Abstract

This study was built on the premise that home education is legal in England and Wales, as well as Florida, United States of America. State officials, responsible for monitoring home educators, were approached in 172 local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales, and 67 local school districts (SDs) in Florida for a postal questionnaire, and home education documentation. From the initial participants who responded (108 LEAs, 39 SDs), a further 18 state officials and 13 home educators gave telephone interviews on issues raised by the literature and quantitative data.

The choice of two societies was based on an expectation that tension or discordant attitudes were likely between state officials and home educators, and more so in England and Wales than in Florida. This expectation was partly drawn from the past thirty years’ research defending home education as a suitable alternative to public or private school education. The limited number of studies investigating state officials’ or home educators’ perceptions also indicate tensions (Petrie 1992, Lowden 1993). The two groups of people were chosen as they have most opportunity to interact with, or be affected by, each other when complying with home education laws. Where issues such as curriculum control, socialisation, monitoring procedures and child protection concerns were drawn from the literature and quantitative documentation analysis, this study explored further through comparison with qualitative data.

The multi-stage study used a case study approach to compare fundamental differences in attitudes between home educators and state officials. Whilst tension and discordance were expected, the interviewed individuals expressed a varying degree of attitude convergence, whilst remaining firm on certain issues. This study suggests changes in attitudes between state officials and home educators since Amanda Petrie’s 1992 study, recommending areas where further research can aid cooperative efforts between home educators and state officials.
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I would like to thank several people who may not have realised the part they played in helping me accomplish what I set out to achieve. My husband, Richard, was a constant source of support and practical help over the past few years. He helped me juggle the demands of a part-time research degree with the demands of family life, moving countries, and houses, and teaching. Quite simply, with all the will in the world, this study would not have been completed without the support of my family. To Richard, and our children Maia, Lance, Fiona and Charlotte, thank you for your patience. My mother, Mary, also deserves thanks for letting me ‘escape’ from the family each weekend to read and write in her peaceful home in Florida.

I gained my two supervisors later in the day than I would have liked, but the support from Professor Mark Olssen and Professor Peter Jarvis was worth the wait. Leaning on their expertise, I gained confidence alongside my knowledge building, invaluable for a distance-learning student. I especially want to thank Peter Jarvis for being on the end of the phone when I really needed to discuss points in the chapters. Not only was he able to tutor me over the phone, he was always able to calm me and renew my confidence whenever I was feeling frantic. Every researcher needs someone like Peter in his/her corner.

My thanks must also go to the librarians at the University of Surrey and the Florida Gulf Coast University. Accessing information as a distance learner and exploring two societies presented challenges that were largely overcome by the use of the libraries, and the DILIS service of the University of Surrey.

The study was lonely work at times, and yet individuals such as Dr. Amanda Petrie, Dr. Paula Rothermel, Professor Michael Apple and Professor Rob Reich took the time to answer my e-mail questions or forward pertinent information to me. These individuals are obviously very busy people, so their generosity in finding time to help convinced me that my study was worth exploring.

To the home educators and state officials that took part, and await a copy of the findings, my grateful thanks to them for making this possible. Their voice is the backbone of my study, so without their participation, there would have been nothing. I hope the findings are as informative and useful to them as the study process has been for me.
I have always been a teacher, at heart. When I was eight years old, I liked to ‘teach’ my neighbours, using workbooks from the local bookstore. Though I was originally home educated for two years along with my sister when we lived in the Philippines, my own education was in traditional primary and secondary British schools in Hong Kong, China. After finishing school in Hong Kong, I tutored privately, and worked part-time in Chinese schools, teaching Mathematics, English Literature and Language. I realised that teaching was an integral part of my character; so becoming a qualified teacher was the next step in my career.

My degree and qualified teaching experience in London, was both rewarding and challenging, but I soon returned to teach in Hong Kong. I perceived the schools to be wonderful communities of over a thousand people, working together, creating a daily learning experience. Nonetheless, teachers such as myself sometimes saw the effects of bullying, self-doubts, and peer pressures among some of the students. If not seen, we knew it existed. It was just part of the make-up of each school.

Personal circumstances forced me to leave my dream job, and join my mother in Florida, USA. As a single parent, I brought my two young children to Florida and wondered what I would do. I had always been a teacher, and I was desperately unhappy to leave a job I loved for an uncertain future. This was coupled with the fact that my priorities had shifted since becoming a mother. Though I had never stopped wanting to do my best for the students I taught, I now had to focus on my two children. I soon found a job tutoring four home-schooled children, at four different grade levels. That was a wonderful experience to have as a teacher, and very challenging. It also awoke my interest in the notion of home education, which had been a part of my past. I wondered, at the time, if I would be able to start home educating my own children, but quickly dismissed the idea as impractical, as a single parent.

Then life took a wonderfully unexpected turn. I re-met a man that I had known in Hong Kong. Within the year’s end, I had packed up our house in Florida and followed my new husband, Richard, to England, where he was working. My eldest child was put into the local state school, and my youngest attended a wonderful playgroup twice a week. We added to the family whilst I completed my research methods course at the University of Surrey.

Our eldest child was not happy at the local school, and I felt interactions with the staff were not dealt with satisfactorily. Even though I had started researching the field, the thought of home educating my children did not seem feasible as I had a newborn child, and I was swayed by initial negative reactions from my own family. At the time, I was also convinced that school was the best place for our children. My research into perceptions towards home education was an initial desire to see how home education advocates argued their case, against state officials who might mirror my perspective of school-as-best. My limited experiences with home-educated children had not convinced me that they had a better lifestyle than children who had the facilities, and life experiences of school-based children.

It was only when we returned to Florida, for Richard’s new job, that home education became a part of my lifestyle as well as my research. The local schools were inflexible about taking our eldest child in at the academically suitable level, as
children in Florida start formal education one year later than their British counterparts. As for our second child, he was not allowed to start school for a whole year. Richard suggested that I had the abilities and confidence to teach our children at home, even though I was initially trained for secondary school-aged students. As we had experienced problems with our eldest child in the British school, and there were already problems brewing with enrolment in the local Florida school, I took up the challenge.

The research study that I have undertaken in the last seven years has coincided with the experiences I have had as a teacher to my own children, as well as a continuing tutor for students who have had difficulties with Mathematics and English Language. The impact of the research, compounded with the home educating experiences, has exponentially increased my knowledge base and understanding of this specific field of education. There is more to say, but I leave that to the epilogue.
Chapter 1 – An Introductory Sketch of the Research

1.1 Introduction

Education for children of compulsory school age is provided by the state or privately in England and Wales, and in the United States of America (USA). State education is free and available to all children in the local educational area. In contrast, private education is met by the provision of fee-paying day schools, boarding schools, religiously based schools, and home education. This study compares attitudes towards home education by two groups, namely state officials and home educators in England and Wales, and in Florida. As education laws vary with each state in the USA, the choice to compare only Florida with England and Wales enabled a better comparison of two centralised state education systems, and two sets of home education laws. Rather than looking at one society in isolation, this comparative study was undertaken to learn more about the attitudes held in each society, to illuminate the other. Especially as the greater corpus of research is American-based, Florida can be used as a lens with which to view home-based education in England and Wales. In addition, the more vocalized view of home schoolers can be compared against potentially discordant views from state officials, whose views are not portrayed as prominently in home education literature.

At a micro level, then, this study looked at attitudes held by individuals who were linked by home education. Past research suggests tension between home educators and state officials, specifically over issues of the law, responsibilities of the parents and state, and perceptions towards socialisation and academic merit. As far as I was aware, no study had tried to compare state officials’ and home educators’ voices on the same issues, in England and Wales, as compared with Florida, USA. Relatively little has been done on perceptions held by state officials in the USA — Lindley (1985), Altman (1985), Reavis (1988), Adams (1992), DeRoche (1993), O’Laughlin (1993), Mayberry et al (1995), Howell (1996), De Noia (2001), and even less in England and Wales — Petrie (1992), Lowden (1993). Research that has looked at perceptions in a comparative fashion (state officials versus home educators) was found in Petrie’s work and also in American studies by O’Neill (1988), Buhr (1988), McGraw (1989), Hines (1993), Cappello (1995), and Golding (1995). The three studies most similar to mine are Petrie (1992), Riegle (1998) in Indiana and Peavie

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1 For the purposes of this study, home education is defined as the option of parental education of the child(ren) as upheld in the law. For reference, Amanda Petrie (1993:139) defined home education as ‘the education of children in and around the home by their parents, relatives, guardians, friends, or tutors employed by the parents. It can be seen as a temporary or permanent alternative to the education which is provided by the state or by private schooling.’

2 Three terms were used when I needed to differentiate between home education in one society or the other. In England and Wales, the term ‘home-based education’ was favoured, whereas in Florida ‘home schooling’ predominated in the literature. To compare or highlight aspects of home education in one society I used the preferred term. When discussing both societies, ‘home education’ or ‘home educator’ was used.

3 By state officials, I mean those individuals responsible for monitoring or evaluating home educated children in their local education authority.

(1999) in Kentucky. Similar methods were used but less favourable perceptions of state officials were reported than in this study. As I could not find any comparative study that focused on England and Wales and Florida, my study did not specifically complement other research. This study represents an area that has not been previously explored, and can thus contribute to the field.

In my study, I sought to explore the state officials’ and home educators’ attitudes, and possible tensions, illuminated and clarified by a quantitative/qualitative, comparative approach. The advantage of using a comparative approach enabled me to see the expected disparity more clearly. The study was specifically constructed to compare attitudes towards home education between the two groups that were most likely to interact because of home education law, and to compare two societies where I expected tension and/or discordant attitudes. The expectations evolved partially from my own background, but were also drawn from the literature base. Amanda Petrie’s 1992 research, 'Home education and the Local Education Authority: from conflict to cooperation' revealed potential tension, emanating primarily from the local education authority’s (LEA’s) confusion over home education law. Studies such as Mayberry et al. (1995) in the United States (US) also illuminated potential conflict between state officials’ and home schoolers’ attitudes. What is more, as a result of the development of the modern home education movement in England and Wales as compared to the US, tension or discordant attitudes were expected to be more apparent in England and Wales, where the movement is not at the same stage.

Whilst the study was narrow in focusing on a marginal aspect of education in both societies, the wider context of the study may be seen in the sphere of private versus public education, and the implications on educational policy and practice. That is, state and local education policies and practices exist to monitor parental home education in the two societies. The intricacies of state education policies that impact this unique form of private education were worth exploring to better understand existing cooperative or discordant relationships. How state officials and home educators perceived policies and their implementation also gave insight into their attitudes. By exploring and comparing these perspectives, this study may bridge a gap between the perceived visions each group has of the other's reality, adding a knowledge base that will facilitate further cooperative policies and ventures. As these societies promote the pluralist notion of public and private education coexisting, and the nature of facilitating education is constantly changing (just think of the ramifications of the Internet on educational opportunities and choices such as virtual schooling), this study may provide a useful avenue for discussion by home educators and policymakers.

5 In this study 'public' education is used to represent state education in the USA and Florida. In England and Wales, the term 'public schooling' refers to fee-paying private education. When the public schools in England and Wales were first established they were open to all, hence the term 'public'. These private schools still retain their label of public schools and are still open to all that are able to pay the fees or gain scholarships. To avoid confusion, the term public education was used to denote state education in both societies, and not public schooling, as this would imply private education. The comparison was between home education (a form of private education), and public education, the state form of education.
1.2 Construction of the research by a practitioner-researcher

My perspectives, my career in education, and my understanding of the education system in England and Wales and of that in Florida played a significant part in the construction of this study, which researched a particular facet of education. As a teacher with over twenty-five years of experience teaching and tutoring, in schools and to private students and home-educated children, I was able to empathize with a teacher’s perspective on education as equally as a parent’s perspective on their child’s education.

As a dual American/British citizen, I was initially aware of subtly different perceptions and attitudes held about home-based education in England and Wales, compared with home schooling in Florida. This duality continued as I have a school-based teacher’s perspective whilst interacting with state officials as a home educator to comply with my responsibilities in the law. My insider/outsider perspective allowed me to see the potential for different attitudes towards home education, and the possibility for tension or collaboration. I realised that I was a role player in my study, taking on either the home educator’s or the school-based perspective. Recognizing the dual roles I took on, and how the participants in the study may have viewed me, made me carefully consider the pitfalls of partisanship.

As a teacher and home educator, I am always striving to learn more about education in a society that is recognized as constantly changing and consequently reflexive (see Beck 1992, Giddens 1997a). As Peter Jarvis (1999:26) notes in his book ‘The Practitioner Researcher’, research is built into the very nature of our changing society and ‘all aspiring experts must have researched and discovered the most recent knowledge about their practice in order to be experts’. Thus, my study was built on my own background in teaching, which straddles traditional schooling and individualised home education. In addition, I was aware that as a home educator I have complete autonomy over my children’s education (notwithstanding complying with the law) and ownership of their education.

Though I could have merely compared the local education authorities’ and home educators’ perspectives in England and Wales, I felt my unique perspective enabled me to gain a deeper understanding by comparing the British and American societies. As qualitative work is constructed by the researcher who is ultimately the research instrument, I was aware that I could use my unique position as a teacher/home educator and American/British citizen to compare both societies. Thus, my study compared LEA and home-based educator perspectives, School District (SD) and home schooler perspectives, and considered the British state officials’ perspective compared to the American perspective, as well as the home-based educators compared to their home schooler counterparts.

6 I take Peter Jarvis’ (1999:3-7) understanding of a practitioner-researcher as one who undertakes his or her own research, working toward a graduate degree, or learning from practice and experience daily, for project-based work, or to satisfy curiosity. He adds that a practitioner-researcher performs dual roles – in my case, I am a teacher, researching one particular field of education. Researching the home education field whilst home educating my own children, added a dimension to my experiences as a teacher, but I deliberately stood back from participating in the study so as not to cloud my analyses.
Chapter 1

1.3 Premises of the study

One premise of this study was that home education could be justified as a legitimate educational choice in England and Wales as well as in Florida, USA. The use of the word 'legitimate' refers to making lawful and is not intended here to lead into a debate over the divine rights of legitimate choices. By using legitimate as 'lawful', I springboard into a potential area of tension — the laws on home education.

The existence of home education laws in both societies accommodates the parents’ right to choose the child’s education, rejecting the state school model. Also embedded in the laws are parents’ responsibilities to meet the child’s educational needs and the state’s duty to regulate home-educated children, through monitoring or evaluation. Thus, the laws that accommodate parents’ rights and state interests reveal at once the potential for discord if either group of individuals feels their concerns are not fully met.

The second premise was taken from available literature that has suggested the home-educating population has risen over the last thirty years and is continuing to grow in England and Wales, and in the United States. However, the estimated numbers of home-based educators in England and Wales, as well as home schoolers in Florida vary, and were difficult to compare across the geographical areas or even over time. Suffice to say, at the present time it has been reported that close to 1% of the total school age population are home educating in England and Wales as compared with almost 3% in the United States (Petrie 1998:12, Rhodes 2000:26). Florida’s home schooling population could fall between the two estimates, but there are no percentage figures in the literature to support this. As part of my effort to compare populations, I used a variety of sources to calculate that about 1.4% (or about 37,000 children) of the total Florida school-age population were home schooling.

That the home educating population is reportedly growing in both societies might have implications for state educators, policymakers and home educators alike. This brought me to the third premise of the study. Tension between home educators and the state officials that monitor or evaluate home education was expected. This was based on previous research that indicated tension between the groups directly, Petrie (1992), Mayberry et al (1995) as well as the body of home education research that

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8 To compare the populations, I went to several government, education, research and media sites for references. The Florida Department of Education produces an annual statistics report on the home education program. In 1999, my chosen year of comparison, 37,196 children were in the home education program, or 1.4% of the total school-age population. See Appendix I for a compilation of statistics drawn from a number of sources.
9 See Meighan (1995) and Lines (1999) as a starting point for England and Wales and the United States respectively. Media reports in both societies continue to state a growing population-base, citing numbers from researchers as well as from state or national home education support groups.
seemed to be defensively based. Though it might have been interesting to harness views from parents who send their children to school, I did not want to detract from my focus. Specifically focusing on attitudes between two groups, directly linked through home education, could give clarity to findings that might otherwise be lost in a larger study sample. Couple this with the possible tensions that were thought to exist between home educators and the state officials, and the choice of participants for the study seemed clear-cut.

1.4 The Research Problem

Home education is a legal option to parents in England and Wales under the 1944 and 1996 Education Acts, and to parents in Florida under the 1985 Home Education Act. Though private education in a myriad of forms existed before compulsory education was introduced in England and Wales and in the United States in the late 1800s, state education still dominates the educational field today. The co-existence of private education, catering to a minority of the total school age population in both societies, alongside state education, displays the parents' right to educational choices.

The introduction of compulsory education was justified on the grounds that equipping the children with basic educational standards of literacy and numeracy, and instilling a 'common identity' was important for political stability and national identity — Rust (1977), Feinberg (1998), Galston (2002). Such compulsory education was mainly facilitated through state schools, fashioned to be factory-like institutions that were considered the most efficient solution at the time. Many scholars such as Emile Durkheim and John Dewey saw the state school as the 'instrument of reason' and the 'legitimate bearer of moral education', states Walter Feinberg (1998:52-53). Of note, such views were a reflection of the belief, at the time, that state schools were fit for educating the masses. Today, satisfying compulsory education laws in England and Wales, and in Florida, is still achieved by sending the majority of school-age children to state schools (See Appendix 1).

Arguments for state education and private education have equal resonance, on grounds of protecting state interests or parental rights respectively. Tensions can be created when advocates for one form of education reject the value of the other. In the

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10 Much of the research over the last thirty years has addressed criticisms of home education's legality, ability to achieve academic and socialisation comparability with school-based children, and rationale for choice. See Meighan's research synthesis (1989), Lines (1991, 1996); Petrie (1992, 1998); Shyers (1992); Smedley (1992); Mayberry et al. (1995); Ray's research synthesis (1999); Lett (1999); Rudner (1999).

11 Home education documentation could have been available at the outset of the study. However, a preliminary analysis of documentation did not form part of the rationale for originally doing this study. To do so might have led to a narrower focus upon specific home education topics, as evidenced in past research. I deliberately wanted to read beyond the home education field, to explore other viewpoints that could impact on home education perspectives, such as politics and policy. Thus the literature review was conducted before, and alongside preliminary analysis of documentation, to enable a more comprehensive and comparative understanding of the issues.

12 Private education prior to compulsory education included home education by parents, tutors, or governesses, dame schools, church schools, trade schools, private boarding schools etc. See David (1980), Curtis (1970), Carper (2000).
case of home education, or more specifically the legal right to home educate, enough
tension has been created to warrant over thirty years of research in its defence. However, no research has specifically targeted the two societies for comparison, and yet the potential for a deeper understanding can result from comparative research.

Thus, using the platform of state education and private education co-existing in both societies under study, I focused more closely on the attitudes held towards home education. What I needed to understand, and reflect in my study, was the status of home education in both societies today, with an appreciation of how they reached their current position in society. Perspectives held towards home education, in terms of the law, the rights of parents, the issues of socialisation or citizenship, and a perception of education itself, also had to be understood in comparative form. I could see the arguments for home education or school-based education, but I wanted to understand the perspectives more clearly from state officials and home educators. From this knowledge base, I then formulated questions that helped to answer the guiding question of this study.

1.5 The Research Question

Based on the premises and focus of the study, the purpose of my study was to explore attitudes held by home educators and state officials and to answer the guiding research question: Are there fundamental differences between attitudes of home educators and state officials towards home education? The implications of this question are two-fold. If fundamental differences in attitude were found, as was expected, there might be a need for improved communication between the two groups, in light of the growing numbers of the home educating population, and the possible impact on educational policies. If there was not as much disparity in attitudes as expected, the study could indicate opportunities for home educators and state officials to work collaboratively for the benefit of both groups (such as with dual enrolment). The comparative aspect of the study was also used to reveal fundamental differences in British attitudes as compared to American attitudes towards home education. In this way, analyses and explanations on the cluster of differences found could be contextualised against the other society, as well as group against group.

The guiding research question was used as focus for a literature search and the quantitative data collection and analysis, in the first phase of this multi-stage study. In the second phase, the research question was used to focus on the extent to which discordant or compatible attitudes could be found between home educators and state officials. As the study was based on comparing two societies and two groups that interact to comply with home education law, the structure of research and analysis was dependent on a multi-stage, comparative matrix. In looking for expected tension and discordance, this study revealed more convergence of attitudes than expected, and a potential shift in the ‘normalisation’ of home-based education in England and Wales.

1.6 Outline of the Study

The wider context of the study was based on the assumption that home education was a legitimate educational choice in the two liberal democracies. By
understanding the extent to which attitudes were discordant, was to ascertain the extent to which pluralism in educational provision was accepted in both societies.

To begin, a search of relevant research highlighted the current understanding of home education in both societies, and illustrated where this study could add to the knowledge base. Then, the literature was reviewed in four areas. An historical context of education and home education was needed, followed by an understanding of the laws that existed in both societies. Tied into the laws were the rights of parents, children and the state in reference to the child’s education. I also felt that the individual’s ideology of education needed to be more transparent, to tease apart attitudes held.

Sub-questions were set and answered by the literature review in Chapters 3-6. In addition, each chapter addressed the guiding research question about fundamental differences in attitudes. In Chapter 3’s historical context, evidence of compatible and discordant perceptions was found. In the legal context of Chapter 4, compatible perceptions were considered likely unless laws were misinterpreted, misrepresented or wilfully ignored. Chapter 5 continued the conceptual differences likely to be held by home educators and state officials with regard to attitudes and an ideology of education. The literature review indicated that whilst similar themes (such as socialisation, citizenship, intellectual function) may be categorized, interpretation of the themes might lead to dichotomous attitudes and ideologies that theoretically pull apart and polarize home educators and state officials. Though extremely discordant perceptions were not expected, dichotomous attitudes and ideologies were explored nonetheless, as an ideology is closely linked with legitimisation, power and conflict. Such ideological differences could lead to tension between the groups.

The similarities and differences between the laws in Chapter 4 were complemented, in Chapter 6, by a discussion of parental and state rights. In spite of laws to minimize problems with home education in society, this chapter indicated that conceptual differences over rights might lead to different perceptions towards home education. In addition, though home education research has not traditionally included a chapter on rights, this particular study is unique in comparing attitudes and cultural differences towards home education in the two societies. As such, a consideration of rights that may affect the home educators’ or state officials’ attitudes was warranted in this study. Furthermore, Chapter 6 complements the previous chapter by theoretically tackling the dichotomy of home educators’ and state officials’ views from a more conciliatory angle, using Rob Reich’s trilogy of interests for balance.

As I progressed through the literature review, I had simultaneously constructed a simple postal questionnaire to send to all LEAs and SDs. The questionnaire was to gather some background information relevant for the qualitative phase, especially in the interview question construction. Documentation requested from all LEAs and SDs enabled initial categorization of themes from the literature and questionnaire responses to be refined into emerging categories regarding curriculum control, secondary socialization, child protection issues, legal rights and duties.
Chapters 7, 8, and 9 highlighted the research question, methodology and methods that triangulated this multi-stage study. Justification for using quantitative and qualitative approaches to gather data was also given. Then, Chapter 10 presented the quantitative documentation data from state officials and home educators and postal questionnaires responses from state officials. A time-comparison analysis of state official documentation also revealed subtle changes to policy and attitudes from the original compilation of data. The emerging categories from the quantitative phase were also used to construct the telephone interview questions for the qualitative phase, and for comparative analysis.

Chapters 11 and 12 presented the qualitative data from the British and American perspectives. These were followed by Chapter 13's focus on the discussion of the data and conclusions drawn. Chapter 14's summary and recommendations completes the study.

1.7 Summary
This chapter introduced my study of attitudes towards home education by state officials and home educators, compared in England and Wales, with that in Florida. The construction of the research was based on my unique insider/outsider perspective to view both societies and both groups of people with a better understanding of the other's viewpoint. I believed that the comparison of attitudes towards home education, between two societies, could add to the body of knowledge and be of interest to home educators, state officials and educational policymakers. It could also help establish the extent of contestation or collaboration of educational aims and goals, and the extent to which educational pluralism is tolerated in the liberal democratic societies.

The study begins with an introduction to the literature review of current relevant research, the historical and cultural development of home education, concepts of attitudes and ideologies, rights and interests.

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13 The preliminary quantitative questionnaire sent to all LEAs and SDs was not sent to a comparable number of home educators on three counts. Firstly, there was no comparable database from which to easily access home educators, as support groups tend to protect the anonymity of their members. Secondly, the categories emerging from the state officials' material were able to be compared against the home educators' group material and their individual voices. Lastly, it was felt that many of the home educators would either not complete a questionnaire of length or return it in a timely fashion, based on a pilot study.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following five chapters encapsulate the literature review that was necessary on several counts:

- To understand the body of research previously conducted;
- To situate this study and its contribution to the field;
- To compare the British versus American perspective on several key aspects pertinent to the study;
- To clarify common categories associated with home education and to uncover less-well documented categories;
- To develop categories and theoretical perspectives to be explored further in the two-phase empirical work.

To begin the literature review, Chapter 2 will detail a review of research relevant to this study. Home education research is far more abundant in American studies than in British studies; comparing the two perspectives added to my knowledge base and helped clarify issues to pursue, as well as situating this study within current research.

The historical developments, and cultural implications of the modern home education movement in the United States, Florida and England and Wales, alongside a crisp comparison of home education laws, become the next two chapters, 3 and 4. By understanding and comparing the history, culture and laws pertaining to home education in both societies, a clearer direction for the study was made apparent.

Initial categories of legal issues, socialization, and curriculum were drawn from the home education research review, with clarification sought through the quantitative data supplied by state official documentation and postal questionnaire returns. However, emerging categories from the quantitative data on legal issues, curriculum control, secondary socialization vs. primary socialization, child protection issues and cooperative ventures, required a further appreciation of literature beyond the home education research field.

Thus, in Chapter 5, concepts of attitudes and ideologies were explored to uncover potential differences held by the group perspective of home educators and state officials. Ideological perspectives on curriculum and socialization, themes from the previous chapters, were included with perspectives on a civil society and citizenship education. An understanding that state officials and home educators might interpret perspectives from different viewpoints was expected. This was based on the possibility of dichotomous attitudes from a group perspective ideology, though few extremes were seen in the quantitative data and not expected in the qualitative data.

In Chapter 6, a facet of the legal issues was teased out when exploring home education rights and interests. The similarities and differences in the home education laws, outlined in Chapter 4, highlighted both societies’ attempts to minimize problems that might surface. In spite of the laws, conceptual differences over rights might lead to different attitudes towards home education. Nonetheless, Chapter 6 tackled the
dichotomy of home educators’ and state officials’ views from a more conciliatory angle, using Reich’s trilogy of interest as a scaffold.

Expanding the literature search to attitudes, ideologies and a concept of rights, was warranted, and based on the need to appreciate the group versus individual perspective. This transpired as the body of home education research illuminated several common issues that required understanding and clarification through an initial quantitative data search. As the analysis of the quantitative data revealed emerging categories that were dependent on opinion or degree, and tethered by the group perspective, the theoretical perspectives of group versus individual were a necessary addition to the study’s literature base. So, whereas Chapter 5 theoretically pulls apart and polarizes home educators and state officials over their group attitudes and ideologies, Chapter 6 shows the theoretical potential for cooperative thoughts when balancing all interests. The literature review also revealed the absence of the individual’s perspective, which was necessary for cross-comparison. Such an individualised home educator or state official perspective was likely to be accessed only through the telephone interviews of the study’s qualitative phase.
Chapter 2 – A Review of Relevant Research

2.1 Introduction

Though home education research has been conducted at a national level and in many American states over the past thirty years, there is far less written from a British perspective. Legal, cultural and historical differences between the two societies’ home education movement notwithstanding, the body of American research that pertains to home education was relevant guidance for this study. As such, a review of the American studies will be detailed first, followed by British studies. The scope of this current study was then justified within the body of research currently available in England and Wales on home education.

2.2 Research from the American perspective

Much of the research conducted in America can be categorized as dealing with historical, legal/political, demographic, or rationale issues, as well as addressing the concerns raised regarding socialization or academic merit. Recent studies have included looking at transition issues of home-educated children into public schools or colleges, as well as interactions between home educators and local authorities.1

An historical background, on the phases of the home education movement, will be dealt with in Chapter 3, based on the work by Mayberry et al (1995). This comparative study focused on home school parents and school district superintendents in Washington, Utah and Nevada. The first phase of the work obtained demographic and attitudinal information from postal questionnaires. The response rate of 25% revealed enough diversity, say the authors, to provide sufficient information for analysis. A second phase involved in-depth interviews with 36 families. The third phase used a postal questionnaire for school district superintendents, resulting in a 38% response rate. Their study produced a demographic picture of home educators at the time as:

Largely white (98%); relatively young (in their 30s) (60%); married (97%); many formally educated (43% attended college or trade school; 33% graduated from undergraduate degrees) though 10% held no post-school education; employed in professional or technical jobs, less likely to work in sales, clerical, service, craft, semiskilled or unskilled occupations; teaching was done mainly by the mothers; financially in middle-class; religiously oriented (78% attending church); politically conservative (77%).

Taken from Mayberry et al. 1995:30-42

1 There are too many individual studies to describe in detail here, as an Internet search on Dissertations Abstracts between 1980-2006 resulted in over 250 relevant studies. Specific studies were conducted in 39 states with only the following not represented at the moment – Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wyoming.
Mayberry et al. note that in spite of the trends cited above, the home school population is not monolithic. To paint a particular picture of the region, demographic information has been included in a number of the states, showing similarity in many areas (such as mainly white families with the mother as teacher), but highlighting differences too.\(^2\) At a national level, Patricia Lines tried to realistically estimate the number of children home schooling in the United States, in the 1990s, through her work with the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement (between 1-2 percent of the total school-aged population, roughly between 500,000 and 750,000 children). Recognising that accurate numbers are not possible until a well-designed household survey is administered (Lines 1991), she nonetheless provided a basis for researchers to work from. Others, such as Ray (1999) have estimated home schooling populations, to give a current figure of about 1.2 to 1.6 million home schooled children in the United States. Probably of more significance to home educators, educational policymakers, and support agencies (vendors, support groups), is the percentage of the school population that are choosing home education (almost 3%, cites Rhodes 2000:26).

Rationale studies have also been found in many of the states, where descriptions of why people choose to home educate add to the knowledge base. For example, Jane Van Galen and Mary Pitman (1991) provided an early taxonomy of homeschoolers' choices based on whether they were ideologues or pedagogues. Pedagogues were those that believed whatever public schools could do in terms of teaching and learning, they could do better. Ideologues were parents that were driven by the desire to pass on their morals, values, and religious beliefs.

Shirley Howell (1996:5) sees the literature as dividing families into three cultures,

The first is based on religious beliefs and the need for these beliefs to be evident in the curricula. The second is a means of controlling the influences of others on a family's children and the third is to increase the academic performances of the children.

Many other researchers have sought to understand home schoolers' rationales, as part of their studies. Others have developed home educators' rationales further, such as Long's (1998) descriptions of home schooling families as connected, unconnected or disconnected when willing to work alongside school officials to educate their children. As educational opportunities continue to evolve, with Information Technology (IT) creating demands for virtual schools and access to information, home schoolers' rationales might evolve further.

Legal and political studies can be state specific, such as Altman's (1985) study of state superintendents' perceptions in Washington, Chmielewski's (1987) study of

the legal guidelines and state regulations in Michigan, Bloodworth's (1991) legal history study of home schooling in North Carolina, or Strout's (1993) legal review and analysis of Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri. Lett's (1999) work looked at accommodation for extracurricular activities in Illinois, where he suggested denying home schoolers access to extracurricular interscholastic activities. However, most legal or political studies have been conducted at a national level, exploring and describing the laws in place — see Wendel (1985), Shepherd (1986), Fox (1987), Harbottle (1995), Levy (2004). In addition, the Home School Legal Defence Association (HSLDA) continually updates legal issues in every state as freely accessible information on their Internet website.

Addressing criticisms and concerns regarding the academic merit of home education, the Alaska Department of Education (1985, 1986) conducted research to indicate that home educators score well above their school peers on standardised tests. Other research followed, to consolidate the home schoolers' opinion that they can perform as well or better than their school-based peers — for example, see Ray and Wartes (1991), Delahouke (1986), Rakestraw (1987), Ray (1997), Rudner (1999). However, in response to Lawrence Rudner's (1999) claims, Kariane and Kevin Welner (1999) voiced the counter opinion that data portraying home schooling academic successes on standardised tests is weakened by several factors. They pointed out that Rudner's analysis is taken from only one section of the home schooling population and fails to explain this limitation. Welner and Welner's (1999:3) concerns are based on the portrayal of home schoolers as a monolithic population, when it has become apparent that they are 'no longer an easily defined segment of the population'. They were also concerned with the perspective of the participants in Rudner's study, mainly white, conservative Christians, that skew the data. As Welner and Welner pointed out, not all home schoolers live with married parents, have larger families, take standardised tests, are in a high income bracket, watch one hour or less of television, and so on. Though their critique is offered as a 'cautionary supplement, rather than as an objection' to Rudner's study, the issue of data generalisability has not been resolved in current American research. As a consequence, I assumed tension could still exist between home educators and state officials, if each group was unable to allay the other's skepticism over data.

Socialisation is the other topic that draws most attention when mentioning home education, though it has not been heavily researched. Larry Shyers (1992) and Thomas Smedley (1992) are often quoted for their studies which revealed little differences in socialisation between home educated and school-based children. Other studies have been conducted by Delahouke (1986), Taylor (1986), Johnson (1991), Francis (1999), and Mecham (2004), finding similar results to Shyers and Smedley. As socialisation was a common area of interest, it became an area of focus for both phases of the study.

More specifically for the study, I reviewed research that looked at perceptions held by state officials towards home education, comparative work related to home education, policy studies, and comparisons between state officials and home educators towards home education.
Perceptions by state officials towards home education include studies by Lindley (1985), Altman (1985), Reavis (1988), Adams (1992), DeRoche (1993), Mayberry et al. (1995), Howell (1996), and DeNoia (2001). In the 1980s, Michael Lindley and Richard Reavis reported on the attitudes of school superintendents in Indiana and Missouri respectively. Both studies recognized the difficulties in balancing the issue of individual rights versus the state to protect the rights of the individual, and the rights of the state to have an educated citizenry. In both states, public school superintendents noticed an increase in the home schooling population and expected further growth. At the time, participating superintendents felt all home schoolers should be required to register with the Department of Education with hours of attendance, curriculum, and proof of learning monitored by the state. Recommendations by Lindley and Reavis included the need for public school superintendents to recognize the legitimacy of home schooling as an alternative, and to fully understand the law.

Mickey Altman (1985) focused on how state school superintendents in Washington perceived issues related to home education. Reporting a 93% return rate, his survey measured opinions using a Likert-type scale. The superintendents favoured registration of home schooled children, but most agreed that home schooling should be properly regulated without detrimental effects to child, parent or school district. This study, along with Lindley and Reavis, echoes Reich's (2002b, 2002c) trilogy of interest concept, dealt with in Chapter 6. Susan DeRoche (1993) also found that state superintendents (in Illinois) support registration of home schoolers, plus periodic standardized achievement testing. It was noted however, that these superintendents are truant officers, so may hold perceptions different from individuals who work with conscientious and successful home educating parents and children. In Veronica DeNoia’s (2001) study of New Jersey Superintendents, she found perceptions that were less favourable towards home education. 46% of the superintendents responding saw no benefit to home schooling, with 67% believing that the lack of socialization was most detrimental. Shirley Howell (1996) also found some negative perceptions, from the assistant superintendents or directors with a high level of experience with home schooling families in Arizona. Another study from Arizona, by Philip Adams (1992), was conducted to assess the relationships between home schoolers and local public schools, especially as dual enrolment exists for home schoolers. Starting with the premise that tensions existed between the autonomy desired by home educators, and the accountability desired by the district authorities, Adams analysed 266 questionnaires. He concluded that there is a fear among home schoolers that they will be rejected if they ask for help with public school resources, or that cooperation with the public school will threaten their autonomy.

From the examples given, it was seen that when studies have drawn on perceptions from public school superintendents, none have been devoid of negatively construed attitudes toward home education. Mayberry et al (1995) noted the relationship between peoples’ attitudes and their behaviours, as recognized by social psychologists (e.g. Ajzen and Fishbein 1977, Schuman and Johnson 1976). As Mayberry et al. (1995:91) stated,
Thus superintendents' perceptions of home-educating parents and home schools are likely to affect the manner in which superintendents implement home education policy, and examining how superintendents' attitudes regarding home schools are shaped becomes a significant point of inquiry.

Policy studies that relate to the current study include Kristi Hendrix (2003) and Patricia Lee-Bishop (2002). In Lee-Bishop's study, school district-level policies in Kansas were analysed. From the 90% response rate of a 10% random sample of school district superintendents, only one district sent a copy of home education policy; most stated that they did not have policies in place for home schoolers. In Hendrix's Mississippi study, almost all of the superintendents responding stated that no written policy addressed part-time enrolment of home schoolers, and their practice was to deny these requests (about 74%). She also stated that over three-fourths of the respondents reported that they were not at all confident in the soundness of the education home schoolers receive.

Comparative work, looking at perceptions held by home schoolers and public school district officials, can be seen in Buhr (1988), O'Neill (1988), Hines (1993), Cappello (1995), McGraw (1989), and Riegle (1998). Thomas Buhr looked at public school administrators' and home schoolers' perceptions towards Arizona home school law, concluding a lack of communication between public school administrators and home schooling parents. Charles O'Neill surveyed home schooling parents and superintendents in Georgia, using a questionnaire and a Likert-type scale to rate perceptions. With a return rate of 81%, he found a significant difference between the views of superintendents and parents in 15 of the 20 statements. He concluded that the degree of differences in the views of superintendents and parents were so extreme that cooperative working relationships would be difficult to establish. Paul Hines studied attitudes between public school superintendents and home schoolers in Arkansas, as well as comparing standardized test scores between home schoolers and their public schooled peers. Nancy Cappello, looking at attitudes held by superintendents and home schoolers in Connecticut, found that individual school principals were more receptive than superintendents in establishing partnerships with home schooling families, including part-time enrolment.

More studies have been produced in Indiana, specific to superintendents' attitudes, including Lindley (1985), McGraw (1989) and Riegle (1998). In Ronald McGraw's work, he collected questionnaire responses from 97 superintendents, and 404 principals, compared to 131 home schooling families. His conclusions included the negative perceptions held by public school principals and superintendents towards the academic, instruction, and socialization quality of home schooling. Conversely, he also saw willingness by principals and superintendents to let home schoolers participate in non-classroom activities, though less than 15% use public school services.
Pamela Riegle’s 1998 work, following on from Lindley’s study on superintendents, is closer in methodology to mine. Wanting to document relationships between public school superintendents and home schooling families, she polled the total school district superintendent population. A response rate of 66% was matched by a 26% return rate from home schooling families registered with the Department of Education. Based on comparing findings from both groups, Riegle concluded several points. Indiana public school superintendents probably have a weaker relationship with home schoolers than they believe, as only 35.5% of home schoolers felt the relationship was fair compared to 65% of superintendents. Home schoolers desired more interaction with the public schools than they are receiving, such as access to classes and textbooks. Whilst superintendents believed religion was a reason to home school (86%), only 55% of home schoolers agreed. Riegle also felt that, whilst public perceptions of home schooling have improved significantly in the last decade, superintendents’ perceptions have changed little since the Lindley study. Superintendents still voiced their opinion that home schoolers should have to participate in mandatory testing, home school teachers should be certified, and there should be mandatory registration with the state.

Rather than drawing guidance from the American studies in isolation, a review of research from the British perspective was sought, for balance.

2.3 Research from the British perspective

Much less research has been conducted on home education in England and Wales, in spite of the modern home education movement starting at approximately the same time. Roland Meighan, a prolific writer on the subject, synthesised research from the home educators’ perspective in his 1989 and 1995 papers, drawing from both British and American studies. In 1989, Meighan used data from England and Wales, to make the following observations:

- No clear pattern of social class appears;
- Most home educating families were not generally opposed to school, but turned to home education as a last resort;
- There was no clear pattern of occupations amongst the home educating parents;
- Families tended to encourage a wide range of social contacts with people and groups of all ages;
- A variety of teaching and learning strategies were seen.

Though Meighan (1989:44) states in his article that the ‘behaviour of LEA officials displays considerable confusion as to how to cope with the phenomenon of home-based schooling’, he does note that as they have more experience with home-based educators, their reactions become more understanding and less ‘hysterical’. By 1995, Meighan incorporates research from the USA, Canada, Australia as well as the United Kingdom (UK), to discuss home-based education effectiveness. He cites the issue of socialization, academic merit, and learning methods, backed up by research,
to extol the effectiveness of home education. He also describes ten reasons why home education works so well.³

As far as numbers are concerned, Meighan estimated that 10,000 families were home educating in 1992, but by 1998 he estimated 25,000 home educating families, though Amanda Petrie estimated a lower figure of 15,000 (Taylor and Petrie 2000:57). What is clear, in spite of the discrepancy in numbers, is that estimating the home educating population in England and Wales is as difficult, if not more so, than it is to estimate numbers in America. This is partly due to the law that enables home educators to remain unknown to the LEAs if they have not been in school before.

Julie Webb (1988) used a case study approach to look at home education in the UK, as did Sandra Blacker (1981). Webb’s work, interviewing twenty-seven home educators, concentrated on older children (fourteen and above), exploring issues about home education from a different angle to work previously completed. Relevant to this study, she also looked briefly at LEA policy and their relationships with home-based educators. She found variety in LEA policy and approach to home education, from one area to another, and even from officer to officer. Concerns voiced by LEA representatives centred mainly on the content and method of home education provision. Home-based educators’ concerns over LEAs were sometimes seen in the relationships formed through monitoring the home education. However, Webb noted that an impression that all LEAs were ‘out to get’ home educators was not evidenced by the families who have established neutral, or positively helpful relationships with their LEAs (cited in Webb 1990:180-181).

Blacker’s work, based on interviewing 16 families, categorized home educators as ‘competitors’, ‘compensators’ and ‘rebels’. Competitors were those qualified, well-read parents that were competing with schools to give their children a better education. In this situation, the decision to home educate was often made before the child’s birth. Compensators agreed in the philosophy of schools but removed their child for specific reasons, as the school was failing the child in some way. In this case, compensators would return the child to school if feasible. Rebels were those home educators that had chosen an alternative lifestyle, wanting freedom from social institutions. Blacker’s taxonomy is a useful starting point, as compared to van Galen’s ideologues and pedagogues, but the complexity of motives for home education in both societies makes such categorisation over simplistic now.

