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**Analysis and comparison of the causal factors of home-school
education between the home school parents of Newaygo County
Intermediate School District and the intermediate school
districts' superintendents in the state of Michigan**

Hansen, Bradley J., Ph.D.

Michigan State University, 1988

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ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE CAUSAL FACTORS
OF HOME-SCHOOL EDUCATION BETWEEN THE HOME
SCHOOL PARENTS OF NEWAYGO COUNTY
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS' SUPERINTENDENTS
IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

By

Bradley J. Hansen

A DISSERTATION

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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College of Education

1987

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ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE CAUSAL FACTORS OF HOME SCHOOL EDUCATION BETWEEN THE HOME SCHOOL PARENTS OF NEWAYGO COUNTY INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS' SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

by

Bradley J. Hansen

The purpose of this study is to determine the motivating factors parents have when educating school-aged children at home. A secondary purpose of the study is to determine if Intermediate School District Superintendents perceptions regarding parent motives are accurate when compared with actual parent responses who have implemented home-based education programs.

Due to the increase in the number of non-approved home schools and related news coverage, home-based education represents an emerging controversial issue. The various reasons why some parents elect to educate their children at home rather than in traditional educational settings is not clearly understood. The study was developed from assumptions that home schools have unique aspects that parents want for their children and that only parents can say what it is they perceive these distinguishing aspects to be.

Bradley J. Hansen

In order to clarify the recent increase in home schools, a rationale for home schools was presented. The historical background of public and parochial school education was reviewed. The evaluation of home-school education as it currently exists, was set forth.

The population of thirteen different sets of parents who educate their children at home were obtained from responses to open-ended questions. The researcher processed the responses and examined the data using the content analysis technique, as well as checking for consistency of response.

The entire population of intermediate school district superintendents in the state of Michigan were surveyed. The results of this survey was to compare the reasons parents gave of why they choose to educate their children at home versus a traditional educational setting. The researcher processed the responses and examined the data to determine similarities and differences among the responses.

The study is significant because it may contribute to an understanding of the reasons why parents remove their children from public and parochial school settings and provide education at home. By investigating the factors which motivate home school parents, public educators will be able to better determine if action on their part might be able to reduce this trend.

The research questions were:

1. What specific aspects of home-based education do parents want for their children?
2. What are the distinguishing characteristics of home-based education as perceived by parents?
3. What do parents perceive as giving home-schools its unique character?
4. What implications do superintendents' perceptions of home-based education have on the future of public school education?

Parents perceived home-school education to be different in kind from public or parochial education. Major conclusions of the study are:

1. A firm belief is shared by parents and educational leaders that parents can and should be deeply involved in the educational development of their own children.
2. Parents and educational leaders agree on the perceived factors which motivate parents to choose home-based education for their children to be; the negative influences in our society which is reflected in our public school environment, lack of confidence in our public school system, and for religious preference.
3. Specific home-school legislation is needed and desired by parents and educational leaders to insure that all children have adequate teachers, equivalent curriculum, instructional time and periodic testing to measure progress and determine problem areas.

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4. Building cooperative relationships between public school officials and home-schoolers was seen as a method that could enrich our understanding of child development and learning since home-schools provide a substantially different learning environment.

This work is dedicated to my family. Without their understanding and help, the completion of this dissertation would not be a reality.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The movement by parents to provide school-aged children academic instruction at home rather than traditional educational settings has gained popularity during the 1980's. Due to the increase in the number of nonapproved home schools and related news coverage, home-based education represents an emerging controversial issue (20:119). The various reasons why some parents elect to educate their children at home rather than in traditional educational settings is not clearly understood. Also, the perceptions of educational leaders, such as Michigan's Intermediate School District (ISD) Superintendents as to why they believe the home-based education movement has gained popularity has not been documented. This information would be valuable as currently schools and parents seem to be in direct adversarial positions.

Historical Perspective of the Problem

Although today, educating your child at home seems to be a radical idea, the long reach of human history shows just the opposite. Compulsory school attendance laws as we know them today were not widespread in the United States until the middle of the last century. Although "free"

schools date back to colonial days, the idea that most children should be educated outside the home often was strongly resisted as a usurpation of parental rights.

At the beginning of this century there was an upstart of religious schools or private schools due to the parents desire to have "God" in the curriculum. The Calvert School, oldest of the organizations enrolling home-schooled children was begun officially in 1908. (21:512) The American Catholic school, which had approximately 200 schools in operation by 1840, had teachers who were not specifically prepared for teaching, but taught reading and writing along with religion. (11:473) Today, however, there continues to be many devout Christian parents who are unhappy with the secular nature of the public schools and have not found a suitable religious school. Others withdraw from public schools for academic reasons. These parents argue that schools in general are not educating their children well enough. The largest growth in home-schooling appears to be among these Christian parents who enroll their children in home curriculum or provide curriculum packages designed for parents teaching children at home.

Rationale for the Study

More and more parents have decided, for many reasons that they would rather educate their children at home than send them to established public or parochial schools. This

trend toward home-schooling appears to be on a roll in Michigan, but state officials say it's hard to pinpoint exact figures. They say they are being hampered in their counting efforts by parents who do not fill out the required registration forms. James Phelps, associate state school superintendent says, "There are a lot of people who just refuse." (31) The actual number of children in home instruction is very difficult to project in Michigan and across the nation. In Michigan, James Phelps, Associate State Superintendent for school management projects between 5,000 and 6,000 students. Patricia M. Lines, political analyst with the United States Department of Education, estimates that home instruction has grown since 1970 from 15,000 students to well over 120,000 students across the nation. (26:112) Francis Roberts in his article, "The Home-Schooling Question", projected at least 30,000 students nationally. (26:112)

A closer look at the number of students in Michigan who are involved with home instruction could be beneficial to educators in public or parochial schools. There has been very little documented on the reasons and number of parents who choose to educate their children at home.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to identify the causal factors of why parents choose to educate their children at

home as perceived by parents in Newaygo County and intermediate school superintendents in the State of Michigan.

Research Questions

In this study the writer focused on the factors and problems of home-based education by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What specific aspects of home-based education do parents want for their children?
2. What are the distinguishing characteristics of home-based education as perceived by parents?
3. What do parents perceive as giving home-schools its unique character?
4. What implications do superintendents' perceptions of home-based education have on the future of public school education?

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the motivating factors parents have when educating children at home. A secondary purpose of the study is to determine if Intermediate School District Superintendents perceptions regarding parents' motives are accurate when compared with actual parents' responses who have implemented home-based educational programs.

Significance of the Problem

Over several decades, the public schools have been the dominant force within education. During the 1980's, public education's leadership role in education has been challenged by different groups and individuals with increasing success. These challenges have eroded the role of public education in contemporary American society. The home-based education movement is one of the most direct challenges as it is not an issue related to reform but rather the removal of students from the public classroom setting. Also, as the review of literature will indicate to the reader, several home-school proponents advocate the position that these home-based programs may be implemented without a state certified teacher. By investigating the factors which motivate home-school parents, public educators will be able to better determine if action on their part might be able to reduce this trend.

Limitations of the Study

The validity of this study is influenced by the following factors:

1. The skill of the interviewer in securing the needed data from parents who have implemented home-based educational programs will be appropriate and sound.

2. The study assumes that parents who have implemented home-based educational programs will respond to the interview questions with accurate responses.
3. The nature and validity of the interview questions and questionnaire to be presented to participants shall be appropriate in testing the hypotheses.

Procedures

The first step in the data collection process was to design interview questions through which parents could freely give their perceptions of the reasons they chose to provide their child with home education.

A written questionnaire was developed for the intermediate school superintendents in Michigan to respond to. A pilot study of the questions and questionnaire format, was completed using five jurists, so as not to bias the superintendents. The five jurists included a K-12 superintendent, an intermediate school superintendent, a parent of public school students, a parent of a home-school student, and a Michigan State Department of Education official. No changes in the questions and format were deemed necessary.

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher of this study. The content was analyzed and categorized, and frequency counts were assigned prior to interpreting the results.

The data, together with the information identified in Chapter II, formed the basis for the discussion and questionnaire of the perceived factors of why parents choose to educate their children at home.

Definition of Terms

Public School - A publicly funded facility that provides tuition free education without restrictions and is available to all school-aged children.

Home-based School - A school maintained by parent or parents within the family housing unit where educational instruction is presented to children by the parent or parent's agent without public financial assistance.

Unapproved Private School - A school that does not receive public financial assistance and for whatever reason, fails to seek approval as a school by an appropriate state educational agency.

Intermediate School District - One of the 57 educational agencies designated by the State of Michigan as an intermediate school district. Such districts are public institutions.

Superintendent - The chief school official within a public school district.

Compulsory Education - A broad term used to identify state statutes mandating school attendance for school-aged children.

Parents - Father, mother, or legal guardian of school-aged children.

Child - A male or female human being 16 years of age or younger.

Teacher Certification - The completion of higher education requirements in the State of Michigan necessary to obtain the licensing requirement to present instruction to school-aged children, resulting in a high school diploma.

Conservation Religious Group - More than one individual advocating a fundamentalist Christian viewpoint organized to impact on certain elements of American society, such as public education.

Summary and Overview

Several articles and studies indicate many reasons why parents educate their children at home. These reasons identify the positive aspects of home education and the negative aspects of public or private schools. The question is raised: "What are the actual reasons that children are educated at home as perceived by parents?"

In Chapter I the background to the problem, the rationale for the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitations, procedures, definition of terms, chapter summary and overview of the study are given.

Chapter II contains a review of the literature for understanding the establishment, development, and the reasons parents give for educating their children at home.

The methodology, which includes the instrumentation, sample, collection of data, and method of data analysis is described in Chapter III.

Chapter IV contains a statement of each interview question and questionnaire; a summary of the analysis derived from the responses; and a description of responses

by category including a selection of quotations from the interviews.

In Chapter V the summary, the conclusions, reflections, and recommendations for the future research are presented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Home based education is an issue directly linked with compulsory education and state regulation of private schools. In this chapter, the writer will review the literature related to the historical origins of home based education, the philosophical questions raised by this movement, and legal aspects of the issue. Those educational factors which have influenced the growth of home based education and non-approved private schools shall be presented. Also, a historical review of the State of Michigan's attempts to deal with this issue has been included with this chapter.

Background Information of Home Based Education in the U.S.

The origins of home-based education in the U.S. begin with universal compulsory education. (15:391) The tradition of mandatory schooling can be traced back to early New England settlements. In order to promote common religious beliefs among the colonists, early Puritan leaders advocated compulsory education a concept most people accepted (23). Due to compulsory education, many individuals attended school who might not have otherwise. State statutes mandating school attendance were generally in place following the Civil War (23).

Early critics of public schools included Johann Frederich Hebart, a nineteenth century educator who advocated home schools (14:26). Hebart believed that the enforcement of uniform educational goals creates an unsuitable education environment for individual learners. Describing state controlled schools as a factory turning out goods (students), Hebart recommended the education of children in their homes, supplemented by visits from an educator to provide support and suggestions to parents (14:26).

In contrast to Hebart's position, John Dewey, an advocate of school reform, and others, fostered the ideological position that community members have an obligation to provide an education for all members of society (12:227). Dewey (6) prescribed to the philosophy that there was an interdependence between the individual and democratic social order. The liberal educational reform movement in the United States is based on Dewey's social ethic. This social ethic provided additional rationale for the compulsory school system. Through compulsory education the school was to become a generalized version of the ideal home. One of the roles of public education, according to Dewey, was to equalize educational opportunity, foster individual growth, provide social continuity, and reduce social conflict (12:227). Dewey's reform strategy advanced the notion that the public schools could become society's

best and wisest parent (6). During the 1960's and 1970's Dewey's beliefs regarding the inherent positive characteristics of democratic institutions, such as the public schools, have been challenged repeatedly (10). These critics suggest the schools have not been the best and wisest parent, do not foster individual growth, fail to mediate social conflicts and equality has not occurred. The American public in general, continues to support the rationale for compulsory education and the role of the public schools, however an increasing number of parents are attempting to educate their children within the home environment (20:119).

