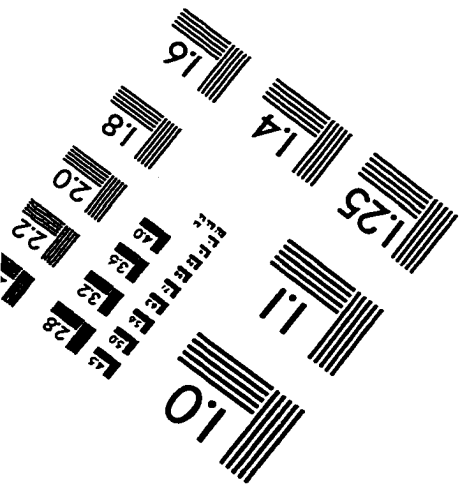
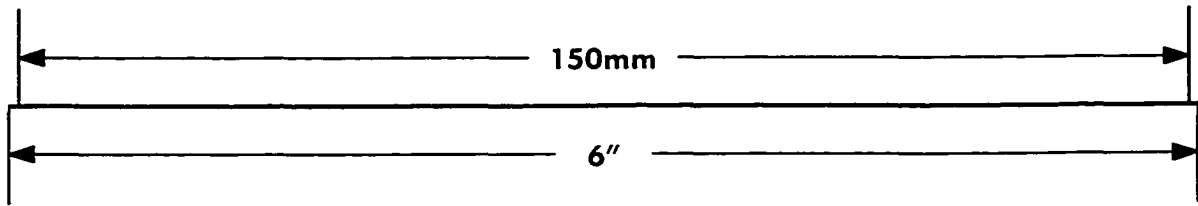
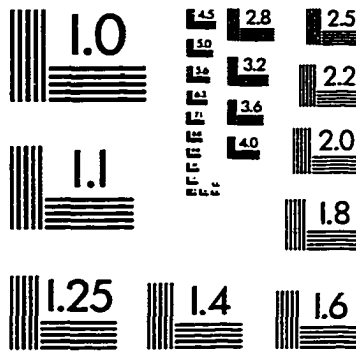
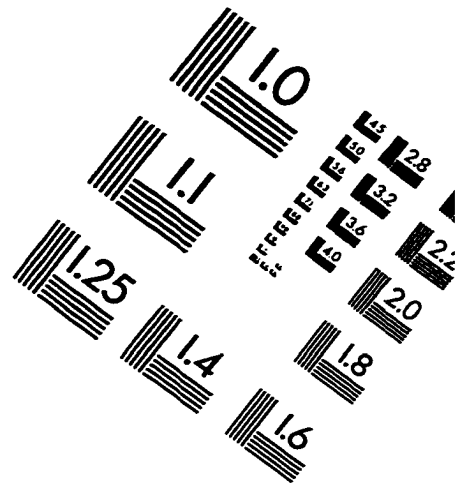
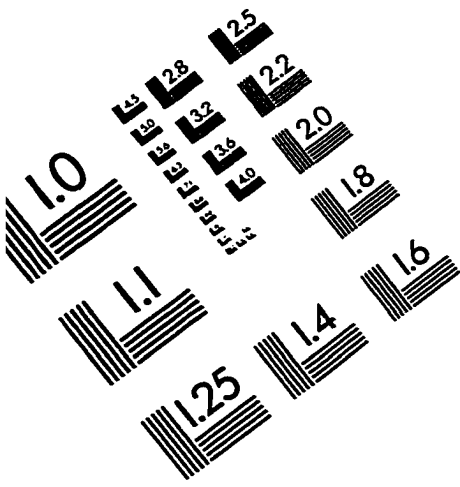
1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.
2. The data I provide will be confidential.

---

Signature of Respondent

Date

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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