Adding to the knowledge base, Alan Thomas (1998) interviewed one hundred home educating families in the United Kingdom and Australia, focusing on informal learning. His work showed how home educators adapted over time from formal to informal learning in their home education lifestyle. Paula Rothermel (2002b) provides the largest and most comprehensive study to date on home education in England and Wales, exploring the aims and practices of home educating families from

³ These reasons are natural learning and dovetailing; applying various forms of discipline; adapting to a wide variety of learning styles; flexible use of at least six types of curriculum; efficient use of time; non-hostile learning environment; direct access to an information-rich society; learner-managed learning; adults as learning coaches and the avoidance of unwanted teaching; and first-hand experiences.
diverse socio-economic backgrounds. She used a questionnaire, completed by 419 families, and evaluated the psychosocial and academic development of home-educated children aged eleven years and under. Her findings revealed that 64% of the home-educated Reception aged children scored over 75% on their PIPS Baseline Assessments as opposed to 5.1% of children nationally. The National Literacy Project assessment findings showed most children scoring above average (80.4% of the home-educated children scored within the top 16% band of a normal distribution bell curve). Psychosocial evaluations also presented home-educated children as socially adept and without behavioural problems. Her findings echo the studies done in America that place home educated children above their school-based peers on standardized testing, as well as studies that have not found the socialisation or behavioural problems that are assumed from some state officials.

More pertinent to this study, Petrie (1992), Lowden (1993) and Bates (1996) compared perceptions towards home education by state officials and home educators. Amanda Petrie was the first to look carefully at the relationship between home educators and Local Education Authorities (LEAs). She wanted to document the policy and procedures and suggest guidelines to help reduce potential conflict. She gathered questionnaire data from LEA officials, with a response rate of 69%. One of the main findings was that 75% of LEAs were not totally conversant with the laws on home education, which Petrie felt could lead to conflict. Petrie documented LEA policy and practice, and recommended guidelines for future LEA/home educator interactions. Just comparing the data on the LEAs' understanding of the law, it would appear that Petrie's 1992 work was influential in improving LEA awareness of home educators', and LEAs' responsibilities and duties (see Chapter 10).

Steven Lowden's 1993 work looked at LEAs' policy and practice, sending out letters to LEAs, resulting in a 78% response rate. He analysed information booklets, reporting findings in a similar fashion to those found in Chapter 10. Rather than keep LEAs anonymous, however, Lowden named particular practices and policies that were then taken to task. Lowden's work in the 1990s focused on LEAs' concerns towards home educating parents providing adequate socialisation and academic standards for their children. His study found instances in the documentation that concerned him enough to conclude,

LEA largely appear to have failed to grasp that there are clear structural differences between the formal system of school which appears to be increasingly more bureaucratic and the informal, non-formal and organized educational activity practiced by many home educators. The aims and objectives of a school do not have to be exported to a home educator and LEA are inconsistent in how they perform their statutory duties...Home education, which does not require parents to assess their child, nor are they held accountable by the state in their use of resources, challenges the cultural web, liberal ideology and aims of school education. (Lowden 1995:33)
Richard Bates (1996), an LEA official, was commissioned to investigate the LEA role in home education to identify good practice, noting how effective this was when combined with active and effective communication with Education Otherwise. He used a questionnaire with 108 LEAs, with a 35% response rate. Home education was considered ineffective by 38% of LEAs, which Bates attributed to a lack of understanding of home educators' aims. He also found considerable variation in attitudes by LEAs to home education and policy. Bates expresses the essential difference in attitudes:

Some LEAs feel that the existence of this form of education is a mistake...and (in view of this) provide formal mechanisms to monitor the home education, with the aim of admitting or returning the home-educated pupils to the school system as soon as possible. Characteristics of this response are a bureaucratic approach to the families concerned, a rigid view of what satisfactory education entails and an absence of support functions...

Other LEAs...even though they may believe powerfully that the schools in the Authority offer a first-class education...adopt a more conciliatory and supportive stance towards home education. Such approaches may be due to a belief in the value of choice through diversity: that in a democracy families should have the right to decide how to educate their own children: that this responsibility should not be assumed against the wishes of the parents.

(Bates 1996:18, cited on Education Otherwise website, subsection – Taking a Child Out of School and LA Contact.)

The latest research on 'Elective home Education' (EHE) as it is now known in government publications, was forwarded to me as I was completing this written paper. Commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Arthur Ivatts (2006) focused on the current policy, provision and practice or home education for Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children. Postal questionnaires were sent to 23 Local Education Authorities, who were identified by the DfES as models of good practice. His return rate was 72.7% from individuals responsible for monitoring/evaluating home-based educators, and 91% from the Traveller Education Services (TES) personnel. The research findings highlighted evidence that was used to justify concerns held by the TES and other government bodies, over the adequacy, suitability and quality of home education among this group. The growing numbers of Traveller families opting to home educate was seen as based on a fear of cultural erosion, a judged lack of relevance within the secondary school curriculum, and the fear of racism and other bullying. Ivatts, who has been involved with Gypsy/Roma and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom for thirty years, presented his philosophy at a UNESCO conference in 2003 as starting with the premise, "there is
nothing wrong with Romanies/Gypsies\(^4\). However, his conclusions and recommendations in the research appear to be loaded against the education provided by this group, as he states ‘Few Gypsy/Roma and Traveller parents have the knowledge, skills and resources to provide or deliver a full-time education that is efficient and suitable’ (Ivatts 2006:22). His report draws out his concern that existing home education legislation is essentially only concerned with parents’ rights and may now be judged as inadequate to protect the educational rights and to safeguard the welfare of children (Ivatts 2006:23). Conflict with existing legislation, the Every Child Matters Agenda, and Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000, has propelled Ivatts to recommend new legislation to apply uniformly to all home educated families.

Whilst the compulsory registration element of the recommendations would be acceptable along Reich’s trilogy of interest concept (see Chapter 6), the research is biased in promoting a school-based, communitarian perspective of ‘suitable education’. Ivatts’ conclusions and recommendations echo Bates’ (1996) comment earlier about the LEA vision that is bureaucratic and rigidly inflexible towards suitable education. As this 2006 research is based on a unique group within the larger home educating community, the leap to legislate for all home educators is not warranted. If anything, this research begs a deeper understanding of Traveller families who choose to home educate. If there is a marked mismatch of educational desires by state and family at the secondary school level, further research is needed. A state prescribed ‘efficient and suitable education’ might not equip Traveller children to be prepared for life in a modern civilized society and to achieve their full potential if it conflicts with their cultural, traditional home community. Likewise, Traveller children who are not given opportunities to access a society wider than their immediate community may need educational support other than from their parents. This does not automatically assume a path to state school, as a well-developed home education programme could bridge Traveller culture and education suitable for society. There is scope for further research to ‘adopt a more conciliatory and supportive stance towards home education’ (Bates 1996:18)

2.4 Summary of research review

Drawing from the American and British studies, several aspects were brought to light. Demographic studies, whether within the body of the work or as the focus of the whole study, are worthwhile to illustrate the participants that are specifically surveyed. Care must be taken, however, not to merely include home educators that have a vested interest in portraying their successes to the researcher. For example, studies such as those home educators who are struggling with their work, or who have returned the children to public school, or who do not take standardized tests to compete with school-based peers, may help to address non-home educators’ concerns more effectively. Rothermel (2002b) attempts this in her work. In the same way, state officials who are not linked to truancy or at-risk children departments should be balanced against those individuals who actively seek cooperative efforts with home


Though attempts have been made, estimating numbers of home educators will continue to be difficult, especially if there is no compulsory registration in England and Wales. Recognising this, a more useful and comparable measure would be the percentage of home-educated children as a part of the total school age population. Studies that managed to report on this measurement could be compared over time or in different states, and countries, as such a measurement also accounts for fluctuations in the school-based population.

Rationale studies continue to be useful, as they add to the knowledge base, and can show changes in the movement (such as the religious motivation lessening as the dominating reason for choice in the United States, or the growth of Traveller children opting to home educate in the United Kingdom). Legal and political studies are useful in a similar vein, as laws are modified. Such studies can also impact discussions over educational policy and practice by state officials and home educators alike.

The two most often quoted areas of concern, regarding socialisation and academic merit, will need more research. As it appears both areas have been dealt with from the home educators' perspective, rather than in comparison to the state officials' concerns, more comparative work is necessary here.

In fact, comparative studies can do much to highlight opposing views with an aim to finding common ground. Those studies that have already been completed on perceptions by state officials and home educators towards home education have added to the knowledge base on home education. Following on from the data produced in the United States, coupled with the three studies on perceptions in England and Wales by Petrie (1992), Lowden (1993) and Bates (1996), the contribution of this current study is highlighted in the next section.

Worth mentioning first is a final point about home education research, from home educating advocates. It was useful to read Larry and Susan Kaseman's criticisms of home schooling research (1991, 2002), to gain the perspective that is filtered to home educators reading the online Home Education Magazine. Essentially, their criticism of academic research is based on their understanding that such philosophical debates will be detrimental to the freedoms of home educators. Or, as they see it, 'the benefits go to researchers, universities, experts, attorneys, and others who use it [research] in place of direct knowledge, alternative practices, and effective political action' (Kaseman and Kaseman 1991:4). Their reluctant support is for case study research, which they feel can showcase individual stories, rather than generalizing or quantifying home education. Kaseman and Kaseman (2002), along with Thomas Washburne (2002), also took Rob Reich to task on his 2001 paper, Testing the Boundaries of Parental Authority over Education: The Case of Homeschooling. Articulating his argument against several points in Reich's paper, Washburne (2002:5) warns that Reich is 'setting an academic framework by which an activist judge might rule in favor of heavy restriction on home education, while at the
same time avoiding the obvious assault on precedent and the Constitution.' The
care of home education advocates for their freedoms is important to note, as it may
help explain the strong lobbying support for home schooling in America, and the
reticence of home-based educators to be too vocal in England and Wales.

2.5 Contribution of this study to the field
Since the introduction of compulsory free education, public and private
education has coexisted to address, amongst other things, the concept of educational
diversity and pluralism in society. It can also balance the interests of the state, parent
and child, offering educational choices to meet individual needs/desires. Moreover,
whilst public education dominates in both societies under study, there is a reportedly
growing population of home educators\(^5\), which can impact education policy.

The implications for education policy are dependent on attitudes/perceptions
that drive policy. Thus, understanding attitudes/perceptions held by home educators
and state officials towards home education can be illuminating. If they are compatible,
interaction could be cooperative and mutually beneficial to both groups, or developed
as such. If there are discordant attitudes/perceptions, it is useful to understand to what
extent, and to move forward for the benefit of the clients of education and future
citizens of society.

As much of the past research in the last thirty years has come from American
studies, with a limited number from England and Wales, my study primarily
contributes to the British\(^6\) knowledge base. Though comparative work on home
education has been completed, none has focused on two societies that represent
similarity (in the legal structure) and difference (for example, in the stages of the
movement, and culture towards home education). Building on work by Petrie (1992),
Lowden (1993) and Bates (1996), my study contributes to the field because:

- It illustrates both perspectives of those involved in education who may
  interact on points of law;
- It is original, as no other research has compared home education from
  the state officials’ and home educators’ perspectives in England and
  Wales and in Florida, USA;
- It adds to the growing literature on home education, especially with its
  comparative approach;
- It highlights aspects that might sit uneasily with home educators or
  state officials, e.g. compulsory registration in England and Wales. As

\(^5\) See for example, Meighan 1995, or Lines 1999, for growth in the home education population in
England and Wales, and the United States respectively. Additionally, the annual statistical brief
produced by the Florida Department of Education shows a steady increase in numbers of home
schoolers.

\(^6\) The term ‘British’ is used in this study to imply the citizens from England and Wales. I am aware that
to be British means to come from the United Kingdom of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern
Ireland. However, merely for clarity when comparing with the American perspective, the term British
perspective is used.
such, it could be a useful tool for discussion of policy, practice and interaction between home educators and state officials; and

- It highlights changes in attitudes/perceptions from previous research, manifest in the voices of the participants, information booklets and policy that inculcate cooperative ventures between home educators and state officials.

2.6 Summary

This chapter detailed British and American research that has contributed to the knowledge base over the last thirty years, revealing a greater number and diversity of studies from America. Positioning this study as adding to the British-based studies, my contribution to the field was outlined.

Chapter 3 continues the literature search with an understanding of the historical context of home education and education within both societies. By comparing the origins and present-day scenarios of home education in both societies, any differences, which might affect the two groups of people, were able to be highlighted.

7 Before completion of the written thesis, I had been asked for good practice information from one LEA, and others also asked for a summary report of my work.
Chapter 3 - The historical context of education

3.1 Introduction
This chapter focused on answering a specific question, namely:

- What is the historical context of home education in England and Wales and in Florida?

To do this, the co-existence of public education alongside private education, including home education was first highlighted. Though home education pre-dates compulsory public education, the development of the modern home education movement in England and Wales and in Florida was the focus. Sketching the development of home-based education and home schooling culminated in considering the historical and cultural comparisons between the present situations in the two societies\(^1\). With home education thus contextualised and compared, assumptions were made on the fundamental differences that were expected in this study.

3.2 Compulsory state education versus private education
Compulsory public education was introduced in England and Wales in the 1870 Forster Education Act. It advocated a basic network of state-supported primary schools (Moore 1987:153) though the specifics of compulsory education for children aged five to fourteen years (raised to sixteen in 1963) did not become law until the 1944 Education Act\(^2\). In the United States, the beginnings of compulsory laws can be seen as early as 1852 in Massachusetts. Known as the ‘common school movement’ there was ‘a series of state movements occurring roughly during the period 1830-1860 that looked toward expansion and improvement of education at the elementary level’ (Jorgensen 1987:20). Compulsory attendance laws for education are now present in all fifty states, so that educators are able to teach children to read, write and compute; to prepare children to assume productive positions in American society; to help enculturate the masses of European immigrants; to eliminate truancy; and, to remove abuses in child labour accompanying the rapid urbanization and industrialization of American society.

Lett 1999: 4

More specifically for this study, in Florida, Tebeau & Marina (1999:247) noted:

- The Constitution of 1868 authorized a uniform system of common schools, but it could not be financed and developed in so short a time. Nor was there any demand for it. Not until January 30, 1869, did the legislature provide for a comprehensive school law.

Before the existence of compulsory education laws in the two societies, education was considered to be mainly a family responsibility, and the extent of the

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\(^1\) Societies refer to England and Wales, and Florida

\(^2\) The 1948 Beveridge Report was the catalyst for the Welfare State. Of importance in this study, education became part of England and Wales's welfare provision.
education provided was left up to the family — Cremin (1970), Carson (1987). Miriam David (1980: 22) noted that education at home was seen as 'proof of the fathers' respectability and station in life that they could afford staff both to run their homes and educate their daughters'. Historians would also note that prior to compulsory education laws, education could have been provided privately through dame schools, church schools, grammar schools, private boarding schools or trade schools. Though many agree that parents ensured their children were literate to be able to read the Bible — Cremin (1970), Noll (1992), Lett (1999), Carper (2000) — the diversity of religious beliefs and values led to private schooling that was unsystematic, unregulated, and discontinuous (Carper, 2000: 10).

It would be reasonable to assume that it was not until compulsory education laws in England and Wales (begun in 1870, 1944), in the United States (1880s) and in Florida (1869), and the provision of free mass schooling, that the majority of children received a school education. The impetus for compulsory education in England and Wales, and compulsory attendance laws in the United States had similar roots, spurred on by industrialisation and urbanisation of the mid-1800s. The argument for the creation of free schools or 'common schools' was made on the grounds of extending 'the benefits of education to the working class' and to give the population 'at least minimal qualifications' in an increasingly complex society (Giddens 1997a: 321) in England and Wales, and to mould 'a moral, disciplined, and unified population prepared to participate in American political, economic and social life' (Carper 2000: 12). The aim of producing literate, useful members of society was met by providing education for all children, regardless of social class or financial background. Indeed, it was the idea that all people are born equal that led to 'the development of mass public education in the United States' (Giddens 1997a: 408).

Thus education in the United States, including Florida, provided for the most part in public schools, exists for similar reasons to that in England and Wales. Education, in the form of public schooling, has the functionalist purposes of producing literate, useful members of society, promoting a common national identity, rather than supporting pluralist religious, ethnic and cultural ideologies. This mass schooling supported the melting pot concept of Dewey's (1916) democracy of education, especially the 'Americanisation' of immigrants to the United States. The desire to encourage nationalism or patriotism through state educational institutions is articulated by Val Rust (1977: 15-18), who notes that to ensure a sense of devotion and awe towards a nation, three elements encapsulated in state educational institutions are needed: socialization, education and schooling.

Though most children of compulsory school age attend public schools in England and Wales, and in Florida, two important differences must be pointed out. Firstly, state schools in England and Wales support a National Curriculum, and religious education for all students. In contrast, the Constitutional separation of church and state does not allow for religious instruction in state schools, and there is no state mandated curriculum in Florida (but the Sunshine State Standards give guidance). I believed these differences would impact the origins and growth of the modern home education movement.
3.3 The origins of the modern home education movement

Though home education is the oldest form of education (Petrie, 1993), predating compulsory education and private schools, the modern home education movement was relevant in my study. Its origin, in the 1970s, is seen by many researchers to have been influenced by alternative education philosophies such as Charlotte Mason, Rudolph Steiner, and Maria Montessori; the desire to educate using the family's religious platform; or the disillusionment of the provision of state schools, echoed by 'deschoolers' Illich, Reimer, Goodman, and Holt. For example, see Kirschner (1991), Van Galen & Pitman (1991), Petrie (1992), Mayberry et al. (1995), Meighan (1995), Ray (1999).

As both societies compelled parents to ensure their children complied with compulsory education or attendance laws, the justification for home education was originally religiously based in the United States — van Galen & Pitman (1991), Knowles et al (1992), Mayberry et al. (1995), Dahm (1996), Carper (2000). That is, many home educating families were citing their choice as their right for religious freedom and an alternative to the secular schools available. Such a choice is ensured by the Constitution of the United States, which expressly provides for such religious freedom in the First Amendment. Though such a fundamental argument with the state does not exist in England and Wales, home educators have also vocalised religious reasons for their choice, as seen in Webb (1988), Petrie (1992), Lowden (1993), Meighan (1995). However, though religiously based state-funded schools, or the introduction of comparative religious education was an impetus for some to turn away from this choice (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses or Plymouth Brethren), religion need not have been the primary reason for choosing home education.

However, in the thirty years since home education began to grow as an alternative to state education, the reasons for choice are no longer predominantly religious in either society. Other reasons, such as dissatisfaction with state provision or the influence of alternative educational philosophies, can fuel the home educators' choice — Petrie (1992), Lines (1995), Lowe (1998), Thomas (1998). In addition, though not found referenced in the research, discontent over desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s might also have provided an impetus for certain families to opt out of state school provision in the United States.3

Home educators may also have aligned their ideas on philosophical grounds. John Dewey was critical of the common school, which he thought would serve children better if it represented a miniature society, reflective of the larger one, to be truly democratic (cited in van Patten, 1997:95). Dewey revived the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's eighteenth-century vision of a child-led education that focused on the child's needs. However, as David Guterson, a high school teacher and home educating parent in the USA points out in his argument for home schooling, Dewey's idealistic views on flexible and child-centred schools were not widely enacted. In addition, Guterson believes that educators embracing Dewey's views in the 1960s

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3 In their synthesis of literature on multicultural aspects of home schooling, McDowell, Sanchez and Jones (2000:127) detailed a study by Llewellyn (1996) where the choice to home school was based on a perception that schools perpetuate institutional racism.
Chapter 3 27 Historical Context of Education

'were naïve in believing that child-centred education was viable in public-school classrooms' (Guterson, 1992: 111). Child-centred education, espoused by Dewey, was taken by home educators to be best met by the individualised family community. In England and Wales, it is likely that Piaget's constructivist theory of cognitive learning struck a chord with home educators.

Dissatisfaction and criticism of the school system was also vocalised by advocates of 'deschooling' society. These individuals, in criticising the public school provision, enlightened parents about the option to choose an alternative. For example, Paul Goodman, in the 1960 Growing Up Absurd and 1964 Compulsory Mis-education looked at the failure of the 'common' school and sought alternatives to schools such as mini-schools and learning from apprenticeships. John Holt's powerful book How Children Fail, published in 1964, suggested that bad teachers and bad schools result in failure. He advocated child-led learning where children were able to learn naturally at their own pace (not constricted by curricula, timetables or school days). Everitt Reimer, like Ivan Illich, saw schools as functioning to provide custodial care, social role selection, indoctrination and education/learning. He considered that the most important thing that individuals could do was to take back responsibility for the education of their children (Reimer, cited in Lister, 1974: 2). Ian Lister articulated the challenges in his work, Deschooling, concluding that in spite of weaknesses in the deschoolers' argument, there was a place to consider serious alternatives to the common school (Lister 1974).

The historical development of home education is closely linked to legal cases, won by home educators or home-educating advocates, who set precedents alongside the education laws in both societies. The specifics of the laws on home education are dealt with in Chapter 4. However, some legal cases clarifying issues on home education were seen in five phases, highlighted by J. Gary Knowles et al. (1992), Mayberry et al. (1995) and David Lett (1999) for their significance in the modern home education movement. Whilst the authors specifically referred to home education in the United States, the five phases (contention, confrontation, cooperation, consolidation, compartmentalisation) are described below to compare home education in England and Wales with that in the United States and Florida.

3.3.1 Contention

The phase of contention was fuelled by statements and practices of a specific group of educational critics and reformers led by John Holt (1969) and Ivan Illich (1970). The work produced by these critics and other social scientists focused on the perceived deplorable conditions of public education. As a result of unprecedented publicity focused upon the failure of public schools, many

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4 Both Guterson (1992: Chapter 6) and others such as Simpson et al. (2005) suggest that home educators misinterpret Dewey's philosophy if they think he advocated withdrawal of children from schools. Though he recommends an individualistic, child-centred approach to education, he sees the child as a social being learning in the school community.
parents began to explore alternative forms of education including home schooling.
Lett 1999:25-26

In the 1960s and early 1970s the increasing contention over state schools was seen in both societies, fuelled by deschoolers and educational critics. However, the historian Lawrence Cremin (1977) recognized that criticism levelled at public (state) schools in the USA is long and cyclical (cited in Mayberry et al., 1995:11). Postman and Weingartner (1973) suggest one strand of criticism stemming from the 1930s, with attacks against Dewey’s progressive education (cited in Mayberry et al., 1995:12). Certainly, since the deaths of students in Columbine, USA (April, 1999), and Dunblane, Scotland (March, 1996), recent concerns over safety have driven some parents to choose alternatives to state schools in both societies.

Mayberry et al. (1995:12) suggests that the persistent attack for the failure of state schools in the USA to ‘emphasize intellectual growth and rigorous thinking’ grew in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, the business community’s desire for a ‘back-to-basics’ educational approach was considered to solve the problems of the school curriculum. A third factor, in the 1980s in the USA, was the ‘plethora of educational reform reports’ in response to the criticisms raised two decades earlier. ‘In the rush to implement these reforms, the well-being of individual children was often overlooked’ — cited in Mayberry et al. (1995:12), from the works of Bastion, Fruchter, Gittel, Greer, and Haskins, (1985); Natriello, McDill and Pallas, (1985).

In England and Wales, Roland Meighan (1989) cites the growth of the modern home education movement as dating from the 1970s, with the formation of a self-help group at that time. The phase of contention outlined by Mayberry et al. (1995) can be seen in this society too, with the visibility of A.S. Neill’s alternative Summerhill School. State schools in England and Wales have also been subject to educational reforms, such as the introduction of comprehensive schools in the 1960s and the National Curriculum in the 1980s.

The effect in England and Wales is similar to that found in the USA and Florida. The phase of contention over the provision of education at state schools led to parents rejecting the institutionalised, reform-driven schooling to establish their own home-educating programs or enrol their children in private schools.

3.3.2 Confrontation
During the early 1970s phase of contention, there emerged conflicts between home school parents and public school administrators [equivalent of local education authorities in England and Wales] which were characterized by extensive litigation. The phase of confrontation saw widespread litigious action and can be attributed in part to the distress administrators felt when suddenly confronted with multiple cases of parents who
thought they could educate children better than the public schools.

One of the biggest obstacles for parents wishing to home educate their children after compulsory education became law in both societies under study, was the illegality of such a venture, or more importantly, the perceived illegality. Whilst compulsory education from the mid-nineteenth century onwards was a move towards educating the mass population to some basic degree of literacy, the legal right of parents to take responsibility of their children’s education has always existed. A clause in the laws has kept the avenues open for private education and home educators alike. To not have such provision would be to deny parental rights to choose the education for their children. In addition, though some might argue that compulsory education could also impinge on parental rights, it is often quoted by home educating advocates and support groups that education is compulsory in England and Wales, but schooling is not. On such grounds, home education is defended as a legal alternative to public or private schooling.

Of note, unlike England and Wales, the United States has not one but fifty education systems, as education is a function of each state and not a federal function (Mann, 1979:3). Each state has interpreted the legality of home schooling in different ways, in spite of its provisions in five amendments of the Constitution. Some states are quite liberal and flexible towards home schooling in contrast with other states that have strict and numerous rules to adhere to (See Appendix II for a brief overview of state regulations). Highly regulated states require strict adherence to sending in test scores, having suitable teacher qualifications, or home visits by state officials, whereas less regulated states only require parents to establish their home school as a private school (Farris, 1997:xxi). In Florida, a moderately regulated state, the 1985 law clarified the right of parents to home educate their children (The Florida law and legal obligations of parents and state officials is covered in Chapter 4).

In examining the modern home education movement, the legal right of parents to take responsibility for the education of their children is enshrined in the laws. However, in the 1970s, when parents considered home education as an option, they had to argue their legal right to choose this alternative. The first phase of contention

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5 In England and Wales, the legal right of parents to direct the education of their children exists in Section 36 of the 1944 Education Act, stating children of compulsory school age should receive ‘efficient full-time education, suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any specific educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’. In Florida Statute 232.02 parents have the choice of accommodating regular school attendance through ONE of the following provisions: a public school, a parochial, religious or denominational school, a private school, a home education program, a private tutor program. The home education program is described as ‘sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent or guardian’.

6 Home education can exist under ‘the religious liberty and free speech provisions of the first amendment; the due process and liberty provisions of the fourth, fifth and fourteenth Amendment; and the limitation on federal interference in the family that would be the necessary result of a government bound by the strictures of the Tenth Amendment’ (Klicka and Phillips 1997:82, Dare 2001)
led to this second phase of confrontation, which may still exist if critics of home education do not know the law.

In this phase of extensive litigation, in the 1970s and early 1980s, both home educators and state officials would have felt threatened by the reactions of the other (Mayberry et al., 1995:13). Meighan (1984a:279), cited in Petrie (1993:30), suggested state officials who were new or inexperienced in home education appeared 'to go through a stage of hysteria starting with ignorant claims of illegality, to obsessive visiting, lengthy correspondence, until some kind of reason prevails'. His comment of reason prevailing would probably have occurred between the LEA and home educator, once the laws and responsibilities of both parties became clear.

In this confrontation phase in England and Wales, the United States, and Florida, the home education laws have needed to be clarified. In England and Wales, the wording of the relevant laws resulted in clarification in the courts for home educators and LEA officials alike. In the case of Harrison and Harrison v Stevedon 1981, the courts decided that a 'suitable' education 'prepared the child for life in the modern civilized society and enabled the child to achieve his full potential.' In the case of R v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex parte Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust (1985), suitable education was also defined by Mr. Justice Woolf:

> education is 'suitable' if it primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so. (Times 12 April 1985, cited in Education Otherwise Booklet)

In the United States, Lett (1999:98) cites four legal cases that are generally recognized in the published research as establishing certain principles and guidelines for the courts to follow when confronting home schooling. In the first case, Meyer v Nebraska (1923), the court held that the right of parents to instruct their children was within the liberty of the 14th Amendment (Klicka and Phillips, 1997:82). In Pierce v Society of Sisters (1925), involving a Catholic school, the high court upheld the right of parents to direct the education of their children (Lines, 1996:63). The third example of the Supreme Court clarifying the state's educational authority was Farrington v Tokushige (1927). The Court stated that the state (Hawaii) could not excessively control the terms and content of non-public schools so that they would be virtually indistinguishable from public schools (Lett, 1999:49). The last legal case involved Amish parents who objected to Wisconsin's compulsory attendance law in Wisconsin v Yoder (1972). The Amish successfully argued that the law interfered with the free exercise of religion clause of the First Amendment, but this case was not a precedent for further religious-based court cases. As Lett (1999) and Klicka and Phillips (1997) both note, the Supreme Court can interpret whether the case involves conflict with the fundamental rights of the constitution, such as
When government regulations conflict with a fundamental right, the government has the burden to prove the regulations are ‘essential’ and ‘the least restrictive means’ to fulfil a compelling interest. When nonfundamental rights conflict with government regulation, the government need only prove its regulations are ‘reasonable’.

Klicka and Phillips (1997:82)

As a result of confrontation between home schoolers and state officials in the United States, the home education laws in Florida are more detailed and specific than the law in England and Wales. In addition, legal cases are now less prevalent in England and Wales, as well as Florida, as the legality of home education has been established and clarified in previous court cases.

3.3.3 Cooperation

This phase of cooperation in the United States had its foundation in the early to mid 1980s, and has grown since then. As Lett (1999:26) notes, ‘public schools began to implement policies - often legislated or court mandated - that allowed home school students to take advantage of public school facilities and programs’.

This can be seen in Florida by the 1985 Craig Dickenson Act, where homeschooled children may be dual enrolled in high school and college courses at their local community college or state university. There is also the opportunity for homeschooled children to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities such as sports, band, speech, or drama, at their local state school (see FPEA guide to Homeschooling 2006, online at www.fpea.com).

Whilst the modular approach to the curricula in American schools might facilitate such cooperation by state schools for home schoolers, this cooperation is not apparent in the literature on home-based education in England and Wales. Any cooperation between home-based educators and LEA officials could be piecemeal, and dependent on the individuals and resources available. To progress to this stage would involve facilitating programmes linked with schools, although this would probably require a certain number, or critical mass, of home-based educators to become viable. However, Lowe’s (1998) research indicates a large proportion of home educators in England and Wales educate as a result of dissatisfaction with schools. Cooperation with the schools might not be realistic.

3.3.4 Consolidation

Lett (1999) sees this phase characterized by the numerical growth of home schoolers, networking, legislative lobbying, visibility and public acceptance.

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7 The right to freely exercise religion is a fundamental right, whereas ‘parents’ rights’ are ‘nonfundamental’ in nature, says Klicka and Phillips (1997:82).

8 For example, a perceived loophole in the Florida law was recently tightened in 2000, to prevent truants using the shield of ‘home schooling’ to circumvent compulsory attendance laws.
Mayberry et al. (1995) sees this phase as a result of consolidation in the USA as fivefold:

(a) the growing public acceptance of home education, especially as reflected in media coverage; (b) the prolonged and perplexing problems facing public schools, commonly defined as the “crisis in education”; (c) the networking achievements of parent educators at the local, state, and national levels by way of grassroots publications and home school organisations; (d) the publication of a relatively extensive number of home school “how to” books and curricular materials, both commercially and by entrepreneurs who are themselves parent educators; and (e) the availability of correspondence programs and courses, particularly those aimed at the home school market.

Mayberry et al. (1995:19)

It would seem from the media articles, and more abundant research completed in the United States on home schooling, that this alternative form of education is more prevalent than in England and Wales. The plethora of support groups, at a state or local level, attest to this phase of consolidation in the United States, as well as perhaps representing part of the American culture of support. In my Florida county (1 of 67 in Florida), there are currently four home educating support groups, all affiliated to the state wide group, FPEA (Florida Parent Educators Association). For legal representation, the HSLDA (Home School Legal Defence Association) is a powerful national lobbying group that serves to protect the rights of home educators to teach their children at home. At the state level, there is a specific coordinator for home education in the Florida Department of Education. In addition, home education is part of the political rhetoric in the United States, albeit mentioned briefly as part of campaign promises.

In contrast, there is no apparent nationwide legal lobbying group in England and Wales, although the two largest groups, Education Otherwise (EO) and Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS) inform home educators and public officials about the laws on home education, keep abreast of government initiatives that might affect home-based educators, and attempt to dialogue with government officials over issues pertaining to home education. In addition, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) does not make it easy to find out about home-based education, and there seems to be no specific coordinator to contact. In the timeframe of this study, the terms for home education have varied on DfES and LEA-specific websites, from home-based education, to home education, to elective home education, to Education Other Than at School. Moreover, whilst it is possible to network with other home-based educators once a family has joined a support group, there is less open promotion of local support groups in England and Wales than in Florida. This may have something to do with respecting those home-based educators who wish to remain

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9 Ray's 1999 synthesis of home education research is predominantly drawn from studies completed in the United States.
unknown to the LEAs and the common stance of giving limited information to the LEAs.\textsuperscript{10} Though it is possible to subscribe to HEAS or EO without being a home educator, access to their members is limited (See Rothermel (2002b) for her time-intensive access to EO members for research purposes).

Mayberry \textit{et al.} (1995) sees the continued growth of the home education population in the USA consolidating their position as ‘bona fide educational institutions’, and cites Hadeed (1991:1) who says, ‘what began as a relatively private endeavour on the part of a small number of parents has taken on a progressively more public character ... and assumed the form and structure of an organized collective action’. The growth of home education in England and Wales is in spite of the lack of organised networking and government lobbying of home-based education support groups. Though media coverage of home-based education is generally positive, I perceived home-based education still operating at a grassroots level, when compared to home schooling in Florida and the USA.

3.3.5 Compartmentalisation

This phase has emerged as a result of confrontations between home school parents and public school administrators becoming less prevalent. Recent times have seen dissent among various competing factions, especially those with religious orientations, with the result being ideological fracturing and the beginnings of compartmentalisation in the movement itself.

\textit{Lett} (1999:26)

In the United States, as a result of less confrontation between home school parents and state school administrators, the home schooling movement is compartmentalised, as there are opportunities to grow as separate home schooling groups. In Florida, home schooling is accepted as one of the educational choices for parents. So, religiously based home schoolers are seen alongside home schoolers who are drawn together by educational philosophies (such as ‘The Well Trained Mind’ of Susan Wise Bauer), or for secular support and socialisation.

Home education is compartmentalized in Florida, and perhaps to a lesser extent in England and Wales, but for different reasons\textsuperscript{11}. In Florida, the support from other like-minded home schoolers enables larger groups of differing orientations to form freely and openly. In England and Wales, as some home educators wish to remain outside the state system of monitoring, there seems to be less publicity about

\textsuperscript{10} This perception is based on information freely available in media sources or on the Internet websites of EO and to a lesser extent HEAS. Another website that encourages home-based education but advocates closed ranks to the authorities is Home Education UK (www.home-education.org.uk).

\textsuperscript{11} Compartmentalisation has been present throughout the modern home education movement in both societies, and should not be seen as the final phase. Fracturing of different forms of home education have existed since the 1970s, giving rise to home educators who follow school-style curricula, to eclectic curricula, to ‘unschooling’. As different as the home educating families are, there are a variety of home education models that encapsulate culture, religion, philosophical and ideological beliefs.
the groups that exist, perhaps leading to a greater degree of fracturing, and less support or strength in numbers. A cursory comparison of support groups and level of public profile of home education in both societies led me to wonder what factors affected the perceived lower profile in England and Wales. Could there be more than just the historical development previously outlined? Briefly I considered the cultural impact on home education development in both societies.

3.4 The issue of culture

Though this study uses a socio-political lens with which to view home education in both societies, a brief mention of the anthropological perspective of culture is first necessary. This concept of culture can be seen by many to be rooted in anthropology (see Gamst and Norbeck’s (1976) compilation of ideas on culture), with Edward B. Tylor’s classic definition used as a backbone of anthropological studies:

Culture or Civilisation...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

(E.B. Tylor, (1873), cited in Gamst and Norbeck, 1976:36)

That culture is learned, not inherited, is one undisputed tenet of all perspectives. Another is the concern for culture change (see Naylor, 1996) though anthropologists study culture and human experiences holistically. In addition, cultural relativism, says Larry Naylor (1996:5) distinguishes anthropology from other disciplines. As he eloquently continues,

Essentially, relativism holds that customs, beliefs, or practices of others can be judged only within their own culture context.

To judge the beliefs or behaviours of another culture based on those of your own culture is fundamentally wrong.

So, a group culture needs to be understood in its particular context, as to view one culture through another’s lens could lead to misunderstandings or erroneous conclusions. Cultural relativism can also be useful in a comparative fashion, as to compare one culture to another highlights similarities and differences, simultaneous to knowledge building.

This study leant on the comparative aspect of studying culture from the relativist stance for two reasons. Firstly, theoretically identifying the group culture of the two societies, as well as the cultures emanating from home educators and state officials, provided foundation knowledge of the groups. Secondly, it was necessary to show how cultural lenses could be used to define the groups in relation to the other. Such comparison of one group’s culture in relation to the other gives rise to stereotypes that do not account for the individual variations within the groups, nor the changes of the groups’ culture over time. Such stereotypes arising from a group perspective towards another group’s culture, was considered an aspect that could lead

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12 The historical overview of the development of the home education movement touches on changes to the home education community, which might not be reflected in the state officials’ view of home educators.
to tensions. Furthermore, though the cross-cultural comparisons of home educators and state officials in the two societies have an anthropological slant, the sociological and political perspectives are also relevant here.

From the sociological perspective, culture is defined in a general way by Gordon Marshall (1998:137) as ‘all that in human society which is socially rather than biologically transmitted...the symbolic and learned aspects of human society’. Anthony Giddens (2001:22) would concur, but goes further to link culture to society. As he states,  

No cultures could exist without societies. But equally, no society could exist without culture. Without culture, we would not be 'human' at all, in the sense in which we usually understand that term...  
A society's culture comprises both intangible aspects – the beliefs, ideas and values which form the content of culture – and tangible aspects – the objects, symbols or technology which represents than content.  

So, whilst the anthropological perspective draws on understanding one culture, and then perhaps understanding that culture relative to another, the sociological perspective used here links culture to society.  

In his work on culture, Fred Inglis (2004:7) considers the ‘birth of a concept’ such as culture, and sees that identifying culture ‘makes it possible to distinguish between different versions of the same sort of action, and so attribute it to different human groups’. He also notes that culture is a contested concept, and infers its multidimensional nature, as does Chris Jenks (1993), Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (1999). Thus, it would be unwise to suggest that all individuals in England and Wales share the same culture, any more than individuals in Florida are culturally homogenous, as there are many strata in both multicultural societies that may be contradictory. However, whilst recognising the cultural variations of individuals in both societies, perceptions held about one society’s culture could be generalised for comparative purposes in this study.  

This chapter has so far dealt with a comparative look at the historical context of education and the home education movement. However, embedded in the historical development, is the impact of the society’s political culture. As Duncan Watts (2003:2) points out, the common or core political culture is a set of long-term ideas and traditions which are passed on from one generation to the next, but are subject to change in attitudes over time. The political culture in England and Wales is based on many historical features that pervade current attitudes and can be summarised from Watts (2003:3-6) as:  

- Long history of independent existence  
- First parliamentary democracy in Europe

13 Society, defined by Giddens (2001:22) is a ‘system of interrelationships which connects individuals together.'
Trust placed in political elite that rules, so social deference, conformity, and acquiescence to status quo

Continuity in British political life, stable political system, present political practice based on past

Hereditary monarchy, hierarchy, nationality

Lack of written constitution, so ideas and institutions relating to government evolved

Preference for consensus – agreement, cooperation, moderation

Preference for strong government

Attitude of tolerance toward opposition and alternative opinions

In comparison, the political culture in the United States, Watts (2003:7-15) summarises, is seen to include:

National unity based on pursuit of American Dream

Inspired by Constitution which espoused faith in democracy, representative government, popular sovereignty, limited government, rule of law, equality, liberty, opportunity, support for free-market system, freedom of speech, and individual rights

Liberal individualism (proffered by John Locke)

Openly religious

Intense admiration for and love of country

The similarities in the political cultures of the two societies include the common commitment to the democratic process and general consensus about the political framework; commitment to individual liberty; preference for gradual political and social change; and equality of opportunity (taken from Watts 2003:16-17). The differences, more relevant to my study, stem largely from the historical roots of feudalism, hierarchy and hereditary monarchy in England and Wales, as contrasted with social equality and the Lockean concepts of liberal individualism and self-ownership in the United States. In addition, the lack of a written Constitution in England and Wales contrasts with the ubiquitous US Constitution.

From the American perspective, cultural attitudes are affected by the legitimisation of the US Constitution and the laws that protect the individual’s right to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’. Such rhetoric raises ongoing debates on various issues (for example, gun control or same-sex marriage), but not so much pertaining to home schooling in Florida. This is due in part to the American belief in social equality, or the ability for individuals to maximise their opportunities and achieve the American Dream (that becomes part of literature and popular media sources). The American psyche is also ingrained with the Lockean concepts of liberal individualism and self-ownership. Such values and norms of a particular culture, whilst varying enormously across cultures, are deeply embedded (Giddens 2001:23). Drawing on the preceding historical development and cultural attitudes, I expected...
home schoolers to have a greater sense of rights and ownership of their child's education than home-based educators. They were also expected to be more confrontational than home-based educators, as suggested in the visibility of an aggressive, national, legal home schooling support group (HSLDA).

The political culture in England and Wales is historically different to that in the United States, as briefly summarised in Watts (2003). For instance, the feudal past of this society lends its weight to a class system based on hierarchy. Running counter to American ideas, Watts (2003: 17) notes the British preoccupation in class-consciousness and the surviving existence of social snobbery. This in turn can lead to a rather deferential attitude towards authority, as noted by Punnett (1974) (cited in Watts 2003: 6). Crispin Jones (1992: 2) would recognise cultural attitudes affected by remnants of the historically elite system of justifying a liberal education for potential leaders in appropriate [school] subjects, leaving training for others to fit efficiently into their occupational niche. Now, whilst such ideas may be viewed with scepticism, the perception that individuals in England and Wales were more likely to follow the consensus, be cooperative rather than combative, and acquiesce to the status quo, drove my expectations that tension was more likely between home-based educators and state officials. That is to say, home education, as the least common educational choice, invites tension from those who perceive a departure from the status quo (on both sides).