Since compulsory education became a universally accepted practice, a small minority of parents, due to remote geographical locations (e.g., Alaska) or for personal ideological reasons, have consistently chosen to provide their children's schooling in the home rather than traditional settings (15:391). The legality of home-based educational programs is dependent on individual state statutes and vary from state to state (32:37). 1983). About two-thirds of the states allow some form of home instruction with provisions, for example, outlining the qualifications of the instructor (32:37) & Gluckman, 1983). A pattern of three basic types of state statutes has emerged: 1) no alternative to public or private schools, 2) implied exception involving equivalent instruction with a certified

teacher and/or correspondence program, and 3) explicit exception protected by statute (30:22). State statutes regarding home instruction vary considerably from state to state. State statutes that allow no alternative to traditional educational settings have been repeatedly challenged, however, except in a limited number of cases (e.g., *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972) such litigation has been unsuccessful (27:34).

The *Yoder* case, as it is commonly referred to, involved a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that Amish families are exempt from Wisconsin's compulsory education requirements beyond the eighth grade (27:34). The plaintiffs argued successfully that Amish values were absent in public school programs (20:119). It should be noted that the issue of compulsory education prior to eighth grade was not challenged. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled, that the compulsory attendance law in Wisconsin, as applied to the Amish, was unconstitutional (20:119).

Since the 1972 *Yoder* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court has not extended rulings regarding compulsory education beyond *Yoder*. Several attempts to challenge various states' rights to mandate compulsory education and regulation of teacher certification have occurred. West Virginia's Supreme Court in *State v. Riddle* (1981), for example, ruled against the parents based on distinctions between the *Yoder* and *Riddle* situations. The *Riddle*'s failed to show they

were members of a religious sect of longstanding and the court took into account that the Riddle's children were much younger than the Amish children (32:37). Other lower court rulings have followed the Yoder decision, allowing exemption to Amish students (19:189). A substantial number of cases involving the states' right to regulate private and home-schools are currently in progress (A Report on Home-Based Education, (20:119).

The total number of children being taught at home in the U.S. is difficult to determine. Lines (1983) indicates that one of the difficulties encountered when attempting to determine the actual home-school student population has been that unaccredited schools do not wish to report to the Census Bureau. Parents, fearing prosecution or alleged harassment from public authorities, sometimes go underground and never report the existence of their children to any public agency. Often, it is difficult to distinguish home schools from small private schools (19:189). The late John Holt (1983), a recognized advocate of the home-school movement, estimated that ten to fifteen thousand children are taught at home in the United States. Some experts report the total numbers may be higher (20:119), up to thirty thousand (30:22). Advocates of home-based education tend to cite higher numbers than public school officials. Most experts agree the numbers have increased rapidly since the 1970's.

Parents educating their children at home often do so with the assistance of commercially available correspondence courses (e.g., Christian Liberty Academy Program and Calvert Home Instruction Courses). Some parents have reported difficulty the first few months of their home school teaching experience, followed by increased self-confidence (7:395). Programs such as the Christian Liberty Academy Program and the Calvert Home Instruction Courses provide structure and student evaluation. Divoky (1983), an advocate for home-based education, recommends that parents integrate traditional academic skill development with other basic living skills such as cooking, shopping, planning menus, gardening, and carpentry. Home schoolers are sometimes criticized for not providing their children with needed peer socialization opportunities. Divoky (1983) suggests that parents enroll their children in Scouts, sports teams, church groups, hobby clubs, and community classes to foster peer socialization skills.

The late John Holt published his own magazine entitled Growing Without Schooling and several newsletters for parents (15:391). Such resources, in addition to correspondence course, serve to support parents' efforts to educate their children at home. Home school parents may face costly litigation and adverse publicity (15:391). Some of their adverse publicity has occurred due to Holt's statement that only three to five hours of formal

instruction is sufficient (7:395), and heavy emphasis on religious instruction and values. Some home school parents have made use of existing shelter school curriculums. Shelter schools are defined as those private schools that show student enrollment records to public school officials when in reality some or all instruction occurs at home (7:396).

The 17th Annual Gallup Poll of Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (13:46) found that although the U.S. public views private and church related schools in an increasingly positive manner, the same cannot be said regarding home based education. When asked the question: "Recently there has been a movement toward home schools, that is, schools where parents keep their children at home and teach the children themselves. In general, do you think this movement is a good thing or bad thing for the nation?" (13:46). The national totals indicated 16% of the public believe home schools are positive for the nation, 73% viewed the movement as negative, and 11% indicate they didn't know. Non-public school parents indicated a slightly more positive response than public school parents or participants with no children. Previous to 1985, national opinion data regarding home-based education was not collected by Gallup, therefore opinion trends cannot be established at this time. Also, the question was not asked during the 1986 Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools.

Regardless of court ruling, advocates and critics, and public opinion, the home school movement's growth may well be limited due to families where both parents are employed and the rise of single parent family units. In many cases, current economic conditions do not make it possible for parents to remain at home in order to educate their children (7:395).

Factors Which Have Influenced the Growth of the Home-Based
Education Movement

The following three key factors have influenced the rise of the home school movement: 1) the decline of public schools' accountability as perceived by the general population from approximately 1966-1983, 2) the influence of conservative "New Right" religious groups, and, 3) advocacy of such programs by noted author John Holt.

After a decade of declining popularity and enrollment during the 1970's, the public schools appear to be regaining its position of respect. The 1984 and 1985 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Schools reported that the public had a more favorable attitude now than at any time during the previous decade. However, the fastest growing segment of American education are fundamentalist Christian schools (4:212). If the recent gains made in the perceived accountability of public school programs are to continue upward, administrative leadership, professional teachers

organizations' efforts, and legislative funding must be sustained (33:382).

The impact of conservative religious groups may determine numerous policies affecting the role of the public schools in modern day American society (25:9). Elsbree (1939) and other early teacher educators involved with the training of prospective teachers, noted the community's impact on the development of teacher education. Over the years, the criteria for teacher selection has been the responsibility of higher education institutions. The gradual recognition that teachers need special training and advanced education encouraged states to enact licensing legislation (4:212). Educational historians view licensing as a milestone in the effort to professionalize teaching (8). Initiatives by those desiring to be free of state regulations, specifically teacher licensing requirements, have broad implication for teaching as a profession (4:212).

In general, leaders of fundamentalist Christian schools are opposed ". . . to the principle of state sovereignty over education, or refusing to conform to state requirements . . ." (4:213). These requirements include minimum curriculum standards and teacher certification which some private and home-school advocates believe not to be appropriate or too restrictive. Advocates of home-school programs, based on religious beliefs, often cite the First

and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution as grounds to oppose perceived government encroachments and harassment (4:212).

The majority of individuals engaging in home-based education appear to be Christian fundamentalist (7:395) (20:119). They cite one of their conflicts with public education to be the belief that public school teachers foster secular humanism (7:395). Matthew Arnold (1965) in the 1800's set the goals that describe the modern humanistic ideal of education. Arnold stated that an ideal person was one whose powers were all in balance. This ideal individual knows how to live in harmony with others, appreciates beauty and has high standards regarding moral judgments (2). A humanist has a broad background in religion, philosophy, languages, literature, history, and the arts. Humanists try to interpret the essence and meaning of life, rather than just describing the physical world or society (3). The evolution of secular humanism has caused great concern for Christian fundamentalists. They cite the development of more liberal public schools. Immorality, lack of dress codes, attitudes, speech, and values fostered by the public schools are not tolerable to some Christian fundamentalists (7:395). Parents of Christian fundamentalists complain that the public schools advance the belief that values are variable; there is no right or wrong. Children can be influenced greatly regarding values and sex education which

is a responsibility of the family. The negative effects of secular humanism, in the opinion of some Christian fundamentalists, that new teachers acquire while completing their preservice requirements at institutions of higher learning, precludes their ability to be effective in some private schools. This perceived contamination factor, the humanistic training of students enrolled in teacher education program, has been used as a rationale to supersede state teacher certification requirements by some Christian fundamentalist groups. Statutory requirements for teacher certification have generally been upheld in the courts (14:26).

Historically, religious leaders have influenced political, social, and educational agendas and practice. Public education received a great deal of evangelical Protestant support throughout the nineteenth century. Protestant leaders urged the churches to accept state regulation of education and only a small percentage of Protestants built competing parochial school system. (25:9). This support of the public schools was due, in part, from overt anti-Catholicism (5). During the nineteenth century, evangelicals believed the public schools served the interests of both Protestantism and Americanism (9). However, during the early 1900's mainline Protestant churches began to slowly adopt modernist and liberal tendencies in a division of philosophy and church doctrine

among Protestants (5). American fundamentalists began building their own education institutions (e.g., Bible institutes, colleges, seminaries, liberal arts colleges, and schools) throughout the 1920's and 1930's (25:9). This split widened during the Scopes evolution trial, school prayer debate, and desegregation. By the late 1970's, and early 1980's, the public schools came under increasing attack by the Moral Majority and several other evangelical Protestant groups. The public school no longer received the support of the Protestants as a group; this support became splintered. Examples of this changing Protestant view are the increase in private evangelical schools, home schools, and demands for a voucher reimbursement system.

In addition to the rise of conservative elements in American society, former school reformer turned home-school advocate, the late John Holt, influenced the growth of home based education. In his writings, Holt seems to avoid the religious and secular humanism arguments used to promote home based education. Instead, Holt's focus of discussion appears to be the perceived improvements made in the learning environment when education is based in the home.

Holt (1982) presents his disillusionment of educational reforms of the recent past, a critique of compulsory education, and advances the notion that parents are the child's most nurturing educators in his book entitled, Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education. Alternative

schools, according to Holt, like traditional schools, present students with an arbitrary curriculum and deny individual self-direction. Holt cites the following seven assumptions traditional schools tend to operate under: 1) the act of learning is inherently negative, 2) learning can only result by way of teaching, 3) only certified teachers are qualified to teach, 4) learning material must be sequentially presented in small units with scheduled rewards and penalties, 5) when students fail to make gains when presented with instruction by certified teachers, the student is blamed for this failure, 6) that failure is attributed to factors related to the student (e.g., family or social class) rather than the school, and 7) the educational diagnostic evaluations focus on students who fail instead of considering school system type influences (15:391). Other pedagogical based reasons for home-based instruction include promotion of creativity, reduced student-teacher class size ratio, and a more healthy environment for students (7:395). A reason parents often cite for developing home-schools is their perception that the public schools are not concerned about their children (14:26).

Holt's position regarding home based education also differs from the Christian fundamentalists in that he advocates some form of either limited or preferably complete partnership with the public schools and home-based program.

This partnership would reduce costly litigation between parents attempting to implement home-based education and the public schools (15:391). In attempting to address one of the major obstacles confronting this proposed partnership, which has been successful in some isolated cases (e.g., Barnstable, MA, Nevada City, CA, and others), Holt proposes a model home schooling law that entitles public school districts to receive state aid for the student educated at home and allow for special services to occur (e.g., music classes and special education for speech impaired students.). The two other major obstacles, teacher certification requirements and ideological conflicts remain unresolved.