To continue my train of thought, from the perspective of home-based educators in England and Wales, their defensive position on the right to home educate is based in law, not on a Constitution or Bill of Rights 14 penned by the Founding Fathers of a nation. Linked to the European Union, home-based educators would presumably be alarmed at the illegality of home education in countries such as Germany and may feel less sure of their rights to 'educate otherwise' as a consequence. In addition, though private fee-paying schools exist in England and Wales, previous Labour government opposition to [close such schools] is fierce (Jones 1992: 7). In spite of such opposition against private education, and defence of the parents' right to choose their child's education, I believed a cultural undercurrent and difference in attitudes towards home education must surely exist in England and Wales. That is, I expected home-based educators to be less sure than their home schooling counterparts that aggressively lobbying their rights against the status quo of state education would achieve their goals to educate their children at home. The quieter British resolve to home educate, and defend their right in the British Law Courts when necessary, may also have more to do with the historical obedience of the people to the feudal system and monarchy, and uncertainty over their infallible right to own their child's education than with strong libertarian views held.

3.5 Similarities in the historical and cultural context of home education

Table 3:1 highlights the most salient points drawn from this chapter to recap the similarities in the historical context and cultural attitudes in England and Wales,

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14 Recently in 2006, the Conservative Party leader, David Cameron has voiced support for a British Bill of Rights (June 27th, 2006, The Independent) to protect its citizens. The debate is ongoing.
and in Florida, USA. These similarities are seen in the introduction of compulsory state education, similar time frames for the origins of the modern home education movement and the variety of reasons for choice. In addition, the confrontation phase, when home education needs to be clarified in law or in the courts places home education within the educational choices available. 'Reactive' parents who withdraw their children from schools will be seen as confrontational in both societies, as they appear to be openly critical of the state school system. Other similar phases include the consolidation of home education through growing public acceptance in the media, greater visibility, and compartmentalisation of different religious, secular, ideological, philosophical, and pedagogical home education support groups.

Table 3:1 The historical and cultural context of home education - Similarities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home-based education in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home schooling in Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory state education introduced (first in 1870, consolidated in 1944, 1996 Education Acts)</td>
<td>Compulsory state education introduced (1869)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Modern home education movement began in 1970s
- Various reasons for choice of home education
- Clarification of law; reactive parents withdrawing child from school
- Growing public acceptance through media, visibility
- Commitment to democratic process
- Commitment to individual liberty
- Preference for gradual political and social change
- Support of equality of opportunity

3.6 Differences in the historical and cultural context of home education

The historical differences, summarised in Table 3:2, include the confrontation phase in England and Wales, where legal disputes still require court clarification\(^\text{15}\), as

\(^{15}\) For example, conflict over what constitutes 'efficient education' was seen as a matter of opinion and degree, and for the local education authority to decide, as determined in \(R \text{ v East Sussex County Council, ex parte Tandy (1998)}\).
there is no specific home education law. In contrast, though legal disputes could find their way to court in Florida, the bespoke 1985 Home Education Law is so detailed as to avoid serious legal battles.

**Table 3:2 The historical and cultural context of home education – Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home-based education in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home schooling in Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation – No evidence in laws that home education is accommodated in cooperative ventures in state schools or by LEAs.</td>
<td>Cooperation – Home schoolers have the right to partake in state school facilities and programmes as mandated by law. Also, eligibility for college scholarships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add to this the legal lobbying pressure of the national group, Home School Legal Defence Association (HSLDA), and it is clear that confrontation to home schoolers’ rights to home educate are aggressively met by the legal weight of this group.  

16 To see how active the HSLDA is, look to their website at www.hslda.org
In the cooperative phase, there is a marked difference in the home schoolers' right to partake in state school facilities and programmes, as mandated by law. They are also eligible for college scholarships. In contrast, there is no evidence in the law that home-based educators are accommodated in cooperative ventures in state schools or by the LEAs. I expected to see limited or no cooperation between home-based educators and LEAs or schools in the study. This cooperative phase ties in with the consolidation phase, where networking and lobbying at local, state and national level raises home education's visibility and profile. In Florida, this is seen by the acceptance of cooperative measures between home schoolers and state schools — see Lines, (2000b), Tyler and Carper (2000), and the visibility of home schoolers in state-wide competitions (such as the Geography Bee, Spelling Bee), extensive publications of home schooling material, and correspondence courses for home schoolers. In contrast, networking of home-based educators appears to be at the local level in England and Wales, and there is little evidence of effective legislative lobbying to the government\textsuperscript{17}. Educational material published is more likely to be school-based, rather than specifically home education-based, and few correspondence courses originate in England and Wales.\textsuperscript{18}

To add to the developmental differences that historically place home-based educators at different phases than their home schooling counterparts, the cultural implications of two other issues must be noted. Firstly, the separation of Church and State, as upheld in the US Constitution could be argued as the original, earlier impetus for parents to justify their choice of home schooling. In contrast, the acquiescence of state mandated religious instruction in schools, as part of the Education Acts, did not seem to be a challenge for most people in England and Wales. The introduction of the National Curriculum in the 1980s, race riots in Brixton, Southall, and Bradley in the 1970s-1990s, and the uneven mix of faith-based state schools (favouring Church of England and Catholic schools over other religions), may have had an effect on some home-based educators who made their choice because of the lack of separation of church and state, or strained race relations\textsuperscript{19}.

Secondly, the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights has been challenged by opponents of home schooling and has been found to uphold the individual's right to choose home schooling as his or her educational prerogative. In England and Wales,

\textsuperscript{17} The two largest home-education support groups, Education Otherwise (EO) and Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS) do keep a close watch on government educational policy and potential legislative changes, as detailed in their feedback to members. However, at present, there is no bespoke law that specifically addresses home education to meet the interests of state and home educating individuals.

\textsuperscript{18} World Wide Education (WES) does provide curricula for the primary years, and correspondence courses can be done for General Certificate of Education (GCSE), International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) and Advanced Level (A Level) examination subjects, but such courses are less comprehensive than the packaged curricula of Calvert School, and The American School, for example. At the time of this study's submission, a UK based virtual school has become available to home-based educators. See Briteschool, at www.briteschool.co.uk for more details.

\textsuperscript{19} However, Lowe (1998) sees two main groups of home-based educators, those that choose home education based on philosophical, ideological reasons, and those reacting to a situation at school. Those home-based educators who cite religion as their reason may fit into either group, and may not consider religion as the primary reason for choice.
the right of the parent to home educate is subject to the laws of the Education Acts and in a wider sense, under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is no British equivalent of the Constitution or revolutionary mantra of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' to bolster an unshakeable belief in ownership of the child's education. Instead the seemingly innocuous historical obedience to the monarchy and the feudal past lends itself more to a cultural attitude of acquiescence to the status quo, and a level of uncertainty when opposing educational options.

Based on the guiding research question set in Chapter 1, I believed that the differences in the historical and cultural contexts of home education would lead to fundamental differences in attitudes between home educators and state officials in the two societies under study. As similar as the two societies are, connected by their past and commitment to democracy, liberty and equality of opportunity, the fact that different attitudes were expected to surface made this study worthwhile. That is, exploring the attitudes towards home education in both societies could be informative for state officials, policymakers and home educators.

3.7 Summary

This chapter placed public education alongside private education in both societies since the 1800s. Tracing the modern home education movement in five phases, it appears that the societies are at different stages today. The future of home education, proffered by Meighan (1988), Mayberry et al (1995), and Paul Hill (2000), could also occur at different stages in the two societies. Mayberry et al. specifically consider the social context and policy considerations of home education, with Meighan introducing a hybrid of home education and traditional schooling in his work on 'flexischooling' (his term). Hill visualises three possible scenarios, linking the future of home education to its effect on state education, summarized as follows:

First, home schooling is part of a broad movement in which private groups and individuals are learning how to provide services that once were left to public bureaucracies.

Second, as home schooling families learn to rely on one another, many are likely to create new institutions that look something like schools.

Third, although many home schooling families are willing to accept help from public school systems, the families and the schools they create are far more likely to join the charter and voucher movements than to assimilate back into the conventional public school system.

Hill 2000: 21

Recognising the development of home education and the cultural attitudes as set down in this chapter, it is worth considering the future, and that changes are occurring that may present a different scenario today than ten years ago — see Petrie's (1992) work. In England and Wales, a preliminary perusal of available literature revealed little evidence of cooperative measures between home-based educators and public schools (mirroring the first scenario mentioned by Hill). This might not be the
case, and was worthy of further exploration in the empirical study. In Florida, examples of private home schools, charter schools and vouchers echo the remaining scenarios Hill suggested in 2000.

State and private education exists for similar reasons of accommodating the parental right to choose the education of their child. By exploring the particular laws on home-based education and home schooling, and the duties of state officials to ensure children of compulsory school age receive an education, the next chapter addressed the issue of the legal basis of home education, and highlighted similarities and differences in the law.
Chapter 4 – Home Education Laws

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, an historical overview of home education indicated the phases of the movement that exist today. Differences in cultural attitudes between individuals in England and Wales and in the United States added to the expectation that discordant perceptions and attitudes would be found in the empirical study. A closer look at the home education laws was now warranted. In this chapter, the definitions of the laws were stated alongside the obligations of the home educating parents and the duties of the state officials, for ease of comparison. Closely linked to the laws, an understanding of the rights of each group was needed. The concept of rights and interests is dealt with in Chapter 6, as the parents’ rights to choose the education for their children, and the state’s interests in regulating the education of its citizens was also expected to reveal discordant attitudes.

However, as part of the quantitative approach, this chapter sought to answer the following questions:

- What laws apply to home-based educators in England and Wales?
- What laws apply to home schoolers in Florida?
- What laws apply to state officials responsible for home-based educators in England and Wales?
- What laws apply to state officials responsible for home schoolers in Florida?

This was achieved by perusing home education laws and documentation pertaining to the law obtained by state officials, and home education support groups.

4.2 The laws on home education

It is illegal for parents not to provide an education for their children, although the form of educational provision is not stipulated in law. This allows for state, private or home education to exist as compulsory education in both societies. Rob Reich (2002b: 154) recognizes the state striving to provide an education that will enable children to ‘develop into adults capable of independent functioning’. It is true in England and Wales, as well as in the United States and Florida, that the vast majority of children attend state schools. If state education provision is adequately supported, and private schools exist as an alternative, parental education provision would seem superfluous. Yet Reich articulately argues that as long as home educating parents are not in conflict with the interests of the state and children, and because home education is a feasible, practical option in some circumstances, it should be a legal option. I agreed with Reich’s (2002b:150) sentiments that home educating parents are generally believed to be acting in the best interests of the child. In fact, this study focused on potential tension between two groups acting for the child’s education. The interests

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1 Though I was unable to find one source for comparison I did construct a table in Appendix I to indicate estimates of public, private and home educated students. Estimates indicate that about 93% of the total school age population attend state schools in England and Wales, and 89% in the USA state schools. Florida’s state schools are likely to enrol a percentage similar to the USA total. Private schooling in Florida would include charter schools, home education programs, and private home education schools.
and rights of the child were also touched on, noted as part of Reich’s trilogy of interests, but I have presented my reasons for not including them in Chapter 6.

The legal right to home educate, although implicit in both societies, needs to be expressly stated in the laws that govern home education today. Following Reich’s argument that the interests of parents should be in accord with the state to allow home education, he concedes that both groups share similar goals, namely they view the primary function of education to be the provision of capabilities, competencies, encouragement of talents, and fostering of scholastic achievement that enable children to develop into adults who can function on their own in society. Reich 2002b:157

Thus the laws defining home education, the obligations of the home educating parents, and the duties of the state officials must accommodate the groups’ similar goals.

4.2.1 The laws defining home education

I found no studies that have been specifically completed comparing home education laws in England and Wales to home schooling laws in the United States. However, comparative studies have been published comparing education in England and Wales and the United States — see Nicholas (1983), Holmes (1992), Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998). Similarities in the law include compulsory, free education for all, and a functionalist perspective of schooling. Differences within the two societies are found in the National Curriculum, centrally applied in England and Wales’s state schools, compared to the state curriculum promoted in each state in America. Each state interprets the federal compulsory schooling law, so that home schooling is more or less regulated in particular states. With fifty different laws at play in the fifty states, published research tends to concentrate on one state, as this study did, to be manageable. Comparing attitudes or perceptions of home educators with state officials has been done in several studies, notably Mayberry et al. (1995), O’Neill (1988), Buhr (1988), McGraw (1989), Hines (1993), Cappello (1995), Golding (1995), Riegle (1998), and Peavie (1999). However, as far as I had discovered, no studies have been conducted to compare the attitudes or perceptions of home educators and state officials in England and Wales, and in Florida. Yet I believed the possibilities in such a comparison could be useful to home educators, state officials and policymakers. Mayberry et al. (1995:102) noted that there is a struggle over home school policy that is rooted in the ‘competing moral visions of parent educators and the professional educational establishment’. She adds that, ‘The challenge is to understand more fully what divides these groups and to develop well-informed policies that foster cooperation and preclude further polarization’ (Mayberry et al. 1995:103). What is more, Amanda Petrie (2000:68) suggests that recent research conducted can be useful for legislators and those working in educational administration; can be seen as relevant to children in school and their parents; and research into home education that has been undertaken in one country can be seen to be applicable to home educators in other countries.
To compare the laws on home education in England and Wales, and in Florida, they were first presented in Table 4:1, and then discussed (see Appendix III and IV for a comprehensive version of the home education laws).

**Table 4:1 The legality of home education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>England and Wales —1944 Education Act, Section 36</th>
<th>Florida — 1985 Home Education Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children of compulsory school age should receive ‘efficient full-time education, suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any specific educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise’ (ACE Bulletin 1996: 11) Consolidated in the 1996 Education Act, Section 7</td>
<td>‘Florida Statute 232.02/1003.01(13) gives parents the choice of achieving regular school attendance through ONE of the following provisions: a public school; a parochial, religious or denominational school; a private school; a home education program; a private tutor program’ (FPEA online guide 2000: <a href="http://www.fpea.com/Guide/2.html">www.fpea.com/Guide/2.html</a>) The home education program will show ‘sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent or guardian’ FL statute 228.041/1002.41(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A legal definition of education has not been determined in the law of either society as to do so may preclude a legally acceptable concept of education. In place of a firm definition of education, interpretation of the legal wording, by home educators and state officials, has sometimes resulted in clarification in the courts and setting case precedents.

Similarities in the laws begin by giving parents the right to choose home education ‘by attendance at school or otherwise’ [England and Wales] or ‘a home education program’ [Florida]. In the spirit of comparative methodology, I chose to compare the ‘home education program’ option available to home schoolers in Florida, which is most comparable to the ‘or otherwise’ option available to home educators in England and Wales.²

Within the law, education is ‘efficient’, ‘full-time’ and ‘suitable’ in England and Wales. Similarly, education is ‘sequentially progressive instruction’ in Florida. Such words are dependent on opinion and degree – what is efficient, full-time and suitable to one individual may not appear so to another. For instance, sequentially progressive instruction may be considered haphazard or unstructured by another. So whilst legal clarification of the terms ascribed to ‘education’ has been dealt with in the courts, the likelihood of individual interpretation of the laws’ wordage, by home educators or state officials, remains high.

² In Florida law, home schoolers may also choose the ‘private school’ option of a ‘600 school’ – these home schoolers do not follow the same regulations and are less comparable to the home educators in England and Wales.
It is probable that the laws on home education are equated with schooling. This can be surmised, for example, from the stipulation for ‘full-time’ education. Though this term is expressly stated in the England and Wales’ law, it is not defined in law, nor is ‘full-time’ mandated in the Florida law. The length of time that constitutes ‘full-time’ or a ‘school day’ or ‘school year’ is not legally prescribed in either society as to do so might impinge on the child’s home education. In the data analysis I expected to find examples of tension based on the home education laws stemming from compulsory education or compulsory attendance laws.

Another similarity in both laws is the legal freedom for home educators over choice of curriculum, educational philosophy and pedagogical approach. Clarified in the courts in the United States were the rights of home schoolers to practice education that was alternative to that found in schools (see reference to Farrington v. Tokushige, 1927). As a consequence of the comparative freedom over the teaching and learning aspects of education, a myriad of home educating styles has proliferated in both societies (see Appendix V for a brief overview of the main home educating styles). Such accommodation for alternatives styles might be a source of tension when there are different interpretations, by state officials and home educators, of what is meant by preparing a child ‘for life in the modern civilised society’ (Harrison and Harrison v. Stevendon 1981).

With the similarities dealt with, I then determined where the laws started to diverge, found in the obligations of the home educating parents, and the duties of the state officials.

4.2.2 The legal obligations of home educating parents

To compare the legal obligation of home educating parents, Table 4:2 summarises:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4:2 Obligations of parent home educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Provides an education that is ‘efficient’, ‘full-time’, and ‘suitable’ to the child’s age, aptitude and ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Satisfies the LEA representative that the home educated child is receiving a suitable education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both societies, the home educating parents are responsible for ensuring that the education provided is efficient, suitable, and is sequentially progressive instruction. No baseline is set for the parents in terms of their children achieving
certain standards or knowledge by a certain age, nor is there a prescribed curriculum for home educators in either society. Parents do not have to hold teaching qualifications in order to teach their own children. However, there is parent accountability, though it is measured in distinctly different ways.

Firstly, compulsory registration of home schoolers exists in the home education program of the Florida law. This is the 'notice of intent' to home educate the child, and needs to be filed with the local school district within thirty days of commencing the home education program. In contrast, there is no compulsory registration of home-based educators in England and Wales, if the children have never been to school before commencing their home education. Thus a child reaching compulsory school age may be educated at home without the local education authority's (LEA's) knowledge. If this seems unusual compared to the registration of home-schooled children in Florida, consider the families who choose private education for their child — they do not inform the authorities of their decisions either.

If a family decides to remove a child from a state school to begin home education, in either society, the authorities are made aware from the outset. This is a useful provision in the law for the authorities who want to ensure that families opting to home educate, for whatever reasons, are able to provide a suitable education for the child — through monitoring or evaluation by the state.

A consequence of the lack of compulsory registration of home educators in England and Wales is the 'unknown home educators' that exist. Researchers such as Meighan (1985), Webb (1988), Petrie (1992; 1998), Bennett and Lowden (1995), and Thomas (1998), working on studies in England and Wales, have been forced to make estimates of the home educating population to accommodate the 'unknown home-based educators'. This uncertainty over numbers was explored in the empirical study, in both quantitative and qualitative phases.

Another difference in the parents’ obligations involves the maintenance of a portfolio of the child’s work. In Florida, a portfolio of the child’s work needs to be kept contemporaneously with a log of educational activities. Evidence of this could include a timetable of daily or weekly educational activities, alongside samples of dated work. The portfolio must also include a reading log of all books read by the child in the home schooling year. The portfolio is kept for two years, and is made available for inspection to the local school district (SD) as requested, with fifteen days notice. By adhering to the requirements of the portfolio, the home schooling child can more readily show 'sequentially progressive instruction'. This is especially important if the parent decides to have the home-schooled child’s portfolio evaluated by a Florida certified teacher. In contrast, no specific conditions in England and Wales are applied to the evidence of home-based educators’ educational activities. Whilst this may seem to give home-based educating parents more freedom than their home schooling counterparts, evidence of a 'suitable' education is still required. It is usually the LEA that determines the suitability of the home-based education. I felt that tension might arise when the home-based educator's and LEA official's concept of 'suitable' education was incompatible. So, part of the quantitative data gathering included looking for incompatibility in home education documentation obtained from
state officials and home education support groups. This expected discordance was also followed up in the qualitative telephone interviews.

Another difference in the obligations of the home educating parents, as stated in the law, is found in the annual evaluation. In the Florida statutes, an annual evaluation is mandated. In England and Wales, whilst the home-based educating parents usually accommodate the monitoring of their child's education by the LEAs, there is no stipulation for this to be annual. It is up to the individual LEA to determine whether the monitoring of the home educated child is annual, or more or less frequent.

A fourth difference in the laws concerns the form of evaluation or monitoring of the home-educated child. In England and Wales, it is up to the LEA to be satisfied that the child is receiving 'suitable' education, usually by directly monitoring his or her educational progress. Thus the LEA appoints an official to monitor each home-based educator, usually through a home visit. In contrast, parents in Florida have to provide an annual evaluation of their child's educational progress, submitted to the school district. To show evidence that their home-schooled child has progressed 'commensurate with his or her ability' parents have a choice of evaluation methods. The child can have their portfolio evaluated by a Florida certified teacher, take a standardised test — either nationally normed such as the California Achievement Test (CAT), or the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT), or be evaluated by any 'valid measurement tool' that is mutually agreed upon by the home educating parent and the school district.

How home educators demonstrate 'suitable education' is taking place is the last difference in the laws. In England and Wales, the home-based educating parents have to satisfy the local education authority (LEA) that their child is receiving a suitable education. This is usually achieved through LEA monitoring of the home-based educated child's educational progress. In contrast, parents in Florida have to ensure that a 'suitable education' is apparent with the annual evaluation of the home-schooled child. Here, someone other than the parent conducts the evaluation of the home schooled child's educational progress, but it is the parents who send the evaluation in to the authority. So, where the LEA usually provides a monitoring service in England and Wales, the SD in Florida provides a more administrative role of filing acceptable annual evaluations. However, though the choices of monitoring and evaluation of home educators rest with either the state or parents respectively, the determination of 'suitable education' does not rest with the parents' opinion, as a third party is involved in both societies.

The different roles of the authorities, namely the LEAs in England and Wales and the SDs in Florida are seen more clearly in the responsibilities they have in law, which was dealt with next.

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3 LEAs only have a duty to act if it appears that suitable education is not occurring. If parents do not provide information to the LEA that education is occurring, it is considered reasonable for LEAs to make informal enquiries about provision. This is usually done through communication with the home educating family and home visits.
4.2.3 The legal duties of state officials

Included here for comparison were the legal duties of the state officials pertaining to monitoring or evaluation, and the duties to ensure compliance of the home education laws in both societies.

Table 4:3 Duties of the LEAs and SDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>England and Wales</th>
<th>Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Need to be satisfied that a home-educated child is</td>
<td>• File notice of intent to home educate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>receiving an efficient, full-time, education.</td>
<td>from each home educating family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though not stipulated in law, this is usually</td>
<td>• Accept annual evaluation of home education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieved with an LEA home visit to the known home</td>
<td>programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educating family.</td>
<td>• If the annual evaluation is considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give parents an opportunity to improve child’s</td>
<td>unsatisfactory, the family is put on a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education if considered inadequate. Time frame is</td>
<td>one-year probation, whilst they try to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about three months before the child’s education is</td>
<td>improve the educational provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re-evaluated.</td>
<td>• If the educational provision is still not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If LEA is still not satisfied with educational</td>
<td>adequate, the family is required to send</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provision, they can issue a school attendance order</td>
<td>their child to school, and the home education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which compels the parents to send their child to</td>
<td>programme is revoked for 180 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State officials have to ensure that children within their local school area are being suitably educated, either in the state school system or by home education. Of note, if parents decide to exit state school provision, the local LEA or SD does not have the same responsibilities for privately educated children.

Stated in the previous section, suitable education is determined through two different means — monitoring by the LEAs and accepting evaluations by the SDs. In either case there is state acceptance of the parents’ right to choose such education. How the laws diverge, with respect to the duties of the LEAs and SDs, illustrates perhaps the most obvious differences in England and Wales and Florida. In the first place, monitoring by LEAs, most usually through home visits, contrasts with the acceptance of evaluation forms by the SDs. The home visit is not stipulated in law but most LEAs do suggest in their guidelines to parents that monitoring procedures consist of an initial home visit. Parents have the right to refuse this visit but the LEAs see it as the most common form of monitoring home-based education. In contrast, the home visit is a more unusual form of evaluation in Florida that falls into the fifth option, ‘evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the school superintendent’ (FL statute 228.041/1002.41(1(c)5). More common is the certified teacher evaluation of the home-schooled child, or standardised test administered by a certified teacher. In either case, someone other than the parents evaluates the child, and the SD then files the evaluation. Thus the time and labour involved with securing an annual evaluation falls to the parents. It appears that the
SD has little outlay of time and money when evaluations of home-schooled children are routinely received and accepted. How this impacted the interactions between SD officials and home schoolers was not really clear. Documentation sent to parents, on their responsibilities and the duties of the SDs, did not suggest the effects of such an administrative role between parents and state officials. It would appear, if in compliance with home education laws, there is little interaction at all between home schoolers and SDs.

In contrast, there is considerably more interaction between home-based educators and LEA officials with the home visit. Rather than an intermediary to evaluate the educational progress of the child, the state official makes this determination. It was unclear in documentation produced by LEAs or home education support groups what impact the interaction has on their relationships. Assumptions of existing tension, drawn from content analysis of the documentation, could only be verified or disproved with corroboration by home educators and state officials. Thus, this was one reason that I needed to interview home educators and state officials in England and Wales and in Florida.

Secondly, the set up of a home education program is dealt with differently in England and Wales, and Florida. The compulsory registration of home schoolers in Florida necessitates filing a notice of intent to home educate within thirty days of commencement. The annual evaluation is submitted to the school district office on or before the anniversary of the filed notice of intent. Thus, in normal circumstances, a whole year is given before the home-schooled child is evaluated. Compare this with the lack of compulsory registration, which immediately puts the LEA in the position of only knowing about home-based educators who inform them. Once known, the LEA gives the home-based educator ‘sufficient’ time to set up their program before monitoring the educational progress. Interpretation of sufficient time is seen as a few months, but certainly not longer than a year from the set up before monitoring begins. Subsequent monitoring of home-based educators can occur at six month or yearly intervals, again depending on the individual LEA.

Thirdly, in cases of non-compliance with the law, subtle differences were seen in the two societies under study. In Florida, non-compliance could stem from not submitting the annual evaluation on time, not having a portfolio ready for inspection, or a deficient portfolio. In law, non-compliance of the home education program prompts the SD to put the home educating family on one-year probation, after which time the family has to show compliance with the law over the particular infraction. If the home education program is still not in compliance, the family has to exit the home education program for 180 days, and enter the child in a school. However, in England and Wales, there is no time frame stipulated in the law, and as such is open to interpretation by the individual LEAs. If the LEA decides after monitoring the child that educational provision is not adequate, or no evidence of educational provision is shown, they give the parents a time frame between three to six months to remedy the situation. If, following a subsequent monitoring of the child’s education, no progress is shown, the LEA can suggest a return to school. If this action is desirable for the child, the LEA has the capacity within the law to issue a school attendance order, compelling the parents to send their child to school.
At first glance, the rigid time frame stipulation of the Florida law would seem to disadvantage the home schooler. Yet the timeframe itself appears more lenient than that found in England and Wales. Non-compliance of the home education program is only usually picked up after the anniversary of the annual evaluation. So, home schoolers have a whole year to be out of the school system, and a further year on probation to improve any failings of their educational provision. In contrast, once the LEA knows about the home-based educators, monitoring the educational provision can be made within a matter of months. Subsequent visits, in cases of concern, are stated to be made within months, and certainly not more than a year from the initial monitoring visit. Thus it appears that in situations of non-compliance with the law, home-based educators in England and Wales are given a much shorter time frame to meet their responsibilities of providing a suitable education for their children. Home schoolers, whilst registering their child in a home education program from the outset, can have almost two years to meet their responsibilities.

In both societies I felt that the laws were written with the intention of accommodating the responsible home educator who intends to educate their child to the best of their abilities. If they were written to severely curtail the actions of irresponsible parents who may use home education as a shield to evade truancy issues, such laws would penalise the responsible home educator and parent. The next point of difference within the home education laws addresses this issue of truancy, but only in one society — Florida.

Intended to close a loophole in the Florida home education law, an amendment to the law became effective in 2000, concerning truanting students (see Appendix IV). If a child displays a pattern of truancy in a school, and then opts to 'home educate', that child is red-flagged to the authorities. In order to home school, the child and his or her parents must meet with a panel, determined by the school district, every thirty days to show compliance with the law. That is, there should be evidence of a portfolio of educational materials, a reading log, and a timetable of subjects kept contemporaneously with the instruction. If the child that has truanted from school is not in compliance with the home education law, he or she is not permitted to continue home schooling but must return to school. Such an accommodation in the law for truanting children suspected of using home schooling as a shield to avoid truancy laws is not apparent in England and Wales. That being said, truant officers frequently search out suspecting truants in England and Wales, under Section 16 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). The support group, Education Otherwise (EO), stated that provisions are made in the law to exclude home-based educators from the truancy sweeps (see Section 16:4 which refers to the Education Act 1996:444(3)). However, concerns from the two national support groups, Education Otherwise and Home Educators Advisory Service (HEAS), over the way home-based educators are sometimes treated may impact how visible these children are during normal school hours.4

4 When I rechecked the EO website in December 2005, there was a section on Truancy Patrol Guidance that revealed continuing problems existing with home educators. Please see the website at www.education-otherwise.org for up to date information on EO and Government Consultations: Consultation Pages: Truancy Patrol Guidance.
4.3 A comparative summary of the laws on home education

For comparative purposes, it was useful to summarise the similarities and differences in the laws, in Tables 4:4(a) and 4:4(b). Possible tensions uncovered between home educators and state officials might then be traced back to the subtleties of the laws. Table 4:4(a) illustrated the similarities between the home education laws, whereas Table 4:4(b) contrasted the differences.

Table 4:4(a) Similarities between the home education laws in England and Wales, and in Florida

- The parent has the right to choose home education as a suitable educational method.

- Education is not explicitly defined in the laws, resulting in the interpretation of what is meant by 'efficient', 'suitable', and 'sequentially progressive'.

- 'Full-time' education, equated with the length of day, and days in the school year is not applicable to the home education programs.

- There is no prescribed curriculum, educational philosophy, or pedagogical approach.

- Parents do not need to hold teacher qualifications to home educate.

- There is no legally prescribed baseline for educational standards to be met at a certain age or grade.

- There is no requirement to take standardised testing, though such testing is an option for evaluating home-educated children.

- If a child exits the school system in order to home educate, the parents of the home-educated child must inform the state officials.
Table 4.4(b) Differences between the home education laws in England and Wales, and in Florida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compulsory Registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is currently no compulsory registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Florida</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory registration exists in the ‘notice of intent to home educate’ letter that is sent into the school district, within 30 days of commencement of home schooling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of educational provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No stipulation of what constitutes evidence of educational provision. This is left to the LEA’s interpretation of ‘suitable education’. No standards set in the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Florida</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A portfolio of work, preserved for two years, and available for inspection by the SD on fifteen days’ notice, mandated by law. The portfolio must include a reading log, samples of work, and a log of materials taught contemporaneously with the instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No stipulation for an annual evaluation. The LEA must be satisfied that educational provision is suitable, but this can be done annually, or more or less frequently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Florida</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual evaluation is required to be completed and sent on or before the anniversary date of the filed notice of intent.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of monitoring</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>England and Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No method of monitoring detailed in the law, but LEAs prefer the home visit. LEAs accept other methods as agreed by the home educators and LEA official.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Florida</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five methods of evaluation are acceptable, as detailed in the laws. Most common is the evaluation of the portfolio by a Florida certified teacher, followed by standardised testing. Most evaluations are done by a third party, rather than by the SD or the home schooler.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 **Summary**

To answer the questions set at the beginning of the chapter, the laws on home education were outlined and compared between the two societies. This revealed similarities and differences between home educators' and state officials' legal duties and responsibilities. I believed tension could exist if there was misunderstanding between the legal responsibilities of home educators and the legal duties of state officials. To explore whether misunderstandings were possible, documentation was obtained from state officials and home education support groups, as part of the quantitative exploration of this study. Concurrently with analysis of the documentation, a postal questionnaire was sent to state officials to analyse and compare facts and opinions on home education\(^5\).

The historical development and cultural differences between the groups under study in the two societies in Chapter 3, coupled with the differences within the two sets of laws in this chapter, begged a deeper understanding within the literature. Hence, the following chapter explores a concept of attitudes and ideologies towards education and home education. In exploring the group ideology of home educators and state officials in the next chapter, possible dichotomous perspectives were proposed, to highlight areas of potential tension, to be realised in the empirical work.

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\(^5\) The quantitative data is presented in Chapter 10, followed by the qualitative data chapters.
Chapter 5 – Attitudes and Ideologies of Education

5.1 Introduction

The historical development of home education, cultural perspectives, and differences within the laws would indicate that attitudes held towards home education could be multi-faceted. Consequently, a concept of attitudes was first necessary to appreciate how best to analyse the gathered data. This chapter also traced the competing ideologies of state versus private education from the state officials’ and home educators’ visions. Specifically woven into the ideologies were the perspectives of curriculum, socialisation, a civil society, and citizenship education. These areas were chosen as most likely to illustrate competing perceptions or attitudes1, and helped to answer the specific questions for the chapter:

- What is the home educators’ ideology of education?
- What is the state officials’ ideology of education?

5.2 A concept of attitudes

Gordon Allport (1935:798) considered the attitude ‘probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology’. His comprehensive definition (1935:810) still stands today,

An attitude is a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situation with which it is related.

Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1996:7) refer to attitudes more simply as a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue.

Though ‘attitude’ is used readily in the English language, the scientific usage of the term is different from colloquial or slang meanings. As Stuart Oskamp and P. Wesley Schultz (2005:8) note, the term has come to mean ‘a posture of the mind’ in social sciences. Several features of the definitions are useful to understand here, as well as reasons for studying attitudes. Tying attitudes into issues with group influences and culture are also detailed. Firstly, though, it is useful to quote Oskamp and Schultz’s (2005:4-5) reasons for studying attitudes:

i. ‘Attitude’ is a *shorthand* term where a single attitude can summarise many different behaviours;

ii. An attitude can be considered the *cause* of a person’s behaviour toward another person or an object;

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1 The choice of these four areas was also determined from synthesising the relevant research, the historical development of the home education movement in both societies, the cultural differences between the two societies, and differences in the law.
iii. The concept of attitude helps to explain the consistency of a person's behaviour for a single attitude may underlie many different actions;

iv. Attitudes are important in their own right, regardless of their relation to a person's behaviour. Your attitudes towards various individuals, institutions and social issues reflect the way you perceive the world around you, and they are worth studying for their own sake;

v. The concept of attitude is relatively neutral and acceptable to many theoretical schools of thought;

vi. Attitude is an interdisciplinary concept.

The shorthand aspect of attitudes becomes a useful tool with which to categorise the data. Analysis of the written word can reveal a consistency of attitudes towards particular issues, and how, for example, home educators dealt with concerns over socialisation in their published literature. Most importantly, Oskamp and Schultz (2005) echo my justification for this study, in that attitudes — a reflection of one's perception of the world — were worth studying for their own sake.

Attitudes can fall into several disciplines, as psychologists, political scientists, communication researchers, anthropologists and sociologists have researched them. Depending on the discipline, different methods of study are appropriate. Oskamp and Schultz (2005:5-6) detail the five different approaches as descriptive, measurement, public opinion polling, theory explanation and experimental. For this study, the descriptions of attitudes held by state officials and home educators were the focus, specifically to look for fundamental differences in attitudes.

It was also useful to understand the functions of attitudes, classified by Daniel Katz (1960), cited in Triandis, as instrumental, adjustive-ulititarian, ego-defensive, value-expressive, and knowledge functions, which explain how:

Attitudes (a) help [people] understand the world around them, by organising and simplifying a very complex input from their environment, (b) protect their self-esteem, by making it possible for them to avoid unpleasant truths about themselves, (c) help them adjust in a complex world, by making it more likely that they will react so as to maximise their rewards from the environment, and (d) allow them to express their fundamental values (Triandis 1971:4)

In considering attitudes, most theorists tease apart features of a definition, such as Allport's or Milton Rokeach's (1975:112)

An attitude is a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner.

[See also Triandis (1971), Oskamp and Schultz (2005)]
Rokeach cites Asch (1952:585) as seeing attitudes as particularly enduring sets formed by past experiences, whilst Harry Triandis (1971:5) sees attitudes lending a certain amount of predictability. It is noted, however, that not all attitudes are enduring. Early theoretical viewpoints also suggested that an organisation of beliefs comprised of affective, behavioural and cognitive components. Researchers have debated whether the components are interrelated or separate — see Triandis (1971), Rokeach (1975), Oskamp and Schultz (2005). What is useful to note is the central feature of most definitions, that of readiness to respond, or predisposition to respond (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005:8). Though this link between attitudes and behaviour (response) is determined by more than a straightforward causal relationship, as social norms, habits and expected consequences affect behaviour (Triandis, 1971:14), the predisposition to respond is nonetheless important. If the state officials' or home educators' readiness to respond is based on written documentation analysed, tension might ensue due to unfortunately worded phrases, misinformation or inaccurate information. However, as Rokeach (1975:121) notes, predispositions that do not lead to some response cannot be detected so they need to be inferred. Allport (1935:836) adds

There must be something to account for the consistency of conduct. It is the meaningful resemblances between activities and their congruence with one another that leads the psychologist inescapably to postulate some such generalised forms of readiness as the term 'attitude' denotes.

This study did not look for a causal link between attitude and behaviour, since behaviour was not observed as part of the empirical work. The comparison of attitudes towards home education by the two groups of people who were likely to interact as a point of law was more valuable to understand, especially in light of preconceived, pre-existing tension. Inference of attitudes was drawn from the written documentation and later from the individual voices in this multi-stage study.

There is another point to make. In writing about attitudes, norms and social groups, Joel Cooper et al (2001:260) discuss the idea that groups have the largest influence on attitudes when group identities are important, relevant and salient. As Cooper et al continue,

Many of the current models of social cognition place an emphasis on the fact that we often will act upon whatever attitudes, information or goal happens to be accessible at a particular moment in time. Like other types of cognitive structures, when group identities have been activated, they can influence how we form, act upon, and change our attitudes. This is particularly true when the group is important to us, and when group membership is relevant to the attitudinal issue.

I believed that home educators, though difficult to categorise because of the variety of existing religious, moral, pedagogical, or philosophical styles of home
education, were likely to hold more homogeneous attitudes towards their group membership. That is, evidence in the literature, to be amplified in the published information documents, would suggest a unifying attitude towards control and ownership of the child's education. Complementing this would be the similarly unifying attitude expressed through much of the state officials' documentation in Chapter 10, (sometimes at odds with the home educators' material).

Another aspect of attitudes to consider in the analysis and discussion was an appreciation of Paul Kimmel's (2000:455) concept of culture. Leaning on others, he quotes Fontaine (1989:2) as noting culture to be 'a growing, changing, dynamic thing consisting most significantly of shared perceptions in the minds of its members'; or Triandis's (1971) definition of subjective culture that contains the categories, plans and rules people employ to interpret their world and act purposively in it. Specifically for this study, culture is seen as being 'to a people as personality is to a person' notes Tyler (1987), cited in Kimmel (2000:455). When comparing and contrasting the attitudes held by home educators and state officials, the cultural aspect was touched on in an historical context in Chapter 2. Whilst recognizing individuals are not culturally homogeneous, it was useful to consider the group specific nature of culture as Tyler suggests, as well as remember the anthropological perspective of group culture. Thus, following Kimmel's (2000:455) explanation, the 'subjective culture' acquired through socialisation has been built or constructed through contacts with others who have already learned or incorporated certain alternatives from that environment. Home educators and state officials alike are likely to construct their culture from others in the same group. Kimmel (2000:456) adds that it is language, our most comprehensive category system, that is our primary mode of communication in our symbolic environment, and as individuals interact within a symbolic environment,

...the shared meanings they create and use become beliefs and attitudes in their subjective culture, and norms and values in their common culture or society...Although we develop individualised, unique subjective culture though localized (for example, familial) interaction, people from the same common culture have more or less equivalent realities and mindsets. Thus, there is a strong relationship among the common culture of a people, their language, and their communication and cognitive style.

Though Kimmel wrote specifically about culture and conflict in his 2000 paper, his link between culture, attitudes and people was relevant here. Attitudes are held by individuals but can be common to a group of people. Culture refers to a group of people as it embodies the ways of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society (Giddens 2001:22). This multi-stage study thus needed to first illustrate the group attitude, and group culture pervading through the written word of state officials and home education documentation. Consequently, the quantitative aspect of data collection was driven by the desire to understand the group perspective.
This then needed to be followed by the qualitative data presentation of individuals, in Chapters 11 and 12, to portray a more comprehensive picture.

5.3 Defining Ideologies of Education

Though acknowledging Andrew Heywood's (1998) distinctions between ideology and ideologies, the type and content of thought respectively, I simply used Roland Meighan and Iram Siraj-Blatchford's (1997: 180) words as guidance:

Ideology is defined as a broad interlocked set of ideas and beliefs about the world held by a group of people that they demonstrate in both behaviours and conversation to various audiences. These systems of belief are usually seen as 'the way things really are' by the groups holding them, and they become the taken-for-granted way of making sense of the world. It is this last use, of ideology as competing belief systems, that is used in the analyses of ideologies of education...since this makes the concept capable of being used as an analytical tool to demonstrate alternative patterns of ideas that coexist and compete for acceptance'.

So, along with attitudes, I used the state officials' and home educators' ideology of education to illustrate their accepting or competing viewpoints. A point made by Marx, that ideology is regarded as 'false consciousness' has relevance in the study too. Giddens (2001:464) explains this as the powerful group's ability to control the dominant ideas circulating in a society so as to justify their own position. This notion of ideology links with the exercise of symbolic power, or how ideas are used to hide, justify or legitimate the interests of dominant groups in the social order — see also Apple (1979: Ch.1). In the case of state and private education, it is state education that is defended as the dominant form, for the political, economic, social and intellectual gains of society. Yet if one group is aware of another group's ideology impinging on them, tension may ensue. As Giddens (2001:670) continues, power, ideology and conflict are always closely connected. Those who hold most power may depend mainly on the influence of ideology to retain their dominance, but are usually able to use force if necessary. The three characteristics of ideology, namely legitimisation, power and conflict, are part of the make-up of home educators' and state officials' attitudes towards home education. Recognition of one group using the power of their ideology to retain dominance was expected to surface as tension in this study.

One other point when looking at an ideology of education is the essentially contested concept of education, in spite of R.S. Peter's (1966) best efforts. Though the functions of education are inextricably linked to functions of schools, education is not exclusively found in schools; rather, it is a part of schools — Barrow and Milburn (1986), Walsh (1993). This becomes part of the conceptual problem if the ideology is based on conflating education with schooling.
If the four basic functions of schools, intellectual, political, social and economic, could be seen as legitimating state over private education, what becomes the home educators' defence? Home educators would probably argue that they fulfil most of the functions detailed by E.J. Nicholas (1983), Kathleen Bennett and Margaret LeCompte (1990) but from their different set of guidelines (these common guidelines are in spite of the fact that home educators have a plethora of teaching and learning styles not replicable in schools). Noted by Meighan and Siraj Blatchford (1997:181), an ideology begins with the attitudes and opinions of individuals who are part of the group. What is more, not all individuals who support a particular ideology will share identical opinions, giving rise to variations within the ideology. Thus looking at commonality among attitudes or opinions was more useful in this study. Meighan and Siraj Blatchford (1997:185-199) also feel that comparing ideologies as dichotomous becomes less useful as an analytical tool, since this approach does not account for the series of component theories or complexities of education, particularly schooling. So, I needed to deconstruct the ideology of state education, as promoted by state officials, and the ideology of home education.