Franzosa (1984) has challenged Holt's home-based education position from an ideological perspective. Contrasting Dewey's social ethic with Holt's conservative libertarianism (in the opinion of Franzosa), Franzosa argues that home based education parents . . . "reject social participation in favor of personal independence and autonomy" (12:229). This rejection, Franzosa (1984) states, reduces the responsibility citizens have as a community to educate the general population. Whereas Holt stresses the inadequacies of the public schools to address the needs of individual learners, Franzosa make the point that unregulated home-based educational practice leaves the child unprotected. Even if obstacles such as the lack of state

statutes providing guidelines for home-based education, school aid financial questions, transfer of credits from home-based education programs to public and private secondary schools, teacher certification requirements are overcome, which seems unlikely except in isolated cases, the ideological issue of society's role in educating children will continue to be at the apex of this issue and subject to intense debate.

Home-Based Education in the State of Michigan

The State of Michigan does not currently have a statute specifically addressing home-based education. Public Act 302, 1921, the Compulsory Attendance and Non-public School Law does provide local and intermediate school boards with the authority to assure the following minimal requirements:

- a. Instruction must be under the direct supervision of a certified teacher.
- b. Students must be provided with 180 days and 900 hours of instruction.
- c. The curriculum must include comparable subjects to that offered by the local school district.
- d. Students shall receive instruction in the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of Michigan, United States history and civics (A Report on Home-Based Education, (1:3).

Historically, Michigan has experienced litigation and controversy when attempting to deal with parents who implemented home-based education programs. In 1961, the state Attorney General issued a memorandum opinion allowing

home-based education if the requirements of the Compulsory Attendance and Non-public School Laws were met. The major requirement of the Compulsory Attendance and Non-public School Laws that barred the typical parent(s) from educating their children at home was the lack of a Michigan teacher's certificate. In 1979, the state Attorney General again issued an opinion that home-schools were legal if they complied with minimal state requirements (e.g., certificated teacher). In 1980, the Michigan decision, *State v. Nobel*, upheld the right of parents to educate their children at home (30:22). From 1978 to 1982, the Michigan Department of Education reported a sharp increase of noncomplying private schools, from 32 to over 250 (1). Currently, the Michigan Department of Education estimates there are 1,000 home schooled children. Advocates of home-based education programs believe the total numbers to be 8,000 (24:2B).

This increase was the impetus for two Michigan Department of Education documents, Compliance and Complaint Procedures, 1980, and Education of the Child in the Parental Home, 1982, which were prepared to serve as guidelines for approval, monitoring, and evaluating home-schools. Efforts by public school officials to review home schools were often met with accusations by parents of harassment.

In 1983, the Sheridan Road Baptist Church et al v. State of Michigan court case arose. The Sheridan Road Baptist Church plaintiffs challenged state teacher

certification requirements and examination of records of enrollment of pupils for purposes of approval of private schools (180 days and 900 hours of instruction). The plaintiffs (Sheridan Road Baptist Church) won lower court ruling (18:3). However, in a narrow decision, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled in favor of the State of Michigan.

At its July 15, 1986 State Board of Education meeting, the board designated Michigan's Intermediate School Districts as its duly authorized agent to conduct home-school investigation and examination. The State Board of also mandated the Department of Education staff to draft compliance procedures for home-schools. These procedures were approved in October by the State Board (28:1).

"A home school will have met the legal requirement if:

- a parent holding a valid Michigan teaching certificate provides comparable education instruction to his child or children in his home, or
- a parent employs a legally certified teacher who provides comparable instruction to his child or children in his home, and
- instruction by the individual possessing the valid teaching certificate takes place on a daily basis during the school year of at least 180 days of instruction, and
- the facility meets the fire and health standard, if there are six or more students" (28:1,3).

The Michigan home-school compliance procedures also have requirements requiring comparable programs of instruction with public school programs. Membership reports for home-schools are to be on file in the parents'

respective intermediate school district every November 1. Several home-school advocates in Michigan insisted the State Board of Education had no legal authority to demand the information on the November 1st membership forms. Mr. Dennis Smith, a home-school advocate whose Information Network for Christian Homes sends over 2,000 newsletters to Michigan families suggesting to home schoolers that they only indicate on the forms that they are providing quality education (16:17).

State Representative Timothy Walberg failed to guide his home-based education bill through the Michigan Legislature in the fall of 1986. The pro-home school bill, co-sponsored by Representative Jelt Sietsema required parents to register with intermediate school districts but did not require state certified teachers or individual's to teach who were college educated (29:10). Walberg criticized the new procedures and requirements for home schools stating home-schoolers are . . . not going to put up with all the reporting" (17:4). In contrast, Superintendent of Public Instruction Phillip E. Runkel remarked, "These compliance procedures provide a systematic process for all home schools to follow". (28:1).

The battle between those who believe in state regulation of home-schools in Michigan and advocates of home-based education appears to have the potential to continue. The issues fought over will probably be the new

reporting procedures required by the State Board of Education and teacher certification for home-based education instructors.

Summary

In order to understand the complexity of the home-based education issue, the following different factors must be considered; 1) ideological differences between proponents and opponents, 2) the impact of conservative religious groups, 3) state regulation of private schools, and 4) compulsory education requirements. The home-based education issue has potentially critical importance for the public schools, although the student numbers are not significant, it is an issue that could effect teacher certification and compulsory education requirements. Colucci (1983) notes the irony that when some groups are advocating better professional preparation for teachers, others propose reducing teacher certification requirements.

The State of Michigan has experienced the growth of home schools as has the nation and the only resolution of the issue appears to be through future litigation. Such litigation may resolve procedural issues but it is unlikely ideological viewpoints will merge. There will continue to be debate about the role society should take in the education of the individual and the individual's responsibility for the education of others.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in conducting the study is described in this chapter. The population and the sample are identified, and sample selection techniques are explained. The data-gathering procedures are outlined, and the research instruments employed in the investigation are described. Finally, statistical treatment of the data and methods of reporting the results are explained.

Population of Interest

The population under investigation comprises parents in Newaygo County who provide home-school education for their children. The total student enrollment in Newaygo County is 7,980. Of that number, 27 students or approximately .33% of the students were identified as receiving home-based education.

Newaygo County is located in the northern part of southwestern Michigan. All school districts located in the county are considered rural in nature with the principle industry being agriculturally related. The largest employer in Newaygo County is the Gerber Products Company. The corporate headquarters and largest food processing plant of

Gerbers is in Fremont, Michigan which is located at the center of Newaygo County.

Explanation of the Research Method

In order to address the purpose of the study, data which revealed the personal beliefs and feelings of parents was needed. Of all the methods of survey research, the personal interview using open-ended questions was considered the best when gathering data from parents. (1, 4, 7) Additionally, the thirteen different sets of parents were located within a twenty-mile radius of the researcher giving easy access to the population to be interviewed.

A written questionnaire was developed to survey the state's 57 intermediate school superintendents. This technique was used due to the proximity of the researcher and larger population being surveyed.

The critical incident and telephone interview techniques was considered and even tried on a limited basis during the time the questionnaire was being developed. The responses were very brief and impersonal; there was little rapport established over the telephone and the risk of getting truthfulness from the parents and intermediate school superintendents was questionable.

The procedure for scheduling and conducting the interview with parents provided for a cooperative atmosphere in which truthful data could be given and received. The personal

non-verbal interaction, as well as the tone of voice and the inflection of speech, provided help in interpreting the content of the responses. The process made it possible to probe systematically the responses which were further screened and clarified to help find answers to the research questions.

Selection of the Sample

The student population were those 27 pupils identified as children who received home-based education in Newaygo County Intermediate School District. They were identified by the Newaygo County Intermediate School District when the parents registered with them as required by the Michigan State Board of Education policy.

All thirteen sets of parents were asked to take part in the study. Of that number, all thirteen sets of parents (100%) were personally interviewed in accordance with the interview questionnaire.

To provide a comparison to the responses given by the parents in Newaygo County, a written questionnaire was sent to each of the 57 intermediate school superintendents in the State of Michigan. This questionnaire was developed as a comparison tool, since all parents who provide home-school education to their children must register with each intermediate school in the state. Of the 57 questionnaires

that were mailed, all superintendents returned a completed questionnaire.

Procedures

The researcher wrote each set of parents asking for their participation in the research project. Allowing two weeks for parents to consider their involvement in the study, the researcher telephoned each set of parents for permission to interview them personally about the factors that influenced their decision to home-educate their children. Permission to conduct the study was granted and an interview date was scheduled to gather data. The purpose of the study was explained, and all procedural questions were answered.

Upon arrival at each participant's residence a brief meeting was held to explain the research project and give a short introduction of the process to be followed. The researcher assured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality regarding all responses.

In order to obtain data from intermediate school district superintendents a written questionnaire, with a cover letter explaining the research project, was sent to each superintendent. The cover letter included the procedure of collecting data and assurances that their participation would be voluntary with all responses confidential.

Research Questions and Instrument Design

The interview questionnaire for parents was designed to address the major purpose of the research project which asked parents in Newaygo County to identify the casual factors of why they chose to educate their children at home. The written questionnaire for intermediate school superintendents was designed to gather their perceptions of home-school education as compared to parent responses of the motivating factors of why parents chose to home-educate their children.

Each research question is now presented along with the description of the interview questions which were developed from it.

Research question one: "What specific aspects of home-based education do parents want for their children?" was intended to identify the reasons which motivate parents to educate their children at home and to be generally positive and non-threatening. Interview question four and five were designed to answer the major purpose of the study. Interview question four: "What would you say are the reasons parents choose to educate their children at home verses an approved parochial or public school?" was intended to identify those qualities which parents generally perceive as necessary qualities in their child's education. This question would help parents to clarify their own

motives before being asked the fifth question: "What would you say are the reasons for educating your child or children at home?" This question was intended to bring the respondent to his/her personal decision after reflecting upon what he/she thought others would give as their reasons for choosing home-school education. These two questions were intended to bring the respondents to a personal opinion orientation and help to convey the feelings that the interview was not seeking "correct" answers, but only his/her answers.

Interview question six: "Would you recall a particular occasion that is an example of the kind of . . . (whatever where the responses to question five) that your child was placed in?" was designed to bring the respondent's perceptions into focus. If the descriptions were vague and/or incomplete, interview question six would give the respondents an opportunity to express the problem that initiated their decision to home educate their children.

Interview question one and three, were designed to collect data so statistical analysis could be performed. Interview question one: "Presently, how many children are you instructing or educating at home and what are their ages, gender, and grade level?" was intended to gather data for the comparison with the number of children being educated at home as identified by the intermediate school superintendents in the state of Michigan. Interview

question three: "Who are you educationally affiliated with so a balanced curriculum is taught?" was intended to identify the institutions that respondents were registered with for compliance requirements.

Interview question two: "Would you please describe what you mean by home school education?" was intended for the respondents to define home school education as it applies to the definition given by the Michigan State Department of Education. This question was designed to clarify the various definitions of home-school education.

Research question two: "What are the distinguishing characteristics of home-based education as perceived by parents?" was intended to identify those qualities which parents perceive as making a home-school. Interview question seven: "Describe what happens in a home-school that does not happen in a public school?" was used to help the respondent identify the qualities that are unique to home-school education by limiting the responses to these conditions that are present in a home-school, but not in a parochial or public school.

Research question three: "What do parents perceive as giving home-schools its unique character?" was addressed by one or more versions of interview question eight: "Why is a home-school capable of providing . . .?" or "What causes . . . to happen?" or "What differences do you see between a home-school and an approved parochial or public school?" or

"How do you account for the differences?" The open-ended questioning was intended to give the researcher an opportunity to discern the respondent's reasoning.

Research question four: "What implications do superintendents' perceptions of home-based education have on the future of public school education?" was intended to compare the responses of the superintendents written questionnaire to the responses of the parent interview question that was given to parents in Newaygo County.