5.4 Ideology of education: state officials' and home educators' perceptions

Giddens (2001:507) articulates that, 'expectations of the educational system are high. Schools play a critical role in socializing children, providing equal opportunities, producing a capable workforce and creating an informed and active citizenry'. As desirable as these expectations may be, whether state schools can meet them is a potential matter of conflict between state and private education supporters. Yet rather than enter into the debate of the vices and virtues of state versus private education, I focussed on establishing the possibly contentious criteria that are components of state education or home education ideology.

Initially I borrowed an outline from Meighan and Siraj Blatchford (1997:191-198) as component theories of an ideology of education were suggested. Here 'theory' was used in the colloquial sense, of a view about something rather than in its

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2 The intellectual purposes of schools are to transmit the knowledge, traditions, values and norms necessary for the continuation of society. The political purposes are to select, train and produce the political, administrative, judicial and military leaders for society (usually in the select, private schools). The remaining majority of children attend schools that inculcate the particular political views held by society, assimilating diverse cultural groups into a common political order. The social purposes of schooling are to socialise children into the various roles, behaviours and values of society. A further social aspect of schools sees children ascribed to particular niches in social-status hierarchies according to their success in acquiring academic credentials. The economic purposes of schooling are to act as the principal selective device in the division of labour. That is, teaching future workers the knowledge and skills needed in the designated work places. It also fulfils a subsidiary child-minding function, by freeing some adults, particularly women, for work — taken from Nicholas (1983:205-206); see also Bennett and LeCompte (1990:5-21)

3 These theories are: A theory of discipline and order (and power); a theory of knowledge: its content and structure; a theory of learning and the learner's role; a theory of teaching and the teacher's role; a theory of resources appropriate for learning; a theory of organisation of learning situations; a theory of assessment that learning has taken place; a theory of aims, objectives and outcomes; a theory of parents and the parent's role; a theory of locations appropriate for learning; a theory of power and its distribution.
Chapter 5

Ideologies and attitudes

scientific sense. As I wanted to focus on the criteria within the ideologies that were most likely to cause tension between the two groups, I first reviewed the literature. As the documentation and postal questionnaires were available during the literature review, they added a helpful dimension when ascertaining the choice of components most relevant to compare and contrast between home educators and state officials. These were:

1. A perspective of civil society
2. A perspective of pedagogy and curriculum
3. A perspective of citizenship education
4. A perspective of socialisation

These perspectives were considered from the main viewpoints, as individual home educators and state officials are not expected to hold identical views.

5.4.1 A perspective of civil society

Though a civil society cannot be simply defined, as there are variations on the theme, attempts have been made at clarification. An analytic definition of a civil society stresses the importance of forms, or 'The arena in which citizens come together to advance the interests they hold in common, containing all organizations and associations between the family and the state except firms' (Edwards, 2003). Michael Edwards also sees the normative, or cognitive definition of a civil society that stresses the importance of norms,

Social values and attributes, such as trust, tolerance and co-operation that are assumed to bring about a society defined as 'civil', a way of being and living in the world that is different from the rationality of either state or market.

(Edwards, 2003)

Historical variations of a civil society range from the state controlled vision of civil societies as 'participative citizenry', 'contractual partner', 'deficiency' and 'hegemony', to the more individualised visions of the 'free market' and 'voluntary parochialism' (Bottery, 2000: 196-200). Of more relevance in this attempt at a definition, a 'civil society' is understood as more than 'simply a description or a group of institutions, or of a sector within society, instead a discourse, a set of principles, which needs a 'home' in which it may be enacted' (Bottery 2000: 210-11).

For this study, I considered a civil society as being represented by citizens that have a common set of principles and shared interests, a tolerance for and cooperation towards others, and a respect for the laws of the land. Noting that children, whether

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4 Though not overtly part of an individual's rhetoric towards home education, one's perspective on whether a civil society is communitarian, libertarian or strongly democratic affects attitudes and ideologies. Moreover, education has always had a political context.

5 Though a recent addition to the National Curriculum in England and Wales, citizenship has been woven into state school education from the onset in both societies. More noticeable as a subject in its own right in the United States' schools as civics education, or within social studies, it has also existed in England and Wales, for example under the guise of Personal and Social Education (PSHE).
they are educated or not, become part of a civil society, it is Meighan (1988) who argues that preparing a child for society depends on the 'vision of society' promoted. Hence, three models of civil society, likely to encapsulate home educators' or state officials' visions, were considered.

The first is the libertarian model of a civil society. This is based on Adam Smith's market insights, drawing on Tocqueville to polarize life into the public and the private, the public meaning 'big government' and the private being the 'free individuals who associate voluntarily in various economic and social groupings that are contractual in nature' Barber, (1998:16), cited in Bottery, (2000: 201). Mike Bottery notes that individual liberty is the core value, while government is seen as the enemy, the coercer. Libertarians are strong advocates against interference from others, especially the state, valuing individual freedom above all else. A note made by Joseph Kahne (1996:19) however, suggests that though libertarians value freedom, they may well support a coercive school environment (as long as parents and not public agents selected it) because they would argue that children are too young to be afforded absolute freedom.

State officials are unlikely to support a libertarian model of civil society, as it goes completely against the grain of state education. Home educators could support this model, but not as right-libertarians — see Vallentyne (2004), as some involvement with state officials is likely in England and Wales and in Florida.

At the other end of the spectrum is the communitarian model of a civil society. Here the human being is defined by a given set of social relationships over which we have no choice (such as being born Catholic, Jewish, Muslim), into communities we had no hand in fashioning. As the communities to which we belong provide us with identity, sustenance, support, and our rights, they need our help and protection. As Bottery (2000) continues, if we wish to enjoy rights, we need to recognize the demands of duty and responsibility as well. Communitarians value the community as forming the individual's goals and qualities, as the individuals share goals and obligations. As Kahne (1996:27) broadly states, communitarians believe that individual preferences both shape and are shaped by the communities in which people live. Interestingly, Rob Reich and others have defended state schools as enabling children to become autonomous from their parents (as opposed to home education which can supposedly inhibit autonomy). This would seem counter to the communitarian view of shared goals, qualities, and obligations, which would suggest homogeneity and a lack of independence. I believed Reich and others would argue that the commonality of state schooling coexists with autonomy from the family, not necessarily autonomy from the state. There is more discussion about autonomy of the state- or home-educated child in Chapter 6. Suffice to say, I believed that in this model, state officials were more likely to identify with a communitarian civil society that supported state schools. The common good of the community is seen as the core value rather than supporting an individual's goals. Home educators were not likely to view this model as feasible as it conflicts with their choice to remove their child from the state school community.
The third model is the strong democratic model of a civil society. Bottery (2000) notes that Barber (1998) sees this model sharing some of the strengths of the previous models. Such a model includes the functions of citizenship, celebrating the exercise of both rights and responsibilities through open, critical and plural debate. Unlike the previous two models, there is scope for both home educators and state officials to have a strong democratic perspective of a civil society. How far their perspectives converge or diverge is not possible to arbitrarily determine, hence the need for exploration and inference in my study.

One final point made by Bottery (2000: 208) is that the promotion of a civil society is seen as a bottom-up concept, starting 'at the local and communal level, providing people with the skills at participation, as well as providing them with the expertise to understand more fully the larger political level'. The potential of education as a site for inculcating a particular vision of civil society is recognized as home educators and state officials affiliate themselves with libertarian, communitarian or the strong democratic models. Additionally, whilst they might not articulate their vision of a civil society, it should be possible to infer from their attitudes.

5.4.2 A perspective of pedagogy and curriculum

Pedagogy, the science of teaching, also offers potential for discordant perspectives between home educators and state officials. Though private schools do not insist on standardised, qualified teachers, state schools do, equating professionally qualified teachers with educational experts. This requirement contrasts with home educating parents in both societies, who do not have to be qualified to teach their own children. That the laws do not require parents to be certified is recognition that alternative pedagogical philosophies may enable a child to progress commensurate with ability. However, though parents may claim to educate their children effectively without qualifications, state officials may not respect these 'unqualified' teachers. In addition, parents may feel defensive when interacting with professionals, especially if they do not have post-school qualifications. Discordant perspectives were considered likely between state officials and home educators over pedagogy, more so in England and Wales than Florida in recognition of the standardised National Curriculum, delivered through standardised programmes of learning, desired outcomes etc.

Another component in the competing ideologies held by state officials and home educators is that related to curriculum. A cursory search on the Department of Education websites in England and Wales and in Florida revealed the curriculum as a series of subjects or programmes of study. If curriculum is to be defined as content, Denis Lawton's (1973) distinctions between the classical and romantic curricula, as seen in Table 5:1, could be roughly mapped onto a state official's or home educator's perspective respectively. This is not to suggest that the Classical and Romantic curricula divide school from home, as there is potential for much overlap. However, in comparing a state official's ideological perspective on the school curriculum, or conversely a home educator's ideological perspective on a home curriculum, there is

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6 Florida, like many states, requires teachers in state schools to hold specific Florida teacher certification. If certified to teach in another state, such teachers still need to acquire Florida certification to teach in the state school system.
evidence of many Classical or Romantic curricular elements in state officials' and home educators' documentation respectively. For example, conformity, obedience and discipline are necessary prerequisites in a classroom, to deliver subject-centred material to a group. That is not to say that originality, freedom and creativity are devoid in the classroom, but these elements would be dependent on the aforementioned prerequisites. Similarly, whilst child-centred curricula and real-life topics may be better accommodated by an individualised, Romantic-inspired curriculum, didactic instruction and standardised testing could be part of an inclusive home education programme that allows the child to compete with his or her school peers.

### Table 5:1 The classical and romantic curricula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of the classical curriculum (state officials' perspective?)</th>
<th>Elements of the romantic curriculum (home educators' perspective?)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Subject-centred</td>
<td>- Child-centred</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Skills instruction</td>
<td>- Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information</td>
<td>- Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Obedience</td>
<td>- Discovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Conformity</td>
<td>- Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Discipline</td>
<td>- Originality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Objectives – acquiring knowledge</td>
<td>- Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Content – subjects</td>
<td>- Processes – ‘living’ attitudes and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Method – didactic instruction</td>
<td>values</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Competition</td>
<td>- Experiences – real life topics and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Evaluation – by tasks (teacher set)</td>
<td>proposals</td>
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<tr>
<td>- By examinations (public and competitive)</td>
<td>- Method – involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evaluation – self-assessment (in terms of self-improvement)</td>
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</tbody>
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(taken from Jarvis 2004:251 after Lawton 1973:22-23)

However, rather than using such a dichotomous distinction, I agreed with Peter Jarvis et al's (1998:8) recognition that it is difficult, in a pluralistic society, to prescribe precisely what should be taught in schools. In addition, though the traditional functions of education may not have altered dramatically, society is changing rapidly in terms of globalisation, demographics, work and the economy, privatisation, individualisation and commodification — see Jarvis et al (1998:16-17).

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7 Such testing and more formalised instruction is usually more relevant to children of public examination age, as some home educators choose to compete with school-based children for qualifications or entrance to colleges and universities.

8 Functions of education summed up as: transmitting the kinds of knowledge and skills required to sustain industrial economies, especially the scientific and technical knowledge on which they were based; reinforcing prevailing cultural values in society – the beliefs and attitudes to which people were expected to conform; selecting the people most fitted to fill the roles which society needed, and to allocate them to an appropriate status or position in society; reconciling people's aspirations with social needs, so that they accepted their place in society. (Jarvis et al., 1998:14-15)
Using globalisation as an example, the impact this change can have on the curriculum could be in terms of public examinations offered or sought e.g. International Baccalaureate, and International General Certificate of Secondary Education; and greater inclusion of multiculturalism in terms of world news, geography, politics, religion etc, instead of dependence on parochial subjects. So, in spite of an assumption that state officials and home educators probably view curriculum in terms of content, or subjects, I needed to focus on curriculum as knowledge.

Lawton (1975:58) neatly synthesised Young's (1971) approach to the sociology of education which sees knowledge as hierarchical, controlled by 'owners' who also control access to knowledge, and socially constructed, as paraphrased by Joseph (1990:211). The question then becomes — who decides what knowledge is relevant for today's society, and how it is controlled and accessed? In school institutions, hierarchical knowledge is seen to be delivered through the high status subjects that are given greater emphasis, generally the language arts, mathematics and sciences. The professionals, teachers and policymakers determine what subjects are offered in schools and who can gain access to the knowledge (through timetabling and pedagogy for example). What is more, the common curriculum, seen as the National Curriculum in England and Wales and the Sunshine State Standards in Florida, is tied to the concept of a common culture curriculum (Lawton 1975). This also echoes Durkheim's perspective, as

The man who education should realize in us is not the man such as nature has made him, but as society wishes him to be...It is society that draws for us the portrait of the kind of man we should be, and in this portrait all the peculiarities of its organization come to be reflected. (Durkheim (1956), cited in Meighan and Siraj Blatchford 1997:246)

From the home educator's perspective, knowledge can also be hierarchical, controlled by the owners and socially constructed. The difference between a home educator's and state official's perspective on curriculum is likely to be primarily based on who defines knowledge. On this point, Carrie Paechter (2001) comments on the difference between 'school knowledge' and 'owned knowledge'. For her, power is central to the conception of owned knowledge. As Paechter (2001:178-179) continues, ...it becomes clear that students will be able to retain ownership of their non-school knowledge only if they continue to have access to the power that it contains. Owned knowledge is not simply something that is learned well, it is that which contains within it the potential for effective individual and group action. It positions its possessor as an acting subject, able to use his or her knowledge in a dynamic way.

9 Globalisation is the growing interdependence between different peoples, regions and countries in the world as social and economic relationships come to stretch worldwide (Giddens 2001:690)
10 She initially characterises owned knowledge as 'non-school knowledge' or everything outside school, including commonsense.
Chapter 5

Power, seen as intricately bound with ideology, once again enters the picture. Who defines the knowledge to be delivered through the curriculum depends on who holds that power, and whether that knowledge is controlled at an institutional or individual level. Remembering that the historical grounds for compulsory education were developed around a common education for all, power emanating from state officials to control the curriculum and knowledge would be justified as preserving the status quo, and stability of society. Moreover, state officials are likely to see a common curriculum, set standards that can be tested and measured, socialisation in a multicultural population that mirrors society, equal opportunities for education, skills appropriate to today's workplace, and a common vision of being a productive member of a civil society, as embodying the curriculum. Communitarians would also support the value of state education, as strengthening the community in which people live by teaching similar education, values, and morals. Yet A.H. Halsey et al. (1997) recognizes a shift in the restructuring of education in Western societies as a consequence of globalisation and a rapidly changing society. Thus, he cites Gamble (1994) when introducing New Right or Neo Conservative ideology - a view that couples the virtues of individual freedom and the free market with a traditional conservative view that a strong state is necessary to keep moral and political order - Gamble (1994), cited in Halsey et al, (1997: 19). This translates well to the current form of state education today, especially in England and Wales with its National Curriculum. Free mass education is offered, but delivered along certain subjects, that are common in all schools and measurable by testing.

In contrast, home educators are more likely to decry state education as homogenized, prescriptive, and ineffective. Instead they may support libertarian views that advocate choice and rights, or the strong democratic model of civil society Barber described. Home educators could see their curriculum as child-centred, highly individualised, allowing enrichment through the flexibility of a fluid curriculum and 'school day', freedom to practice faith-based education coupled with the ability to impart the family's own cultural, traditional and moral codes, and a vision of socialisation that encapsulates the family values with the vision of being a productive member of society. As one of the defining features of home educators is their individuality, it could be argued that this freedom to encourage the individuality of children takes precedence for their desire for a national identity. That is not to say that home educators are not patriotic or nationalistic, but their priorities are seen to be family first. Though there is little evidence in the literature or documentation that suggests parents or state officials see their role as fostering a national identity, such an identity and patriotism (especially in the United States) could be infused through the curriculum.

So, the perspectives held by state officials or home educators on their curriculum are more than the sum of the subjects taught. Defining knowledge, for the individual, may depend on either a communitarian perspective of the society's culture determining a common curriculum, the libertarian perspective of choice and freedom guiding a more individualised curriculum, or a democratic perspective that incorporates the functions of citizenship, and rights and responsibilities of all groups.
5.4.3 A perspective of citizenship education

Twinned with political rhetoric, citizenship education has recently become a popular issue to promote in schools. However, many authors on citizenship realise that it is essentially a contested concept. How best to interpret what it means to be a citizen and how to promote citizenship education depends on the individual’s perceptions, contextualised in the multicultural, globalised society. The relevance for considering citizenship education is tied into the three other ideological perspectives. That is, the hidden curriculum will inculcate citizenship education; an individual’s vision of a civil society will shape what it entails to be a citizen; and socialisation is the means by which children develop an awareness of social norms and values (Giddens, 2001:699).

Originally, discussions about citizenship took T.H. Marshall (1950, 1964, 1981) as their starting point, with citizenship seen as both a right and a duty. As Jack Demaine (1996:19) notes, Marshall’s perception of citizenship entailed equalisation of civil rights, political rights and social rights within the adult population. Demaine (1996:18) adds that in spite of the contested notions, the main concerns of citizenship theorists also include ‘social justice, the obligations of citizens and the principle of equality’.

The interest in citizenship theory, and the redefinition of citizenship recently being investigated in England and Wales (see the Crick Report and the Parekh Report), has much to do with concerns over what citizens should be in multicultural, democratic societies. As Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (1994:353) explain, the qualities and attitudes of a society’s citizens depend on:

- Their sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities;
- Their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves;
- Their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable;
- Their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands and personal choices which affect their health and the environment. Without citizens who possess these qualities, democracies become difficult to govern, even unstable.

Ralf Dahrendorf (1996:31) points out, ‘Citizenship describes the rights and obligations associated with membership in a social unit, and notably with nationality’; the question of who can become a member and who cannot is part of the ‘turbulent history of citizenship’. Add to that the multicultural societies of the United Kingdom and the United States, where ‘Few societies have managed to integrate as many ethnic groups as those of North America...[and]...the United Kingdom is an outstanding

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example of a country that includes several nations' (Dahrendorf, 1996:31). When you consider that children cannot be citizens but their education has a direct bearing on citizenship, it becomes more obvious that state officials and home educators may have different perspectives. As Alfred Marshall would see it, compulsory education is linked to the requirements of citizenship. State schools are trying to stimulate the growth of citizens in the making. The right to education is a genuine social right of citizenship, because the aim of education during childhood is to shape the future adult. Fundamentally it should be regarded, not as the right of the child to go to school, but as the right of the adult citizen to have been educated...Education is a necessary prerequisite to civil freedom. (Marshall, 1997:299)

In looking at ways in which citizenship education could respond to challenges of the next twenty years in their cross-national, cross-cultural study (including the United States and England) John Cogan and Ray Derricott (1998) felt that

A citizen was defined as 'a constituent member of society'. Citizenship, on the other hand, was said to be 'a set of characteristics of being a citizen'. And finally, citizenship education, the underlying focal point of the study, was defined as 'the contribution of education to the development of those characteristics of being a citizen'. (p.13)

They took the definition of citizenship to be:

Citizenship is a set of characteristics of the citizen of the 21st century, given and agreed upon by a panel of experts, including educational, political, socio-cultural and economic dimensions at the local, national and international levels. (p.13)

Yet both definitions become dated very quickly when writers such as Iris Young (1989), Kymlicka (1995), Penny Enslin (2000), Kymlicka and Norman (2000), Gerard Delanty (2003), and James Banks (2004) challenge the reader with 'differentiated citizenship', 'diverse citizenship', 'multicultural citizenship', 'global citizenship', and 'cultural citizenship'. So before comparing the perspectives of state officials and home educators, three premises are laid down.

Firstly, education has always been associated with citizenship in both societies. As Carlos Torres (1998:109) notes, '...education has always been seen as playing a pivotal role in the constitution of citizenship.' What is more, he continues, Although education has been publicly provided, with the growing emphasis on market forces in education, the citizen has become a consumer, affecting social modes of
solidarity and forms of political consciousness and representation.

Though the curriculum is ‘essentially a selection from the culture of a society’ (Lawton, 1975:6), Sally Tomlinson (1996:121) makes the point that as the school curriculum transmits cultural values, it must focus on the dominant ideas and values that are reflected in schools, questioning the origins of these values. Thus the culture of society and the citizen as consumer will affect the make-up of citizenship education.

Secondly, there are multiple visions of what it is to be a citizen and disagreement over how to promote citizenship education in society. A salient point made by Banks (2004:5) follows:

Becoming a legal citizen of a nation-state does not necessarily mean that an individual will attain structural inclusion into the mainstream society and its institutions or will be perceived as a citizen by most members of the dominant group within the nation-state. A citizen’s racial, cultural, language, and religious characteristics often significantly influence whether she is viewed as a citizen within her society.

Kymlicka and Norman (2000:8) stress that the disagreement about how best to promote responsible citizenship reflects the need to adapt theories of citizenship to the realities of modern pluralistic societies. To this end, writers such as Banks (2004), and Cogan and Derricott (1998) have promoted globalised and multi-dimensional visions of citizenship. Delanty (2003:601) has argued that learning is part of the ‘cultural process of creation and construction’ and ties cultural citizenship to collective learning. Kymlicka (1995) sees multicultural citizenship entwined with the vision of today’s society, and necessary to include multiple cultural groups and identities — see also Feinberg (1998). As yet, there is no consensus on a concept of citizenship education.

Thirdly, a perspective of citizenship education will depend of the political vision of the individual supporting communitarianism or liberal individualism. Rob Gilbert (1996:43-44) notes liberal individualism as the ‘most influential concept of citizenship’ in Britain and the United States, where citizenship is a status implying individuals’ rights of sovereignty over their lives. Adrian Oldfield (1990:2) is quoted describing this concept as:

The function of the political realm is to render service to individual interests and purposes, to protect citizens in

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12 Delanty (2003:602) sees the learning of citizenship including the ‘learning of a capacity for action and for responsibility but, essentially, it is about the learning of the self and the relationship of self and other. It is a learning process in that it is articulated in perceptions of the self as an active agency and a social actor shaped by relations with others. In this view, citizenship concerns identity and action; it entails both personal and cognitive dimensions that extend beyond the personal to the wider cultural level of society.
the exercise of their rights, and to leave them unhindered in the pursuit of whatever individual and collective interests and purposes they might have. Political arrangements are thus seen in utilitarian terms. To the extent that they afford the required protection for citizens and groups to exercise their rights and pursue their purposes, citizens have little to do politically beyond choosing who their leaders are to be. One of the rights of citizens within this framework is the right to be active politically: to participate, that is, in more substantial ways than merely by choosing political leaders. Because it is a right, however, citizens choose — on the assumption that they have the resources and the opportunity- when and whether to be active in this way. It is no derogation from their status of citizen if they choose not to be so active.

The communitarian approach is also described, by Gilbert (1996:46-47):

Just as people identify themselves as members of families, communities, nations, they also recognize, to varying degrees and in varying ways, obligations implied by these memberships. In this view, citizenship implies membership of a community entailing a juridical status which confers formal rights and obligations, such as equality under the law, the right to vote, paying taxes or otherwise contributing to the social and economic welfare of the community. The concern is for the extent to which these are safeguarded in law and government, but also whether citizens practise these formally established rights and obligations.

State officials are currently working to meet the demands for an inclusive, cohesive citizenship education for schools. Their perspective is likely to be fuelled by the belief that schools will deliver a common citizenship education, teaching the five attributes of a sense of identity (usually defined in national terms but also the multicultural identities of individuals); rights and entitlements of citizenship; responsibilities, obligations and duties; being active in public affairs; and the acceptance of societal values — taken from Cogan and Derricott (1998:2-6). The communitarian vision is manifest in their perspective to ensure a common identity.

In contrast, citizenship education to home educators is likely to be seen from a different perspective. Unable to teach citizenship in a school setting, Arai (1999:11) contends that home educators are emphasising participation and the importance of the family as the basis for a different definition of citizenship. The liberal individualist perception is likely to be prominent to home educators who will see their individualised citizenship as one of many interpretations. Their perceptions of
citizenship may differ and be rooted in their particular faith, for example, but this does not nullify their vision, nor make the following comment ring true, ‘Without public schools, there can be no citizens’ (Barber 1997:27).

It would seem that the perspectives of citizenship education are rife with conflicts within themselves, as the individual concept of a citizen is based on a multitude of factors. So, borrowing from Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett (1996:82) I concur,

The only kind of civic education which can prepare citizens for life in a fully democratic society is one which acknowledges both that the meaning of citizenship is perennially the subject of contestation, and that it is through this process of contestation that the relationship between the citizen and the state is being continuously redefined.

5.4.4 A perspective of socialisation

Just as citizenship education is seen as part of the school curriculum to promote a common identity, secondary socialisation has a similar grounding in schools as the status quo. Primary and secondary socialisation need to be distinguished though, as it is only the latter that is relevant to state officials and home educators. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) would explain that humans, as social products, internalise the reality of their social construction through primary and secondary socialisation.

Primary socialisation is the first socialisation an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialisation is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective of his society. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:130)

In other words, primary socialisation originates in the home, and secondary socialisation is the internalisation of institutional or institution-based ‘subworlds’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:138). From Gidden’s (2001:28) sociological perspective, ‘agencies of socialisation’ are groups or social contacts in which significant processes of socialisation occur, normally schools, which Val Rust (1977) considers the most specialised of learning environment. Habitas, a central tenet in Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural and social reproduction theory, is also seen evidenced in schools, as the children are socialised within certain subgroups of class, race, etc.

Still related to schools, Berger and Luckmann’s (1966:142) description of secondary socialisation is useful to note. They see secondary socialisation as formal and anonymous, and more easily bracketed. It is formal in that secondary socialisation takes place after the formed self and internalisation of primary socialisation. Overcoming the internalised reality formed by the child’s primary socialisation, teachers need not become ‘significant others’ in the way parents are to
their children. Teachers have a specialist function of transmitting specific knowledge. As Berger and Luckmann (1966:141) note, problems can occur, with secondary socialisation, when children realise that the world represented by their parents is 'not the only world there is, but has a very specific social location, perhaps even one with a pejorative connotation'. It is anonymous in that, in principle, any teacher can teach rather than being a special individual to the child or class. It is easily bracketed, as the individual child is able to set aside the realities of the secondary internalisations. Of importance in the context of contrasting home educator and state official perspectives is the development of the capacity of the schooled child (exposed to secondary socialisation) to distance his or her total self and his or her reality (primary internalised socialisation) and the role-specific partial self and reality (secondary internalised socialisation). Specifically, Berger and Luckmann (1966:143) see that the development of this ability to hide the total self and its reality is an important aspect of the process of growing into adulthood.

Though it will appear in the state officials' documentation (see Chapter 10) that socialisation refers to social contact with others, I wondered if state officials also believed the home-educated child would not be exposed to secondary socialisation that properly promoted role-specific selves and realities. I believed that state officials were likely to vocalise schools as the 'best fit' to socialise children, in keeping with a more communitarian vision.

Conversely, when defending their perspective of socialisation, home educators are probably referring to an extended form of primary rather than secondary socialisation. Whilst not able to replicate secondary socialisation as schools do, Arai (1999) suggests that home education literature points to various methods families employ to ensure secondary socialisation opportunities for their children, such as belonging to support groups, churches and organised youth groups, outsourcing to classes — see Ray (1997), Mayberry et al (1995).

The crucial difference in state officials' and home educators' perspectives on socialisation appears likely to revolve around the characteristics of secondary socialisation. Even Giddens (2001:28) sees that schools do not have a monopoly on socialisation, citing peer groups, organisations, the media and eventually the workplace as socialising forces. If other socialising forces exist outside of state schools, there may be room for state officials to accommodate an acceptable, different form of socialisation for home educators.

To conclude, Table 5:2 compares the likely attitudes and ideologies of the home educators' and state officials' groups. The table highlights the similarities of a homogeneous group attitude, and the differences in specific ideological perspectives. Note though, that such a comparison of likely attitudes and ideologies was based on the Weberian 'ideal types' of the spectrum. These likely attitudes are the spectrum ends for each group, and are highlighted here for the noticeable differences that could exist, and for comparative purposes. Such spectrum extremes were not readily apparent in the documentation and questionnaires, and were not expected in the qualitative data. Elements of the likely attitudes and ideologies were expected to be
amplified in the qualitative data, highlighting areas of potential tension. At the same time, instances of cooperative or converging attitudes or ideologies were also sought.

### Table 5:2 Comparison of likely attitudes and ideologies between home educators and state officials

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<th>Home educators likely to support</th>
<th>State Officials likely to support</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison of likely attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Homogeneous group attitude, including total ownership of child’s education through curriculum control, primary socialisation, legal rights, duties, and responsibilities</td>
<td>Homogeneous group attitude, including degree of curriculum control (England and Wales)/curriculum choices (Florida), secondary socialisation, legal rights, duties, and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home educators likely to support</strong></td>
<td><em>Libertarian or strong democratic vision of a civil society;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Belief that curriculum can be taught by non-professionals; more likely to include elements of the romantic curriculum;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Justifying owned knowledge from the home perspective to preserve family traditions, cultures, values, morals and religion;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Citizenship rooted in particular faith, culture, family values, vision of society</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Primary socialisation, family-based</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Officials likely to support</strong></td>
<td><em>Communitarian or strong democratic vision of a civil society;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Belief that curriculum best taught by professionals; more likely to include elements of the classical curriculum;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Justifying owned knowledge from school-based perspective to preserve the status quo;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Common citizenship education, inclusive of multiculturalism;</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Secondary socialisation, school-based</em></td>
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5.5 Summary

Attitudes are a shorthand term to summarise many different behaviours, are predispositions to respond, and are worth studying for their own sake. Attitudes were linked in this chapter to culture, and group influence, touching on Chapter 3 and the group attitude to be displayed in the quantitative data of Chapter 10. Understanding a concept of group attitudes and individual attitudes in this chapter was a prerequisite to exploring individual attitudes towards home education in the qualitative data, presented in Chapters 11 and 12.

In addition, the perceptions towards the ideology of education held by the state official or home educator were seen to be dependent on a number of components. These were highlighted as perspectives on civil society, pedagogy and curriculum, citizenship education and socialisation. State officials are likely to see education as a public good and home educators are likely to see education as their private right, with their perceptions based on their views as the stakeholders. In this chapter, contrasting communitarian or liberal/libertarian views were used to indicate the likely perspectives of both groups.

The next chapter looks at the home educators' and state officials' perspectives once more, but this time from the issue of home education rights and interests. The value of highlighting perspectives likely to be held by home educators and state officials over their rights and responsibilities to educate children is to highlight dichotomous perspectives that have the potential for more convergence.
Chapter 6 – Home Education Rights and Interests

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 highlighted the home education laws in both societies. Understanding that attitudes towards home education are intertwined with the individual's concept of rights to home educate, or rights to monitor/evaluate home education, led me to explore the concept of rights a little further in this chapter. Exploring the two perspectives on rights will further address the question specifically for this chapter:

- What are the rights of parents to home educate their children in England and Wales, and in Florida?

6.2 A concept of rights

Though a simple definition of a right is 'a thing one may legally or morally claim; the state of being entitled to a privilege or immunity or authority to act', one thing is clear - a concept of rights is complex and contestable among political philosophers. Jeremy Waldron (1993: 49) makes the general point that 'all modern theories of rights claim to respect the capacity of ordinary men and women to govern their own lives on terms that respect the equal capacities of others'. Thus, rights are based on respecting an individual's autonomy. He also argues that his theory of rights supposes that unavoidable controversies or disagreements can be settled on the basis of respect for the rights of each individual. As he continues,

Things might be different if principles of rights were self-evident or if there were a philosophical elite who could be trusted to work out once and for all what rights we have and how they are to be balanced against other considerations. But the consensus of the philosophers is that these matters are not settled, that they are complex and controversial, and that certainly in the seminar room the existence of good faith disagreement is undeniable. (Waldron, 1993:49)

Waldron also considers the competing conceptions of rights, from Robert Nozick and Joseph Raz, to Ronald Dworkin and John Stuart Mill. Rather than enter into a discussion about the various competing theories of rights, a few salient points are drawn from Waldron's paper. First, defining an individual's rights cannot be done in isolation to another. As Waldron puts it, rights are seen as a way of resisting 'trade-offs':

Rights express limits on what can be done to individuals for the sake of the greater benefit of others; they impose limits on the sacrifices that can be demanded from them as a contribution to the general good. (Waldron 1989:508)

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2 Waldron writes succinctly about different philosophers' theories in 'Rights in Conflict' (1989), Ethics Vol. 99, No.3. For this study, rather than discuss the different theories, it was the complexity of the various sets of rights that needed consideration.
Secondly, of importance especially to home educators, and to state officials, is the possibility of trade-offs that might be adopted as a solution to conflicts of rights. If one set of rights is seen as less important, and does not have the weight in numbers to improve their perceived importance, such rights might be 'trumped' (Dworkin's image). Waldron states this as,

The worry that some of us have about the calculus of utility is not so much that individual interests are traded off against one another: that, as we have just seen, may be inevitable (no matter how it is characterized). The worry is that, in the utilitarian calculus, important individual interests may end up being traded off against considerations which are intrinsically less important and which have the weight that they do in the calculus only because of the numbers involved. (Waldron, 1989:509)³

So, home educators, as the minority group, may be defensive about their rights because they fear being traded off by state officials who argue their interests in trumping the child's education.

Thirdly, since my study looks at rights from the perspectives of the state, the parents and the children, I had to be cognizant of taking all viewpoints into account. My focus, then, intertwined legal rights for individuals with civil, human and children's rights.

First of all, laws specific to home education, discussed previously, embody the legal rights of individuals, that is 'rights which exist under the rules of legal systems' (Campbell, 2005:1). Yet legal rights can be seen as only belonging to those who can bring relevant actions on their behalf (Wellman, 1995). Thus parents have the legal right to home educate their child, just as state officials have the legal right to ensure provision of state education, or monitoring/evaluation of home education. For this study, the focus is on the legal rights of children to public, private or home education, enshrined in law, as subsumed by the education choice that the parents' make.

Second, civil rights are seen as 'the basic legal rights a person must possess...that constitute free and equal citizenship and include personal, political and economic rights' (Altman, 2003:1). This free and equal citizenship is based on the notion of public and private autonomy. As Andrew Altman (2003:5) explains, public autonomy is 'the individual’s freedom to participate in the formation of public opinion and society’s collective decisions'. Private autonomy is 'the individual’s freedom to decide what way of life is most worth pursuing'. However, autonomy and citizenship, viewed from the home educators’ or state officials’ perspective, may be debatable concepts.

³ The utilitarian calculus is based on trading off one course of action over another. The example Waldron gives is that we are justified in harming A over harming B and C, because A’s loss can be “traded off” in our moral computations against a commensurate benefit to B (the benefit of not being harmed), leaving the similar benefit to C (of not being harmed) as the determining factor for our decision.
Third, human rights, upheld in the American Constitution and the English Magna Carta, are also catered for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that includes liberty rights (protecting freedoms in areas such as belief, expression, association, assembly and movement) and welfare rights, also known as economic and social rights (requiring provision of education to all children) (Nickel, 2003:1-2). These human rights are seen as minimal standards to allow for cultural and institutional variations. For example, Americans prize liberty rights more vocally than their British counterparts who in turn look to the State to accommodate their welfare rights. For this study, liberty rights and welfare rights are woven into the perspectives held by parents and state officials towards home education.

Last, a child's rights depend on the competing choice or interest theories. As David Archard (2002:2-3) explains, choice theory sees a right as a protected exercise of choice whilst the interest theory sees a right protecting an individual's interest of sufficient importance. Yet both theories, along with notions advocating liberationism or arbitrariness, have limited resonance because of children themselves. That is, a child is not an adult and cannot have the same rights as he or she initially does not have the capacity to make choices as a right-holder. Parents, on the other hand, have the responsibility to act as representatives for the child, acting in his or her best interests. Likewise, in public schools, teachers are in loco parentis, acting in the best interests of the child. However, as the child develops his or her capacities, intelligence and understanding of issues, the best interest principle can wane in significance. Rather than enter a debate over a child's rights, I focused on the lenses of the parents and the state officials to clarify conflicts over rights to education, with the child's rights subsumed within these perspectives.

In looking at the parents' and state officials' perspectives, I considered Eamonn Callan (1997), Rob Reich (2002a, 2002b, 2002c), and William Galston (2002) who discuss specific rights of parents and the state with reference to education. As recognised by Callan (1997:1) the particular rights required of liberal democracies, such as rights to political participation, freedom of expression, religious practice, and equality before the courts, have the force of law. Home education is lawful, but do state officials see a conflict of rights?

6.2.1 Parental rights (and children's rights)

Parents have the legal right to choose their child's education, whether it is state (free), private or home education. Within their legal rights, they can follow any educational philosophy, curricula, and pedagogy that will provide a suitable education for their child. Reich (2002b:143) sees home schooling as the 'paradigmatic example of the realisation of complete parental authority over the educational environment of their children'. His concern over the home educating parents' authority is based on his

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4 The documents that are similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pertaining to the Americans, are The American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man (Organisation of American States 1948) and the American Convention on Human Rights (Organisation of American States 1969)

5 Although welfare rights also exist in the accommodation of state schools in Florida, it is the welfare state mentality in England and Wales that contrasts with a corresponding lacking mentality due to the comparative limitations of welfare provision in America.
liberal theory of multicultural education, promoting an education for children that 'cultivates their autonomy and ... is multicultural' (Reich, 2002b:142). Of importance to Reich when considering the rights of parents to home school, are their interests in education, grounded in the self-regarding interests of the parents themselves, and grounded in the other-regarding claim of parents being best situated to promote the dependent child's welfare (Reich, 2002b:149). He sees a trilogy of interests, of the state, parents and the child. The interests of parents depend on their particular view of the good life, with plural conceptions of the good life defying a consensus about the best interests of the child in all cases. Galston (2002) also considers parents' authority over education in a liberal pluralist state, acknowledging as Reich does that parents have the right to choose the child's education. He sees the 'expressive interest' of parents in 'raising their children in a manner consistent with their understanding of what gives meaning and value to life' (Galston, 2002:94). He also leans on John Stuart Mill's generalised defence of educational diversity and parental choice (Galston, 2002:99), recognizing that the education laws presume parents have the best interests and understanding of the children in hand. Another commentator acknowledging the rights of parents for educational choice, Callan (1997:136) echoes Reich's concern when he states,

Agreement that there is a parental right to educational choice coincides with profound differences about its scope as well as the conditions under which the right is defeated by other moral reasons.

Reich, Galston and Callan essentially voice concern over the human rights issue of parents acting in the best interest of their child. Their collective criticism against home educating parents exerting their rights to reject public schooling focuses on parents' interests superseding the child's. Reich (2002b:151) notes

We can conclude that while parents clearly have substantial interests in the education of their children, it appears highly unlikely that they will be so weighty as to justify a claim that parents should command complete authority over the education of their children.

From the child's perspective, Reich (2002b:155) sees the potential for conflict between the child and the parents' interests, when 'parents seek through the educational environment (and elsewhere) to satisfy an expressive interest in molding their children into certain persons without regard to the will of the children themselves'. Galston (2002:105) sees the child's 'expressive liberty' that parents cannot rightly undermine. Callan (1997:145) adds to this by outlining the 'zone of personal sovereignty', in which individuals are free to make their own way in the world, but can be compromised by parents exercising their rights in education. The suggestion inferred is that parents may not always accommodate the best interests of the child.

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6 The 'good life' is perceived by libertarians, liberal democrats and communitarians through different lenses. Depending on the political stance of the individual, the good life is attained in isolation to the community or as a consequence of partaking in community living.
Furthermore, James Nickel (2003:3) points out that human rights should not be inalienable, instead favouring latitude to override such rights. Galston and Reich both note that sound education policy cannot be exclusively state-centred, parent-centred, or child-centred. Callan and Reich go further as they see conflict between parents and children when the child's rights are not fully accommodated. Specifically, in spite of parental rights to home educate children to provide an education that prepares them to take part in a civilised society, Callan and Reich have concerns over the child's antonomy.

In order to thrive in society, the argument would follow, a child's education should promote his or her autonomy. Reich (2002b:157) sees that Neither parents nor the state can justly attempt to imprint upon a child an indelible set of values and beliefs, as if it were an inheritance one should never be able to question, as if the child must always defer and be unquestioningly obedient.

Callan (1997:132-133) takes the autonomy argument further, stating [State] schooling properly involves at some stage sympathetic and critical engagement with beliefs and ways of life at odds with the culture of the family or religious or ethnic group into which the child is born.

In other words, state schooling is the most likely institutional vehicle to promote an understanding of 'ethical diversity' from the 'extra-familial social influences that impinge heavily on children's and adolescents' lives — peer groups, the mass media of communication and entertainment'.

Callan (1997:149) sees the child's 'right to an education that liberates [him or her] from cultural domination, whether it be in the family or in some larger cultural unit'. He uses Ackerman's (1980) idea of schooling as the great sphere to promote state schooling (his term — common schooling) and, in effect, reject the parents' rights to home educate. Both Callan and Reich sense a danger that home education is 'effectively demanding a right to keep ... children servile' (Callan, 1997:155). This violates the child's rights, as he or she is raised in 'ignorant apathy' towards other viewpoints barring that of their parents. As Callan (1997:189) concludes,

Children have a right to an education whose content is given by their prospective interest in sovereignty. Most obviously, that means they need to be equipped with the capabilities to live more than the one way of life with their parents would prescribe.

As Bruce Arai (1999:6) sees it, based on Callan, connecting the child's personal rights with state rights for the preservation of liberal democracy cancels out parental rights to make choices about their children's education.
However, as compelling as these arguments may seem to erode parental rights to home educate, they are flawed on several counts. Firstly, as noted earlier, though children have rights, they are not initially synonymous with adults' rights as children lack the adult capacity to make choices and rationalise. So parents represent the child's interests. It is likely that most parents act in their own best interests, but also home educate in a manner they consider to be in the best interests for their children. Though impossible to gauge what constitutes 'best interest', it seems presumptuous to suppose parents are not introducing their children to other viewpoints or methods of teaching and learning. This would indicate isolation of the children; yet the proliferation of home educating groups suggests a demand for networking support.

Secondly, as a teacher and home educator, I see no logical explanation to speculate that a child's autonomy in public schooling is preferable to that in home education. True, as it may be, some home educating parents want their children to slavishly follow their religious beliefs, morals and livelihoods. This cannot be the generalisation for home educators any more than independent-minded, liberal thinking children are the product of public schools. I would argue that suggesting that public schooling enables children to be autonomous is to ignore the prescribed curricula and hidden curriculum that demands uniformity. I know, as a teacher, that uniformity, consistency, and acquiescence to authority are necessary for a school's smooth functioning. So, just as the best interest principle has various permutations and is impossible to formulate, superseding children's rights over the parents', on the notion of autonomy, needs to be a case-by-case approach. Are there other interests of the state that need consideration?

6.2.2 Interests of the state (and children's rights)

Reich (2002b:154) sees the state possessing two 'distinct interests in the education of children: first, children receive a civic education and second, that children develop into adults capable of independent functioning.' Of note, Reich concedes that whilst parents and the state share the second interest, state interests most often clash with parents' interests where civic education is concerned. This issue of civic education, realised as citizenship education in schools, or interpreted as socialisation to home educators, was touched upon by in Chapter 5. In this section, I wanted to situate the interest of the state and the desire to subsume the children's educational rights as their duty.

The historical perspective of state schooling underpins the assumed prerogative of state schooling to be thought of as the status quo, to produce a literate, working force in society, as summarised by Galston (2002: 97):

...education was thought to promote a range of public goods: economic growth, appropriate civic beliefs and virtues, national unity and “Americanization”, and a strong national defense.7

7 Such a summary would be true for the basis of education in England and Wales, barring the Americanization aspect – the issue of assimilating immigrants through education would come much later than the nineteenth century in England and Wales.
Historically, the state has an interest in the child’s education to perform a ‘backstop role’ says Reich (2002b:153) ‘...in ensuring that children receive some basic minimum of schooling such that they can develop into adults who are capable of independent functioning’. Independent functioning, is described further by Reich as, ...all children need to grow into adults who possess a baseline set of social, emotional, and intellectual competencies that enable them to navigate and participate in the familiar social and economic institutions of society.

This backstop role of the state seemingly ensures a baseline education to enable autonomy of the child. Though it would appear Reich is suggesting that the state must control and regulate all educational provision in ‘some basic minimum of schooling’, he is quick to point out that this is not the case. He concedes that parents know the children better than the state, and as they also share the interest in education for the child, they rightly have a choice in how best to meet the child’s educational needs in terms of curricula, pedagogies and environment.

To provide the backstop role, state schooling is organised into institutions. The interests of the state are wedded to the financial abilities of the state to provide state education – thus state school institutions tend to form along traditional, replicable models, attempting to run as efficiently as possible. School organisations, as described by Anthony Giddens (2001:370) are a large association of people [teachers] set up to achieve specific objectives [educate the children]. Specific objectives of state school institutions must also take into account the make-up of the current society. England and Wales, and Florida are multicultural and multi-religious societies. Will Kymlicka’s (1995) liberal theory of minority rights explains how he sees minority rights of the various national minorities (for example, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians) coexisting with basic human rights such as freedom of speech, association and conscience. The challenge seen in multicultural societies today is to accommodate the differences in the various groups in a cohesive way by recognizing their rights. Kymlicka sees three forms of group-specific rights, namely self-government rights, polyethnic rights and special representation rights. Such group-specific rights appear to reflect a communitarian outlook, rather than the liberal belief in individual freedom and equality (Kymlicka, 1995:34). Kymlicka (1995:6) notes the dangers of recognizing minority rights though, and sees the need for them to be ‘limited by principles of individual liberty, democracy, and social justice’. So even when recognizing the multicultural facet of society in state schools, the interests of the state extend to providing an education that supports the vision of the nation state, ‘Americanising’ or ‘Anglicising’ its future citizens.

However, home educators, in exercising their group-specific rights (or collective rights as they may be viewed), may exercise their rights to educate in individual ways. As a minority group, home educators’ rights are recognized, but in...
the interests of the state, the backstop role exists to accommodate the children's rights too. As Reich (2002b:155) sees it,

...the fact that children are needy and dependent justifies a certain amount of parental and state paternalism with respect to educational provision, and often necessitates that persons other than the child be able to represent his interests.

This state paternalism with respect to educational provision may be in conflict with home educators' paternalism. This is seen more clearly from the multi-religious aspect of the two societies. Though the U.S. Constitution's separation of church and state means state schools in Florida do not include religious instruction, the opposite scenario exists in England and Wales. Not only is religious instruction part of the National Curriculum, faith-based schools (mainly Anglican and Roman Catholic) exist parallel to other state schools. There has been a recent upwelling of comment on the case against state-funded faith-based schools in England and Wales, (particularly for Muslims) especially since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York in 2001. These faith-based schools exist to meet the needs of the predominant faiths, and are considered by many parents as providing a high quality education. However, the Humanist Philosophers Group (HPG) makes a case against increasing the number of religious schools in England and Wales as it flies in the face of promoting a truly multicultural, autonomous child. The HPG (2001:23) argues that religious schools 'tend to inhibit the growth of their pupils’ autonomy by giving them a one-sided view of the world and by exercising various kinds of pressure’, making it ‘difficult for pupils to make up their own minds about the truth or falsity of religious beliefs’. What is more, state funded religious schools are not consistently supported, with 4716 Church of England schools, 2108 Roman Catholic schools, but only 30 Jewish schools and 1 Sikh school (DfEE statistics in Schools in England (2000), cited in Humanist Philosophers Group, 2001:34). It seems hardly possible to promote pluralism and a multicultural society if there is inconsistency for the different religious groups in society. The HPG's recommendation for a pluralist, multicultural society is the promotion of tolerance and recognition of different values, religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs. This cannot be done in state supported faith-based schools, especially when these schools are not compelled to cover a variety of different religious beliefs as part of their religious studies curricula, as found in all non-religious state schools (HPG, 2001:38).

In Florida, no religious instruction is permitted in the schools yet citizens have the right to exercise their religious freedoms. The private education sector fulfils the need for religious education, with many home educators citing religious reasons for their choice. Thus in Florida the interests of the state are in conflict with home educators who seek the religious element and ethos in their child’s education.

A final point — the interests of the state will be driven by the political climate of the society. The two extremes, of liberalism and communitarianism, are perspectives on the freedom of the individual and the importance of social values. The liberal perspective will emphasize the individual, although this need not be in
opposition to society. Communitarianism emphasizes communal traditional values, though the individual can be recognized as part of the traditional values (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004:99-100). Comparing the political climate of England and Wales, and Florida, with reference to education today uses an historical insight. Bruce Frohnen (1996:29) helps me with my comparison, by focusing on the fact that ‘American politics belong, if not completely then in large measure, to liberalism and to Locke in particular’. Locke’s claim that people have a natural right to life, liberty and property is ingrained in the American Constitution, but also in the American psyche. Thus the political climate in Florida can be seen supporting a liberal democracy. The interest of the state will be tempered against the mantra of ‘life, liberty and property’ that parents may uphold in opposing state education. In contrast, the Welfare State provision of a national education in England and Wales has a more communitarian perspective that affects the liberal democracy. Consequently, the interest of the state can be more in line with the community ideals of communitarianism. Interestingly, Frohnen (1996:41) sees the communitarian perspective as protecting families because they are necessary for turning children into responsible, well-adjusted adults. Do communitarians see home educators as liberals or communitarians?

6.2.3 Regulating home education — a balance of interests

Touched on in the previous sections (6.2.1 and 6.2.2) are the potentially competing interests of home educating parents and state officials over their perspectives on rights. To balance these interests, and the child’s, regulations by law or policy are instituted. In state and private schools, at the very minimum level, an attendance register of all children is kept; curricula are followed with educational standards defined and aimed for; and standardised testing or grading assesses the educational achievements of the children. School institutions are also likely to regulate civic education and a multicultural curriculum to recognize the needs and make-up of society. This regulation of education in schools is warranted to serve the children’s interest of becoming autonomous citizens in society, equipped with at least a basic minimum standard of education. Meira Levinson echoes the state’s interests, stating children must attend institutional schools in order to achieve autonomy, as ‘even the most well-intentioned and resource-laden parents’ cannot accomplish what a school can with respect to fostering the development of autonomy (cited in Reich, 2002b:161). Ruling out home education as an alternative, Levinson presumably does not consider that home educating parents are prepared to expose their children to views, values and beliefs diverse from their own. In fact, Reich (2002b:163) considers private and religious schools are as likely as home educators to need regulations to ensure that children receive the ‘minimal degree of autonomy necessary to provide them with options other than that into which they have been born; they must have an effective right of exit’. He suggests four regulations of home education — but do they balance interests of the state and home educators?

Firstly, Reich sees compulsory registration of home educators with the local education authorities as necessary. His reasoning — to allow more accurate data on home education, to help make decisions about how to distribute resources for home educators and to enable simplified communication between school leaders and home
educating parents. He also suggests that compulsory registration more effectively distinguishes between home educating children and truants.

In England and Wales, not only is there no compulsory registration, home-based educators can remain anonymous to the local education authorities.9 As a form of private education, parents who home educate have opted out of state school involvement, regulations and compulsory registration. In contrast, home schoolers in Florida must register their intention to home educate their child within thirty days of commencing a home education program. The local school district files the information on the child, and reports their statistics to the Florida State Education Department for an annual statistical report. So, in line with Reich's recommendation, parents and the state balance interests in Florida through compulsory registration.

Secondly, Reich (2002b:169) suggests that parents must demonstrate to relevant education officials that their particular homeschooling arrangements are up to determined educational standards, and there ought to be clear procedures, including avenues of appeal, for resolving disputes about whether such standards have been met.

The onus of determining the child's educational standards rests with the parents. This regulation is followed in both societies, albeit differently. In England and Wales, the local education authority (LEA) monitors home education; in Florida, parents have to submit an annual evaluation of their child's educational progress to the school district (SD). The shift in involvement by the LEAs (home visits preferred) or the SDs (third party evaluation sent in) may affect the perceived balance of interests between parents and the state.

Thirdly, Reich (2002b:169) sees that

Because the state must ensure that the school environment provides exposure to and engagement with values and beliefs other than those of a child's parents, the state should require parents to use multicultural curricula that provide such exposure and engagement.

Reich suggests this regulation, so that home-educated children can receive a liberal multicultural education, as do school-based children, to meet the needs of society. He sees the regulation met through submitting a curriculum for review by school officials, choosing from a state-approved list, or allowing the children to enrol in some state school activities. However, regulating the use of multicultural curricula in home education is not found in England and Wales or in Florida. This recommended regulation, based on the assumption that home-educated children are not exposed to a multicultural education, is obviously not supported in either society,

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9 This situation arises when a child, on reaching compulsory school age, is home educated rather than being put into state or private school.
or the regulation would already exist. Perhaps Reich’s suggestion is a school-model perspective that is recognised by the authorities as having little cogency for home educating families.

Lastly, Reich suggests that home-educated children should be regulated to take annual standardized tests to measure academic progress. As with the last regulation, this is more transparently from a school-model perspective, rather than a regulation that meets the interests of parents, state and child. In England and Wales, measuring academic progress is made, but usually with a home visit, not a standardised test. Florida annual evaluations can be satisfied by standardised tests, or four other methods that are more flexible than the regulation Reich suggests. So whilst each society is regulating the education of the child through monitoring or evaluation methods, it is not through rigid enforcement of standardised testing that is a school prerequisite for assessment.

Reich recognizes, as he should, that balancing the interests of state, parents and child is not a simple matter. Neither is enforcing his suggested regulations that stem from school-based regulations, and the state interest perspective. It does seem, evidenced in England and Wales and in Florida, that in recognition of the parents’ right to choose home education, they have accepted some forms of regulation by the state. How far this give-and-take may cause tension was explored as part of my study.

Tables 6:1 and 6:2 draw out the main perspectives of state officials and home educators in England and Wales and Florida, over specific issues on rights. It became clear that potential for tension between home educators and state officials could exist over perspectives towards rights to home educate and the underlying best interests and autonomy of the child. Thus, such perspectives were considered when analysing the participants’ voices in the telephone interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Officials’ Perspective</th>
<th>Home Educators’ Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Best Interests of Child</strong></td>
<td>Vested interest in future, educated, independent citizen</td>
<td>Vested interest in educated, independent member of family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>State education can provide autonomy; home education viewed as cultivating servility to family, ignorant apathy to counter-viewpoints</td>
<td>Home education can provide autonomy; state education viewed as cultivating uniformity, consistency and acquiescence to authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6:2 Comparison of Perspectives to meet Trilogy of Interests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>England and Wales</th>
<th>Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Perspective</td>
<td>Welfare State Communitarianism</td>
<td>Lockean Liberalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation – compulsory registration</td>
<td>Not currently a legal requirement</td>
<td>Legal requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation – evaluation of educational provision</td>
<td>LEA-based assessment, usually through home visit</td>
<td>Parent-controlled through one of five methods in law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation – regulated curriculum</td>
<td>Not currently a legal requirement (school biased)</td>
<td>Not currently a legal requirement (school biased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation – annual standardised testing</td>
<td>Not currently a legal requirement</td>
<td>Annual evaluation can include standardised testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3 Summary

Tracing a concept of rights from the state or home educator perspective highlighted the sets of interests that needed consideration in home education and the potential for tension. In answering the guiding question, I believed fundamentally different attitudes were likely between home educators and state officials, from a legal and rights context. Where tensions become evident in the study, it could be as a consequence of misinterpretation or ignorance of laws, or misinterpretation of the other’s rights.

This chapter completes the literature review. Guiding each literature review chapter was the question, *Are there fundamentally different attitudes between home educators and state officials towards home education?* Starting from the premise that tension should be expected, each chapter portrayed the main theoretical perspectives of home educators and state officials, highlighting where different attitudes might be apparent. What is necessary now, in the next chapter, is to review the questions answered by the literature review, and sketch the research questions to answer from the quantitative and qualitative data.
STUDY FOCUS – RESEARCH PROBLEM, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The previous five literature chapters were necessary to focus upon issues pertinent to the research problem. The outcome of exploring various issues most relevant to answer the guiding research question enabled further structuring of this study. Thus, the next three chapters focus on the research problem and questions to answer, followed by the methodologies and methods best suited to achieve meaningful data for analysis and discussion.
Chapter 7 – The Research Problem and Questions to Answer

7.1 Introduction
This study compared potential tensions, attitudes and perceptions towards home education by a small section of the educating population, yet the wider context is worth noting. The duality and dichotomy of private and public education in society is continually influenced by politics, educational policy and practices. As such, I believed a comparative understanding of the attitudes and perceptions towards home education were useful, for further research and discussion.

In order to better appreciate home educators’ and state officials’ perspectives, this chapter first retraced the sub-questions posed in the Chapters 3–6, offering answers highlighted in the literature. My practitioner-researcher perspective, or bias, is also relevant here. The research problem is also retraced, followed by addressing the guiding question with related sub-questions.

7.2 Review of the questions answered in the literature
In Chapter 3 the question was posed, ‘What is the historical context of home education in England and Wales and in Florida?’ Through the literature, home education is seen to predate public education, yet with a modern home education movement beginning at roughly the same time – in the 1970s – in both societies. The literature shows little evidence of cooperative measures between home-based educators, public schools and state officials in England and Wales, in contrast to the dual enrolment opportunities for home schoolers in Florida. The cultural differences of the separation of Church and State in schools, and the US Constitution in Florida, contrasted with mandatory religious education, and the lack of a Constitution in England and Wales. The differences in the historical and cultural contexts of home education were considered to lead to fundamental differences in attitudes between state officials and home educators.

In Chapter 4, questions were posed to sketch the home education laws. These questions were:
- What laws apply to home-based educators in England and Wales?
- What laws apply to home schoolers in Florida?
- What laws apply to state officials responsible for home-based educators in England and Wales?
- What laws apply to state officials responsible for home schoolers in Florida?

A comparative summary of the home education laws revealed the similarities and differences. Among the differences, which may have significance for attitudes held towards home education, were issues on compulsory registration, evidence of educational provision, annual evaluations and the method of monitoring or evaluation.

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1 It is precisely because I am a teacher and a home educator that I felt able to see both perspectives. In addition, I realised that my dual nationality and movement between England and Florida gave me a cultural insight that other researchers may not have.
Chapter 5 detailed the concept of attitudes, connected to culture, and an ideology of home education presumed to be held by state officials and home educators. Likely attitudes held by home educators and state officials in Chapter 5 were suggested, with Chapter 6 following attitudes and perceptions over the law by seeking to answer the question: 'What are the rights of parents to home educate their children?' This chapter highlighted the fact that the home educators' and state officials' interests in the child's education may colour their perception of rights. For example, religiously motivated home educators see their educational choice as their God-given right, though paradoxically this right is accommodated in law, by the state. The rights of the child were also considered, as well as the interests of the state in the child's education. As Reich (2002b) illustrates the trilogy of interests that must be mutually inclusive for harmony, it was possible to see discord if one set of interests was not balanced. Though a discussion of rights does not usually feature in home education research literature, presenting a balance of perspectives from state officials and parents continued my comparative approach to this study.

7.3 The practitioner-researcher perspective (bias?)

One further aspect of this study relates to my practitioner-researcher perspective. As someone familiar with the commonalities of the school system and the individuality of home education, I approached this study with the dual perspectives of a home educator and schoolteacher. My sense of awareness of British and American cultures also lent me dual lenses to view this research. However, I was cognizant that whenever I spoke, I was perceived to be either British (when I was in Florida) or Americanized (when I was in England, as my accent has a noticeable twang, I am told). Thus, as a researcher, an unusual situation arose as I am both an 'Insider' and an 'Outsider' (Merton 1972, Merriam et al, 2001).

In Robert Merton's words (1972:15), 'you have to be one [an Insider] in order to understand one'. He continues,

The doctrine holds that one has monopolistic or privileged access to knowledge, or is wholly excluded from it, by virtue of one's group membership or social position...According to the doctrine of the Insider, the Outsider, no matter how careful and talented, is excluded in principle from gaining access to the social and cultural truth'.

So, it would seem that the Insider has the advantage over the Outsider in gaining access to the truth. Yet, Merton recalls Francis Bacon's emphasis on Plato's allegory of the cave to show how our perceptions are limited by our immediate social world. As Merton (1972:30) adds,

Dominated by the customs of our group, we maintain received opinions, distort our perceptions to have them accord with these opinions, and are thus held in ignorance and led into error which we parochially mistake for the truth. Only when we escape from the cave and
extend our visions do we provide for access to authentic knowledge.

The Outsider then has the advantage of observing ‘social institutions and cultures on the premise that they are more apt to do so with detachment’ (Merton, 1972:34). As a non-member of the group, an Outsider is able to be more objective in observing and researching without the influence of familiarity, loyalty or belonging to the group. Sharan Merriam et al (2001:411) agrees that it is assumed the Outsider’s ‘advantage lies in curiosity with the unfamiliar, the ability to ask taboo questions, and being seen as non-aligned with subgroups thus often getting more information’. Yet, these characterizations of Insider/Outsider are far too simple. Merriam and her colleagues explore the Insider/Outsider status in terms of power and positionality when conducting research within one’s own culture and across cultural boundaries. Their paper resonates with my own particular status, as three themes are seen to frame the Insider/Outsider status. Firstly ‘the notion of positionality rests on the assumption that a culture is more than a monolithic entity to which one belongs or not’ (Merriam et al., 2001:411). Other authors such as Aguilar (1981), Villenas (1996) and Banks (1998) see the researcher as a relative Insider or Outsider depending on a host of status variables, such as gender, social class, age, political affiliation, religion and region’, Banks (1998:5), cited in Merriam et al. (2001:411). The variables that I assumed affected my status with the study’s participants could have been my perceived nationality, occupation (teacher/tutor), gender, age, educational background, and educational choice (home education). In order to acquire the information in my interviews, I promoted my Insider status for both groups of participants. Thus, I presented myself as a teacher to the local education authority participants, and as a home educator to the home educating participants. This positioning was to gain access to those participants who may feel that an Outsider has no real interest in hearing their ‘voice’. I acknowledged the advantages noted by Merriam et al (2001:414) of an Outsider being able to see things not evident to insiders, rendering a more objective portrayal of the reality understudy. Nonetheless, especially in the case of gaining access to, and candid comments from the participants, the best strategy for me was to show the participants that I was ‘one of them’. I was also aware that the participants’ perception of me as an Insider could have been more or less congruent with my vision, depending on status variables mentioned above.

The second theme framing Insider/Outsider status is that of power. As Merriam et al (2001:413) continue, analyses ‘have exposed the power-based dynamics inherent in any and all research and have suggested that power is something to not only be aware of, but to negotiate in the research process’. I was aware that the state officials’ ‘voice’ is seldom reported in the home education literature. In order to hear their ‘voice’ and their side of the story, it was necessary to have an equal power relationship, or even to relinquish some perceived power I might have had to allow the voices to be heard clearly. For the home educators participating, it was important for

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2 To be ethical, I did inform the participants of my dual roles. So state officials were aware that I was a trained teacher interested in home education and teaching my own children; home educators were aware that I was home educating and an experienced trained teacher.
the research experience to be positive, and perhaps empowering and interactive, as suggested by feminist scholars (cited in Merriam et al, 2001:413).

The third theme is representation of the ‘truth’ of the findings and allowing the voices to be heard. As I perceived myself as both an Insider/Outsider to both participating groups, I had a concern that I might not accurately interpret the participants’ perspectives in the analysis of findings. I did feel that being a teacher and a home educator gave me the opportunity to see both viewpoints more vividly than if I was only a teacher or home educator. Yet, just as a seesaw can be easily tipped, I needed to take care not to either vigorously support or distance myself from either identity. This potential bias was a concern I had to address when constructing the questionnaires and telephone interview questions, data collection and analysis. As a teacher and a home educator, however, I also realized that I had an insight into both worlds, enabling me to explain why perceptions may be different between the two groups.

7.4 The Research Problem Revisited

Home education is legal and reportedly growing in numbers in both societies. Based on the literature and previous research, it seemed likely that home educators and state officials would hold different perceptions towards home education laws, rights, curriculum, socialization, and citizenship education. That the home educating population is increasing, and the law determines that interaction with state officials occurs, was important, in my view. The research problem that I felt needed addressing in this study was the inevitable tension between advocates of public or private education. From a micro perspective, studying perceptions between home educators and state officials was my attempt to uncover any underlying components accountable to the tension. Whilst home education research has provided a body of knowledge, little has been done to compare perceptions between state officials and home educators. Specific studies by Petrie (1992), Lowden (1993), and Bates (1996) in England and Wales, and Lindley (1985), McGraw (1989), Mayberry et al (1995), and Riegle (1998) in the United States, indicated that misunderstandings between state officials and home educators can occur, especially over legal issues, policy implementation, and perspectives on socialisation. From a macro perspective, the fact that home education exists to accommodate educational pluralism in both societies invites tolerance or cooperation between state officials and home educators. Addressing issues that lead to misunderstandings could create relationships that are more cooperative. So, for educators, home educators and policymakers, it could be useful to understand perceptions held towards home education, and their underlying components. On the other hand, comparing perceptions between the two groups in the two societies may reveal illuminating cultural differences that negate comparison.

7.5 The Research Questions

The guiding research question in this study was, ‘Are there fundamentally different attitudes between home educators and state officials towards home education?’ Though, in theory, it would seem that dichotomous perspectives could be held by state officials and home educators, I now needed to corroborate such notions in the empirical work. To do this, I first needed to ascertain if home educators and
state officials did have different attitudes of home education, in several categories. These categories were drawn from the literature review and previous research that highlighted issues over the law, curriculum and socialization as potentially contentious. The core questions and sub-questions that directed my focus are shown below:

The core questions:

I. To what extent are there discordant attitudes between state officials and home educators towards home education?

II. To what extent are there compatible attitudes between state officials and home educators towards home education?

Sub-questions to address I and II:

1. What differences exist in attitudes over the law between state officials and home educators in England and Wales?
2. What differences exist in attitudes over the law between state officials and home educators in Florida?
3. What differences exist in attitudes over curriculum between state officials and home educators in England and Wales?
4. What differences exist in attitudes over curriculum between state officials and home educators in Florida?
5. What differences exist in attitudes over socialisation between state officials and home educators in England and Wales?
6. What differences exist in attitudes over socialisation between state officials and home educators in Florida?
7. What other significant differences exist in attitudes between state officials and home educators in England and Wales?
8. What other significant differences exist in attitudes between state officials and home educators in Florida?
9. What differences exist between the British perspective and the American perspective towards home education?
My assumptions from the outset, backed up in the literature review, were to find different attitudes between home educators and state officials that could potentially lead to tension, and more so in England and Wales than in Florida. The sub-questions above were used to draw out information in two data collection stages. Thus, the sub-questions were constantly referred to when analyzing the quantitative data over issues on the law, curriculum, and socialisation. Other issues that presented themselves, such as child protection concerns, were compared against the groups. The sub-questions were then referred to again, to help formulate telephone interview questions and for analysis of the qualitative data. So, whilst the quantitative stage of the study explored and compared the categories drawn from the literature review, documentation and questionnaire returns, the qualitative stage extrapolated categories from the quantitative data for amplification in the qualitative data. Based on the complete range of data, I then sought to extract from individual cases the extent to which discordant or compatible attitudes could be illuminated, from a British case approach and an American case approach.

7.6 Summary

This chapter retraced the questions posed and answered in previous chapters. The assumption that fundamentally different attitudes would be found was stated, alongside two questions constructed to focus to what extent compatible or discordant attitudes would be voiced by the thirty one participants.

Before presenting the quantitative and qualitative data, clarification is needed on the choices of case study methodology, the comparative approach, and the multi-stage nature necessary for this study. Thus the following two chapters address the methodology and methods of this study.
Chapter 8 — The Research Methodology

8.1 Introduction
From my initial interest about home education in England and Wales compared to Florida, I perceived potential for tension between state officials and home educators. It was my contention that this phenomenon would only take place when home educators and state officials interacted, or when they were presented with concepts incongruent with their own (i.e. the other’s perception of education). However, observing home educators and state officials was not possible within the scope of this study. Thus, it was important to carefully consider and justify the research structure that I felt would enable the greatest level of understanding of the material, and address the research questions set in the last chapter.

In this chapter then, I first grounded myself by mapping the research structure. The theoretical framework is based on a comparative approach woven throughout the study, including using sociological strands of symbolic interactionism, conflict and consensus theories and the symbolic construction of community, to guide data analysis. This chapter also describes the assumptions made for qualitative work to be most useful; details the comparative approach used to clearly show where similarities and differences were found and further expected; and the choice of case study methodology to help address the research questions.

8.2 Mapping the Research Structure
Using David Silverman’s (2000:79) figure on levels of analysis was a useful map for my research structure. Adapted in the following Figure 8.1, the sections in boxes 1-5 were explained in this chapter.
8.3 Theoretical model/paradigm

The overall framework for looking at reality in this study could have been drawn from a number of theoretical orientations. In comparing the perspectives held towards home education, several pertinent issues were forthcoming from the literature review. Firstly, home educators’ and state officials’ perspectives have the potential to be tolerant or dismissive of the other’s viewpoint. Secondly, it seemed likely that subjective perspectives would emanate from each group. Thirdly, it seemed apparent that home educators would view the family as the primary source of education, compared with the state officials’ visions of the educational functions of schools.

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1 For example, ethnography, phenomenology, heuristic inquiry, ethnmethodology, systems theory, chaos theory, hermeneutics, or grounded theory.
What is more, the concepts of culture, attitudes, and rights suggested that home educators and state officials might hold a group consensus. In the documentation gathered from state officials and home educators, this group consensus could easily emanate from the material—yet recognizing the heterogeneity of home educators and state officials warrants also focusing on the individual. Though the theoretical framework is intricately structured around a comparative approach to better understand the cluster of attitudes towards home education, further work looking at differences in attitudes required an understanding of symbolic interactionism\(^2\), conflict and consensus theories, and the symbolic construction of community.

Symbolic interaction theory is based on the works of Herbert Blumer and George Herbert Mead; inspired by the writings of William James, John Dewey, and Charles Horton Cooley (Fine 1993:62). Gary Alan Fine (1993) examines the changes in the issues of symbolic interactionism and its position within the discipline in the 1970s to early 1990s. Recognizing that the core beliefs in symbolic interactionism are becoming infused with other perspectives, or that symbolic interactionism has impacted upon other research disciplines, Fine (1993:64) nonetheless sees the continued acceptance of Herbert Blumer’s classic three premises. These are ‘that we know things by their meanings, that meanings are created through social interaction, and that meanings change through interaction’ (Blumer, 1986 /1969:2).

George Ritzer and Douglas Goodman (2004:351-352) also collate seven basic principles of symbolic interactionism theory, including:

- The capacity for thought is shaped by social interaction.
- In social interaction people learn the meanings and the symbols that allow them to exercise their distinctively human capacity for thought.
- People are able to modify or alter the meanings and symbols that they use in action and interaction on the basis of their interpretation of the situation.
- People are able to make these modifications and alterations because, in part, of their ability to interact with themselves, which allows them to examine possible courses of action, assess their relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one.
- The intertwined patterns of action and interaction make up groups and societies.

But as Fine (1993:66) notes, symbolic interactionists have incorporated other theoretical approaches to invigorate their own perspective.\(^3\) I took this approach in my study, as I agreed with Fine’s (1993:69) comment that

\(^2\) In spite of not observing interactions between home educators and state officials, the concepts associated with symbolic interactionism, and the theoretical link with conflict and consensus theories helped me understand how attitudes towards home education might have changed over the last thirty years, and even during the course of this study.

\(^3\) Fine gives examples of attempts to link symbolic interactionism with Marxist and critical theory, Parsonian theory, or child development theories.
The interactionist recognizes that much of the world is not of an individual's making (e.g., systems of patriarchy or class) and can only be understood in the context of the circumstances in which these social realities are expressed.

I considered his examination of social coordination theory, emotion work and experience, social constructionism, the creation of selves, macro-interactionism, and policy-relevant interactionism. From social constructionism, I drew from the relevance of the history of situations I was studying to understand how historical events might have constructed the realities of the state officials' and home educators' perceptions towards home education. As Fine (1993: 76) continues:

Interactionists argue that even the past is constructed – time and history are not immutable, but their meanings result from situational appropriateness and the activities of moral entrepreneurs. Thus, interactionists turn backward trying to understand historical events and, as significantly, how historical events are given weight.

I also drew from the creation of selves, looking briefly at Goffman’s concept of the self as a sense of masks, but more at Mead’s concept of the self, generalized other, ‘I’ and ‘me’. One of the basic principles of symbolic interactionism is that the capacity for thought is shaped by social interactions. In light of the information society in which we live, could the capacity for thought also be shaped by one’s exposure to information, as the mind is perceived as a continuing process, rather than as a physical structure like the brain? Ritzer and Goodman (2004: 352) add that the ‘mind is related to virtually every other aspect of symbolic interactionism, including socialisation, meanings, symbols, the self, interaction, and even society’. Ritzer and Goodman (2004: 346) paraphrase Mead’s belief that the development of the self is reflexivity, or the ability to put ourselves unconsciously into others’ places and act how they act. As George Mead sees it, ‘It is only by taking the roles of others that we have been able to come back to ourselves’ (1932/1980: 184-5). Taken one step further, Mead’s concept of the ‘generalized other’ is essential to the self. This generalized other is the attitude of the entire community or organized social group. For abstract thinking and objectivity, the development of the self necessitates evaluation from the view of the generalized other. Mead’s ‘I’ and ‘me’ also play a part here, with the ‘I’ as the immediate response of an individual to others (allowing a definite personality to develop), and the ‘me’ (controlled by society), an organized set of attitudes of others which one assumes, i.e., adopting the generalized other — see Ritzer and Goodman (2004: 349); also Stryker (1980: 37-38).

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4 See Manis and Meltzer’s Part IV: 1972
5 The attitudes of the entire community or social group could understandably be difficult to determine though, in the multicultural societies today. This could lead to a fragmentation of the generalised other along divisions of race, gender or religion for example.
Though the development of Mead's central concept of self accommodates an individual that is reflexive and socially controlled, he 'gives priority to the social world in understanding social experiences' (cited in Ritzer and Goodman, 2004:340). Specifically in relation to the study of 'schooling' Mead recognized that, 'So far as education is concerned, the child does not become social by learning. He must be social in order to learn' (Mead 1910:693). For this study, Mead's concept of self became a valuable comparative tool in describing the home educators' and school officials' perspectives, as they are shaped by each other. In looking for cooperation, collaboration or an appreciation for the other's perspective, I was leaning on Mead's concepts.

Another principle of symbolic interactionism, is that of learning meanings and symbols, adapting or modifying them on the basis of social interaction or socialisation. This social interaction is important, says Ritzer and Goodman (2004:353) as the ability to think is both developed and expressed. What is more, during the interaction and socialisation process individuals learn the meanings that society gives to objects. It has already been suggested through the literature review that the concept of socialization may be interpreted differently by home educators and state officials. Thus, focusing on this aspect in the empirical work was necessary, to tease apart learned and perceived meanings and symbols based on socialization.

Mead (in Manis and Meltzer, 1972: Chapter 1) notes significant symbols, as gestures or language, as usually shared meanings between individuals, and that society 'rests upon a basis of consensus, i.e., the sharing of meanings in the form of common understandings and expectations'. Though society rests on this basis of consensus, not all symbols, meanings and objects will be interpreted in the same way, especially in written documentation. So, even when there was a consensus of interpretation, disputes could still arise. What I considered important with this framework was that certain symbols and the meanings attached to them were not congruous between the two groups studied. That is, home educators and state officials use symbols to communicate meanings to each other, with the others interpreting the symbols and interactions on the basis of their interpretation. How symbols were communicated

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6 Mead's concept of self also complements the contextual cultural concept of each group, referenced in Chapter 3. That is, home educators and state officials learn and judge their group culture from within; with an understanding of the other's culture made only by suspending their own cultural perspective.

7 Bernard Meltzer (1972:4-22) discusses Mead more fully, pointing out the shortcomings of Mead's philosophical theory, as well as the major contributions to social psychology.

8 Ritzer and Goodman (2004:354) enumerate the functions of symbols as:
1. Language, allows people to name, categorise, and especially remember the objects they encounter;
2. Symbols improve people's ability to perceive the environment; 3. Symbols improve the ability to think; 4. Symbols greatly increase the ability to solve various problems; 5. The use of symbols allows actors to transcend time, space and even their own persons in 'taking the role of the other'; 6. Symbols allow us to imagine a metaphysical reality such as heaven or hell; 7. Symbols allow people to be active and self-directed rather than passive.
with inferences to how others might interpret them was one of my focuses. To uncover the different constructions of home educators’ and state officials’ realities, I used the symbolic interactionist perspective to analyse and compare the symbols, language and meanings used by these two groups, especially between the two societies.

Other perspectives that bore consideration in this study were the structuralist approaches of conflict and consensus theories. In this way, Mead and Blumer’s micro studies were complemented by the macro studies of individuals in society by Parsons (1951/2001), Merton (1968) and Dahrendorf (1958). Fine (1993:78) notes that symbolic interactionism was previously seen as a micro sociological perspective, with no interest in structure, no belief in the power of organizations and institutions, and no constructs to examine such issues. He then points out that macro-sociological issues have been addressed. This I did with a consideration of conflict and consensus theories.

Though appearing to be incompatible, consensus (functionalist) and conflict theories are juxtaposed, according to Dahrendorf (1958). From the consensus or functionalists’ view, society is seen as static, or in a state of moving equilibrium (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004:254); in contrast, the conflict theorists see every society at every point subject to the processes of change. As Ritzer and Goodman continue:

Where functionalists emphasize the orderliness of society, conflict theorists see dissension and conflict at every point in the social system. Functionalists (or at least early functionalists) argue that every element in society contributes to stability; the exponents of conflict theory may see societal elements as contributing to disintegration and change.

Functionalists tend to see society as being held together informally by norms, values and a common morality. Conflict theorists see whatever of order there is in society as stemming from the coercion of some members by those at the top. Where functionalists focus on the cohesion created by shared societal values, conflict theorists emphasize the role of power in maintaining order in society.

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9 ‘Interaction is a complex process which involves verbal and non-verbal elements; both are inextricably bound up with culture’ (Kirch 1979:416). Furthermore, culture is communication, notes Hall and Hall (1990: 3-4). He develops the notion of ‘silent language’, the region of human behaviour that exists outside the range of people’s conscious awareness. Understanding the silent language, ‘provides insights into the underlying principles that shape our lives’. He also cautions that when people unconsciously apply their own rules to another system, cultural programs will not work if crucial steps are omitted.

10 As Fine (1993:79) notes, ‘While seemingly far distant from the examination of interaction systems, all large-scale systems are ultimately grounded in symbolic constructs that individuals use in coping with their local reality’.

Writers such as Parsons (1951/2001) and Merton (1968) see the functionalist perspective of society producing stability, solidarity, moral consensus and power as legitimate authority (Giddens, 2001:14; Reid, 1978:10). However, this idealistic functionalist perspective of social cohesion does not accommodate the conflict theorists’ vision of divisions in society. Writers such as Marx (1867/1967), Dahrendorf (1958) and Collins (1975) would counter this view with the conflict perspective of society existing because of the differences in control and access by certain groups to wealth, power, prestige, knowledge etc. (Reid 1978:11). As Ritzer and Goodman (2004:264) recap, the conflict theory approach looks at ‘change rather than equilibrium, conflict rather than order, how the parts of society contribute to change rather than stability, and conflict and coercion rather than normative constraint’. For this study, I believed both conflict and consensus perspectives of society could influence state officials’ and home educators’ attitudes, as the group and individual attitudes might not necessarily coalesce.

Important in this study was the acknowledgment that symbolic interactions between the two groups would be based on their interpretations. These interpretations can be inferred from the emerging categories of the quantitative data, and the voices of the participants in the qualitative data. A salient point made by Anthony Cohen (1985:74), who looks at the symbolic construction of community, are the public and private faces of community which lead to very different perspectives. By comparing the home educating community with the state school community, similarities and differences between attitudes become more apparent. In addition, the comparison of two societies amplifies the differences. This concept of community is developed further in the next section.

8.4 Concepts
The theoretical framework is structured around a comparative approach and based on symbolic interactionism (alongside a consideration of conflict and consensus theories), and the related concept provided by Andrew Cohen – the symbolic construction of community. As Peter Woods (1979) states, symbolic interactionists assume three things. Firstly, that human beings act towards things based on the meanings they have for them. The attribution of meanings, or interpreting, is what makes people distinctly human, and social. Secondly, the attribution of meaning to objects through symbols is a continuous process, so the individual constructs, modifies, pieces together, and weighs up the pros and cons. Thirdly, this process takes place in a social context. By revealing shared or contradictory symbols used by the groups, the guiding questions of the research become easier to answer.

Most important in this study was that the definition of the situation by home educators and state officials. I needed to envisage and then compare each group’s definition of the situation to best describe how they may interact. Closely linked to defining the situation from each group’s perspective, I considered their perceptions of

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12 A community boundary is the mask presented by the community to the outside world, the community’s public face which is symbolically simple, and prone to stereotypes. This public face is the community as perceived by people on the outside of the boundary. In contrast, the members of the community who see differentiation and variety refract the private face, which is symbolically complex.
society as subjective reality. This term, coined by Berger and Luckmann, considers the internalization of the individual through socialisation ‘the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:130). They also note the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization that compose the dialectic nature of society. What is important here is Berger’s and Luckmann’s (1966:147) recognition that ‘Since socialisation is never complete and the contents it internalizes face continuing threats to their subjective reality, every viable society must develop procedures of reality – maintenance to safeguard a measure of symmetry between objective and subjective reality’. That is, the reality subjectively understood in individual consciousness needs to be balanced against the reality that is institutionally defined. Thus, ‘the subjective reality must stand in a relationship with an objective reality that is socially defined’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:149). Whatever the home educator’s or state official’s subjective reality, social processes from which society is constructed apprehend it. Of interest to me was how home educators and state officials perceive society – was there a meeting of the minds?

More insightful for me was Cohen’s (1985) concept of community. Recognising the theory of community as a contentious subject, Cohen writes articulately about the word’s use, rather than its definition: namely, a community implies that the members of a group of people have something in common with each other, which distinguishes them in a significant way from members of other putative groups. Community, as he describes it, implies both similarity and difference, and expresses a relational idea. His concept of community includes his definition of the boundary, so marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished (Cohen, 1985:12). This notion of boundary seems especially relevant to home educators and state officials, though Cohen (1985:12) does add that a boundary ‘may be perceived in rather different terms, not only by people on opposite sides of it, but also by people on the same side’. As Cohen (1985:15) further articulates,

Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members’ unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community’s boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment.

The initial literature search suggested categories worth developing in the quantitative data. However, the quantitative data will be based on the community or group perspective, and will not transparently reveal the nuances that could exist among individuals in the groups. Thus, to develop the study further, both the

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13 Note that the concept of culture (Chapter 3) can also be woven into the concept of community, as a construct that would make tacit sense to home educators and state officials.
community perspective, and individual perspective towards home education are needed for discussion purposes.

8.5 Theory and hypotheses

Drawing together the concepts above, and the symbolic interactionist’s line of questioning, ‘What common set of symbols and understandings have emerged to give meaning to people’s interactions?’ (Patton 1990), a proposed theory could be developed for analysis. Based on what is already known up to this point in the study, I considered fundamental differences in attitudes likely to exist in various categories, from the community group perspective. Previous research in England and Wales and in the United States has generally displayed negative perceptions towards home education by state officials; whilst defensive advice can be found in readily available home educators’ support group material. It would seem that tension between home educators and state officials would continue, as they define their situations, define and attach meanings to symbols, and mentally construct their community. Instances where cooperative ventures exist would indicate less tension, and a better understanding of each other’s community, definitions of symbols, and compatibility.

To best answer the guiding questions, and to understand to what extent attitudes were discordant or compatible, analysis of the group perspective was first needed. This was followed by a more detailed analysis from the individuals’ perspective. In this way, the individuals’ attitudes could be amalgamated/contrasted with the group perspective. Generating an hypothesis at this stage is not useful, as the study first required the quantitative phase of exploring the group perspective, focusing upon issues drawn from the literature review. The subsequent qualitative phase was then needed to further address the research questions. Since qualitative work is less about hypothesis testing, and more about hypothesis generating, any proposed hypotheses should be left to the conclusions chapter.