The following additional questions were posed to the 57 intermediate school district superintendents for the collection of data in this project:

1. In your opinion, what are the real reasons parents choose to instruct or educate their children at home versus an approved parochial or public school?
2. Please identify the areas that reflect the best reason why parents choose to educate their children at home?
3. Please identify the seriousness of the problem in your intermediate school district?
4. In your opinion, please identify a problem or problems dealing with home-school education and what possible solution would you recommend?
5. Would you support a state mandated procedure in which to evaluate home school requirements?

Data Analysis Technique

The major analysis technique employed was content analysis. The interviewer transcribed the responses and noted the observed responses for each interview question.

Categories based upon responses were designed; a preliminary frequency table was designed for each question. Categories were collapsed where possible, but it is acknowledged that some loss of information was inevitable when categories were combined. It is, therefore, important that tables be interpreted with the aid of written explanations, so that a more accurate picture may be derived and distortions from simplicity of presentation may be minimal.

The responses were analyzed for consistency with the following questions: What would you say are your reasons? Do the reasons the parents choose home-school education correspond with the opinions as stated by the intermediate school superintendents? Is there a cause-and-effect relationship with the parents of home-school education and the perceived qualities of public schools? Are the personal incidents cited examples of what the respondents consider the necessary qualities of an ideal public or parochial school setting?

After responses were categorized and the recurrent responses noted, causes for those responses were examined. Finally, the parents' perception of home-schools were compared with the goals as identified in the discussion of the literature in Chapter II.

Summary

In this chapter the research questions and instrument design, sample selections and data collection were presented. The interview questionnaire and written questionnaire were designed to identify the casual reasons that parents give to the question of why they chose to home-educate their children.

Perceptions of a stratified sample of parents from Newaygo County were obtained and compared with the opinions of Michigan's intermediate school superintendents. These perceptions of parents were obtained through face-to-face interviews in which open-ended questions were asked. This approach allowed for observation of non-verbal reactions and vocal reflections, as well as clarification of responses by additional questions.

After the researcher tabulated the responses, he analyzed them using the content analysis technique. The analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The movement by parents to provide school-aged children academic instruction at home rather than in traditional educational settings has gained popularity during the 1980's. The various reasons why some parents elect to educate their children at home rather than in traditional educational settings is not clearly understood. Also, the perceptions of educational leaders, such as Michigan's Intermediate School District Superintendents as to why they believe parents educate their children outside the traditional educational setting has not been documented or compared to the reasons that parents give of why they choose to educate their children at home.

Responses of parents in Newaygo County who provide home school education were obtained through thirteen interviews and content analyzed; they are presented in this chapter.

The fifty-seven Intermediate School District Superintendents were sent a written questionnaire for the purpose of gathering their responses and perceptions of why some parents chose to educate their children at home or in a non-traditional setting. An analysis and comparison of the data are presented in this chapter.

Sample Characteristics

The sample for the present study comprised the entire population of intermediate school district superintendents in the State of Michigan and the parents of all home-school children in Newaygo County, Michigan. From a total of 57 superintendents, all 57 had responded to the questionnaire. All thirteen different sets of parents in Newaygo County were included in this study.

Number of Public and Home-School Children

Parent Interview Question One: "Presently how many children are you instructing or educating at home and what are their ages, gender, and grade level?" was asked as a means to gather statistical data. The thirteen responses are quoted here:

One elementary female whose age is six.

Three female students at the elementary level, ages 8, 9, 10.

Two students: Female elementary student age 11 and one male elementary student age 7.

Two students: A female age 14 in ninth grade. A male in 8th grade age 13.

Three students: One female elementary student age 8. Two male students elementary level ages 6 and 7.

Two students: Both males in middle school, ages 11 in sixth grade and age 12 in seventh grade.

One student: Male elementary level age 10.

Two students: Both male elementary level ages 6 and 9.

One student: Male elementary level age 7.

Three students: A female age 15 in ninth grade. Two males ages 12 and 13 in grade six.

Three students: One male in 6th grade age 11. Two elementary students, both male age 7.

Two female students at the elementary level ages 6 and 7.

Two students: Female age 14 in 9th grade, Male age 12 in 7th grade.

The total number of public and home-school children in the State of Michigan and Newaygo County are shown in Table 1. The percentages of home-school children according to grade level are given in Table 2. As shown in Table 1, the total number of public school children was 1,663,272; of which 782,418 were at the elementary school levels (K-5), 341,654 were at the middle school level (6-8), and 539,107 were at the high school level. The total number of home-school children was 917; of which 706 (77.7%) were at the elementary school level, 145 (15.8%) were at the middle school level, and 66 (7.2%) were at the high school level.

As for Newaygo County, there were a total of 7,564 children in public schools; of which 3,584 were at elementary school level, 1720 were at middle school level, and 2,260 were at high school level. The total number of home-school children was 27; of which 17 (63%) were at elementary school level, 7 (25.9%) were at middle school level, and 3 (11.1%) were at high school level. The data revealed that the distribution of home-school children, both in the State of Michigan and Newaygo County,

corresponded at a descending rate. That is, there were more home-school children at the elementary school than at the middle school level and even less at the high school level.

| TABLE 1 | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| NUMBER OF PUBLIC SCHOOL AND HOME-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN MICHIGAN AND NEWAYGO COUNTY | | | | |
| <u>School Level</u> | MICHIGAN | | NEWAYGO COUNTY | |
| | <u>Public School</u> | <u>Home School</u> | <u>Public School</u> | <u>Home School</u> |
| Elementary | 782,418 | 706 | 3,584 | 17 |
| Middle School | 341,684 | 145 | 1,720 | 7 |
| High School | <u>539,107</u> | <u>66</u> | <u>2,260</u> | <u>3</u> |
| TOTALS | 1,663,272 | 917 | 7,564 | 27 |
| SOURCE: Michigan State Board of Education Bulletin Newaygo County Intermediate School District | | | | |

| TABLE 2 | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| NUMBER OF HOME-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN MICHIGAN AND NEWAYGO COUNTY ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF SCHOOL | | | | |
| <u>School Level</u> | MICHIGAN | | NEWAYGO COUNTY | |
| | <u>Freq.</u> | <u>Perc</u> | <u>Freq.</u> | <u>Perc.</u> |
| Elementary | 706 | 77.0 | 17 | 63.0 |
| Middle School | 145 | 15.8 | 7 | 25.9 |
| High School | <u>66</u> | <u>7.2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>11.1</u> |
| TOTALS | 917 | 100.0 | 27 | 100.0 |
| SOURCE: Michigan State Board of Education Bulletin Newaygo County Intermediate School District | | | | |

Definitions of "Home-School"

Parent interview question two: "Would you please describe what you mean by home-school education?" was intended to identify the definition that parents and superintendents use to define home-school education. The thirteen parent responses were:

School-aged children not being taught in a private or public school.

Children that are supposed to go to public school, but aren't.

Two families deciding to educate their children at home with help from a teacher each week.

Three families who are teaching their kids with a college graduate.

Parents are teaching kids because they don't like the public or parochial school choice available.

Non-certified adult who wants to teach.

Educating their kids at home.

Guardian of children teaches them without help and we do not want any help.

Two families trade-off and teach the kids.

Two families provide education in one of our homes.

The superintendents responded to the identical question with the following:

Eighteen responded that "one or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from a certified teacher".

Fourteen responded that "one or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with a non-certified teacher but with a college graduate".

Twelve responded that "one or more families educating children in a home of a parent or guardian (non-certified)".

Five responded that "students were attending classes of a non-approved curriculum".

Three responded that "delivery of education to children by a parent in a systematic format".

Two responded that "school-aged children (6-16) were taught outside the institutional environment".

Superintendents and parents were asked to describe "home-school". Their responses, in terms of frequency and percentage are shown in Table 3. The results indicated that superintendents and parents gave different definitions of "home-school". Thirty-three point three percent of the superintendents and 10% of the parents defined "home-school" as "one or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from a certified teacher." None of the parents and 25.9% of the superintendents defined "home-school" as "One or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from a non-certified teacher but a college graduate." Majority of the parents (60%) and only 22.2% of the superintendents agreed that "home-school" was "One or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian which involved a non-certified instructor! Thirty percent of the parents and only 3.7% of the superintendents agreed that "home school" was "School-aged children (6-16) taught outside of the institutional environment." Only superintendents defined "home-school" as "Students attending classes of a

non-approved curriculum" (9.3%), and "Delivery of education by a parent in a systematic format" (5.6%).

| TABLE 3 | | | | |
|---|------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| DEFINITIONS OF HOME SCHOOL" AS GIVEN BY SUPERINTENDENTS AND PARENTS: | | | | |
| <u>Definition</u> | <u>SUPERINTENDENTS</u> | | <u>PARENTS</u> | |
| | <u>Freq.</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Freq.</u> | <u>%</u> |
| One or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from a certified teacher. | 18 | 33.3 | 1 | 10.0 |
| One or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from a non-certified teacher but a college graduate. | 14 | 25.9 | - | -- |
| One or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian (non-certified). | 12 | 22.2 | 6 | 60.0 |
| Students attending classes of a non-approved curriculum. | 5 | 9.3 | - | -- |
| Delivery of "education" by a parent in a systematical format. | 3 | 5.6 | - | -- |
| School-aged children (6-16) taught outside the institutional environment. | 2 | 3.7 | 3 | 30.0 |
| TOTALS | 54 | 100.0 | 10 | 100.0 |

In summary, the results indicated that the majority of superintendents (59.2%) agreed that "home-school" was "one

or more families educating children in the home of a parent or guardian with support from either a certified teacher or a non-certified teacher with a college degree," while the majority of parents (60%) understood "home-school" as "one or more families educating children in the home of a parent/guardian with a non-certified instructor."

Educational Affiliation of Home-School Children

Intermediate school superintendents and parents in Newaygo County were asked to identify the kinds of institution they were educationally affiliated with so as to define the educational background the home-school children were being provided. Their responses, in terms of frequency and percentages, are shown in Table 4. The results indicate a great difference of opinion between what superintendents in the state are being told are the educational affiliations and what is actually being done. Thirty-eight point four percent of the parents and 3.1% of the superintendents identify that home-school children are being taught by parents who hold a college degree without a teaching certificate.

| TABLE 4 | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|-------|
| EDUCATIONAL AFFILIATIONS OF HOME-SCHOOL CHILDREN | | | | |
| AFFILIATION | SUPERINTENDENT | | PARENTS | |
| | F | % | F | % |
| Independent private teachers | 232 | 25.4 | - | - |
| Parents with teaching certificates | 204 | 22.2 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Christian Liberty Academy | 204 | 22.2 | 2 | 15.4 |
| Clonlara | 110 | 12.0 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Accelerated Christian Education | 36 | 3.9 | - | - |
| Baptist Academy | 34 | 3.7 | - | - |
| Parents with college degrees | 28 | 3.1 | 5 | 38.4 |
| League of St. Michael - Calif. | 26 | 2.8 | - | - |
| Adv. Training Instit. of Amer. | 22 | 2.4 | - | - |
| Pensicola Christian Academy | 21 | 2.3 | - | - |
| Parent with no formal training | - | - | 4 | 30.8 |
| TOTAL | 917 | 100.0 | 13 | 100.0 |

The discrepancy continues when 30.8% of the parents and none of the superintendents indicated that parents were educating their children at home with no formal training beyond a high school degree. Additionally 15.4% of the parents and 22.2% of the superintendents responded that home-school education was being provided under the auspices of an out-of-state religious institution identified as the Christian Liberty Academy in Illinois. The second religious institution that 7.7% of the parents and 12% of the superintendents indicated educational affiliation with was Clonlara, located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The second highest response from superintendents or 22.2% indicated that parents were providing education to their children with an up-to-date teaching certificate and 7.7% of the parents

indicated the same. The majority of superintendents (25.4%) responded that parents were contracting independent private teachers to provide education for their child. This discrepancy holds true since no parents in Newaygo County indicated that they had contracted an independent private teacher to provide education to their children.