However, proposing a comparative theory to link the similarities and differences between home educators and state officials, and the British and American perspectives, was a useful focal point. Thus, it was felt that a comparison between state officials’ and home educators’ group perspectives with their corresponding individual perspectives might reveal more complexity to the different attitudes portrayed. A comparison between the British and American perspectives towards home education may also reveal the historical and cultural differences more clearly. By using one group to highlight the different attitudes of the other, this study uses a comparative approach from the literature, the methodological structure, through the data analysis to the conclusions. So, whereas group attitudes towards home education can reveal homogeneous differences over certain categories and likely ideologies, individuals were expected to reveal more diversity and complexity in discordant attitudes. Such individual discordance could affect individual interactions between state officials and home educators that are not apparent in the homogenized group perspective.14

14 The example that immediately springs to mind is the perceived greater discordance over home visits and child protection issues that could be felt by LEAs and home-based educators. The quantitative data alluded to concerns, but needed clarification and resonation from the qualitative data.
8.6 Methodology

This study can be described as quantitative/qualitative, using comparative methodology in a naturalistic, case study approach. It was because of the nature of what I was studying that such methodology was the best fit. To explain my reasons for choice is to justify my specific research methodologies. This includes my choice of anti-positivistic, interpretative, complex realities guiding me. Triangulating methodology is followed by detailing comparative research methodology. In addition, the case study approach is explained in relation to my study.

To continue then, research is defined by Fred Kerlinger (1970) as the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena. Yet, as succinctly put by Louis Cohen et al (2000:5), there are two conceptions of social reality – depending on the researcher’s theoretical assumptions will determine his or her methodological constructions. My work involved me, as a practitioner-researcher and the research instrument, studying two groups of people who could share common meanings and symbols, interacting cooperatively. Conversely the meanings and symbols could be perceived by the other as too discordant with the other’s own views, potentially leading to tensions.

Four sets of assumptions, as determined by Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan (1979), underpin the two conceptions of social reality. To help define my methodological choices, the subjective approach of ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology are now detailed. Firstly, the ontological assumption (the nature of reality) of my study was nominalist rather than realist. The nominalist view supposes that ‘objects of thought are merely words and that there is no independently accessible thing constituting the meaning of a word’ (cited in Cohen et al., 2000:6). That each individual’s essence of reality can never be the same as another’s correlates with the concepts guiding this study as I was aware that each state official or home educator would bring a slightly different vision of his or her reality to the fore.

The second set of assumptions is epistemological, or ‘the relationship between the researcher and the researched’, Bateson (1972:314) cited in Denzin and Lincoln (1998:26). Positivist or anti-positivist concepts were the two epistemologies to choose between. If I saw knowledge as something to be acquired, hard, objective and tangible, then a positivist assumption would have guided my work. However, as detailed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Cohen et al. (2000), the anti-positivist assumption of knowledge personally experienced, subjective and unique, reflected my assumptions towards individual perspectives.

The third set of assumptions concerns human nature and the relationship between human beings and their environment. As Cohen et al (2000) summarise, human beings are either responding to their environment (voluntarism) or initiators of their own actions (determinism). Burrell and Morgan (1979) recognize that the assumptions of many social scientists are pitched somewhere in the range between. As

15 Quantitative methods were used in the initial collection of documentation and the postal questionnaire. This quantitative data impacted the qualitative phase of data gathering.
it stood, I was not sure whether the state officials or home educators were controlled by or controlled their environments.\(^{16}\)

The final set of assumptions involves the methodology — how one gains knowledge of the world. Based on my choice of nominalist, anti-positivistic assumptions, my methodology leant more heavily towards the subjective approach of qualitative rather than quantitative research. That is not to say that some quantitative methods were not useful in the study. As Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1998:9) recognize, many qualitative researchers will use statistical measures, methods and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population; however, the findings are seldom reported in the same complex, statistical manner seen in quantitative research. Concisely put by Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3) qualitative research is ‘multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’.

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1998) see qualitative research being an interactive process, shaped by personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity and people in the settings. As such, I recognized my particular worldviews and perspectives as a teacher and home educator might have affected the relationships I had with those individuals researched. Nonetheless, I saw anti-positivism as the more useful methodological framework. This research perspective considers events and individuals are unique and generally non-generalizable; interpretations of the truth will always be pluralistic; reality is complex and multi-layered; detailed interviewing and observation can get closer to the actor’s perspective; and that thick descriptions are more illuminating than reducing phenomena to simplistic interpretations — adapted from Cohen et al. (2000:22), and Denzin & Lincoln (1998: 10-11).

Such a constructivist paradigm, described by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) mirrors the assumptions laid out previously, that is, a relativist ontology (multiple realities), a subjective epistemology (knower and subject create understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Constructivist thought is that all knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known (Belenky et al. (1986:137), cited in Jarvis et al., 1998:73), and what is more, constructivists ‘are not troubled by ambiguity and are enticed by complexity’ (Belenky et al. (1986:139), cited in Jarvis et al., 1998:73). The constructivist-interpretative approach of my work could uncover sets of meanings that may be as diverse as the variety of individuals I studied. Moreover, ‘multifaceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them’ (Cohen et al, 2000:23) were expected.

In contrast to the terms of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity of positivistic research, I looked for terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:27) as

\(^{16}\) Such assumptions would be better made through analysis of data on observed interactions, which were not part of this study.
criteria to judge the rigour of my study. On the issue of credibility, this study has to clearly state the assumptions that undergird it (premises laid out in Chapter 1; assumed tensions stated); detail the credibility of the research instrument, me, in terms of qualifications, experience, and perspective (explained in Chapter 1 and 7, including my potential bias, and Insider/Outsider status); and outline the methods to ensure integrity, validity and accuracy of findings (see Methods Chapter 9). Transferability refers to how the results from this study could be applied to other similar studies. To do this, detailed descriptions of the research situation and methods are needed for readers to determine if this study is similar, or transferable to their own work (see Methods Chapter 9, and Discussion and Summary Chapters 13 and 14). Dependability, analogous to reliability, emphasizes the need for the researcher to describe the methods involved with the results found, with Robson (1993:405-6) noting triangulation as a means of assessing dependability (this is dealt with more in the next section, and in Chapter 9, with triangulation of data and method employed in this study). Confirmability allows the reader to assess the study by following an 'audit trail' (evidence of raw data, coding, instrumentation, processing – addressed in the Methods chapters and presentation of data chapters).

8.6.1 Triangulation
This study employs a quantitative/qualitative, comparative, case study approach to address the research problem. As weaknesses or intrinsic bias can result from a single method and single researcher study, triangulation is one way to mitigate such weaknesses. Triangulation is a known technique used by qualitative researchers to improve the reliability of the findings, Patton (1990), Stake (1998), Jarvis (1999), Silverman (2000), Cohen et al. (2000). Triangulation refers to 'the attempt to get a 'true' fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings' (Silverman, 2000:177). Patton (1990:187) describes different 'methodological mixes' that include triangulation of four types, identified by Denzin (1978) as:
- Data triangulation – the use of a variety of data sources in a study;
- Investigator triangulation – the use of several different researchers or evaluators;
- Theory triangulation – the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data;
- Methodological triangulation – the use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program.

Jarvis (1999:126) notes that practitioner-researchers frequently use 'more than one approach to focus on the same phenomenon in order to get a more accurate picture – even though, in this case, the picture will still only be a representation'.

Triangulation was used with the methodological choices of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the comparative methodological structure of focusing upon two societies and two groups of people, combined with the case study approach of American versus British perspectives. Data triangulation was also employed, but will be dealt with in Chapter 9.
As much as I may have wanted to tether my study to quantitative, statistical measures for representative findings, I was guided more by the desire to get the individual's viewpoint, to add to what was already known through the group perspective. Thus, the quantitative data was a means of gathering background information to understand my preconceived notions towards expected tension. What is more, the broad categories suggested from the literature and gleaned from analysis of the state officials' quantitative data was triangulated and compared with the narrower, more specific categories apparent in the qualitative data. So, the quantitative approach was used to clarify categories for further study in the qualitative phase. I felt strongly that the state official's attitude was important to explore, as it has not been well documented in the body of home education literature. Similarly, the home educators' perception of state officials was equally important in comparison. Though a general home educator's group perspective was sketched from the quantitative data documentation, the individual home educator voices were only obtainable through qualitative interviewing. These personalized attitudes, perceptions and visions of state officials and home educators as determined by their experiences and challenges in their role were important to compare against the group perspective. Thus, eliciting the individualized voices, through qualitative means, was the best avenue to gather rich descriptions of the individual's perceptions of their social worlds. Such individual perspectives could then be compared to the largely homogeneous group perspective of home educators and state officials, triangulating data and methods.

This study became multi-stage in order to best answer the research questions set. Triangulation of methodology and data were necessary to develop the clearest material for analysis and discussion. Though the quantitative research methodology enabled an initial understanding of the main categories for potential attitude discordance, the qualitative methodology was necessary to illuminate the details and individualized voices. Intertwined with triangulation strategies to improve the rigour of this study, the comparative methodology and case study approach were essential components. Each will now be detailed.

8.6.2 Comparative methodology

I considered a comparative methodology and analysis as my best approach to understanding attitudes between state officials and home educators. This choice was also based on Isaac Kandel's view of the relationship between education and the state, as he pointed out 'how the political character of the state determines the nature of the education it offered' (Kandel, in Blake, 1982:3). As Kandel expressed it himself:

The comparative approach demands first an appreciation of the intangible, impalpable spiritual and cultural forces which underlie an educational system; the forces and factors outside the school matter even more than what goes on inside. Hence the comparative study of education must be founded on an analysis of the social and political ideals which the school reflects, for the school epitomizes these for transmission and for progress. In order to understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the educational system of a nation, it is essential to know
something of its history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organization, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development. (Kandel 1933:xix, cited in Blake, 1982:3)

The express intention of comparative research is to contextually compare issues in different socio-cultural settings (e.g. institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, lifestyles, language, thought patterns) using the same research instruments to carry out secondary analysis of national data or to conduct new empirical work. In the field of education, such studies can describe, analyse, or make proposals for a particular aspect of education in one country other than the author’s own country. Studies will either seek similarities, usually starting from some well-defined a priori general theory, which is then tested, in different social (and possibly historical) contexts; or they search for variance (Marshall, 1998:102-103).

Kohn (1989a:20-24) cited in Oyen (1990:6); also in Inkeles (1996:29), identifies four kinds of cross-national research depending on their intent. Such studies can be object-orientated, context-orientated, units of analysis or trans-national. My study involved the nation as context, described by Kohn as testing the generality of findings and interpretations about how certain social institutions operate or about how certain aspects of social structure impinge on personality. However, Kohn acknowledges that the four kinds of research are not sharply differentiated, but gradations of each other. Of interest to my study is the following point:

Finding cross-national similarities greatly extends the scope of sociological knowledge. Moreover, cross-national similarities lend themselves readily to sociological interpretation; cross-national differences are much more difficult to interpret. (Kohn, 1996:31-32)

By this, Kohn (1996:32) implies that when cross-national similarities are found, ‘the most efficient strategy in searching for an explanation is to focus on what is structurally similar in the countries being compared, not on the often divergent historical processes that produced these social-structural similarities’. When differences are found, Kohn advises that a ‘necessary first step is to try to discover which of the many differences in history, culture, and political or economic systems that distinguish any two countries are pertinent to explaining the differences we find in their social structures or in how these social structures affect people’s lives’. It has already been established in the literature review that historical/cultural differences between the two societies have resonance in explaining the differences in laws, attitudes and likely ideologies held by the two groups. Kohn’s suggestions were useful to guide me in the analysis of the data, as was one final comment made. Kohn (1996:46) cautions the use of cross-national research – it should not be undertaken without good reason, as the difficulties are considerable. It may be worth doing, Kohn notes, if you believe that important theoretical issues can be more effectively addressed by conducting the research in more than one country. For my study, comparative research was essential to understand why attitudes towards home
education seemed so markedly different in the two societies, and to what extent the different attitudes were present between home educators and state officials. The comparative methodology also extended to comparing quantitative and qualitative data, as the group perspective was compared to the individual.

Several authors have written about the distinctiveness of comparative research, noting its long history, development and increasing popularity in a globalizing world. The French scholar Jullien, with his guidance on scientific observation, is seen by many including Michael Crossley and Patricia Broadfoot (1992:4) as impacting what was 'a largely undisciplined, descriptive form of investigation [to] foreshadow increased concern for statistical precision, quantification and a scientific approach to comparative and international education'. Crossley and Broadfoot also note that several comparative research authors such as Anderson (1961), Noah and Eckstein (1969) and Foster (1975) focused on strict methodological frameworks for conducting comparative research. However, in spite of the need for a structured methodological framework to ensure systematically deconstructing the phenomena under investigation, there are challenges to the influence of positivistic science in comparative education — see Holmes (1981), for example). Furthermore, Edmund King (1979) views the formulation of cross-national generalizations as unrealistic and unfounded, whilst Stein Rokkan (1996:18) sees two extremes in cross-societal research. At one extreme, all societies constitute units of potential comparison and ought to be subjected to tests against unified models of universal hypothetico-deductive explanation. At the other extreme, all societies are culturally and historically unique and defy understanding through comparisons with others. Whilst I could have taken these extremes on board, in a cautionary capacity when using comparative methodology, it was also useful to note Ragin's boundaries and goals of comparative social science. That is, from a comparativist's viewpoint, the twin goals of comparative work are to both explain and to interpret macrosocial variation. Indeed, Charles Ragin (1996:76-78) argues that the use of macrosocial units in explanatory statements is essential to the comparativist, as they impinge on their work in a fundamental manner. Even though Ragin states that many comparativists do not often define the macrosocial units, they must be operationalised in the course of comparative work. Furthermore, as he states

As long as social scientists continue to be influenced by their social and historical contexts and continue to try to interpret them, they will use macrosocial attributes in their explanations of social phenomena.
(Ragin, 1996:77)

I have indicated that comparative research methodology would enable greater understanding of both groups in the two societies. But why did I want to compare? Neville Postlethwaite (1988:xix) contends that comparative education, when done well, 'can deepen our understanding of our own education and society, it can be of assistance to policy makers and administrators, and it can be a valuable component of teacher education programmes'. Else Oyen (1990:1) sees the globalizing trend of

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countries as an impetus for comparative studies. Sztompka (1988) is cited as suggesting that comparative research may have to shift its emphasis from seeking uniformity among variety to studying the preservation of enclaves of uniqueness among growing homogeneity and uniformity. Furthermore, Crossley and Broadfoot (1992:6) summarise four purposes for conducting comparative and international research in education that are relevant here. Firstly, the practical value of studying foreign systems can assist in better understanding of our own systems. Secondly, identifying and analyzing similarities and differences in educational systems are useful in the solution of identified problems or future development of educational policy and practice. Thirdly, comparative studies 'can help us to better understand the nature of the relationship between education and the broader social, political and economic sectors of society'. And finally, citing Zachariah (1990) in their work, Crossley and Broadfoot (1992) concur that comparative and international research has long been recognised as promoting improved international understanding, cooperation and goodwill. It is also seen as a stimulating and worthwhile activity in its own right. By comparing attitudes which were expected to be discordant between home educators and state officials and more so in England and Wales than in Florida, this study can inform readers about the cluster of categories that might affect attitudes. Such a comparison can highlight the underlying issues that might be addressed to minimize discordance and lead to cooperative attitudes and outcomes for these groups under study.

Another thought – what did I compare? Several authors point out the inherent problems of cross-national comparison. As Edmund King warns, the comparativist must be aware of not being trapped into doing comparative analyses that are fundamentally invalid because they try to compare the incomparable. He argues that the essence of a country's educational system is embedded in a particular historical and cultural context. Because of this, concepts, variables, and indicators will always mean different things in different countries, and to different people (King, cited in Noah and Eckstein, 1998:47). Harold Noah and Max Eckstein (1998:20-21) also note bias, utility of results and eclecticism in both methodology and data. As they state, bias may arise at every stage of the study, from the identification of problems to the collection of data, their interpretation, and the conclusions drawn from them. Comparative education findings need to have some practical application for educational policy makers, contend Noah and Eckstein. If not, a problem exists where the researcher is unable to recognize the relevance of the findings for the problem he has chosen. With reference to eclecticism, Noah and Eckstein echo other authors' visions of the best methodology and data collection methods for comparative research — should it be quantitative or qualitative?

To avoid the pitfalls of cross-national research I needed to consider how to compare two groups in two societies. Essentially, I had to compare the comparable, taking into account the cultural differences between the individuals in the two societies. Ragin and Zaret (1983), in Inkeles, 1996:84) defines the distinctiveness of

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18 See King (1979/2000); Holmes (1981); Crossley and Broadfoot (1992); Hantrais (1996);and Noah and Eckstein (1998).

19 Ragin discusses this issue in Inkeles (1996: Chapter 7)
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the comparative method as essentially a case-oriented strategy of comparativist research. The focus is on comparing cases, and cases are examined as wholes – as combinations of characteristics. So, using symbolic interactionist concepts, and Cohen’s concept of community, I looked at how the participants constructed their realities, their use of symbols and meanings to construct their community, and their ability to take the role of the other for cooperation and tolerance.

Admittedly, this study was not comparative in the pure quantitative sense of the word, as there were uncontrollable variables within each group. However, it was possible to compare like with like between the societies in the historical and legal contexts of home education. The study also compared attitudes between the two groups of state officials, and between the two groups of home educators in both societies. Differences were expected and proposed between state officials and home educators in England and Wales, and in Florida, in the literature search. As a consequence, though a homogenized group attitude was expected in the quantitative data, differences in attitudes towards the other’s perspective were expected in the individualized qualitative phase of the research.

The strength of using comparative methodology was to better understand the phenomenon under study in each society, and to provide practical application. One of my intended outcomes was for the study to serve as a point of discussion for policymakers and home educators, as I had received requests from several participants for dissemination of the work. However, I had to be aware of the weakness of cross-cultural comparative research, which lies with selective cultural borrowing. Brian Holmes (1981:33) wonders if selective cultural borrowing is theoretically justified and practically feasible, as he considers establishing

Ideal-typical models...[which]...would serve to show what can be borrowed and what cannot be taken over. If, as Sadler maintained, educational systems can be transplanted only if the ethos or living spirit which informs them is taken with them, then comparative educationists need to understand the implications for host countries of proposed innovations which carry with them unique characteristics.

A caveat must then be held alongside conclusions drawn, relating to the specific ‘snapshot’ aspect of this study. That is, conclusions drawn from comparing the two societies’ differences are based on the study’s particular cases, and may not be representative of a larger group. The value of case study methodology is now necessary to detail.

8.6.3 Case Studies

The value of conducting case studies is recognized, says Michael Patton (1990:99) by development agencies such as the World Bank and U.S. Aid. A case study is defined as ‘the study of an instance in action’ (Adelman et al., (1980), cited in Cohen et al, 2000:181). This single instance is of a bounded system, continues Cohen et al., providing a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to
understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles\textsuperscript{20}. Furthermore, case study research observes cause and effect in real contexts that are unique and dynamic, leading to the investigation of the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance. Cohen \textit{et al.} (2000: 181-190) articulate the distinctiveness of case studies, but it is Denzin and Lincoln who are closer to my use of a case study approach. As they note,

Ultimately we may be more interested in a phenomenon or a population of cases than in the individual case. We cannot understand this case without knowing about other cases. But while we are studying it, our meager resources are concentrated on trying to understand its complexities. For the while, we probably will not study comparison cases. We may simultaneously carry on more than one case study, but each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case.

\textit{(Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:87)}

Such case study work is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1998:89) as \textit{collective case study}, where individual cases are chosen because understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases.\textsuperscript{21} In my study, I wanted answers to the research questions posed from individuals in two socially, culturally, historically different societies. I was not looking for the correct interpretation of the data. To build up my ‘thick descriptions’, Geertz (1973), cited in Cohen \textit{et al.}, 2000:182) and to be able to compare them to the group perspective, I valued the case study approach of taking each participant’s thoughts, perceptions, experiences as a ‘story’ in itself, but adding to the multi-faceted collective case of perceptions and tensions.

The strengths of choosing a case study approach are three-fold. Firstly, this study illustrated a way of exploring complex social units (the state officials and home educators) in a rich and holistic account. Secondly, by looking at the way state officials and home educators made sense and meaning out of the highlighted issues, this study offers insights to expand the readers’ experiences. However, the limitations of case study research were also noted. Rich, thick descriptions and analyses were limited by time and the lack of observations of interactions. If this study was considered too long, or detailed, policymakers and home educators may not read or use it. If I had not checked for biases, the study could become too skewed to be meaningful. However, my fear of being drawn too far into the state official’s or home educator’s perspective, to the detriment of the other, helped me try to avoid

\textsuperscript{20}The uniqueness of case studies is noted by Stouffer (1941), Stake (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and Jarvis (1999). Six aspects of uniqueness are: the nature of the case; historical background; physical setting; other contexts such as economic, political, legal and aesthetic; other cases through which this case is recognized; and those informants through whom the case can be known (taken from Denzin and Lincoln (1998:90) and Jarvis (1999:83)

\textsuperscript{21}Denzin and Lincoln cite Kohli and Schutze as using collective case studies with Strauss’s grounded theory approach.
partisanship. Thirdly, as an interpretation of state officials’ and home educators’ perceptions, at a particular time and stage in their career/journey, this study represented a snapshot of the phenomenon, bounded in a case study approach.

The benefit of using a case study approach in my work was to provide ‘interpretation in context’ (after Cronbach (1975), Shaw (1978), cited in Merriam, 1988:10, 21). That is, concentration on a single phenomenon aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. When you can’t separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context, case study research is a useful approach. Case studies also produce descriptive accounts of a specific instance, which could illuminate a general problem; they are heuristic in offering insights into the phenomenon; and they rely on inductive reasoning emerging from an examination of the data (Merriam, 1988: 11-13). With the qualitative nature of my case study approach, I had assumed multiple realities would be offered, as the participants’ perceptions. As described by Robert Stake (1998:104), the value of case studies are in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability.

In reference to the generalisability of this comparative study, the initial quantitative phase was my attempt to compare the comparable, that is, the group perspectives of state officials and home educating groups. Thus, in effect, the homogeneous viewpoint was expected within the state officials’ group and home educators’ group. This quantitative phase was necessary to gain information and develop the emerging categories from the literature and data. However, the qualitative phase of the study entailed the non-generalisable aspect of case study work. The individual voices were the focus, and in spite of a small number of participating home educators, especially from England and Wales, different viewpoints were expected to amplify the group perspectives found. More importantly, in spite of the socially homogeneous nature of the individual home educators, comparisons with the group perspectives would enable inferences to be made about one’s construction of the other’s reality, public and private faces of the community and the potential for discord over symbolic aspects of home education (socialization, curriculum and so on).

8.7 Summary

The research structure map was used to detail my overall comparative methodology. From this, concepts were extracted that needed to be uncovered in my study of home educators and state officials. Chapter 9 continues the research structure map with details of the specific research methods chosen.

To clarify the comparative nature of this study thus far, and to introduce the research methods and data analysis employed, Table 8:1 illustrates the matrix used. In looking for similarities between state officials, and home educators in the quantitative, group perspective, initial categories were chosen to then focus upon in the qualitative, individual perspective. An overall comparison of similarities and differences could then be analysed and discussed.
### Table 8:1 Comparative Methodology Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups to compare</th>
<th>Compare/Contrast</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| LEAs vs. SDs and Home-based educators vs. home schoolers | Similarities [Quantitative approach] | • To gather information  
• To find similar categories between the two groups  
• To identify categories likely to lead to tension |
| British case – LEAs vs. home-based educators and American case – SDs vs. home schoolers | Differences [Qualitative approach] | • To identify categories between the two groups  
• To identify different attitudes  
• To identify cooperative attitudes |
| British vs. American perspective | Differences [Qualitative approach] | • To identify different attitudes  
• To draw inferences on different attitudes, based on historical, cultural and ideological differences |
Chapter 9- Research Methods

9.1 Introduction

Silverman (2000) and Cohen et al. (2000) see research methods as the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data, and the specific techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering. As Silverman (2000:79) notes, methods can be more or less useful, depending on their fit with the theories and methodologies being used. Methodological strategies connect 'theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical material' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:28), which could include case studies, participant observation, grounded theory methodology, biographical or historical methodology, action and applied research. For each theoretical paradigm, to address the issues of representation and legitimation, and to obtain data, there is a best practice.

In this chapter, I was guided by my chosen theoretical paradigms and methodology to use a qualitative, case study approach, to illuminate home educators' and state officials' definitions, symbols, subjective realities, and attitudes towards home education. In addition, I also carefully considered how best to compare these two groups of individuals in the two societies. Issues such as ensuring validity and rigour, outlining the instrumentation and data collection methods, and methods of comparative analysis are justified in this chapter.

9.2 Credibility, reliability and validity

As case study researchers do not pretend to present findings that are generalizable, there are questions about reliability, validity and rigour that have to be addressed. Nisbet and Watt (1984) note strengths of case studies, yet the weaknesses cited include non-generalizability; not easily open to cross-checking, hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective; and problems of observer bias, despite attempts to address reflexivity (taken from Cohen et al, 2000:184). To address the issues of credibility, reliability and validity of my work, I had to clearly illustrate my chosen methods and procedures.

The credibility issue of qualitative research is enumerated well by Patton (1990:461) as three-fold,

1. Rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that is carefully analysed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation;
2. The credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and

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1 Strengths include easily understandable results by a wide audience as the language is usually in layman's terms; findings speak for themselves; unique features are caught that might be missed in larger scale data and might help to understand the situation; case studies are strong on reality; they provide insights into other similar cases and situations; they can embrace and build in unanticipated events and uncontrollable variables. (taken from Nisbet and Watt (1984), cited in Cohen et al., 2000:184)
3. A philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, and holistic thinking.

As Patton (1990: 461) makes clear, the credibility of the researcher is particularly important, as ‘the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytic process’. Dealing with this point, I recognized that my practitioner-researcher, and Insider/Outsider perceptions and roles to the participants could have been either beneficial (capturing a better understanding of the participants’ views, realities, perceptions), or detrimental (if my inherent biases were not carefully considered and minimized accordingly). I believed I had a unique ability to gather the data, analyse it and present a more holistic picture than a researcher who might not have the same researcher/teacher/home educator, and British/American cultural insights. Careful to address issues of reliability and validity (as dependability, confirmability, and transferability), I believed I brought strength to this study as a qualitative researcher. Not only did I feel that my particular experiences and circumstances gave me credibility, I was aware of Stake’s (1998: 92) comment that ‘a personal contract is drawn between researcher and phenomenon’. In this study, I chose the micro-social world of home educators and state officials to explore perceived tensions that I felt compelled to learn about. In addition, addressing the issue of credibility, this multi-stage study was conducted in phases that show progression from original, preconceived ideas of tensions between home educators and state officials, through the initial categories explored in the literature and quantitative data, to the emerging categories that were then compared against the qualitative data.

In describing the techniques and methods used to secure data, I also considered validity. As Patton (1990: 462) explains,

The qualitative researcher has an obligation to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the processes of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product.

Validity is seen as the ‘truth’, a credible explanation, or the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers — Silverman (2000), Hammersley (1990), Patton (1990), Janesick (1998), and Jarvis (1999). However, qualitative case study research can only record and illuminate what has already happened, notes Jarvis (1999: 86-87), providing information that can be built upon in further work. The illustrations that I have drawn from in my study may be seen as valid by state officials but not home educators, or vice versa. Especially in

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2 I valued Stake’s (1998: 93) comment that in ‘telling the story’ qualitative case researchers will ultimately decide what will be reported for the understanding of the case. Such criteria of representation can be dependent on many factors (such as funding, prospective readers, rhetorical convention, or a notion of what represents the case most fully) and usually not finalized until the write-up of the study.
this comparative study between two groups of people, the truth of my explanations will only be accepted if they mirror the group’s perspective. As I wanted to draw out both the state officials’ and home educators’ voices, I accepted that the conclusions drawn might not resonate completely with either group. Thus, it was important to illustrate how I met internal and external validity.

Regarding internal and external validity, with specific reference to practitioner-researcher case studies, Jarvis (1999:82-83) cautions not to claim for case studies greater validity than we can demonstrate. He further notes that internal validity reflects the reality of the situation at hand, whereas external validity refers to the extent to which the findings can be studied in other situations. One of the particularities of case study qualitative work is that the reality studied is unique and ephemeral – such findings are not possible to repeat. Still, internal validity of the recorded data is important. Though it will not be presented in a completely objective manner with the facts speaking for themselves, Jarvis (1999:84) adds ‘no meaningful research about practice can ever be presented in a value-free manner’. He also notes that it is the interpretation of the data, as part of the hermeneutic process, which enables us to get to the reality of what is recorded.

As Patton (1990:475) sees it, ‘the data inevitably represent perspective rather than absolute truth’ and that qualitative data is most acceptable to people ‘comfortable with the idea of generating multiple perspectives rather than absolute truth’ (p.483). My perceptions and experiences may have aided or deterred interpretation of the data, in spite of carefully choosing methods to maximize rigour of the study; thus rather than proposing to generate validity as truth in qualitative work, ‘pragmatic validation’ becomes more useful. That is, as described by Patton (1990:485), the perspective presented is judged by its relevance to and use by those to whom it is presented; their perspective and actions join the evaluator’s perspective and actions. The qualitative group perspective of home educators and state officials can clearly be validated in readily available documentation. Further validity or reflection of the reality of the situation as perceived by home educators and state officials was sought in the qualitative data, and then compared to the quantitative work.

A further point, about generalizations of qualitative research is relevant here. Patton (1990) notes the concern about the impossibility of generalizing from the usually small sample sizes of qualitative methods — see also Cronbach (1975), Guba and Lincoln (1981). Rather than attempting to show generalizability, qualitative researchers should be concerned more with providing useful information that is specific to one or a few programs. Patton (1990:489) continues with Cronbach et al.’s (1980) suggestion that qualitative methods use designs that balance depth and breadth, realism and control, and allow for extrapolation instead of generalization. Extrapolations go beyond the ‘narrow confines of the data to think about other applications of the findings. Extrapolations are modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions’. A further useful point by Patton (1990:489) is that extrapolations can be useful when ‘based on information-rich samples and designs, that is, evaluations that produce relevant information carefully targeted to stakeholder concerns about both the
present and the future’. Thus the design of this multi-stage study was to draw data from the larger, quantitative group perspective to inform and corroborate emerging categories in the smaller, individual perspective. The more representative quantitative data was useful for external validity comparisons with the non-generalisable qualitative data.

In the sense of illustrating my perspectives and interpretations of the material, I wanted to ensure the dependability, confirmability and transferability of the data and analysis. Silverman (2000:177-185) suggests five interrelated ways of thinking about the data analysis to aim for findings that are more valid. These are the refutability principle, constant comparative method, comprehensive data treatment, deviant-case analysis, and using appropriate tabulations.

Presenting my interpretations and perspectives as the most ‘objective’ knowledge about the material, I had to refute assumed relations between phenomena and search for other alternatives, exhausting all possibilities. To be more objective, rather than assuming tension must exist between home educators and state officials, cooperative attitudes and ventures were also sought. The constant comparative method involves inspecting and comparing all data fragments that arise in a single case (after the grounded theory methodology of Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Silverman’s practical advice in this technique is to begin analysis on a relatively small part of the data, after which generated categories can be tested by steadily expanding the data corpus. Thus, initial categories that were searched for in the state officials’ quantitative data were compared with similar categories in the home educators’ quantitative data. The emerging categories were then compared against similar categories in the qualitative data. The comprehensive data treatment involves working with smaller datasets, open to repeated inspection, until any generalization constructed can be applied to every bit of relevant data gathered. So, rather than using the quantitative or qualitative data in isolation, all data was used in the analysis, albeit in phases. Deviant-case analysis complements comprehensive data treatment when looking for exceptions to the categories made. It was thus important to find home-based educators who were unknown to the authority. And finally, appropriate quantification in research can be used that is qualitative and interpretative in design. As Silverman (2000:185) adds, ‘Simple counting techniques, theoretically derived and ideally based on members’ own categories, can offer a means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive, qualitative research’.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley 1992:67). With qualitative tools of measurement (such as questionnaires and interviews), such consistency is difficult to ensure as participants and researchers may hold multiple interpretations and perceptions. As Stake (1998) recognizes, knowledge transfer from researcher to reader is embedded with individual facets of personal constructions. As a result, I had limited control over

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3 Strongly reactive parents and those parents who were not successfully home educating would also have been useful deviant cases, but were difficult to access in the data gathering timeframe.
the reliability of the material I have presented that is then interpreted by the reader – such is the nature of qualitative research. To address the issue of reliability, Silverman (2000:188) suggests that the scientific investigator documents the procedures and demonstrates that categories have been used consistently. The categories that were originally drawn from the literature, including socialization and curriculum, will be shown in this study to be applied to quantitative data, expanded upon and compared, and applied to the qualitative data, expanded upon and compared.

In addition, methodological triangulation has already been touched upon in Chapter 8. Here, the data triangulation used in the study is outlined. As Stake (1998:96-97) would contend, ‘meanings do not transfer intact, but take on some of the conceptual uniqueness of the reader, [however] there is expectation that the meanings of situation, observation, reporting, and reading will have a certain correspondence’. This resonates with his earlier comments above concerning reliability. To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretations, this study triangulates data from documents received and Internet-accessed documents/information, postal questionnaires, alongside transcripts derived from telephone interviews. This study also uses the group perspective from the quantitative data to compare against individual home educator and state official voices in the qualitative data.

9.3 Pilot work

Pilot work is a necessary vehicle to refine the research instruments, or the method of data collection. This I did through the year of 1999. All contacts were made through word of mouth, or by the most practical option available. The draft questionnaires and telephone interview questions were tested on a variety of people. These included teachers, parents who did not home educate, home educators and local education authority representatives. Many of those who helped me in the pilot phase highlighted the fact that the statements were more or less true depending on numerous variables such as the education presumed for children in school, and the character of the home educated child\(^5\). Instead of stripping the statements down to be devoid of related variables, I deliberately left the structure of the questionnaire to see if the chosen participants would be equally questioning. They were. I later realized that many of the statements were not as useful for me, as it was not possible on the questionnaire sheet to discuss any issues, which needed to be addressed in telephone interviews.

The telephone interview questions were tested next, and reworded where necessary to improve clarity. I had to practice asking questions for the telephone interview, as I was initially inexperienced in soliciting responses from an interviewee. I practiced asking the questions into the phone, and into a tape recorder. Playing back the tape to hear how I asked questions helped me improve my interviewing techniques. With practice, I became more relaxed in my approach, allowing the pilot

\(^5\) Statements that were dependent on variables included ‘A home educating child may have difficulty conforming to society’ (Parents-England and Wales) and ‘Public schools provide a child with good social skills for today’s society’ (State Officials-Florida). For the full questionnaires, please see appendices VI-VII, and XIV-XVI.
interviewees (my husband, a teacher friend, a home educator) to give more information that would ultimately benefit the study.

The pilot work highlighted how I could use quantitative methods with the state officials (and home educators to a lesser extent) as preliminary work prior to the construction of the qualitative method of interviewing. I considered this necessary on three counts. Firstly, some quantitative data could help my understanding of each case chosen and triangulated methods and data, as suggested by Patton (1990), Silverman (2000) and others. Secondly, I had more confidence that access would be granted for qualitative interviews if I began with a state official 'gatekeeper'. That is, 'an individual who is a member of or has insider status with a cultural group' (Creswell, 1998:117). In this study, the gatekeepers to approach were the individuals responsible for home educating families in a particular local education authority. By making contact with a gatekeeper, I could start a relationship with an individual state official, build a level of confidence and later approach the individual for volunteer participation in the qualitative data collection by interview. And lastly, I felt quantitative methods could help clarify the initial categories that I sought in the data. The emerging, more complex categories were then a focus in the qualitative interviews.

As access to home educators is known by researchers to be difficult, I did not envisage getting a large sample of participants. Practical access is usually achieved through advertising for volunteers in home education magazines and support groups, or by asking friends to suggest home educating families to contact. This is always volunteer sampling, or snowball sampling, and will probably never be representative of the home educating population. As a member of two home education support groups, I was aware of privacy concerns and the desire not to give membership lists to research students. Those that do volunteer to participate are usually quite confident that they are successful in their home education endeavours, and may have their own agenda to promote the virtues of home education to the uninitiated. In my study, participants from the home educating communities in Florida and England and Wales were volunteers or recommended by someone I accessed. Important to note here – in the 1999 pilot phase, when I was not home educating my own children, I found it difficult to gain access to a home education support group, or to home educators. It was only after I started home educating our eldest child in 2000 that I was treated as an equal, rather than an outsider. Other researchers in England and Wales, such as Webb (1988), Petrie (1992) and Rothermel (2002b) have noted they were active members of home education support groups, which facilitated access. What is more, Rothermel’s (2002b:122) access to the largest sample of home educators to date was obtained over a two-year period, mainly through the home education support group, Education Otherwise (EO). As she acknowledged, access was a very long process involving many hours of research and time spent establishing trust. I did not have the

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6 Though a teacher for many years, I had not considered home educating my own children until difficulties to enrol our eldest child in the local Florida school necessitated the decision.
luxury of time, and accessed home-based educators through Home Education Advisory Service (HEAS) instead of EO.

9.4 Access and data collection
To gain access to the LEA and SD state officials, I started by using the Internet government sites that list all the LEAs in England and Wales and all the SDs in Florida. For most of the LEAs, there was a general contact number, address and email address. Almost all of the SDs had designated websites, many of which had home schooling links and contact details. At first surprising to me, very few of the LEA websites had clear links to home education in 1999-2000. By 2006, almost 80% of LEA websites had information on home education. With full lists of LEAs' and SDs' contact details, I then telephoned each one (172 LEAs and 67 SDs) to get a named person responsible for monitoring or evaluating home education in the local education authority or district. This was reasonably successful, though some authorities had no position filled (I was referred to the Chief Education Officer in these cases) and there was sometimes confusion as to who might be the most suitable person to contact. Once I had a named person for each LEA or SD, I then drafted a letter to accompany the questionnaire.

Quantitative data were collected from questionnaires and documentation from LEAs, SDs, home education support groups, and home education support group websites. Documentation was requested from the LEAs and SDs, to be returned with the completed questionnaires. Such documentation included policy documents, and information packets sent to home educators. Documentation was also collected from support groups in England and Wales and in Florida, home educating magazines, and websites.

The initial mailing of the questionnaire included a self-addressed envelope to help improve response rate. After about two weeks, follow up calls or letters were used to improve the response rate. In some cases the letter and questionnaire needed to be re-sent as it was reportedly lost or never received. I limited myself to gathering the data from the LEAs first, and then from the SDs (though I did improve the response rate of LEAs by following up non-respondents when I approached the SDs).

I started approaching the LEAs for participation in December 1999 to June 2000, with 69 returns from the 172 LEAs. I approached the SDs for participation in March 2001 to May 2001, and re-approached the LEAs that had not responded to my earlier request for participation in my research. A further 39 LEAs responded to my

7 When I originally approached EO, it was indicated that information would not be forthcoming unless I was home educating. Once I began home educating in 2000, I approached HEAS for access. In retrospect, if I had also approached EO, and joined as a home educator, I might have had a larger sample of home-based educators to access. However, it seemed that accessing home-based educators through a second national support group was less useful than word-of-mouth (for three of the participants).

8 The standard letter that I sent to all LEA and SD officials gave information on my basic research idea, the University and department that I was affiliated with, the information I required for my research and my intention to maintain confidentiality of results. I also requested participation in a telephone interview in the letter accompanying the questionnaire. See Appendices XV-XVIII
Chapter 9

questionnaire and request for documentation by July 2001, making a total of 108 out of 172 total LEAs.

Once the questionnaires were returned, and I had a chance to do some preliminary analysis, I finished construction of the telephone interview questions. I then contacted participants from those who gave consent for the telephone interviews. In spite of non-response from 64 LEAs and 28 SDs, and the implications of such non-response, I felt there was plenty of material to deal with. It was very time consuming to contact each named person in the LEA or SD, and usually more than one phone call was needed. I did find out from some of the smaller LEAs or SDs that participation would not be useful as there were very few home educators in the area, and only a part-time official monitoring. Some LEAs or SDs refused to take part in the research because they felt the information might be sensitive. This was in spite of assurances that I would maintain anonymity. One official informed me that some LEAs or SDs were in a state of disarray, and might not have anyone filling the position of home education liaison officer. Many of the individuals I spoke with when trying to contact a specific person told me that home education was only one of the responsibilities the individual had in the LEA or SD.

Setting up the telephone interviews was more of a logistical problem as I was dealing with two different time zones (Florida is five hours earlier on the clock than England and Wales). The telephone interviews were difficult to conduct as so much arranging needed to be done beforehand – thus, I limited the interviews to 10 LEAs and 8 SDs. The telephone interviews were coded for anonymity, recorded with permission, and the transcripts were then typed up and sent back to the participants to check for accuracy and clarification. This was usually done via email, which proved to be a valuable method of communicating with the participating LEAs and SDs and to keep the communication channels open. The transcripts were then returned to me via email so I could analyze them. Where I had not asked questions during the interview, I inserted them into the transcript, and received responses to most of the added questions as well. Most interviews were an average of forty minutes, though some were thirty minutes and others were over an hour. The telephone interviews were conducted for LEAs and SDs between June and October 2002.

After I had completed all LEA and SD questionnaires and interviews, I turned my attention to gaining access to home educators and home schoolers. As our family was now living in Florida, (job relocation for my husband) it was easier to ask home

9 Selection for interview participants was based on an initial analysis of the questionnaires that highlighted categories I was exploring, such as socialisation.
10 The telephone interviews for the participating LEAs were conducted first, between 3 am to 7am, Florida time. This time was chosen as the earlier part of the day was usually preferable for the LEA and my four children were asleep! For the SD interviews, I needed the support of my husband taking time off work for two days, so that I could get the bulk of the interviews completed. Other interviews were done when I could get a babysitter.
11 An example of an added question to the transcript:
Would the school district prefer tests one year and then a portfolio review the next year, as an improvement to the current evaluation methods on offer?
Response: Yes, we would prefer it, but I doubt such will ever become law.
schoolers for participation in person. The difficulty arose with gaining access to home-based educators in England and Wales. I used our home education support group newsletter to place an advertisement for volunteers. One responded positively, whilst another responded negatively (and left no forwarding address!). Our family knew a home educating family of five, and the mother introduced me to her local support group. I was able to gain one more volunteer from this meeting. Another home-based educator willing to participate was recommended by a friend of mine who corresponded with the lady over the Internet. The final home-based educator responded to me after I had contacted another large support group for help with my study. In all, five home-based educators completed the shortened questionnaire (which was e-mailed for quicker response rate) and the telephone interview. I would have preferred a larger group participating, but it was more difficult than anticipated to gain access in the time I had available, and from another country. The five home-based educators were varied in their years of teaching, educational background, and number of children being educated. Two of the participants were unknown to the authority, as ‘hidden home-based educators’, and one was a volunteer for a large support group.

As I belonged to a local home schooling support group in Florida, I approached the group for participation. Included in the participants was a former leader of a large support group, veteran home educators and new home educators; 8 home schoolers were able to participate in the shortened questionnaire and telephone interviews (two interviews had to be face-to-face because of family circumstances).

The interviews were conducted from January to August 2004. In spite of the small number of home educating participants (13 as opposed to 18 state officials), I felt their voices would elaborate attitudes towards the categories focused upon as a result of the quantitative data. Each individual home educator added their personal perceptions to the data already collected, and represented unknown home-based educators, new or veteran home educators and home educators with large support group experience. Each case gave me the individual perspective to complement the group consensus found from the quantitative data. This was the focus with the small number of home educators, to see how their perspectives aligned with the group perspective.

The telephone interviews were conducted over a five-month period in 2002 for the state officials. With the home educators, once I had secured access, I had to fit around each family’s particular lifestyles. Completing the questionnaire was done

12 See Appendices IX and X
13 Though I had a convenience sampling of home-based educators, which was never considered ideal, the lack of visibility of home-based educators in England and Wales necessitated this approach. In spite of the limitations of accessing a larger group of people, I was satisfied that the two unknown home-based educators would illuminate reasons behind the reluctance of home-based educators to be highly visible.
14 Note the gap between getting the telephone interviews from the LEAs and SDs in 2002 and the home educators’ interviews in 2004. Sometimes life gets in the way of research work. I took two temporary withdrawals during my study, in 2001-2002, and part of 2003, as we added two babies to the family, and I gained new supervisors when the University Department reorganized.
either by e-mail, or in person. The questionnaires were completed between January and August 2004 for the home educators and home schoolers. As with the LEA and SD participants, I tape recorded the interviews with permission, transcribed them and gave the home educators and home schoolers an opportunity to correct, add or clarify their interviews.

9.5 Case selection
As Stake (1998:104) contends, case studies are of value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, with the purpose of case study not to represent the world but only to represent the case. Careful choice of the cases will amplify my focus on potential tensions between home educators and state officials. Stake (1998:100) sees cases selected to represent some population of cases, with Patton (1990:384-5) adding that the case study approach to qualitative analysis is a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. The purpose is to gather comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest. However, as noted by Silverman (2000:102), it is unlikely that cases are selected on a random basis, as often a case will be chosen simply because it allows access. So, how best to choose the cases for the study?

As I had already proposed a phenomenon to explore, that of potential tensions between home educators and state officials, I looked for verification of the phenomenon in the chosen cases. From the literature and the pilot work it was apparent that access to home-based educators could be difficult, as they do not have to make themselves known to local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales if the child has not started school. In Florida, home schoolers don’t always belong to support groups. In addition, home educators guard their privacy, with researchers having to seek out volunteers usually in return for anonymity. Though home school support groups are more easily accessible in Florida, the members are also wary of outsiders.

The pilot study also revealed the time consuming, proactive approach I needed to access the particular individual responsible for home education in England and Wales and Florida. Bearing the difficulties of access in mind, the choice of cases had to help me illustrate, explore and understand the issues under study.

All 10 LEA and 8 SD participants interviewed by telephone were responsible for some aspect of home education in their local education area, and had a variety of job titles. They were able to answer questions on the law, curriculum provision, policy implementation and monitoring of home education provision. Though I had originally canvassed all state officials in England and Wales and Florida, I filtered the

15 In England and Wales there are 172 local education authorities, of differing population sizes and educational facilities, compared to 67 local school districts in Florida. As a result, the numbers of home educators within an LEA or SD varies, and is dependent upon a multitude of factors such as geographical location to schools, numbers of school places, and the history of home education numbers. I could neither control variables for the chosen cases nor, due to a time constraint and access issues, could I purposively select certain LEA or SD representatives for certain characteristics that would enable a more representative sample.
volunteers to the 18 participants that formed my state official cases\textsuperscript{16}. All state official volunteers were accessed from the LEAs/SDs that had originally taken part in the postal questionnaire.

Although I believed access to home educators would be easier and participation more forthcoming as I was also a home educator, this was not the case. Not only can home educators be guarded around newcomers especially if they are wary of authority, but they have incredibly busy lives\textsuperscript{17}. Logistically finding the best time to send a similar questionnaire to home educators proved difficult, and I was warned in the pilot work that it might not be answered for a while. I needed to work around the home educators’ schedules to gain participation. The quantitative questionnaire (Section A, similar to that sent to LEA and SD representatives) was either e-mailed or given in person depending on the easiest method for home educators. As the sample of participants was small, I tried to include as many variables as would allow\textsuperscript{18}. However, I was not looking for representative sampling in the cases, as the focus was to compare and amplify the categories developed from the quantitative data and literature search. Admittedly, it could have benefited the study if LEA/SD labelled ‘reactive parents’ had lent their voices for analysis. At the time of accessing home educators, I did not pursue these parents via LEA/SD avenues, but relied on the voices of two home-based educators and two home schoolers who volunteered for the study. Five home-based educators from England and Wales and 8 home schoolers from Florida participated in a short questionnaire and a telephone interview, making 13 participants for my home educator cases.

To best answer the research questions, a multi-stage study was necessary, which then dictated the cases chosen for comparison. Initially, the literature review indicated certain categories worthy of focus, whilst the quantitative data analysis clarified and expanded upon the complexity of the emerging categories. The qualitative data analysis added to the knowledge base, layering the group versus individual perspective, and the British versus American perspective towards home education. Thus, in spite of the small number of interviewed participants, discussion of the data relates to the whole corpus of this multi-stage study.

\textsuperscript{16} I had hoped for a larger sample to pick and choose from, but very few state officials volunteered. Selection for the interviews was based largely on willingness to participate, though I did find variables in geographic location, size of home educating populations, job descriptions, length of position in the job, and gender in the interviewing participants.

\textsuperscript{17} The job of home educating usually falls to one of the parents, and this is usually the mother. The home educating parent, if conscientious about the commitment taken on, has to teach her child (or children) and provide socialization opportunities as well. Usually on one income, with the added responsibilities of managing the home, the home educating parent sometimes has a part-time job that fits around all their other commitments.

\textsuperscript{18} Participants included home educators that had home education experience of a few years, ten years or more, and those who held leadership positions in home education support groups. All home educators who participated were volunteers, people that I knew in my home educating community, volunteers forthcoming from requests put in a home education newsletter or email, or volunteers known to home educating friends of mine.
9.6 Instrumentation

**Figure 9:1 Instrumentation tools used**

![Instrumentation Diagram]

Questionnaires and interview questions were my instruments to gather relevant data, as seen in Figure 9:1. I designed the questionnaires to get snapshot views on categories that I further explored in the telephone interviews. I had some concerns that I wanted to test in the questionnaires to state officials. For instance, it appeared from the literature and anecdotes that many home educators do not completely trust state officials, to the extent that they believe state officials misrepresent the laws. To address this, one of the constructed statements deliberately misrepresented the law. I wanted to see if the participants would see this or ignore it (Most respondents correctly interpreted the law in the questionnaire). Depending on the data collected from the LEA and SD questionnaires, I then constructed the telephone interview questions. Another reason for the postal questionnaire was to gain access to individuals in the LEAs or SDs, for the telephone interviews.

An important point to note here is the lack of a similarly detailed questionnaire for home educators. Though it might have been useful to identify categories relating to discord or compatibility from a preliminary questionnaire sent to home educators, or to gain access to a more diverse home educating community, difficulties with access precluded this option in my study. Nonetheless, in spite of the lack of full representation of home educators who actively rejected state schools, school authorities, or those who had no educational philosophy or programme, the data gathered in the quantitative phase was still useful. The group perspective of state officials, through the postal questionnaires, and more importantly amplified through written documentation, was compared with the group perspective of home educators through website documentation and advice to home educators. The initial categories drawn from the literature were developed into the emerging categories to be explored through the individual perspectives of state officials and home educators alike. At the individual level, unknown home-based educators and state officials with strong social service backgrounds, for example, were expected to project discordant attitudes.
However, were these discordant attitudes expressed at a group perspective level, in the freely accessible written documentation? To what extent were these discordant attitudes apparent at the individual level? To compare the overt group perspective with the individual perspective, this multi-stage study was structured to incorporate the quantifiable, readily accessible data from state officials and home education support groups to identify emerging categories. A qualitative, individualized analysis of individual perspectives provided insight to the myriad of individual attitudes that encompass the public persona of state official or home education communities. As such, though the small number of interviewed home educators, especially in England and Wales, would appear to be a core weakness, the multi-stage approach of the study illuminates both the group and individual perspective, and not merely individual voices. Conclusions drawn from this study can be taken further, in subsequent research, with a larger group of home-based educators, to explore and test the categories focused upon here.

With both questionnaires (LEA/SD and home-based educator/home schooler) I needed to take into account current wording or phrasing for each society. So there were two versions of each questionnaire. For example, 'home-based education' appeared in the England and Wales version of the questionnaire, whilst 'home schooling' was substituted in the Florida version. Each questionnaire was split into two sections, A and B, to gather information on facts (section A) and opinions (section B). In section A, the questions were as a result of unanswered questions I had from the initial literature search, or were included as I thought the answers would give pertinent information to my study19. The questionnaire designed for the home educators gathered personal facts such as number of children home educated, ages, and length of time home educated, as well as reasons for choice. It was felt that opinions on various aspects of home educator (Section B) would be best left to the telephone interviews, as ambiguity in the LEA/SD opinion responses left more questions unanswered and unable to be analysed.

Following the return of the questionnaires, I conducted telephone interviews with both groups in both societies. I used the qualitative approach of a more open-ended telephone interview to gather information-rich data from the small sample of LEAs and SDs and home educators. The telephone interview questions for LEAs and SDs were my attempt to give the participants a voice to expand on questionnaire comments20. In addition, the interview questions for home educators and home schoolers allowed the participants to add rich descriptions to information gleaned from the home education literature search and the participants' questionnaires21.

19 For example, two of the questions asked for information that would give me an estimation of the number of home educators as a percentage of the total school population within the LEA or SD [see appendices VI-VII for copies of questionnaire sections A and B, annotated with justification of construction].
20 Many LEAs and SDs annotated the questionnaire or chose the 'not sure' category of agreeing/disagreeing with the statements. Many respondents indicated that a chosen category could not be made definitely because of the inherent variables involved with education and children. I took such responses as highlighting the respondents' recognition of the variables involved, rather than them seeing issues on home education as 'black and white'.
21 The annotated telephone interview questions are in Appendix XI.
Telephone interviews were considered the most pragmatic choice to overcome geographical boundaries. In addition, to avoid mixing methods such as face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, introducing undesirable variables or biases, one method of interviewing was preferred. Telephone interviewing is a recognized form of data gathering in the United States, as noted by Dillman (1978), Lavrakas (1993), Frey and Oishi (1995), and Shuy (2002). Traditional market research tools such as postal questionnaires and in-person interviewing have always had the edge on telephone interviews until fairly recently. One of the main disadvantages with quantitative telephone interviewing has been the ability to ensure a representative, random sample of the population though this is less of an issue today.\(^2\) Another disadvantage could be the prevention of an interview by the participant simply hanging up. Other problems noted by Janet Powney and Mike Watts (1987:32) include the possibility of the interviewee giving short, non-committal responses, the difficulty of using visual tasks, of providing encouragement, of deciding whether the interviewee understands the question, or of accessing sensitive, or affective information. Yet, in spite of limited studies comparing telephone interviewing with in-person or mail surveys, Shuy (2002:539) suggests the ‘telephone interview has swept the polling and survey industry in recent years and is now the dominant approach’.

One general advantage of telephone interviewing is due to improved technology. More households have telephones than forty years ago (see Dillman, 1978), and the improved technique of random digit dialing (RDD) facilitates collecting a more representative population sample. Other advantages include the ability to include data from geographically scattered samples reasonably cheaply and quickly, and better uniformity in delivery and standardization of questions — Dillman (1978), Thomas and Purdon (1994), Shuy (2002). Specifically for my study, I feel the advantages outweighed the general disadvantages because I was not ‘cold calling’ or attempting to get a representative sample. All participants had given their consent for an interview, as I used Dillman’s Total Design Method (TDM) approach.\(^2\)

Don Dillman’s theoretical basis of the TDM considers why people respond to questionnaires or interviews. If they can see rewards, establish trust and perceive the interview to be a low cost to themselves, response is more likely to occur. For each state official that volunteered to participate in the telephone interview, I made it clear that I valued their input, would keep them informed of results gathered, and would maintain confidentiality and anonymity. For the home educators, I showed support for their values in home educating, established trust by being ‘one of them’, and ensured anonymity.

\(^{22}\) Dillman (1978:2) notes the problems of people not having telephones to take part in such research, and those that do tend to have higher than average incomes and education. This was the case in the late 1970s.

\(^{23}\) The TDM consists of two parts. The first is to identify each aspect of the survey process that may affect either the quality or quantity of response and to shape each of them in such a way that the best possible responses are obtained. The second is to organize the survey efforts so that the design intentions are carried out in complete detail. (Dillman, 1978:12)
9.7 **Chosen methods of analysis**

With all the data gathered from three main sources in two societies, careful consideration was given to the best method of analysis. Returning briefly to my research methodology, I used the theoretical approach of symbolic interactionism to look in the collected data for three concepts — how home educators and state officials defined their situation, their use of symbols and their subjective realities. Already discussed in this chapter was the need to increase the credibility and validity of my work through careful, systematic choice of methodology and methods. In addition, comparative analysis was integral to critically deal with all the data.

As I was dealing with case studies in two societies, I followed Patton's (1990:384-6) advice on case study analysis. He states the purpose of such analysis is to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest. So, each case analysis must include all the interview data, documentary data, impressions and statements of others about the case.

Several authors on qualitative research suggest a variety of analysis methods — see Creswell (1998), Patton (1990), Robson (1993), Huberman and Miles (1994). There are similarities in suggested methods, but at the same time, John Creswell (1998:142) acknowledges that qualitative research is custom-built, revised, choreographed (after Huberman and Miles, 1994) and that qualitative researchers learn by doing (after Dey, 1993). Creswell’s figure on a data analysis spiral was very useful for me as it encapsulated the procedures and examples that guided me through my analysis (see Figure 9:2).

**Figure 9:2 The Data Analysis Spiral (Adapted from Creswell 1998:143)**
To follow the spiral, I began with my collection of documents, and questionnaires, followed by transcripts — see Patton, 1990:387-390). Initial focus upon socialization and curriculum led to identification of such categories in the documentation and questionnaire answers. Documents were read over one at a time, to identify categories. Once the whole set of LEA documents were individually read, I then compared all LEA documents to get a sense of the common repeating categories or themes. As each document was compared with the next, categories were subdivided and coded. For example, each category was identified and graded as positive or negative. The positive categories were carefully weighed against corresponding categories from the other’s perspective and filtered (examples are found in Appendix VIII). For the negative categories, each was comprehensively compared with other positive categories. So, an LEA statement that an LEA officer would have to make a home visit to approve home education was compared with more positive statements as well as against the law (further examples are also found in Appendix VIII). The categories taken from the set of LEA data were condensed and organized into those most likely to lead to tension or cooperative efforts between home educators and LEA officials. Next, the questionnaire data from the LEAs was treated to a similar analysis, being read singly as a unit, and then in comparison to the whole set of LEA questionnaire returns. By comparing the documentation to the questionnaire data, I was further able to develop categories. Specifically, the preliminary analysis of quantitative data threw up issues that I had not previously considered, as there had been scant mention in the literature. For instance, nebulous references to child protection issues in printed documentation became more worthy of focus when identified in questionnaire responses and when cross-referenced with home visit procedures and corresponding home-based education documentation. Thus, once I had analysed all the LEA documentation and questionnaires, I analysed the home-based educator documentation (in a similar fashion to that detailed above). Greater depth of analysis was achieved once categories drawn from home education documentation was compared to state official documentation. A similar process was utilized with the SD documentation, followed by the home schooling documentation. In addition, categories identified in LEA documentation were compared against SD documentation and then against home education documentation.

Categories that emerged from the LEA/SD questionnaire responses and documentation, and compared against the home education group documentation, were then analysed and classified into the emerging categories explained in Chapter 10. To ensure that the emerging categories inferred from the quantitative data were valid for focus upon in the qualitative data, the quantitative data was revisited with the emerging categories in mind. Content analysis was useful when dealing with such a large volume of data as the data I had to analyse were considerable, in spite of the preliminary analysis. As I could only work in a methodical way, lest I lost sight of my focus, I also needed to see the ‘whole picture’ several times, before I could analyse parts of the whole. Like a jigsaw puzzle enthusiast, I tackled the data as one would a puzzle. The whole picture would answer my research questions, but it was the pieces that needed to be explored and explained first. Constant searching for category patterns, similarities and differences among the groups was necessary to develop the categories for qualitative data gathering and analysis.
Comparative analysis was also integral to understanding the material, incorporating a lens approach. Thus, LEA data was also viewed through the SD lens, and vice versa, once it was clear that differences were apparent (e.g. no compulsory registration in England and Wales presented a different cluster of attitudes towards home education than in Florida). Rather than only using home education data to view state official data, both lenses were used, to appreciate the other's viewpoint. As I was aware that the group versus individual perspective, and the individual state officials versus the home educators were not strictly comparable, the lens approach was a means to help ascertain whether one perspective was mirrored, magnified, or dismissed by the other.

Through comparative analysis of the quantitative data, the group perspective was drawn out to include a cluster of categories, all seen as based on aspects of control. This largely homogeneous group perspective was then compared against the individual perspective voiced in the telephone interviews. The telephone interview data was read over, one at a time, as with the quantitative data. Annotating the transcribed interviews was first completed. The annotated interviews were compared with others in their group, followed by coding on the basis of the emerging categories and content analysis produced categories that revealed similarities and differences to the questionnaire and document data. Looking for further category examples or exceptions in the qualitative data, I also wanted to consider, in the memos, coding, categorization and reduction of data, what the purpose of the data might be – was it to define the state official’s or home educator’s reality of home education, or their symbols, to inform, or to control? Through a comparative analysis of quantitative data with qualitative data, the underlying assumption of potential tension could then be addressed in the overall analysis and discussion.

9.8 Summary

Outlining the methods employed in my study was essential to displaying how I had considered the most appropriate, credible and rigorous way of tackling the data to answer my set questions. This chapter highlights a variety of suggestions by qualitative research authors to aid in the analysis of the data, but there is recognition that I had to use the methods best fit for the purpose. For the purpose of this study, then, the research methodology and methods leant on the multi-stage approach of combining quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis with a comparative matrix that enabled similarities and differences between the studied groups to be highlighted. Chapter 10 follows, by presenting the quantitative data and the emerging categories that are then used as a structure to present and analyse the qualitative data in Chapters 11 and 12.

24 The transcribed interviews are quite lengthy, especially with annotations. Two examples are given in Appendices XII and XIII, of an annotated LEA transcript and an annotated home-based educator transcript respectively.
PHASE I – THE QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

Introduction

This study was constructed as a multi-stage project in order to best deal with gathering and analysing information to answer the research questions. As I began with a set of perceptions and assumptions towards home education based on my experiences, I first looked to relevant research to elucidate preconceived notions. Then I used the literature to obtain a historical and cultural grounding of home education in both societies. My expectation that differences would be found in comparing and contrasting the societies and the two groups was magnified once I looked further in the literature regarding culture, attitudes and ideologies.

As a consequence of the literature review, which threw out categories worthy of focus, the quantitative phase of the study was conducted. A quantitative postal questionnaire was sent to all LEAs and SDs in England and Wales, and Florida, respectively, to gather background information on the initial categories drawn from the literature. In addition, documentation from state officials was received and analysed, and later compared against readily available documentation on the Internet. Readily available documentation was also analysed from home educating support group websites. Hence, the following chapter presents the quantitative data of the study.
Chapter 10 – Quantitative Presentation: Initial to Emerging Categories

10.1 Introduction
With the historical, cultural and legal overview of home education in both societies, coupled with my preconceived expectations of tension, quantitative data was sought from the state officials and home educators and presented in this chapter. A postal questionnaire, sent to all LEAs and SDs produced a response rate of over 50% in both societies. Documentation sent by the state officials included information booklets for home educators, and some policy documents. All documentation was analysed to develop categories on the ideology of home education including perspectives on curriculum, secondary socialisation, and legal rights and duties. Drawn from readily available material from the Internet, home education support group documentation was also analysed.

The quantitative data was designed to gather a group perspective towards home education. Even with the largely homogeneous perspectives towards the initial categories focussed upon, individual perspectives filtered through questionnaire responses or prepared documentation. This chapter concludes with emerging categories based largely on a group ideology of home education, as the focus for the subsequent qualitative work. In addition, the initial data analysed and categorised were later compared to a follow-up search and analysis of LEA/SD or government documentation available on the Internet in 2006. This time-comparison revealed subtle changes in policy and attitudes towards home education from my original analysis.

10.2 Initial categories
From the research literature, initial categories to explore in a quantitative search presented themselves. These included the law, rights and responsibilities of home educators and state officials, and perspectives on home education related to socialisation and curriculum. As general background, it was also useful to understand the size and growth of the home education population, and to note whether there were cooperative ventures between the state officials and home educators. The state officials’ postal questionnaires, combined with information documents and policy procedures, were thus designed to elicit such information.

Initial Categories for Quantitative Data Search
- Legal rights, duties, responsibilities
- Curriculum
- Socialisation
- Size and growth of home education population
- Cooperation between state officials and home educators

1 108 out of 172 LEAs responded to the questionnaire, whilst 39 out of 67 SDs responded.
2 In early research (1980s-early 1990s) on home education in the USA, academic merit and socialisation were two concerns addressed. See Chapter 2 on research review for more details.
3 See Appendices VI and VII for postal questionnaires.
Presentation of quantitative data will be displayed in two sections, for the sake of clarity. First, the state officials' data is presented and briefly discussed. The initial categories used for focus in analysing the state officials' data were then revised as emerging categories from the data. Once the home educator support groups' data was similarly analysed for evidence of initial categories, and then compared to emerging categories from the state officials' data, a comparison of the emerging categories from both perspectives could be made.

**10.3 Overview of results from state officials' documentation and data analysis**

Before interviewing individual LEA or SD officials, I wanted some idea about their policies on home education. In this way, rather than moving forwards with a perception that tension must exist (gleaned from my perceptions and the literature search), I used the analysis of quantitative documentation to deal with bias. It was also helpful in formulating the interview questions.

The documentation analysis revealed a number of salient points. Firstly, though the home-based educators in England and Wales and in Florida represent a minority of the school-age population, there is a marked difference in size in the two societies. The Florida home schoolers, representing about 1.8% of the total school age population outnumber the home-based educators in England and Wales, who represent about 0.2%.5

This difference in population size did not seem to have an impact on who monitored or evaluated home educators, as both LEAs and SDs have a variety of job titles that encompass home education. What struck me were the titles that could potentially create a conflict of interest. For example, where one individual had responsibility for excluded students and electively home educated students, I wondered if a conflict of interest ensued.

Secondly, though both LEAs and SDs cited the written word as the usual method of informing home educators about responsibilities and duties of both groups, there was awareness that home educators would go to national or state support groups for information. In recognition of this, some LEAs and SDs included home education support group material in their information packets. This could be viewed favourably, as state officials offered information from both perspectives.

Thirdly, School Districts did not normally interact with home schoolers, and were unable to judge the main educational philosophies or pedagogic styles that home schoolers used. On the other hand, LEAs described four main categories of home-

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4 Documentation refers to postal questionnaire returns from all LEAs and SDs, information booklets for home educators, questionnaires for home educators from LEAs and SDs, policy documents for LEAs and SDs, website information on home education from government or state education departments, collected in 1999-2001.

5 From the completed questionnaires [57.56% (58%) from the LEAs; 56.72% (57%) from the SDs] the percentage of home educators from the total estimated school age population was calculated using the following formula: Home educators/ (home educators + school age children) x 100 = %
based educators – those that used a child-led or parent-led curriculum, those that had a religious basis to their education, and those that are reacting to a situation in school. It is this last group of reactive parents that caused LEA concern, and may create tension.

Fourth, I found no specific references to socialisation in the SD documentation. In contrast, the LEA documents set questions for officials to ask regarding socialisation opportunities for the children in policy documents, parent questionnaires or information booklets. Caveats were stated about ensuring socialisation as part of home education, and were mainly based on a school model. A few LEAs could not reword their bias towards secondary socialisation; negative statements about children’s life chances being affected by home education were also found. As a result of this analysis, I expected to find tension regarding socialisation from the LEAs and home-based educators, but less from the SDs and home schoolers.

With specific references to the curriculum, the SDs’ lack of desire for control over the curriculum was manifest in the documentation. Curricula resources were given, though not endorsed, and home schoolers were directed to curriculum guidance from the support group Florida Parent Educators Association (FPEA), the Florida Virtual High School, and the Florida Department of Education. As dual enrollment is permitted for home schoolers, guidance was given for compliance with the law and meeting the home schoolers’ dual enrolment needs.

The LEAs’ documents reflected a desire to portray the National Curriculum (NC) as the standard, with the subjects frequently stated, for reference purposes. A ‘good curriculum’ was regularly portrayed as following NC guidelines. However, some LEAs recognized curricula, and methods of teaching and learning, were as varied as the home-based educating families. Nonetheless, caveats existed in the documentation suggesting a narrow curriculum may disadvantage the child. Again, I expected to find tension over the curriculum between LEAs and home-based educators.

Lastly, there were other issues that arose in the documentation analysis – home visits, child protection concerns, and superfluous information requests. Home visits, peculiar to LEAs, were requested as a matter of course in documentation though not prescribed in law. Child protection concerns, found only with the LEAs, were nebulous in written documentation. Believing there to be more to this concern, I had to ask about child protection in the interviews. Both LEA and SD documents requested superfluous information, to build a picture of the home educators in the area, perhaps satisfying national or state statistical requirements. Whereas the LEA documents suggested information would be asked for in home visits, SD documents included standard forms requesting more information than was required in the statutes.

Presented in the following pages is evidence of the material that led me to consider possible points of tension that needed further uncovering in individual interviews.
10.3.1 What is the size of the home educating population?

Figure 10:1 shows the estimated size of the home educating population in both societies. Rounding the percentage to 1 decimal place, home-based educators represent 0.2% of the school-age population as compared with 1.8% of home schoolers. Whilst the Florida Education Department (FLDOE) website had the statistical figures readily available, the Department for Education and Skills in England and Wales (DfES) had no such comparable information (the data was retrieved from compiling numbers from my postal questionnaire). When asked if the number of home-educated children in the LEA/SD had changed over the last ten years, most respondents noticed an increase in the numbers (57% of LEAs and 87% of SDs). 25% of LEAs and 10% of SDs did not notice a significant change in the numbers, yet not one LEA or SD saw the numbers decreasing. As the numbers rise, there is potential for more tension between state officials and home educators. Conversely, as a critical mass is reached, more cooperative efforts may be seen. It was not clear in the data if there was more/less tension between the two groups as a result of the perceived growing population. Important to note, however, home education policies were focused on a much smaller population in one society than in the other. As both populations are small, relative to the public school population that harnesses most of the state officials’ time and effort, there was a corresponding lack of funding in both societies. This impacted the next question.

Figure 10:1  The estimated number of home educators in the local education area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>England and Wales</th>
<th>Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in LEA/SD sample of compulsory school age</td>
<td>4,673,012</td>
<td>1,104,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children known home educated in sample</td>
<td>7,448</td>
<td>20,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average % of home educated children in LEA/SD sample</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated populations of home educators are noticeably lower than any estimates given by other home education research in England and Wales, or in Florida. This would indicate that either many home educators are unknown, or that estimates might be over-inflated. As this is not a statistical study, I did not focus on acquiring a more accurate number of home educators.

State officials indicated to me that money allocated to them for education was not allotted specifically to home education. As budgets varied from one local education authority to another, it was not possible to ascertain how much money was allocated to each LEA or SD for home education.

A statistical brief from the Florida Department of Education, June 2000, gave the state-wide roster of home educating children as 37,196. Compared to the returned figures received as part of this research, my data is based on 55% of the recorded home educating population.
10.3.2 Who is the person responsible for monitoring or evaluating home educated children?

In the pilot study, the difficulty of gaining access to the correct person made me wonder about the allocation of responsibilities within the LEA or SD. Several LEAs and SDs indicated that home education responsibilities were not exclusive to one person, in many instances. Whilst Figures 10:2 and 10:3 show the most common job titles cited, many were found in the ‘other’ category. This included many more job titles not exclusive to home education. Most striking to me were the titles that I felt could create a conflict of interest, such as ‘Pupil Referral and Exclusions Service’ or ‘Coordinator of Titles, Dropout Prevention, Home Education’. This made me consider possible conflicts of interest with the individuals, to be explored in the telephone interviews.

Figure 10:2 – Person responsible for monitoring/evaluating home educated children in LEAs in England and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common job titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEA Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Adviser/Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other job titles given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Positions specific to home education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Education Team Otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Education Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Tuition Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education at Home Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA Appointed Monitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Positions not exclusive to home education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Adviser (Head of School Improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Officer (inclusions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Inspector- Quality Assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Welfare Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory/Qualified Teachers/Teachers in Tutorial service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and Hospital Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Welfare Service/Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil referral and Exclusions Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Support Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 10

Figure 10:3 – Person responsible for monitoring/evaluating home schooled children in SDs in Florida

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common job titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor of Student Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Elementary/Secondary Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other job titles given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Positions specific to home schooling:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home School Liaison/Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Education Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Education/Child Find</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|(ii) Positions not exclusive to home schooling: |
| Director, Pupil Personnel Services |
| Director of Research |
| Director of ESE |
| Coordinator Partnership Schools and Child Care Programs |
| Attendance Officers at each school |
| Coordinator of Titles, Dropout Prevention, Home Education |
| Supervisor, Attendance and Pupil Assignment |
| Program Specialist |
| Supervisor, School Support Services |
| Administrative Aide/Director of Administration |
| Supervisor-Research, Assessment, Evaluation |
| Supervisor – Alternative Education |
| Director of Curriculum and Staff Development |

10.3.3 How do LEAs and SDs make home educators aware of the laws?

The responsibilities of home educating parents and local education authorities to satisfy the law should be clearly articulated and understood. Such information should also be freely available. In the information-rich societies, the Internet is one of the most accessible methods of acquiring knowledge, even to those without computers as they can use their local library. When I first tried to access the DfES website for home education information, I found it to be markedly more difficult than retrieving the same information from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE). Asking

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9 To get the relevant information for home educators on the DfES, (www.dfes.gov.uk) one can now type in elective home education in the search engine on the website. When I started the research I had to type in education otherwise or education other than at school. In contrast, the FLDOE, Florida Department of Education website (www.fldoe.org) has always had a specific site on home education.
the LEAs and SDs in the postal questionnaires how they made home educators aware of the laws, the most common method cited in Figure 10:4 (about 75%) was through the written word (letter, information booklets, leaflets, or guidance notes). Both LEAs and SDs favoured the written word. For LEAs, the almost ubiquitous home visit was not cited as the most common method of informing home-based educators. Some SDs indicated that information was sent by request, rather than automatically, indicating that home schoolers might acquire information from another source. In fact, some LEAs indicated that home-based educators were made aware of the law through home education support groups rather than the LEA. This could also be true of home schoolers accessing information themselves rather than going to the SDs (more likely, as such information is more freely available). Some LEAs and SDs also revealed the cooperative relationship with one of the national/state support groups — in both societies the state support group has produced a booklet for LEAs or SDs to use with home educators.

**Figure 10:4  Method of informing home educators about the law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Booklets/leaflets/notes</th>
<th>Letter from LEA</th>
<th>Home Visit</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Florida statutes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.3.4 What evidence exists of a variety of educational philosophies, ideologies of education, teaching or learning styles?

Research literature suggests many educational philosophies underpin home educating lifestyles, guiding their teaching and learning. I asked LEA and SD questionnaire participants to detail evidence of the plethora of home educating styles, ideologies and philosophies, as a precursor to analyzing the state officials' policies. From the data, I grouped the variety of educational forms in Figure 10:5, though I realised that 'educational philosophies' was perhaps the wrong phrase to use in the questionnaires. Many SDs did not answer the question, as they do not usually interact directly with home schoolers. A certified teacher would be more likely to encounter a variety of educational philosophies in the annual evaluation of the child(ren). LEAs responding were more inclined to give examples of teaching and learning styles that had been observed rather than educational philosophies that guided the home educating families.
The four main styles seen were predominantly religiously based, followed by structured child-led or parent-led studies, and unstructured studies. Cited more often in England and Wales, Jane Lowe (1998) echoes the LEAs' observation that parents can home educate as a reaction to problems in school, rather than because of a well thought out plan to home educate. These reactive parents seem to cause most concern to LEAs, as evidenced in the analysed documentation.

Figure 10:5  Educational philosophy, teaching or learning style, as seen by LEAs and SDs.

Religious basis

- Religious basis - based on bible teaching, guided learning, specific requirements of Jehovah’s Witnesses, Plymouth Brethren, Muslims, or Christians.

Reactive basis

- Reactive basis - Parents reacting to problems in school, including bullying, school phobia, disagreement with teachers or principal, truancy, or unhappy with school choice.

Parent-led curriculum or learning style

- Parent-led - Structured through subject-based curriculum, correspondence courses, eclectic teaching including cooperatives and tutors, mirroring school curriculum (e.g. following National Curriculum subjects).

Child-led curriculum or learning style

- Child-led - Structured through holistic, life skills, experiential learning, talent-based (e.g. musically gifted), and unit studies. Unstructured through unschooling or interest-based studies.

10.3.5 Ideology\textsuperscript{11} of home education – opinions from state officials

In an effort to glean opinions from state officials towards their ideology of home education, statements were included in the postal questionnaires with a Likert-

\textsuperscript{10} Reactive parents’ were not easily accessed, though LEAs might consider HEC and HEF to be part of the group (see pp.180-180 for brief introductions). It would have added to the study to have interviewed ‘reactive parents’ labelled and recommended by the LEAs. During the pilot phase, an LEA official told me it was neither ethical nor possible to access home-based educators through the LEA department. So, I did not pursue this avenue further.

\textsuperscript{11} The concept of ideology, and what an ideology of home education encompasses, was discussed more fully in Chapter 5.
scale response tool. They were designed to ascertain the state officials’ opinion on curriculum, socialisation, law, educational attainment, and overall perceptions. Some statements were not worded carefully enough to produce a clear response; such data were not included here. For those statements that did provide informative or intriguing answers, they are presented now:

**Graph 10: There is no need for home education in today’s society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statement was worded to see if LEA or SD representatives would consider home education an unnecessary educational option. Most of the representatives (72 - 83%) disagreed with the statement, which would imply that they recognized that home education is considered a legal, viable option in both societies. However, the statement does not really expand on the individual’s attitude towards home education.
There was a consensus of opinion from the LEAs and SDs in disagreeing with the statement that only home educated children can get an education which is matched to their individual needs (92-97%). I had taken the statement from home education literature, which promotes an individualized curriculum that can be constructed for the home-educated child. Here, I played devil’s advocate with the statement, to see if it would produce a strong response one way or another. As it did produce a strong response, I expected state officials to indicate school-based education as responding to a child’s individual needs. This was seen in the information booklets in terms of curriculum (and socialisation opportunities) found in schools. However, very few examples portrayed the home educators’ perspective, and yet such a dual perspective could limit potential for tension.
Graph 10.3: A less structured approach to the curriculum is more appropriate for the child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though there seemed to be a consensus of opinion from the LEA and SD representatives disagreeing with the statement that a less structured approach to the curriculum was more appropriate for the child (50-70%), I felt that this may have been an ambiguous statement. The paired statement, that a structured curriculum was more appropriate for the child, was annotated on many of the questionnaire returns. Most comments were that the appropriate structure or lack of structure depended on the child and the definition of structured curriculum. The construction of the statement came from the literature which suggested that many home education programs are child-led to an extent, and more so than the curriculum prescribed in schools.

Table 10.4: A structured curriculum is more appropriate for the child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 Where statement returns were too ambiguous, I have included only the table of responses rather than a corresponding graph, as a comparison to its paired statement.
Chapter 10

Graph 10:4 A home educated child will reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a state school educated child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research on home education consistently points to studies conducted that show home educators scoring above their state schooled peers in almost every subject (For example, see Ray 1999). This statement and its paired statement, shown below, were designed to see whether LEAs and SDs considered that home educated children would reach a higher level of numeracy and literacy than their state-schooled peers. The level of disagreement, above by the LEAs and SDs (62-76%), would indicate that they might also disagree with the research published that portrays the academic successes of home-educated children. This result was thought provoking, especially in light of curriculum suggestions in LEA documentation, and the data below that indicates over a third of the LEAs and SDs could neither agree nor disagree with the paired statement. Individual perspectives were needed for further clarification of this statement.

Table 10:2 A school-based education will enable a child to reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a home-educated child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 10:5 The curriculum in state schools is broad and balanced enough to provide an effective education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the phrases from the National Curriculum document in England and Wales is that the education provided to state school children is broad and balanced. This phrase is also worded into documents sent to home-based educators. Some concern towards home education originally stemmed from a belief that parents were ill equipped to teach their own (resulting in numerous studies on the academic merit of home educated children). Most LEAs and SDs (72-95%) agreed with the statement, which would indicate their confidence in the state schools. How far such a belief affected their perspective towards home educators providing an effective education would need to be teased out in the individual perspectives.
**Graph 10.6: Home-educated children will not be able to make friends easily**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though over a quarter of LEAs could not decide whether to agree or disagree with the statement, 58% of LEAs disagreed, implying that home-educated children could make friends easily. 78% of SDs also disagreed with the statement. Research over the last thirty years has consistently voiced one of the main concerns towards home education focusing on suitable socialization of the home-educated child. Critics believe schools are the best place to be properly socialized for society, with home educators arguing that schools are artificial institutions that socialize children according to their age. This issue about socialization needed further clarification from the individual perspectives garnered in the qualitative telephone interviews.
Table 10:2  Once enrolled in school, a child cannot be home educated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 10:7  Parents are only informed about home education if they are actively interested in this option

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The local education authorities have a duty to inform parents of their school choices in their particular area. I was not aware if home education was routinely mentioned in documentation for parents considering their educational choices, hence the statement above. 88% of LEAs and 63% of SDs agreed with the statement, though 26% of SDs could not agree. Perhaps the SDs considered the influence of abundant media articles on home education, as indirectly informing all parents.
Once home educated, a child cannot be enrolled in a school at a later date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99-100% of the LEAs and SDs disagreed with the statement that once home educated, a child could not be enrolled at school at a later date. This statement was constructed after reading research by Petrie (1992) and Mayberry et al. (1995) that suggested many local education authority representatives did not have a complete understanding of the home education laws. I wanted to see if that was still the case – in this instance, and reflected in the home education documentation, it seems as if most LEAs and SDs are cognizant of the laws. However, the twin statement, that once enrolled in school, a child cannot be home educated, was seen as accurate by 5% of LEAs. The result was puzzling, as 94-97% of the local education authorities disagreed with the statement, showing their understanding of the law. I found it hard to believe that such a statement could be misinterpreted, especially in comparison to the paired statement above.

Table 10:3 Once enrolled in school, a child cannot be home educated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 10:9 State schools provide a child with good social skills for today’s society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67-84% of the LEAs and SDs agreed that state schools provide a child with good social skills, which runs counter to the average home educators’ perspective of artificial socialization in schools. As most people have not experienced home education personally, they could see traditional institutionalised school as the normal avenue to develop social skills. This response concurs with the rationale behind the introduction of mass state schooling, to educate the children and provide them with social skills necessary for society.
Chapter 10

Graph 10:10 Home education is seen as a suitable educational alternative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Neither Agree/Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over half the LEAs (55%) and over half the SDs (57%) agreed with the statement that home education is a suitable educational alternative. Of note were those that could neither agree nor disagree (20-25%), annotating in the questionnaire that several caveats needed to be considered alongside such a statement. Only 2% of the LEAs strongly disagreed with home education being a suitable alternative, but did not give an explanation for the answer.

Summarising the graphs and tables, though informative and intriguing as some of the above answers to the statements were, it became apparent that this quantitative tool would not provide all the information that I required. This was partly due to some statements creating too much ambiguity, as well as others that were dependent on opinion and degree. Quite a few of the questionnaires were returned with annotations and explanations for answers given. As a consequence, it appeared sensible to elicit information from other sources; primarily through telephone interviews with some of those individuals who had completed the questionnaires (see Chapter 11). Before the qualitative data was analysed, however, all state official documentation received was analysed with the initial categories as a lens. Specifically to compare LEAs against SDs, the categories of socialisation, curriculum, and legal issues and interpretations were analysed and are now presented.
10.3.6 What specific references are made regarding socialisation?

Looking at the LEA documentation first, the small sample of policy documents forwarded to me made little specific references to socialisation. Nonetheless, such a category is considered important to the LEAs, as it is frequently mentioned in parental questionnaires sent to home-based educators preceding a home visit. Most questionnaires ask parents to detail any arrangements that have been made for the social development of the child. Quoting from one LEA parental questionnaire, a typical request asked\(^\text{13}\):

Please describe how you intend to encourage your child to meet and mix with children of their own age for play, conversation, games and other activities. [LAV]

Yet, this question did not really tell me how state officials’ viewed socialisation. Perusing the documents revealed references to socialisation in most information booklets sent to home-based educators, though the text was not lengthy. In most cases, advice was given, such as:

Provide opportunities which help with physical development and ones (sic) which allow social interaction to take place in different contexts. [LAM]

[Successful home educators]...encourage their children to develop socially with other children and adults. [LAI]

...provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities, contact with other children, and joint activities with other children and groups. The impetus which comes from such activities may provide a useful social setting and improve your child’s motivation to succeed with his or her learning. [LAG]

There were also examples in several information booklets of caveats to home-based educators, intended to make them consider the responsibilities of taking complete ownership of their child’s education. Two examples are illustrated here:

Think about your child’s social development too. Relationships with other children have to be learned. Joint activities, the stimulus of seeing other children’s work, borrowing ideas between friends and becoming independent from home are all advantages in school life. [LCO]

\(^{13}\) Each quote referenced in the text has been coded with random letters to preserve anonymity. Each document has a unique code, depending on the LEA or SD from where it originated.
This example was written from the school-based perspective, as it may be interpreted that the school life advantages of joint activities, seeing other work, and borrowing ideas are not found in home education. My contention was that, if cognizant of the benefits of relationships with other children, home educating parents are just as likely as school-based parents to encourage such socialisation, albeit through a different form of facilitation. Examples of the home-based educator's perspective of socialisation were expected to be forthcoming from home education documentation.