Interview question three: "Who are you educationally affiliated with so a balanced curriculum is taught?" was intended to identify the institution that parents were registered with for compliance requirements. The thirteen responses were:

Clonlara in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Christian Liberty Academy in Illinois.

I am a parent who holds a Michigan Teaching Certificate.

Both parents hold a college degree but not a teaching certificate.

The children's mother has a college degree in psychology.

Christian Liberty Academy in Illinois.

Neither parent has any formal training after the twelfth grade.

I graduated from College with a social science degree.

Parents didn't graduate from high school and no other formal training.

I graduated from high school and have raised other children.

I have graduated from college with a business degree.

Some training in vocational education class but nothing after high school.

I hold a masters degree in criminal justice.

In summary, the results indicated that parents and superintendents are at opposite ends of the spectrum regarding the educational background that parents possess and what is being told to intermediate school superintendents when providing education to their home-school children.

Parents Reason in Favor of Home-Education as Perceived by
Superintendents and Parents

During all thirteen interviews with parents, responses were given to interview question four which stated; "What would you say are the reasons parents choose to instruct or educate their children at home versus an approved parochial or public school?" For a comparison to the above question the superintendents were asked to identify the reasons that parents give to them for educating their children at home. Since there was no limit on the number of reasons that could be given, eight reasons were identified in the responses from the thirteen interviews and 57 returned questionnaires which gave responses to the questions. The percentages were computed on the frequency of a response category to the total number of responses. The responses, in terms of frequency and percentage are shown in Table 5.

| TABLE 5 | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|-------|
| PARENTS REASONS IN FAVOR OF HOME-EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY SUPERINTENDENTS AND PARENTS | | | | |
| PARENTS REASONS FOR HOME-EDUCATION | SUPERINTENDENT | | PARENTS | |
| | F | % | F | % |
| Fear of Public School Environment | 21 | 36.8 | 4 | 30.0 |
| Lack of confidence in public school system | 10 | 17.5 | 2 | 15.4 |
| Right to teach their own value system | 9 | 15.9 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Religious Beliefs | 7 | 12.3 | 3 | 23.0 |
| Lack of discipline in public schools | 4 | 7.0 | - | -- |
| Desire to have a "one-on-one" situation for their child | 2 | 3.5 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Belief of human rights to educate their own children | 2 | 3.5 | 1 | 7.7 |
| To provide a better academic founda- tion | 2 | 3.5 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Transportation problems | - | - | 1 | 7.7 |
| Quality of teachers of elementary school | - | - | 1 | 7.7 |
| TOTALS | 57 | 100.0 | 13 | 100.0 |

The majority of parents (30.8%) and superintendents (36.8%) agreed that the public school environment is what both groups perceive as the most contributing reason given for home-school education. Both groups were consistent in their perception that parents lacked confidence in the public school system. Seventeen point five percent of the superintendents and 15.4% of the parents chose this response which contributes to the fear of the public school environment. Twenty-three percent of the parents and 12.3% of the superintendents responded that religious beliefs were

the main reason for their decision to educate their children at home.

Of the remaining responses to this question the frequency of the response or (7.7%) was given to: right to teach their own value system, superintendent's response (3.5%); transportation problems and quality of teachers at the elementary level were not responded to by superintendents.

Interview question four: "What would you say are the reasons parents choose to instruct or educate their children at home versus an approved parochial or public school?" was intended to identify those qualities which parents perceive as necessary qualities in their child's education. The following responses from parents were given:

The belief that I have the right to educate my own kids.

The quality of teachers at the public school is terrible. They are terrible because they don't care about kids, just a paycheck.

The public school makes the kids walk about a quarter of a mile and I pay taxes for them to be picked-up here at the house.

Our previous children always got into trouble at public school. I don't have much confidence in their program.

Our religious background and beliefs are different than the parochial school located in town.

Traditionally we have little confidence in the public school that we must send our children to.

There is so much drugs and alcohol at school during the day that our children are exposed to.

We don't believe in God and we feel that we have the right to teach our kids anyway we want. We wanted this type of life for our kids and they like our values.

The religious education is not thorough enough. I would send the kids to public school but don't like the hassles I get from them.

We used to send the kids to the parochial school but they were too tough on them when it came to discipline.

We are definitely afraid of the physical abuse that children take from older kids.

Peer pressure on elementary aged students is too great for our child.

The public school environment protects naughty children.

The Superintendents' responded to the identical question with the following:

Twenty responded that parents fear the public school environment.

Ten responded that parents lack the confidence in the public school system.

Nine responded that parents felt they had the right to teach their own value system.

Seven responded that parents chose religious beliefs.

Four responded that parents felt a lack of discipline in the public schools.

Two responded that parents believe in the human rights to educate their own children.

Two responded that parents want to provide a better academic foundation for their children.

Two responded that parents desire to have a one-on-one situation with their child.

Actual Reasons in Favor of Home-Education as Perceived
by Superintendents and as given by Parents

Parent interview question five and question five of the superintendent questionnaire addressed the actual or real

reason parents chose to educate their children at home. Their responses, in terms of frequency and percentage are shown in TABLE 6.

Parent interview question five: "What would you say are the reasons for educating your child or children at home?" was intended to bring the respondent to his/her personal decision for choosing home-based education. The responses were:

Lack of trust in the public schools.

The public school system can't be trusted. The teachers and administrators don't listen to parents when they have a problem.

We as parents feel strongly that our own value system can be better taught if our children don't go to school. We know what is best for our children.

Because of the high cost to live these days, we need our children at home to do the work. We think that our children can learn by doing instead of just learning facts that are of no use.

We fear the negative influence of other children.

Religion is our basic concern. Its not enough to take religious classes but we as parents feel the need to monitor the application of religion all day long.

There are too many children who push drugs so they can earn money. The parents don't believe that their son or daughter is a drug pusher. If you catch the kids pushing drugs, their parents won't believe you.

We feel that our children need to learn the value of hard work to get ahead in this world. They can't learn to work sitting in a classroom.

Religious teaching can address some of society's problems like aids and venereal disease. Religion needs to be introduced to children everyday.

Older students pick on our children and make fun of them. There is no justice in the public school system. Political influence carries too much weight.

Teachers teach kids to experiment too much regarding sex education.

Our society is too permissive and adults don't monitor their own children. When their child gets into trouble the parents support their own children instead of listening to other adults.

We fear the negative influences of society in general. You can't trust anyone with our children's education so we will do it ourself.

The Superintendents indicated the following when asked the same question:

Twenty-two responded that parents fear the negative ills of society.

Ten responded that parents desire religious preferences.

Eight responded a desire to have their child work at home.

Four responded that parents believe strongly to teach their own value system.

Three responded that parents had a lack of trust in the public schools.

Three responded that parents were embarrassed over the low achieving or special education child.

Two responded that parents wanted to develop a value laden education in isolation from outside influences.

One responded that parents felt that public schools were unsuccessful.

One responded that parents felt the cost of private education was high.

One responded that parents wanted to develop a non-conformist attitude with their children.

One responded that parents felt pressure from a minister.

One responded that parents disagreed with decisions of a teacher or administrator in a public school.

The thirteen responses to interview question five were categorized into five different responses. Of the responses, 46.1% indicated that parents feared the negative influence of society that is prevalent in public schools. Fifteen point four percent was cited in the next three responses of religious preference, desire to have their children work at home and lack of trust in public school. The belief in teaching their own value system was mentioned by parents in 7.7% of the total number of responses.

The responses from the superintendent questionnaire follow very closely the same pattern as to the actual reasons, as perceived by superintendents, that parents chose to educate their children at home. Of the twelve responses, 38.7% indicated that parents were fearful of the negative influences in society that are prevalent in the public schools. Relative to this perception, 7% of the superintendents felt that parents wanted to teach their own value system; 5.3% felt parents had a lack of trust in the public schools and 3.5% felt that parents desired isolation from outside influences for their child's education.

Of the eight remaining responses given to question five of the superintendent questionnaire, 17.6% of the superintendents cited religious preference which was second to the fear of the ills in society (38.7). The desire to have their children work at home was mentioned in 14.1% of the responses followed by: parents embarrassment over a low

achieving or special education child at 5.3%; disagreement with a teacher or principal, pressure from a minister, development of a non-conformist attitude on behalf of parents at the expense of their child, lack of success in the public school and the cost of private education was stated in 1.7% of the responses.

| TABLE 6 | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|---------|-------|
| ACTUAL REASONS IN FAVOR OF HOME EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY SUPERINTENDENTS AND AS GIVEN BY PARENTS | | | | |
| ACTUAL REASONS FOR HOME-EDUCATION | SUPERINTENDENTS | | PARENTS | |
| | F | % | F | % |
| Fear of the ills of society | 22 | 38.7 | 6 | 46.1 |
| Religious preference | 10 | 17.6 | 2 | 15.4 |
| Desire to have their child work at home | 8 | 14.1 | 2 | 15.6 |
| Believe strongly in their own value system | 4 | 7.0 | 1 | 7.7 |
| Lack of trust in public school | 3 | 5.3 | 2 | 15.4 |
| Parents embarrassment over a low achieving or special education child | 3 | 5.3 | - | - |
| Development of a value laden education in isolation from outside influence | 2 | 3.5 | - | - |
| Disagreement with a teacher or principal in a public school | 1 | 1.7 | - | - |
| Pressure from a minister | 1 | 1.7 | - | - |
| The development of a non-conformist attitude on behalf of parents at the expense of their child | 3 | 5.3 | - | - |
| Lack of success in the public school system | 1 | 1.7 | - | - |
| Cost of private education | 1 | 1.7 | - | - |
| TOTALS | 57 | 100.0 | 13 | 100.0 |

Parent interview question six: "Would you recall a particular occasion that is an example of the kind of . . . (whatever were the responses to question five) that your child was placed in?" was intended to give the respondents an opportunity to express additional ideas of why they chose to home-educate their child. The thirteen responses were:

Drug use in the public schools is not monitored closely enough and my child sees someone else get away with it and he/she thinks he/she can do it too.

Our children spend so much time at school and after school in activities that she doesn't have time to do her chores at home.

I as a parent would like to teach the particular values that I was taught. With the values of society changing so rapidly, I feel its necessary since these are my children and they do not belong to society.

The teachers attitude at public school is very bad. Don't they realize who pays their salary. If they treat everybody the way they treat me it is no wonder that the below average student feels neglected.

There seems to be so much fighting and arguing going on at school.

The curriculum is not allowed to provide some religious activity.

The bus stops in our school district are terrible. Kids must walk in the cold snowy morning to go to school.

The curriculum should be developed to address some of the ills in society. We feel we can address some of these issues through religion.

There is a fight a day in our schools. Why should we as parents subject our kids to this kind of fear.

State law won't allow our children any bible reading.

The influence of other children selling and using drugs is extremely negative.

Question six of the superintendents questionnaire was intended to give the respondents an opportunity to express

additional ideas of what superintendents perceived to be the real distinguishing factors of why parents choose to educate their children at home. One hundred and fifty-four responses were tabulated since there was no limit to the number of items the 57 superintendents could respond to that were given by parents. These items are listed with the frequency and percentages as shown in Table 7.

| TABLE 7 | | |
|--|----------------------|-------|
| AREAS THAT BEST REFLECT THE REASONS IN FAVOR OF HOME EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY SUPERINTENDENTS | | |
| Areas that reflect best reasons for home-education | Superintendents F | % |
| Religious conviction | 35 | 22.7 |
| Fear of drugs | 29 | 18.8 |
| Lack of confidence in public schools | 19 | 12.3 |
| Non-religious activities | 18 | 11.8 |
| Discipline | 18 | 11.8 |
| Teacher attitudes | 16 | 10.4 |
| Special needs reasons | 7 | 4.5 |
| Parents want to teach | 7 | 4.5 |
| Inconvenience | 3 | 1.9 |
| Poor curriculum | 2 | 1.3 |
| Transportation | 0 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 154 | 100.0 |

Of the one hundred fifty-four responses to question six of the questionnaire, twenty-two point seven percent indicated that parents tell them that they are educating at home due to religious convictions. Eighteen point eight percent cited the fear of drugs; twelve point three percent

gave the lack of confidence in public schools; eleven point eight percent stated non-religious activities and discipline; ten point four percent gave teacher attitudes; four point five percent identified special needs and the desire on behalf of parents to teach; one point nine percent mentioned inconvenience and poor curriculum was mentioned in one point three percent of the responses. All superintendents failed to identify transportation as a problem as perceived by superintendents of why parents choose to educate their children at home.

Superintendents' Perceptions of the Problems Relating to
Home-School Education

Question eight of the superintendent's questionnaire: "In your opinion, please identify a problem or problems dealing with home-school education and what possible solutions you would recommend?" was intended to identify the problem and possible solutions that superintendents perceived when parents chose to educate their children at home. There responses were:

Nineteen responded that unqualified instructors were a problem.

Ten responded that the socialization of the child would be a problem.

Eight responded that it would be difficulty to identify grade equivalency.

Eight responded that a problem would be the lack of firm leadership from the Michigan State Department of Education.

Three responded that parents had unrealistic expectations of the public schools.

Two responded that parents have a lack of standards for home school curriculum and instruction.

One response stated mandated testing for students.

One responded difficulty in college acceptance and placement for home school students.

One responded about the Constitutional question of parents rights versus state right for education.

One responded a problem with enforcement of present laws regarding home school certification.

One responded that intermediate school districts have a severe problem with monitoring curriculums.

One responded a concern about home students having access to extra-curricular activities.

One responded the difficulty of evaluating legitimate home schools against the curriculum of a public or parochial school.

Since there was no limit on the number of responses that could be given, thirteen problem areas were identified from the 57 superintendents. The percentages were computed on the frequency of a response and are listed in TABLE 8.

Of the thirteen responses to question eight of the superintendents questionnaire, one-third or 33.3% indicated the major problem to be education of children by unqualified instructors. Seventeen point six percent of the superintendents felt there would be potential problems with the socialization of the child since the child would be in a more protective environment. Identifying grade equivalency and the lack of firm leadership from the Department of Education was cited by fourteen point two percent of the superintendents. Five point three percent stated that

unrealistic expectations of the public schools was a parent's reason for pulling the child out of public school and placing the child in a home-school setting. The lack of standards for curriculum and instruction for home-schools was cited by three point five percent of the superintendents. At one point seven percent of the responses were: state mandated testing college acceptance and placement; constitutional question of parents rights versus states rights; enforcement of present laws that are not enforced; intermediate school district monitoring; access to extra-curricular activities and differentiating. It was interesting that no superintendents offered a probable solution to the number of identified problems.

Not all responses are mutually exclusive. In most instances the researcher was able to clarify the reasoning behind a given response, but this did not always help in categorization; therefore caution should be exercised in data interpretation.

| TABLE 8 | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| PROBLEMS OF HOME-SCHOOLING AS PERCEIVED BY SUPERINTENDENTS | | |
| Problems related to home schooling | Freq. | % |
| Unqualified instructors | 19 | 33.3 |
| Socialization of the child | 10 | 17.6 |
| Identifying grade equivalency | 8 | 14.2 |
| Unrealistic expectations of the public schools | 3 | 5.3 |
| Lack of standards for curriculum and instruction | 2 | 3.5 |
| State mandated testing | 1 | 1.7 |
| College acceptance and placement | 1 | 1.7 |
| Constitutional question of parents rights versus state rights | 1 | 1.7 |
| Enforcement of present laws that are in place | 1 | 1.7 |
| Intermediate school district monitoring problems | 1 | 1.7 |
| Access to extra-curricular activitie | 1 | 1.7 |
| Differentiating between legitimate home-schools | 1 | 1.7 |
| TOTALS | 57 | 100.0 |

Seriousness of the Problem as Perceived by Superintendents

Question seven of the superintendents questionnaire was intended to give the respondents an opportunity to categorize the seriousness of the home-school education problem as it relates to other problems or issues they deal with. (TABLE 9)

In three of the fifty-seven respondents, or six percent of all responses, no responses were given to question eight.

In a little over thirty-five percent of the responses, superintendents did not see home-school education as a serious problem. Next at twenty-six percent, the superintendents identified home-school education as a potential problem with twenty-two percent of the superintendents citing it as a very little problem. Thirteen percent of the superintendents stated that home-school education was somewhat a serious problem and three point seven percent cited it as a very serious problem.

| TABLE 9 | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| SERIOUSNESS OF HOME-SCHOOL AS A PROBLEM AS PERCEIVED BY SUPERINTENDENTS | | |
| Degree of seriousness | Freq. | % |
| Very serious problem | 2 | 3.7 |
| Somewhat of a serious problem | 7 | 13.0 |
| Potential problem | 14 | 26.0 |
| Not a serious problem | 19 | 35.1 |
| Very little problem | 12 | 22.2 |
| TOTAL | 54 | 100.0 |

Superintendents Opinion as to the Need for Evaluation
of Home-Schools

Superintendent question nine, "Would you support a state mandated procedure in which to evaluate home-school requirements?" was addressed by the respondents, with the intention of helping the researcher identify the percentage of legal requirements needed for the superintendents to evaluate home-school education. Over eighty-five percent of

the superintendents agreed that mandated rules and/or regulations are needed to evaluate home-school education. Fourteen point eight percent of the respondents didn't feel they needed state mandated procedures in which to evaluate home school requirements. (TABLE 10)

| TABLE 10 | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| SUPERINTENDENTS OPINIONS TO THE NEED TO FOR EVALUATION OF HOME-SCHOOLS | | |
| Evaluate Home School | Freq. | % |
| YES | 46 | 85.2 |
| NO | 8 | 14.8 |
| TOTAL | 54 | 100.0 |

Parent interview question eight: "Why is a home school capable of providing . . .?" or "What causes . . . to happen?" and "How do you account for these differences?" was designed to bring the respondents perceptions into focus.

The thirteen responses to interview question eight were placed into three categories. (TABLE 11)

| TABLE 11 | | |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME-SCHOOLS | | |
| Category | Number of Responses | Percent of Responses |
| Parents care more about their children than public or parochial school personnel. | 7 | 54 |
| Generally, education is applied activities of learning in a relaxed environment | 3 | 23 |
| Negative or positive influences of other children | 3 | 23 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 100 |

Of the thirteen responses to interview question eight, fifty-four percent indicated that public school teachers don't show that they care about the needs of their children. Twenty-three percent cited that applied education is more valuable for long-lasting student's learning. In their opinion education will occur regardless if it's at home or in an institutional setting. Also, twenty-three percent stated that the influence of others in a classroom or at school detracts from their child's learning opportunities.

Parent interview question six: "Would you recall a particular occasion that is an example of the kind of . . . (whatever were the responses to question four)?" was asked for each of the reasons given in response to question four so as to bring the respondent's perceptions into focus. If the examples were vague and/or incomplete, this question

would clarify the response and give the interviewee an opportunity to expand upon their example.

Fear of the negative influences in society was cited most frequently as the aspect that parents wanted to protect their child from. (31%) There were likenesses and differences in the responses, such as the four quoted here:

Substance abuse in the public schools, especially at the Middle School level, is becoming more prevalent. There seems to be more violence in the public school setting and I don't want my children to see such violence.

The parents protect their children when they make mistakes. They continually blame other children in the school when their child gets into trouble.

I had a friend tell me that kids are very mean and do awful things to other students if these other students tell the truth or squeal on others. Why can't we raise children in an environment that rewards people for doing what's right.

All the responses are listed with the frequency and percentages in TABLE 12.

| TABLE 12 | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| STATEMENTS BY HOME-SCHOOL PARENTS AS NEGATIVE FEATURES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS | | |
| Statements | Freq. | Perc. |
| Children are required to walk a considerable distance to the approved bus stop. | 1 | 8 |
| The attitude of teachers in public schools emphasizes gifted education not helping the less fortunate child | 1 | 8 |
| I as a parent would like to teach the values that I want my child to live by. Society's values in general are toward greed. | 1 | 8 |
| Children spend too much time at school and at school related activities that very little time is left for work or time with the family. | 1 | 8 |
| There seems to be too much violence at school. | 2 | 15 |
| The curriculum does not emphasis any teaching of religious values. | 3 | 23 |
| The negative influence, such as substance abuse, is too great for my child to deal with. | 4 | 31 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 100 |

There were a variety of meanings underlying the notion of religious values. Twenty-three percent of the parents noted examples of religious values and they are quoted here:

Since public schools cannot teach religion or any aspect of religious beliefs, where is my child going to learn about God.

Our society has lost its faith in God and where else can children learn about faith but at school.

I think it is ridiculous that children can't pray in school. I wonder if the teachers don't have religion or if it really is the fear of controversy that they would have to address.

Fifteen percent of the parent responses dealt with some form of violence in the public schools as shown within the following two statements:

When an argument turns into a fight the teachers and administrators just suspend the kids from school instead of getting down to the reasons that caused the fights.

Peer pressure on children in the public school to stand up to other children is too great. Our children see the only way to settle a disagreement is to fight to see who is the strongest.

Four different sets of parents gave an independent response which was eight percent of the total responses. They were as follows:

The school requires so much time from my child that he/she doesn't have time to learn the things we as parents want to teach. After school my son wants to be in athletics and after practice he has to study.

As a parent I would like to teach the values that I feel I want my child to possess. I want my child to learn to help others not to use others for financial gain.

The teachers in public school display an attitude that is not caring. The only thing that teachers care about is patting themselves on the back because their class has high test scores. They don't care about the poor academic student.

The transportation department assigns bus routes so my child has to walk a quarter of a mile. Don't they realize that my child could get hit by a car or picked up by a terrible person and physically harmed.

Distinctive Qualities of Home-Schools as viewed by Parents

Interview question seven: "Describe what happens in a home-school that does not happen in a public school?" was intended to identify those qualities which parents perceive as unique to home-school education by limiting the responses to conditions that are present in a home-school but not in a parochial or public school.

Of the thirteen interviews, ten offered responses to interview question seven; three gave no response. Nine responses were identified and are listed below:

My child has the opportunity to apply a value to a work experience.

A one-on-one relationship can be established at home that can't be nurtured in a public school.

Children don't have to waste 2 1/2 hours of the day riding on a bus.

Parents can monitor their children at home where they can't when they are at school.

Since my child has been identified as a special education child, I would like to give him more of my time and help him to learn.

I as a parent feel I can do a better job of teaching my child than the public or parochial school.

I can provide education when my child is ready to learn. Children don't always learn between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

While building our house, I can teach math, a construction trade and common sense to my child. This is called applied education, not just learning facts.

I feel that our society is being ruined due to the lack of family pride.

Smaller class size has proven to be more productive with less time being spent from the entire day.

Consistency of Responses

The data were analyzed for consistency of response by reviewing and comparing the responses of the following questions:

1. What do you say are your reasons?
2. Do the reasons the parents choose to home-educate correspond with what they say are characteristics of a home-school?
3. Are the personal incidents cited as examples from parents consistent with the distinctive qualities of a home-school?
4. Are the reasons parents give to superintendents consistent with the real reason that parents give for home-education of their children?

The consistency of the responses of a simple interview was different from the consistency of all the responses to a particular question.

There was a high degree of consistency of the responses in six of the thirteen interviews. If the parents had stated that the reasons they chose to home-educate their children was to protect their child from the negative influences in society, they usually said the distinguishing characteristics of a home-school was protection from the ills of society. The personal incidents or qualities that parents want for their children were the same kind of qualities identified that they were addressing.

In the seven interviews with inconsistent responses, the parents may have thought that once a response was given it should not, or need not, be mentioned again during the interview.

Summary

In this chapter the responses to the parent interview questions and superintendents questionnaires were presented and content analyzed. For each question there was a statement of the question, a summary of the analysis derived from the responses, and a description of the responses with a selection of quotations from the interviews. The data were also analyzed for consistency of responses.

The summary, the conclusions, the implications of home-schools, reflections and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is presented in five parts: summary; findings; conclusions; recommendations for further research and reflections.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to determine the motivating factors parents have when educating children at home. A secondary purpose of the study is to determine if intermediate school district superintendents perceptions regarding parents motives are accurate when compared with actual parents' responses who have implemented home-based education programs.

The study was developed from assumptions that home-schools have unique aspects that parents want for their children and that only parents can say what it is they perceive these distinguishing aspects to be.

In order to clarify the recent increase in home-schools, a rationale for home-schools was presented. The historical background of public and parochial school education was reviewed. The evolution of home-school education as it currently exists, was set forth.

The population of thirteen different sets of parents who provide home-based education to their children and who reside in Newaygo County were interviewed. Their

perceptions of why they educate their children at home were obtained from responses to open-ended questions. The researcher processed the responses and examined the data using the content analysis technique, as well as checking for consistency of response.

The entire population of intermediate school district superintendents in the State of Michigan were surveyed. The results of this survey were used to compare the reasons parents gave of why they choose to educate their children at home versus a traditional educational setting. The researcher processed the responses and examined the data to determine similarities and differences among the responses.

The study is significant because it may contribute to an understanding of the reasons why parents remove their children from public or parochial school setting and provide education at home. By investigating the factors which motivate home-school parents, public educators will be able to better determine if action on their part might be able to reduce this trend.

Home-based education was first established during the colonial period of this nation. Colonist recognized the value of education for all children in their colony. The right to decide the type of education, freedom of speech and religious association was the main principles that this nation was founded. To protect these rights the United

States Constitution and Bill of Rights was adopted and they continue to govern the people of this nation.

As our population increased and expanded across the continental United States, home-school education continued to flourish. This method of education was the mainstay while the American frontier was being settled. Parents had to educate their children at home because large population centers were non-existent for formal education to take place as we know it today. As the population increased and settled in geographical locations, the need for a formal setting where groups of children are educated together was stressed by the people.

Today the home-school movement seems to be growing in this country as it did during the colonial era. Parents choose to educate their children at home for a variety of reasons ranging from safety to morality. Practitioners of home-schooling came from both the anti-establishment movement from the far left as well as the Christian fundamentalist movement from the far right. With estimates of the incidence of home instruction increasing, it is reasonable to assume that school districts will face the question of whether parents can legally have their children educated at home, rather than in the public schools.

The answer to this question is primarily a legal issue that is dependent upon state statutes. Each state has a compulsory attendance statute. These statutes may be

grouped into three categories - those that require attendance at public or private school only with no exception, those that provide an alternative with broad language such as "equivalent instruction elsewhere", and those that explicitly provide an option of home instruction.

The State of Michigan does not have a law pertaining to home schools and are solely guided by the compulsory attendance and non-public school statutes.

Parents may provide for the education of their children in the home if certain requirements are met. These requirements are as follows:

- ... All instruction must be given by a Michigan certified teacher. The certificate must be valid for the subject matter being taught by the teacher. All teaching certificates must be registered with the Intermediate Superintendent's office.
- ... The Compulsory School Attendance law states that the curriculum for children in the home must be comparable to that offered by the local public school in which the home is located. The parent must request a statement of comparability from the local superintendent. This statement is to be kept on file in the office of the local superintendent.
- ... Children in the home must be provided with a minimum of 180 days and 900 hours of instruction. Because of the intensive instruction that can be provided by one teacher and one student, it may not be necessary for the certificated teacher to be in attendance for the full day of instruction. The number of hours may be adjusted so that children receive adequate supervision in which to perform their work. "...If instruction in the home is provided for 6 or more students, the home must comply with the school fire safety standards. See 1941 PA 207, MCLA 20.1 et seq; MSA 4.559 (1) et seq and 1979 Michigan Administrative Code, Vol 1, R 29.16, p 222. Accurate records must be kept

by the parent to substantiate the days and hours of instruction provided to the child."

... Children being taught in the home shall be given: A) courses of instruction in the Constitution of the United States, B) Constitution of the State of Michigan, C) the history and present form of civil government of the United States, the State of Michigan, and the political subdivisions and municipalities of the State of Michigan. The parent must provide a statement to the local superintendent of schools that the above courses will be taught.(1)

The primary issue for courts to decide is the question of academic equivalence. Once home instruction has been accepted as a possibly equivalent alternative, the issue shifts to what standards or criteria are used to measure equivalence. In Michigan, specific requirements, such as teacher qualifications, curriculum coverage, equivalent time and periodic testing are being evaluated by the intermediate school districts. This does not negate the ultimate responsibility of local discretion on matters of equivalency.

A secondary issue that parents and local officials must address is the overall effectiveness of home instruction. Many parents are unqualified to teach and hide behind religious institutions such as the Christian Liberty Academy of Arlington Heights, Illinois. This academy enrolls students in their program and provides an array of courses and other materials for parents to teach their children at home. In 1977, the Christian Liberty Academy had an enrollment of 600 students and today they are servicing

approximately 23,000 students. By enrolling their children under the auspices of the Christian Liberty Academy, home-school parents educate their children under a private school heading.

The trend toward home-school education is small, but vigorous and diverse. Home-schoolers appear to have many reasons for undertaking home-schooling for their children.

Findings

The motivating factors expressed by the parents interviewed who home educate their children are included in three specific categories: fear of the negative influences in society, religious preference, and the lack of confidence in the public school system. Some overlapping of categories was created by varying parental interpretation.

Parent Fear of negative influences in society. A significant number of parents object to the political or cultural values they find in public or private schools. Many parents feel the need to protect their children from drug and substance abuse. Additionally, they responded that much violence is in the public school system. Parents indicated that fights, abusive language and inconsiderate behavior is widely prevalent in public schools. In general, the opinions of parents can be summed up in one parent's response: "The availability of drugs and violence in the public school system is my only reason".

Parental Preference on Religion. Religious preference is perceived with greater unanimity than any other reason except the fear of the ills in society. "Religious motives are behind much of the recent surge in home-schooling. It is Christian fundamentalism which decries a perceived "godlessness" in the public schools and which includes belief in literal interpretation of the Bible". This parent response was an outcry by a person who differed in his belief of the parochial school that was located in the area. Many parents indicated the desire to teach their own value system which closely reflects their political and religious belief. Parents see home-school education as a means to express their human rights.

Parent's Lack of Confidence in the Public Schools. For the most part, parents choose home instruction because they are "committed to providing a more informal, individualized, and responsive style of learning." Other families detest structure and strongly believe in allowing the children to set the pace and direction of home learning.

In a few instances parents perceived the public school personnel to be uncaring. "Teacher attitudes" was described by one parent to be selfish and only wanting to teach the gifted child and not the academically handicapped children.

The 57 intermediate school district superintendents were asked to identify the reasons parents give to them of why they educate the children at home. The reasons

expressed by the superintendents who responded to the questionnaire are included in three specific categories: fear of the public school environment, lack of confidence in the public school system, and religious beliefs. There was some overlapping of categories by varying superintendent interpretations.

Superintendents' Responses to the Fear of Public School Environment. A significant number of superintendents identified the formal school environment as the reason parents choose to educate their children at home. Included in their responses was the same concerns expressed by parents of drugs, substance abuse, violence in the schools and negative social traits associated with the traditional school setting.

Superintendents' Responses to the Lack of Confidence in the Public School System. In this category superintendents included administrators and teachers who do not actively pursue correction of a disruptive environment. They site parents who disagree with public school policy, or unfair treatment of their son or daughter when discipline measures are taken. Superintendents feel that parents support their own children no matter if the children are wrong or not. This leads to poor discipline, inconsistent treatment of children and generally a lack of confidence that the public school is trying to instill good moral values.

Superintendents also identified that parents do not like, or agree with, some teachers' instructional methods. Few teachers display an attitude of caring for each child like parents would.

Superintendents' Responses to Religious Preference.

The majority of superintendents explained that parents registered their children in home-schools because of religious reasons. Contrary to what parents said were their reasons, superintendents feel that parents take their child out of a traditional setting, due in part, to their fear of the school environment and lack of confidence in the school system.

A significant number of superintendents indicated that parents do want some permeation of religion throughout the classes and activities of each day. They feel that the most recent push for home-schooling comes from fundamentalist Christians who want to give their children a God-centered education at home. But superintendents also recognize that many Christian schools do exist for their children to attend if that is home-school parents actual desires.

For the most part, superintendents and parents wrestle with the whole basic issue; "do the children belong to the parents or do they belong to the state"? Educational leaders and lawmakers feel that the state is responsible to

educate each child. Home-school parents feel that it is only a privilege of the state to educate.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivating factors of why parents choose to educate their children at home as perceived by parents and intermediate school district superintendents located in the State of Michigan.

This study of parent and superintendent perceptions of why parents choose to educate their children at home was guided by four research questions:

1. What specific aspects of home-based education do parents want for their children?
2. What are the distinguishing characteristics of home-based education as perceived by parents?
3. What do parents perceive as giving home-schools its unique character?
4. What implications do superintendent's perceptions of home-based education have on the future of public school education?

Parents and educators perceive home-based education to be different in kind from public school education which is taught in a traditional setting. The major conclusions of the study are:

1. A firm belief is shared by parents and educational leaders that parents can and should be deeply involved in the educational development of their own children.

Parents and superintendents share the belief that the purpose of education in a democratic society is to enable its citizens to develop to their fullest potential. To this end, education must include more than the accumulation of facts and information.

Both groups indicated a strong concern over the quality of education for their children. Academic achievement is perceived with greater unanimity than any other quality. Involvement on behalf of parents and educators is needed to define what is quality education.

Some parents objected to the political or cultural values they find in public or private schools. Others do not like the instructional method. Many home-school parents agreed with the late John Holt that children learn best in an unstructured environment in which the child sets the pace and direction. Many parents indicated a desire to spend time with their young children before enrolling them in public or private school. Sometimes, recognizing the needs of a gifted or special needs student, a parent indicated that only a highly individualized program will permit their child to attain their highest potential.

Superintendents expressed agreement with home-school parents about parental involvement in a child's education; a few superintendents indicated that public schools are now affording parents opportunities to sit on committees that provide input into the decision making process. Another

superintendent indicated that public schools are making an effort to make parents feel important with good communication between the school and home through newsletters and articles in daily or weekly publications.

The opinions of superintendents can be summed up in one superintendent's response: "If done properly, home-schooling is an ideal method of education. Unfortunately, public education encompasses all children within a school district. We must provide quality education within the economic limits that a majority of parents in a school district approve."

2. Parents and educational leaders agree on the perceived factors which motivate parents to choose home-based education for their children to be: the negative influences in our society which is reflected in our public school environment, lack of confidence in our public school system, and for religious preference.

Parents feel the need to protect their children from the negative influences in society by withdrawing their children from the public school environment. Parents and superintendents both agreed that peer pressure plays an important role in the exposure of children to many ills in society. Students are pressured into drug use, use of alcohol and sexual activity that home-school parents want to protect their children from by keeping them home. It is felt that absences from other children, who are not raised

with proper values, will help to reduce the use and spread of these negative activities.

Parents also expressed the lack of discipline as a contributing factor to remove their children from the public school system. Parents indicted that the lack of discipline was a by-produce of certain parental influences of the community which contributed to inconsistent treatment of students who disrupt the school day by fighting or swearing. Parents felt that negative influences are always present where you have groups of children. For that reason home-school parents felt that parochial schools were no better than the public school.

Secondly, parents chose to educate their children at home because they lack confidence in the public school site. For the most part, parents interpret this lack of confidence to be poor communication between the school and parents, an inadequate curriculum, and an uncooperative attitude on the part of school employees. Many parents cited disagreement with a teacher or principal as their reason to home-educate. Some further indicated that school personnel had an attitude toward their child which caused their child to do poorly in academic classes.

Finally, a number of parents mentioned religious preference as their reason to home-educate. Superintendents identified that parents would like some form of religion in their teaching of children. Parents view religious

instruction as a fundamental skill enabling children to cope with life's problems or to determine right or wrong, a point some superintendents classified as a form of discipline.

The opinion of superintendents with regard to religion in the public schools can be summed up in one response: "parents, whether they are religious or not, feel the responsibility to provide their children with some form of religious instruction. When religion was forced out of public schools by minority groups, education deteriorated and became a battle ground for society."

3. Specific home-school legislation is needed and desired by parents and educational leaders to insure that all children have adequate teachers, equivalent curriculum, instructional time, and periodic testing to determine progress and problems.

The Supreme Court has indicated that states have a legitimate interest in the education of children and may specify reasonable regulations governing a private school curriculum. But the Court has never extended this dictum to state control over the selection of specific materials or to state prescription of every subject taught.

The courts will uphold reasonable state regulations. There is little doubt that states have the right to request data from home-schools. States may also be able to set standards for the minimum length of instruction for a day and a year.

Parents and superintendents feel that the state could prescribe reasonable standards for teachers in home-schools. The objection that parents site revolves around teacher certification by the state. Home-school parents continue to identify very little justification for requiring teachers to be certified. They state that public schools are not out of business if a child fails to test above a minimum level. Additionally, certified teachers only have to pass courses in a planned curriculum, not be tested to receive or continue with a certified license.

Parents expressed a concern about a home-school curriculum being equivalent with the public school curriculum. Their concern revolved around the issue of equivalence because all of the public schools in the state are not equal to each other. There are many public schools who offer various types of curriculum due to economic reasons. Parents and superintendents support the concept that children should be periodically tested to determine learning progress rather than an equivalent curriculum.

4. Building cooperative relationships between public school officials and home-schoolers was seen as a method that could enrich our understanding of child development and learning since home-schools provide a substantially different learning environment.

Parents and superintendents agree that public educators could gain a great deal by constructing a cooperative

relationship between public school officials and home-schoolers. This effort could reduce the fear that home-schoolers face when registering their home as a private school and help superintendents to identify the number of children involved in home-school programs. Superintendents indicated that better ties could facilitate studies in the comparative effects of one-to-one versus larger student teacher ratios; the effect of peer pressure; the effects of child directed verses teacher directed programs; and improvement of various teacher training programs.

Parents stated that much could be learned from home-school parents who provide different learning environments, particularly those who pursue a less structured, more child-directed approach to schooling. More importantly, parents felt that better ties could help public educators to identify the child abuse or neglect cases.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Additional studies similar to the present study should be undertaken to test the general applicability of the finding in this study. Comparable samples in other intermediate school districts should be examined.
2. Investigation of the attitudes and perceptions of parents of children attending parochial schools would provide valuable comparative reasons to why parents do not educate their children in public schools only.
3. A study of parents perceptions of public schools should be instituted to help resolve some of the problems the public schools have.

4. A comparative study of the teacher in home school and the teachers in public schools may give the teachers insights regarding themselves and their colleagues.
5. A study of the perceptions of public school administrators could be used in developing an interactive program for parents and administrators.

Reflections

The readings, interviewing, analyzing, and reporting undertaken for this study have absorbed my thoughts for many months. The home-school issue, public school environment, the role of the family in education; and my personal experiences and insights have been the subject of some reflections, questions, and visions.

Home-school Issue. Parental rejection of school is neither new nor surprising. Which parent among us has not listened with growing interest to some tales of educational exploitation or incompetence reported by our children. How often have we sat at the local restaurant and listened to a story about school only to find out that the facts were misrepresented or slanted after we investigated the rumor.

Some parents choose home-based education because they object to the political or cultural values they find in public schools. Others do not like the instructional method. Still other parents want to give their child extra attention or they would like an unstructured environment. For what ever reason, who is to say which educational approach or philosophy is best for the total educational

experience of a child. The real issue is not home-school education but the idea that parents would use their own children to express their feelings and perceptions of what is wrong in our society.

Public School Environment. Perhaps the single most important aspect of life is protection from negative influences. During the parent interviews it was obvious by their responses that parents want to protect their children from the ills of society. This aspect of their lives is one controllable aspect of life where as the cost of life insurance, for example, which is protection, is not within their control.

The Superintendents expressed a concern that the children who are home-educated will lack the social development skills that public school children will gain due to group participation. This seems quite ironic since most home-school parents are trying to protect their children from the negative influences in society that educators believe to be a problem. Social adjustment for children depends upon the number and varied experiences that they are involved with. Home-schoolers are trying to control the different types of group activities their children are in. They look for the very activities that educators believe enhance social development. Involvement with church and community activities are experiences that home-school parents desire for their children.

Role of the Family. Home instruction that is provided by parents takes a total commitment on their part. If done properly, these parents must give up employment opportunities and other activities. Many parents indicated the desire to sacrifice monetary gains for the enrichment of their children's value system. Most parents supported this statement by explaining that people are greedy for material goods at the expense of their own children. The teaching of family values and/or religious values is the heart of why parents choose to educate their children at home.

Personal. This study has proved to be a self-study. As a professional educator for the past seventeen years, I feel a greater desire to look at public education as what it should be instead of what it is. The influence of politics in education is disheartening. Education needs to be free from politicians who use their influence for personal or social gains. Let's get back to the basic principles that education was founded on. By nurturing these basic principles and by keeping the courts and lawyers out of our school environment - our boys and girls will have a brighter future. A review of my values and a reassessment of my goals in education have made way for new visions and hopes for future involvement in the lives of others.

This dissertation is a symbol of myself. It was brought into being by forces outside of my life. Through

the support of my family, professional advisors, and true friends a dream is about to come true.

Like myself, this dissertation is unfinished - it may lead to further studies and further involvement in helping people to know themselves and others. The real issue is not home-school education but respecting the values of other people, no matter how different from our own, so they can fulfill life's dreams.

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Bradley J. Hansen, and I am the Superintendent of Fremont Public Schools in Fremont, Michigan. I am working on a research paper that identifies the factors why parents in Newaygo County Intermediate School District choose to educate their children at home. I will compare your responses to the responses that intermediate school superintendents in the State of Michigan give of why parents choose to home educate their children.

I do hope you will choose to help me in this project, as I feel that your answers may give some direction to schools regarding parent involvement in school planning. I will call on you within the next two weeks. If you choose not to discuss your personal reasons why you home educate your children that will be fine. I do not mean to infringe on your privacy. No names will be linked to any information you give. Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. The interviewee has the right to discontinue providing information for the project at any time.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEW

During the conversation before the interview the following ideas were expressed:

I'm grateful to you for arranging to meet with me (today/tonight). You will be very helpful to me in my research which may lead to ways of understanding public schools.

The major purpose of this interview is to find out from parents the factors which lead them to provide education to their children at home. Therefore, it is critical to this research that you be totally honest with me and yourself as you respond to these questions. I want you to relax and enjoy telling me just what you think. You will not be identified with these responses. Your participation and responses are strictly voluntary. The interviewee has the right to discontinue providing information for the project at any time. The results of the study will be available to all participants who wish to respond. I would like to read my introduction to you now.

This interview is part of a study to determine the causal factors of why parents choose to educate their children at home. The interview has some questions that you will find thought-provoking. I will read each question as I have it written so that I will ask all the people I interview the same thing. I will not interrupt your responses with my comments or observations. I will be listening to you. However, I will repeat a question whenever you want me to; and you may go back and add to previous questions any time you want to.

Unless you have a question, we'll get under way.

PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

YOUR PARTICIPATION AND COMMENTS ARE STRICTLY VOLUNTARY.
THE INTERVIEWEE HAS THE RIGHT TO DISCONTINUE PROVIDING
INFORMATION FOR THE PROJECT AT ANY TIME.

1. Presently, how many children are you instructing or educating at home and what are their ages, gender and grade level?
2. Would you please describe what you mean by "home school" education?
3. Who are you educationally affiliated with so a balanced curriculum is taught?
4. What would you say are the reasons parents choose to instruct or educate their children at home versus an approved parochial or public school?
5. What would you say are the reasons for educating your child or children at home?
6. Would you recall a particular occasion that is an example of the kind of . . . (whatever were the responses to question five) that your child was placed in.
7. Describe what happens in a home school that does not happen in a public school? (some of the things given in an earlier response).
8. Why is a home school capable of providing . . . ?

What causes . . . to happen?

What differences do you see between a home school and an approved parochial or public school?

How do you account for these differences?

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION TO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Dear Educational Leader:

I am a graduate student at Michigan State University in the Division of Educational Administration and the Superintendent of Fremont Public Schools in Fremont, Michigan. I am currently working on a research project that is a requirement of my doctorate degree. The title of my dissertation is "Analysis and Comparison of the Causal Factors of Home School Education Between the Home School Parents of Newaygo County Intermediate School District and the Intermediate School Districts' Superintendents in the State of Michigan."

I am interested in your perception of why parents choose to educate their children at home in your intermediate school district. Your participation and support in this project will enhance the presentation of my findings. Filling out the questionnaire and returning it in the postage paid envelope should not take longer than five minutes of your time. The results of the study will be available to all intermediate school superintendents who respond. Please remember that your participation is strictly voluntary. The interviewee has the right to discontinue providing information for the project at any time.

This survey will not be an evaluation of any individual or school. All respondents will remain anonymous. Please do not allow anyone else to complete the questionnaire. I am comparing the perceptions of intermediate school superintendents with parents in Newaygo County who educate their children at home.

Thank you for your cooperation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Bradley J. Hansen

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPERINTENDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In your intermediate school district, how many children are being educated or given instruction at home and what are their grade levels?
2. Would you briefly describe what you mean by "home school" education?
3. Of those identified as home schoolers; who are they educationally affiliated with?
4. What would you say are the reasons that parents give of why they are educating their children at home?
5. In your opinion what are the real reasons parents choose to instruct or educate their children at home versus an approved parochial or public school?
6. Please identify the areas that reflect the best reason why parents choose to educate their children at home?
 - a. Lack of confidence in the public schools
 - b. Fear of drugs
 - c. Poor curriculum
 - d. Non-religious activities
 - e. Transportation
 - f. Discipline
 - g. Teacher attitudes
 - h. Special needs reason
 - i. Inconvenience
 - j. Parents want to teach
 - k. Religious conviction
 - l. Other
7. Please identify the seriousness of the problem in your intermediate school district. Please circle one:
 - a. Very serious problem
 - b. Somewhat serious problem
 - c. Potential problem
 - d. Not a serious problem
 - e. Very little problem

8. In your opinion, please identify a problem or problems dealing with home education and what possible solutions you would recommend?
9. Would you support a state mandated procedure in which to evaluate home school requirements? Please circle one:

YES NO

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