In the second example, the home educator's argument that their children do socialize within their large families is addressed. Again, the concern over becoming independent of the family is insinuated in the words:

It is important for your child's development that they (sic) have the chance to mix with other children of all ages and both sexes, not just other family members, on a regular basis. Membership of a young person's organisation should be considered to provide the opportunity for forming relationships in safe and comfortable surroundings. It may also be helpful to consider joining groups for the purpose of expressing any artistic or musical talents. [LAA]

Most references to socialisation could be seen as quite constructive and helpful. Conversely, where documentation was overtly biased towards the school model of school (secondary socialisation), it could be viewed as lacking relevance to the home-based educators' situation, which promotes primary socialisation. One comment, perhaps intended to make home-based educators consider the implications of their decision, came across quite negatively to me:

Consider very carefully whether in later years your child may feel that his or her life chances have been adversely affected by being educated at home. [LCC]

What was behind this statement? By inference, it suggested that home education could adversely affect a child's life chances. In terms of socialisation, or curriculum taught, or lack of autonomy and independence from the family — I was not sure. This bothered me, as it was an indication that at least some LEAs were not in favour of some aspects of home-based education, warranting further exploration in telephone interviews.

After finding references to socialisation in the LEA documents, perceiving it to be a point of tension between the two groups studied, I was surprised to find no references to socialisation in the SD documentation. No guidelines, caveats or advice. Rather than an indication that socialisation is not part of education, the lack of

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14 Many home educating groups encourage socialisation along similar lines by membership to clubs and groups such as 4H, Scouts, Guides, cooperatives.
specific references tied in with the more administrative role of the SDs in monitoring homeschooling.¹⁵

### 10.3.7 What specific references are made regarding curriculum?

Again starting with the LEA documentation, there were considerable references regarding curriculum in policy documents, and information booklets. The National Curriculum (NC), statutorily followed in state schools but not mandatory in home-based education, was nonetheless usually used as a LEA’s starting point for curriculum information. Many of the information booklets referred to the NC and its subjects in answer to the question, ‘What would be seen as a good curriculum?’ The information most often quoted refers to the White Paper, *Better Schools* (1985) and the definition that a curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated:

- **Broad:** It should introduce the pupils to a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills
- **Balanced:** Each part should be allotted sufficient time to make its special contribution, but not so much that it squeezes out other essential parts
- **Relevant:** Subjects should be taught so as to bring out their applications to the pupil’s own experiences and to adult life, and to give the emphasis to practical aspects
- **Differentiated:** What is taught and how it is taught need to be matched to pupils’ abilities and aptitudes.

...A good curriculum would also include other elements at an appropriate level, such as personal and social education, health education, outdoor and environmental education, economic and industrial understanding, citizenship, careers education, home economics and a considerable acquaintance with information technology. [LCI]

When detailing the NC, or a ‘good curriculum’, it was stressed that home-based educators did not have to follow the national curriculum subjects, though one policy document perhaps revealed more about the LEA curriculum policies by quoting:

*The education expected by an LEA who have established, according to their own values and principles, curriculum*

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¹⁵ The annual evaluations that are submitted to the SDs are filed, if satisfactory. If not satisfactory, a review of the child’s work portfolio is done by the SD, not an evaluation of the child’s socialisation progress.
policies based on National Curriculum, the idea of equal opportunities for all, the importance of information technology and of preparing pupils for the world of work, as well as particular systems for pupils with special educational needs, does not always take into account that alternative approaches to educating children, based on a fundamentally different set of principles and aims, may nevertheless be totally appropriate for some pupils. [LZB]

As state officials would be familiar with school-based policy documents, I surmised that they might see home-based education from the school perspective. As another policy document stated, ‘Obviously, the LEA has the view that children’s educational needs are best met by attendance at school but the [home] visit should not be seen as adversarial.’[LZC] Such wording, suggesting that some LEAs would see children’s educational needs best met by school-based curricula and school attendance, would do little to dissipate tensions with defensive home-based educators.

Also found in the documentation were a series of questions revolving around precise wording taken from the law and the NC. Such questions included asking about access to a broad and balanced curriculum, appropriate to the child’s age, ability and aptitude. In addition, questions about time allocation for teaching, days taught and specific subjects taught revealed the school-based perspective:

The equivalent of four hours teaching time a day, for 200 days a year, is sufficient time for providing a broad and balanced curriculum. [LAW]

Having said this, whilst home education time management cannot be comparable to school education, LEA documents may need to follow some recognizable, standardized format, in order to allow comparable monitoring reports between individual LEA officials. Especially in light of the variety of teaching styles and philosophies of home-based educators, some formatting of policy and questioning may be most suitable for state officials. As one policy document noted, however, the law does not mandate requests for specific documents or information:

Parents need to present evidence, in an appropriate form, that would, on the balance of probabilities, convince a reasonable person that a suitable education was being provided. [LZC]

Most of the reviewed documents listed a set of questions for the home-based educators, to presumably encourage careful consideration of the LEAs’ perception of what might provide a ‘suitable education’:

- Will the planning and resourcing support a broad and balanced curriculum?
- Are the plans sufficiently clear for the longer term (the year ahead)?
- Are the short-term plans sufficiently clear to create effective learning?
• What relationships are there between different aspects of approaches to learning?
• Will the child be involved in a proper range of activity – talk, writing, practical work, visual presentations, imaginative play?
• How will assessment and recording of progress be managed?
• Which adults will be involved and how do their skills and knowledge relate to the proposed curriculum?
• Are parents aware of the public education benchmarks (esp GCSE) which enable access to FHE and work opportunities?
• Is effective use being made of educational broadcasts and of visits?
• Does the child have somewhere to study quietly? [LZE]

Another style of informing home educators about the LEAs' perspective on curriculum was advice given to parents indicating they were more likely to succeed in educating the children if they:
• Try to ensure that the learning process involves your child in a wide range of practical activities and is systematically planned.
• Try to take full advantage of all the resources available around you.
• Give great importance to reading in your programme.
• Have a programme of educational visits and broadcasts planned. Make sure they are prepared in advance and followed up afterwards.
• Provide opportunities which help with physical development and ones [sic] which allow social interaction to take place in different contexts.
• Make your approaches to learning more enjoyable by varying the style and content, and the processes it involves.
• When necessary, give opportunities for independent study and research, and provide a quiet area for sustained study.[LBA]

In the spirit of recognising that home education programmes could encompass many formats to provide a 'suitable education', a few LEAs found fluid and flexible policy and information documents more useful:

Some parents may wish to teach in a formal manner, using a fixed timetable, which keeps school hours and terms, and a curriculum based on traditional school subjects, perhaps the national curriculum. This approach may be chosen when a child is first withdrawn from school, where the family appreciates the sense of stability
offered by a familiar routine. Also, if a return to school is likely in the future, many families prefer to plan their education in a similar way to school, and with reference to the national curriculum. Sometimes a structured approach is the child's choice.

Other families take advantage of the fact that home-educated children do not have to follow the national curriculum or a timetable, allowing them to have far greater flexibility. They may choose an autonomous approach, allowing the child to determine the areas of study and to decide how, when and what to learn, using individual interests and a natural curiosity as a starting point. Children whose enthusiasm for learning has been seriously affected by school problems often benefit from this relaxed and child-centred approach. Alongside this flexibility, there is usually consistent attention paid to basic literacy, numeracy and social skills. Subjects may be covered by, for example, a study of a family tree, or by a project about the local area. [LCF]

Such flexibility towards the curricula aspects of home education was also seen in these examples:

The important thing to remember is that your child can only start and progress from the point they [sic] are at, not some arbitrary level determined by their age. Find out your child's starting level of attainment and provide work that will allow him/her to move on from that point. [LBG]¹⁶

It is widely accepted that there is no one totally successful method of learning or teaching and that each individual responds differently to the variety of approaches. We are all aware also that children learn at differing rates and at different times. [LAF]

There is no one form of education; children learn in many different ways, at different times and speeds, and from different people. Education does not always need to follow a set plan of 'lessons' or even a 'timetable', but it is a good idea when trying to justify what you are doing to someone else if you can at least show a longer term plan and the ways you are getting there. [LAG]

¹⁶ This LEA, LBG, was also represented in the telephone interviews by the participant coded EWH
Some home educators choose to use a 'discovery' type of education without any formal instruction. The interests of the child at that moment are followed, supported and developed until a new spark set the child off in a different direction. Others have a formal timetable such as you would find in a school and pre-planned courses of study are followed. Yet others do a mixture of both these methods. In fact all styles of education are valid as long as they are suitable. The LEA's interest is in establishing that a suitable education is taking place rather than endorsing any particular method. [LCM]\(^{17}\)

Documents that included a vision of home education that more closely mirrored the home educators' perspective were more likely to inform both groups and less likely to invite tension as a consequence.

Only one LEA parental questionnaire stood out as being so heavily laden with school-based terminology as to be potentially intimidating to home-based educators. This document included asking for details on the aims and objectives of the programme; the concepts to be covered; the skills to be taught; and the subject matter/body of knowledge to be covered.

Examples of statements regarding the curriculum that could be negatively construed by home-based educators were not commonly found, but did exist.

There are no compulsory subjects for parents who educate their children at home because the National Curriculum does not apply to them. However, we are sure that you would not wish to see your child disadvantaged because he or she has not benefited from a broad education similar to that received by other children. [LBZ]\(^{18}\)

Such a statement could have been worded differently, as it has been done in other information booklets, to become a caveat to home education. For example, the following statement could be viewed more favourably by home-based educators:

...consider career choices. These may be limited by the absence of some subjects from the curriculum and it may be difficult to obtain a place in higher education if appropriate pre-requisite qualifications have not been obtained. [LCD]

\(^{17}\) This LEA, LCM, was also represented in the telephone interview by the participant coded EWJ

\(^{18}\) This LEA, LBZ, was also represented in the telephone interview by the participant coded EWC
Rather than using the loaded phrase of *disadvantaging* the child, this LEA has linked the home educators’ curriculum choices with the competitive nature of higher education and the working world. As individualized as home education can be, if the home educated child or family wish to compete with school-based children for higher education places or job prospects, standardized test or examination scores may be necessary.\(^{19}\)

Some of the statements made by LEAs were more transparent than others, showing the school-based perspective or more negative approach to home education. One LEA stated that they ‘need to know the background and experience of the teacher to assess their suitability to provide the education programme’ for the child [LBY]\(^{20}\). This makes the assumption, not required by law that the home educating parent needs to be an experienced teacher. Even worse, in my opinion, was the comment found in one LEA document:

> Please note, however, that the Inspector will not be able to give you guidance on the content of your programme or your methods of delivery. If you need guidance of this kind, it may indicate that your child would be better off in a school. [LAP]

There are home educators who struggle with their choice, undoubtedly. They can get guidance and advice from other home educators, through support networks, or researching education themselves – or they conclude that school is the best educational facilitator for their child. Whilst LEAs would probably not be considered a source of advice for home educators, it is unhelpful to include the comment above in any information booklet. This would just create or exacerbate tensions.

Turning to the SD documents specifically citing curriculum, one document explicitly described the rationale that guides the school districts:

> Parents or legal guardians who choose to participate in a Home Education Program assume full and total responsibility for fulfilling all of the requirements of Florida Law in the education of their child(ren). The [SD] shall neither oversee nor exercise control over the curricula, academic, nor extracurricular program for Home Education. [SBD]\(^{21}\)

Most of the documents received included the Florida Statutes to inform and guide parents. In contrast to the LEAs, not one SD stated what was considered ‘a good curriculum’, but several included the Florida Parent Educators Association (FPEA) booklet or links to its website, both of which give information on curriculum options, approaches and resources. Many SDs included information from the Florida

\(^{19}\) Ray (1999) cites college acceptance of home schoolers studies (Prue 1997, Klicka 1997b, HSLDA 1999, Klicka 1998). See also Klicka (2000) and the HSLDA ratings of colleges and universities by their admissions policies, which indicate admission requirements other than test scores. University admission policies in England and Wales are not shown in similar studies.

\(^{20}\) This LEA, LBY, was also represented in the telephone interviews by the participant coded EWG

\(^{21}\) This SD, SBD, was also represented in the telephone interviews by the participant coded FLC
Department of Education (in booklet form or as a website address), which lists regionally accredited correspondence courses and curriculum suppliers. Also listed is the online Florida Virtual High School, a charter state school, available to home schoolers.

The school-based perspective of the curriculum was not apparent in many of the documents, although two SDs included a standard timetable sheet for home schoolers' reference. One SD also sent a copy of the Sunshine State Standards, and Florida Certificate of Achievement Test (FCAT) information. As with their home-based educator counterparts, home schoolers do not have to follow the state curriculum or the state test.

Noted differences in the documentation from Florida in comparison to England and Wales are over the issue of dual enrollment, or re-entering schools. For dual enrolment, the student has to satisfy various criteria:

- The student will be subject to all applicable rules and regulations pertaining to full-time students, including required immunizations. [SBE]

Home schoolers who want to be dual enrolled in their local school and home school, usually want to take advantage of participation in interscholastic extracurricular activities. Those students that may want high school diplomas at the end of their school year would be required to re-enter the school system in order to graduate. Some documents gave information on the credits required for graduation in Florida public high schools, as well as placement procedures for home schoolers entering public schools at all grade levels. For example,

A student who enters a [SD school] from a [home education program] must meet the entry requirements...

...With appropriate documentation of satisfactory completion of a Home Education Program, a student may be provisionally placed in the regular program for these grades. This provisional placement will be validated before the end of the first 45 days in the program as follows:

i. The judgment of the teacher(s) to whom the student is assigned that the grade placement is correct. This judgment will be based on the student's classroom performance ... and,

ii. A minimum Grade Equivalent Score ... on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) and the Stanford Diagnostic Math Test (SDMT).

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22 Regionally accredited courses are recognized in Florida as providing courses equivalent to those found in the state schools. If the accrediting correspondence school assesses the child's work, this can satisfy the fifth method of evaluation accepted by the SD.

23 Unlike General Certificates of Secondary Education and Advanced Levels of Education (GCSEs and A Levels) qualifications, high school students in the United States are awarded a high school diploma on completion of a certain number of credits. Home schoolers not attending school are not eligible for the diploma, though they can take the General Educational Development (GED), or attain a high school diploma from a regionally accredited correspondence course or the Florida Virtual High School.
Note: The final determination will be based primarily on classroom performance and not on a single test. [SAY]

Though guidance on a particular curriculum is not usual, several documents give suggestions for further research by the parents:

- It is strongly recommended that home education parents affiliate with a home education support group of their choice for further guidance and direction. [SBE]

One SD gave useful website links on its site for DOE Course Descriptions (Grade 6-12); Dual Enrollment; FCAT Explorer; Florida Statutes; Florida Virtual School; General Education Development; GED — State of Florida; Grade Level Expectations; Live Homework Help; Public Library System; Regionally Accredited Correspondence Programs; Student Progression Plans; and Testing Schedules. [SAO]

Two information leaflets stood out from the pack for their particular approach. In one SD, collaboration with the local district leader of a large support group was made and highlighted. On page 3 of the document, the home schooling parent wrote an open letter, saying amongst other things,

- Needless to say, home schooling is quite a challenge! It is not a decision to be made without careful planning. Some topics to cover before you decide to home school include budgeting, age appropriate curriculum, time management, field trips, family support, etc.

- ...This packet is full of information and I urge you to view your school district as your partner in education. [SBC]

Taking the collaboration of home schoolers and the school district one step further, another SD had created a blended school project, to offer certain subjects and field trips to home schoolers from the public school system. Through the blended school project, the SD can get funding from the state (FTE — full-time enrollment) for part-time enrollment of home schoolers whereas the home schoolers have access to free classes. As stated in the SD document, one home schooling representative of a support group saw trust as a factor for the home school community when working with the public school district. I saw this notion of trust as being particularly important when dealing with tensions between the two groups.

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24 This SD, SAO, was also represented in the telephone interview by the participant coded FLG
10.3.8 What other issues stand out in the LEA/SD documentation?

The documentation provided or obtained from the LEAs and SDs was very similar in many ways, indicating that several authorities had collaborated on the content in the information leaflets. This is acceptable if such information is based on the law – the problem arises with interpretation of the law by individual LEA or SD policy makers. In the LEA documents, two interpretations of the law were most significant, and warranted follow up in the telephone interviews. Firstly, almost without exception, the LEA’s home visit was detailed in the documents as standard monitoring practice, even though the law does not distinguish any one method of monitoring home-based educators. Most of the LEAs went into detail about the home visit, what to expect, and what home-based educators could do to facilitate the visit. There were few examples of the documents acknowledging that home-based educators did not have to have a home visit, but could opt for another method of monitoring. An example of the typical information about home visits followed by a second example that stays carefully within the law, are provided here:

When you have notified the Local Education Authority that you plan to educate your child at home a [LEA officer] will arrange to visit you to discuss your plans. Additionally, once you have been educating your child at home for a period of time, a [LEA officer] will visit and monitor the effectiveness of the provision you are making. [LAC]

Staying within the law:

The LEA will make informal enquiries of you to satisfy itself that you are providing an ‘efficient education’...

LEA often undertakes this task by making home visits at times that are mutually agreed between yourself and our representative. You may or may not wish your child to be present at these visits...

We also acknowledge that you may, at any stage, not wish to meet the LEA representative in your home and instead, may prefer to let us know about the education you are providing in other ways. For instance you may choose one or more of the following:

- Meet at another venue with an LEA representative with or without your child being present
- Send a report setting out your educational plans
- Provide evidence in some other mutually acceptable way

In all cases the LEA will allow sufficient time for the family to set in hand their arrangements for home education and also time for the family to choose how they will present their evidence. [LCM]

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25 In fact, LEAs are under no obligation to monitor home-based educators if they feel the child is receiving a suitable education.
That most of the LEAs viewed the home visit as the method *de rigueur* was intriguing to me. I expected to understand the policy better once I interviewed the LEAs and compared the home-based educators' views on home visits.

The second interpretation of the law, that caused me some alarm, was over child protection issues\(^{26}\). At first, I was alerted by the concern of two LEAs responding to my postal questionnaire:

I am very worried by the possibility of parents removing their child from school, then moving to another LEA. Children can 'vanish' and be exploited e.g. as house slaves/ for sexual abuse. [LAQ]

Unfortunately a small percentage of parents with Munchausen's by Proxy – these are the most difficult cases. [LAA]

I found it hard to believe these comments from two opinionated LEAs. Yet, by looking through the documentation received, I picked up a few examples that could indicate concerns by LEAs. Three policy documents seemed to imply in their wording that child protection issues could be linked to home-based educators:

**ANY CONCERN WHICH MAY BE A CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE IS CLEARLY VITAL AND PROCEDURES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED** and will obviously be a prime concern during the visit. It certainly is the case that some parents withdraw their children from school because they fear enquiries over child protection issues. **PLEASE SHARE ANY DOUBTS WITH THE PRINCIPAL E.W.O. [LCU]\(^{27}\)**

[emphasis of caps and bold face in the original document]

Arrange for the Education Welfare Officer for the school last attended to make contact with the parent to discuss the decision and their reasons and provide them with the [LEA's] information on home education. It will be important to gather further information about the child e.g. ethnicity, looked after, special education needs. [LAN]

Following registration of the child on the Education Otherwise register there should be dual visits between the nominated Adviser and EWO. The Advisers have responsibility for checking the curriculum content and delivery ensuring that it is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the individual child. The EWO's observations on the home environment and the responses of the parent and child could be significant in determining whether

\(^{26}\) Child protection was defined by the Surrey County Council's 'Area Child Protection Committee' (ACPC) as being four-fold, under the categories neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. (May 2005, Internet)

\(^{27}\) This LEA, LCU, was also represented in the telephone interview by the participant coded EWF
arrangements are suitable. There may also be child protection issues to consider. [LZA]

Such concerns over child protection issues were not directly mentioned in the information booklets for home-based educators, though some stated that monitoring consisted of seeing the home-based child as well as looking at the samples of work:

- What can I do to prepare for the Inspector’s visit?
  There is no single answer to this question. One approach would be to show the Inspector a written programme together with some samples of the child’s work. You will almost certainly be required to answer some questions and may be required to allow the Inspector to see the child at work. [LAP]

The [LEA official] will look at the child’s programme and work and will want to talk to the child as well as to the parent and others who teach the child. [LAJ]

As I read the job titles of LEA officials responsible for monitoring the children, I also paid attention to the policy behind the choice of personnel. In addition to an Adviser to discuss the child’s curriculum, one LEA stated that an Education Social Worker was necessary:

An Education Social Worker will arrange a visit to your home to discuss the procedures and any welfare issues. [LCL]

Such a statement suggested that the LEA is starting from a perspective that home-based educators may have welfare issues!28 Now, child protection issues could be argued to be a general concern that LEAs have towards all school children who are not in school, including truants, expelled children or sick children. Some LEAs may have distorted perspectives based on their vision of child protection provision in schools (visibility to adults, access to professional help, pastoral services, etc.) From the documentary evidence, such LEAs are in the minority, though. However, concerns emanating from LEAs could create tension or mistrust by the home-based educators, especially those who are successfully home educating, irked rather than perturbed by such concerns. Though not strictly an educational issue, child protection concerns appear to be woven into LEA policy, mainly through home visits or information-searching techniques.

From the SD and LEA documentation, superfluous information was often requested. LEAs suggested information that would be requested at the home visits, such as who teaches the children, or reasons for choice of home education, which has little bearing on the evidence that would convince a reasonable person of suitable education. Some SDs used standardized forms for home schoolers, requesting

28 The Surrey County Council ACPC also cites that a risk factor is a parent who may ‘persistently refuse to allow access on home visits’ (section 5.2.4)
additional information\textsuperscript{29} rather than just requiring the name, address and parents' signature for each home schooling child. An example of an SD policy exceeding the requirements in law was found in papers that needed notarization, or a copy of the child's birth certificate. Interesting to me was how home educators dealt with requests for extra information - were they accommodating to the LEAs and SDs or reticent about providing more than was necessary?

10.4 Initial to Emerging Categories in State Official Data

The initial analysis on information booklets received from participating LEAs and SDs was based on 74 LEA documents received (43% of the total LEAs) and 24 SD documents received (36% of the total SDs). Each document was analysed to see if the initial categories of legal rights, duties and responsibilities, curriculum, socialisation, and cooperative ventures could be drawn out\textsuperscript{30}. To do this, each document was analysed for categories as detailed in Figure 10:6.

Examples of each category are found in Appendix VIII. Similarities in content for LEA and SD documents include the percentage of booklets that contained the laws verbatim (LEAs = 82%, SDs = 96%), laws in layman's terms (LEAs = 95%, SDs = 96%), parental duties explained (LEAs = 95%, SDs = 96%) and LEA/SD duties explained (LEAs = 89%, SDs = 92%).

Whereas 89% of LEA documents informed about LEA monitoring procedures, there was no comparable information in the SD documents. However, 100% of SD documents informed home schoolers about the notice of intent, with some school districts even including a notice of intent form. Only 71% of SDs included information on a letter of termination, with some prepared forms included in the documentation.

Two categories found in the LEA documents, but absent from any SD documents related to definitions of terms and caveats to home educators. As the law in England and Wales leaves room for interpretation, some LEAs felt it useful and perhaps necessary to define certain words or phrases from the law. The contrasting detailed Florida law leaves less room for interpretation by either home schoolers or SD officials. The category of caveats to home educators was also absent from SD documentation, which intrigued me. The need for some LEAs (68%) to inform home-based educators to think about the potentially positive and negative aspects of home education warranted a better understanding in the telephone interviews. A third category, on curriculum information, was positioned differently in LEA or SD documentation - LEA curriculum information tended to offer examples of 'a good curriculum' or what constituted a 'good curriculum'; SD documents gave contact information for regionally accredited correspondence courses.

\textsuperscript{29} Grade level, last school attended, reason for home schooling, social security number, gender and race were some of the superfluous information requested.

\textsuperscript{30} The size and population growth were determined by the postal questionnaire returns.
Figure 10:6 highlights the categories used to help code the documentation data. Whilst I only found two instances of interpreted law, open to misunderstanding in SD documentation, there were several examples in LEA documents. In each and every case, the potential for misunderstanding is created by the usage of words or misinformed policy. However, there were many more examples of the law interpreted correctly and explained clearly.\(^\text{31}\)

**Figure 10:6 Categories from the LEA/SD information booklets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEA/SD booklets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Education laws/statutes verbatim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education laws/statutes in layman’s terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parental duties explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- LEA/SD duties explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Useful contacts, addresses, websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- DfES/FLDOE information on home education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interpreted law, open to misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parental duties open to misinterpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Misleading or incorrect information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Additional information provided/requested/expected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEA booklet specific**
- Curriculum information with resources
- Monitoring procedures explained
- Definitions of terms used
- Caveat to home-based educators
- Additional useful information for home-based educators
- Monitoring misinformation

**SD booklet specific**
- Letter of intent
- Letter of termination
- Curriculum information
- Useful information
- Useful resources

As the questionnaire data, the opinions insinuated, and the categories classified from the documentation, led to more questions than answers, I compared

\(^{31}\) Each category example that had misinformation, or the potential for misunderstanding, is given in Appendix VIII, with annotated explanations.
my initial categories with those that were revealed from the state officials’ data. These emerging categories became:

**Emerging Categories in Quantitative Data Search**
- Legal rights, duties, responsibilities
- Curriculum control
- Secondary socialisation
- Child protection issues
- Cooperation between state officials and home educators

What is more, it became apparent that though home education was a viable option in England and Wales and in Florida under similar provisions in the law, the differences revealed in the documentation compelled a comparative study. By understanding, for example, the nature of curriculum control from the home educator and state official perspective, as compared in each society, the potential for tension could be inferred. Thus, data gathered from the home educators’ support groups was analysed and is presented next.

**10.5 Overview of home educators’ Internet documentation search and data analysis**

To view the comparable information documents from home education support groups, I mainly used Internet sources and free publications, as I felt home educators would be more likely to access free information or word-of-mouth information from other home educators. As I wanted to compare the written word at this stage, freely accessible Internet sources of information (based on generic aspects of home education) were my main focus. Belonging to a national support group in England and a state group in Florida, I also used their magazines to gauge perceptions towards certain issues.

In comparative mode, I analysed the home educators’ documentation for similarities to the LEA or SD documents. Hence, the legal content, educational philosophies, socialisation and curriculum issues, were all highlighted. The question of home visits and child protection concerns were addressed in the home-based educators’ documents, and other issues that were revealed as important were illustrated.

Whilst the LEAs’ estimate of home-based educators was given on the recognition that many are unknown to the authorities, the findings from a support group suggested a higher estimate than the LEAs reported. Unfortunately, it was not clear in the findings if such a discrepancy was a cause for concern.

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32 As there are a diverse number of home education groups based on specific religious, moral or educational philosophies, I wanted to compare documentation that was more in line with the state officials’ generalised information.
Home educators advised members or interested people on issues pertaining to the law, curriculum, and socialisation. Support groups in both societies insinuated the state officials' tendency to interpret the law, so they gave guidance on how to deal with situations. The curriculum, far from being tied to public school requirements, was presented to home educators in many ways, as resources to research, as well as online and correspondence courses to access.

Specific to the home-based educator support groups, socialisation was considered as an area most novice home educators have to deal with. In contrast, home schooling support groups illustrated the benefits of joining a support group to address the issue of socialisation.

Two issues that surface only with home-based educators in England and Wales were home visits and child protection. Whilst home visits were detailed in most of the documentation found, child protection formed part of the home visit issue. I concurred that this indicated the home-based educators' perception of education and welfare being conflated by the LEAs.

Reviewing the home educators' documentation allowed me to compare against the state officials' documentation, construct questions for the interviews, and to see emerging categories that would enable further analysis.

10.5.1 The size of the home educating population, according to home educators

Patricia Lines (1996) recognises that a realistic measurement of the home educating population in the United States is unlikely at the present time. Nonetheless, at least one support group estimated that the home educating population in England and Wales is 1% of the total school age population, which far exceeds the state officials' estimate. Are the 'unknown' home-based educators a concern to the LEAs? From the home-based educator's perspective, it was important to interview at least one 'hidden' family, to understand their rationale in comparison to the LEA's perspective.

The numerous home schooling websites that I accessed did not give a comparable percentage of home schoolers, but did direct users to the Florida Department of Education Statistical Brief which reported 45,333 home schooling children in the 2002-2003 academic year. As home schoolers have to register with the SD as a matter of law, I was not sure that there would be the same concern over 'hidden' families.

10.5.2 Legal issues

Looking first at the material informing home educators on legal aspects, most websites in England and Wales and in Florida cited the law verbatim, and in layman's terms. Revealing mistrust for the authorities to stay within the letter of the law, there were several examples of how to deal with the law to avoid misinterpretation by either side.
For example, the parent questionnaire sent by many LEAs, is often based on a school perspective of education, teaching and learning. This support group suggested not using the standardized format:

I will not be returning the questionnaire included with your letter as it is not relevant to our style of education.

[WLZZ]

The same support group recommended that home-based educators make contact with the LEA showing their own knowledge of the law and stating how they will comply, on their terms:

I understand that case law has established that, since no such 'appearance' can exist or not exist in the absence of any information, it is reasonable for LEA's to make informal enquiries about provision. I understand that, although I have no legal requirement to respond to these enquiries, this could be perceived as an appearance of no provision. In consideration of this understanding of my rights and responsibilities, I will be happy to supply information to you about my arrangements for my child's education once we have had sufficient time to thoroughly consider all the information available about home education and arrive at a method which is best suited to my child's age, aptitude and ability. [WLZZ]

In Florida, a support group made it clear that the written notice of intent that registers the child with the SD needs to have only limited information:

Your written notice of intent must include each of the following:

1. Name of each child (6-16 years of age)
2. Birth date of each child named
3. Address
4. A parent's signature.

...there is no official or required form which must be submitted.

[WSZ]

The same support group advised that the annual evaluation should be sent in to coincide with the SD's deadlines, where possible:

Some superintendents have established deadlines for receiving the evaluation in order to help them with their bookkeeping. While nothing in the law requires families to comply with a particular date, most families do comply unless circumstances make it impossible to do so. [WSZ – 2000 edition]

Both home-based educators and home schoolers advise, through the support groups, to keep records of all correspondence with the state officials, and to send requested or required documents by certified, recorded mail. This would obviously help in matters under dispute.
As for additional information required by LEAs or SDs of the home educators, guidance was given on the strict interpretation of the law. In this way, home educators can defend their reluctance to give extra information on the letter of the law – it is up to the LEAs or SDs to take matters further. I found it interesting to note that in situations that might escalate into legal disputes, home schoolers have a dedicated legal support group, and political lobbying group that will work on their behalf. There does not seem to be the equivalent support for home-based educators in England and Wales, though support groups can have affiliated legal representatives.

10.5.3 Socialisation

Two issues, which were picked up in the literature, and amplified especially in the LEA documentation, were also found in home education material. Socialisation, addressed on several support group websites in England and Wales, was conspicuously absent from the Florida support group documentation. Whilst information from home-based educators' support groups answered the question, 'What about socialisation?' with personal examples or carefully worded responses, home schoolers mention support groups.

As soon as I mention home education, I seem to be asked how we cope with 'socialisation'. People ask me how my children will be able to get along with people from different backgrounds, and how they will fit into society as adults, if they haven't been through the ups and downs of school life.

So when someone asks you, 'How do you deal with the problem of socialisation?' try finding out exactly what they mean by the word. [WLYY]

This was just part of a long extract from a particular home-based educator's website. It echoed other support groups in England and Wales, where personal experiences of dealing with the socialisation issue were interspersed with research references that found no discernable difference in socialized home educated or school educated children.

In contrast, Florida support groups promoted the strength and support that like-minded home schoolers can offer one another, rather than socialisation per se:

Functions:
- To provide support and encouragement to its members
- To disseminate proper information regarding the law, how to begin homeschooling and how to maintain an effective homeschool
- To sponsor local field trips for the children on a weekly or monthly basis

33 See Shyers (1992), and Smedley (1992), for example.
To provide extracurricular activities and events such as spelling bees, science fairs, language art festivals, talent nights, art/music/dance classes...
[taken from WSZ, 2000 edition]

In mirroring the LEAs and SDs, it seems that socialisation was less of an issue in Florida than it was in England and Wales. A useful comparison would be the individual’s perspective towards socialisation in the two societies, which was addressed in the telephone interviews.

10.5.4 Curriculum issues

A plethora of educational philosophies, teaching and learning styles are illustrated on support group websites, as links, and in home educating publications. The four categories (religious, parent-led, child-led, reactive basis) seen by the LEA participants in this study were also seen by home educators, amongst others. What is apparent from the wealth of information is the choice for the individual home educating family – no one style of education was promoted over another, when all were presented. There were individual websites and organizations that focused on their particular philosophy or religious belief (for example, the Charlotte Mason method, or Delayed Academics, Christian or Muslim groups), but there were also opportunities to explore and research many different forms of home education.

Specifically regarding the curriculum, home-based educators and home schoolers offered information on curriculum resources, as well as online and correspondence services. Though home-based educator support groups mentioned the National Curriculum, it was usually in reference to the GCSE and A Level examination subjects. I understood that the information was to guide those children who were competing for school or higher education places, or jobs that required standardized testing. In the same way, Florida support groups offered curriculum information, including regionally accredited correspondence courses that award high school diplomas. In addition, one support group detailed the graduation requirements of public school children, and the minimum requirements for admission to a Florida university.

10.5.5 Child Protection Issues and Home Visits

Two areas of concern that surfaced in the LEA documents - home visits and child protection - are also found in home-based educators’ documentation. Though the home visit is one of several methods to provide evidence of suitable education to the LEAs, some support groups discouraged home-based educators from them:

By allowing an LEA officer into their home a parent surrenders control of the evidence [of education taking place in accordance with section 7 of the 1996 Education Act] The LEA will consider their perception of everything

34 Public high school graduates need 24 credits, whereas 18 credits gain admission to a Florida university. By detailing the subjects taught at high school in a portfolio and transcript, some universities take this in lieu of a high school diploma. Other entrance requirements, such as a standardised test (SAT, ACT) may still be needed.
they see and hear as evidence and present it as such to the court. [WLXX]

Other support groups were more accommodating to the LEAs, offering alternatives to home-based educators such as sending in an educational philosophy statement, or agreeing to meet with the LEA official on neutral territory. Linked with the home visit and tying into child protection concerns of some LEAs, was the LEA’s conflation of education and welfare, as perceived by home-based educators:

Education and welfare issues should be kept separate as far as possible, to prevent the possibility that differences of opinion with the LEA over educational provision could become mixed up with judgements about welfare. [WLZZ]

Finding evidence of concerns over home visits and child protection with both LEAs and home-based educators fuelled my speculation that such concerns would create tension. In contrast, no child protection issues or home visit information was found in home schooling documentation.

10.6 Comparison of emerging categories

From Figure 10:7, it is clear that there are comparable categories between state officials’ and home educators’ documentation, and also between the two societies. Subtleties in how each category was envisaged by each group fuelled my perception that tensions could result, and thus required further consideration. In addition, specific to LEAs and home-based educators, the issue of child protection was necessary to understand from both perspectives in the telephone interviews.

Figure 10:7 Comparison of emerging categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs</th>
<th>Home-based educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Legal rights, duties, responsibilities</td>
<td>• Legal rights duties, responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum control</td>
<td>• Curriculum control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secondary socialisation</td>
<td>• Primary socialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child protection issues</td>
<td>• Child protection issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDs</th>
<th>Home schoolers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Legal rights, duties, responsibilities</td>
<td>• Legal rights, duties, responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum choices</td>
<td>• Curriculum choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
<td>• Cooperation/dual enrolment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To recheck the emerging categories that were inferred from the quantitative data, and used as a focus for validating the qualitative data and analysis, I had the opportunity to conduct a second LEA/SD document search via readily available information on the Internet. I looked for the same categories as detailed in Figure 6, as well as the emerging categories revealed from the data. This second analysis of information booklets, produced by LEAs and SDs for parents intending to home educate, was conducted from January 2006 to August 2006. All documentation was accessed via the Internet, on LEA, SD or government websites. A total of 136 LEA documents were analysed, and 22 SD documents, which represented 79% and 33% of the total LEAs and SDs respectively. To get home education information on specific websites, several different phrases had to be used. For the LEAs, the most common phrase to access information was ‘Educating your child at home’, whilst ‘home education’ was the most common term used by SDs. Many of the LEAs and SDs made use of useful contacts and websites, with hyperlinks to government sites and home education support groups. In fact, all 22 Welsh local authorities now redirect parents to the DirectGov site that gives generic information on home education, as well as links to EO, HEAS and Parents Centre. In addition, though I retained anonymity for all participants to my original study, I produced a summary report (see Appendix IX) for interested persons, including LEA officials in 2006 – this study named my choices of good policy and practice found on the Internet websites.

Over half the LEA and SD websites that I was able to access had links to home education support groups, revealing a more cooperative effort between state officials and home educators. That almost 80% of all LEAs had access to home education information was a considerable change in policy from the beginning of this study. In contrast, the Florida Department of Education has always had access to information for home schoolers, including a statistical brief. The home schooling state-wide support group, the Florida Parent Educators Association, has also always had information freely available on the Internet throughout the study, as has Education Otherwise, one of the national home educators group in England and Wales.

Noted in several Internet information sources was a change in wording, more in line with the home educating support groups, rather than a school-based perspective. There were examples of LEA and SD collaboration with home educating support groups to write the information for home educators (see Cornwall LEA and Orange SD). This cooperative, collaborative effort will be brought up in Chapter 13.


36 Examples of good policy and practice by LEAs included Bedfordshire, Cumbria and Coventry websites in England, and Orange and Okaloosa websites in Florida. Leeds, Staffordshire and Cornwall are also very useful websites, but Cornwall needs to be accessed through the exact phrase ‘elective home education’.

37 When gathering information booklets from LEAs, I had such difficulty gaining access to any home education information on the Internet LEA sites, that I abandoned the search of 172 LEAs at the time and concentrated on the information booklets and questionnaire returns.
10.7 Summary

An analysis of postal questionnaires and information booklets from LEAs and SDs, and information available on the Internet sites of LEAs, SDs, home educator support groups and government sites, aided the development of emerging categories from the data. Approaching the data with a focus on the initial categories of law, curriculum, and socialisation, it became apparent that greater complexity to each category was needed. Thus, by viewing the state officials' and home educators' perspectives in the written word, the potential for tension was considered in the emerging categories. Legal rights, duties and responsibilities become dependent upon interpretation by each side; curriculum issues seem to centre around control; socialisation seemed to be used by home educators and state officials without a clear understanding of the other's concept of the word; and child protection issues were of concern to LEAs, but seen as a conflation of education and welfare by home educators. In spite of the emerging categories highlighting potential areas of tension, there was also evidence of cooperative ventures between state officials and home educators, including information sharing.

However, this quantitative search did not take me far enough to answer my guiding question, *Are there fundamentally different attitudes between home educators and state officials towards home education?* Indications in the written word, once compared, would imply that there are fundamentally different attitudes that could lead to tension between state officials and home educators. Such attitudes were based on the group perspective of state officials and home educators; yet comparison with the individual's perspective would add depth to analysis and discussion of issues. The focus on discordant attitudes may also be more transparently revealed through individual voices. Hence, the next two chapters present the qualitative data and analysis that helped to inform the discussion chapter 13.
PHASE II – THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Introduction

Chapters 11 and 12 illuminate the British and American state officials’ and home educators’ perspectives on the categories that emerged from the quantitative data. The decision to present the chapters as mainly descriptive was deliberate, to amplify attitudes expressed by individuals. However, comparisons were continuously made in both chapters so that the overall discussion of the participants’ attitudes could be appropriately dealt with in Chapter 13. In addition, the quantitative data and analysis of the previous chapter adds to the overall discussion in this multi-stage study.

Before presenting the two qualitative chapters, a subsidiary piece precedes them. Though I was unwilling to detail each participant in the qualitative phase to any great extent, lest I compromised promised anonymity, a brief sketch of each participant was useful. Each individual perspective lends the reader similar or contrasting insights towards the cluster of categories analysed, that might mirror or contrast with their own perspectives towards home education.

Ideology of education

I recognized that an individual state official’s ideology of home education would be intertwined with the policy and procedures set by the LEA or SD. Likewise, an individual home educator’s ideology of home education would show solidarity to the group perspective as detailed in Chapter 10 from support group website material. Based on previous chapters, I expected to find some level of discordance between state officials and home educators over curriculum, socialization, child protection and monitoring procedures, as well as limited evidence of cooperative ventures. Thus, state officials could indicate that education should be uniform, follow a curriculum common to schools, including citizenship education and standardized testing. Teachers and schools would be seen as the best providers of education, suitable for the multicultural needs of a communitarian-based society. Home educators could be more likely to express the individuality of their curriculum, which did not necessarily involve standardized testing. Home education would be seen as the best fit for the child, with primary socialization from the family as a defining reason for choice. Whilst not expecting to find strong libertarian philosophies guiding home educators, I expected to see more examples of home educators separating themselves from the local education authorities.

It was also apparent from the quantitative analysis that cooperative ventures were possible and sometimes encouraged by both state officials and home educators. For example, the LEA documentation, available on LEA websites, indicates the subtle changes towards home-based education over the course of this study. In addition, compatible attitudes were revealed in texts that complemented the other’s viewpoint, rather than directly opposing it. Thus I also expected to find examples of attitudes that led to compatibility between the two groups.
INTERVIEWED PARTICIPANTS OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

Introduction

Although aware that I was speaking to individuals who would display their personal perceptions with great clarity or perhaps ambiguity, I also understood the state officials' accountability to policy and procedure. Policies on home education, anchored in the laws that exist, were manifest in documentation received from the LEA or SD, and their implementation of monitoring or evaluation policies.

As Petrie noted,

Experience suggests that the few serious disputes between LEAs and home educators are confined to local authority areas where the policy and procedures relating to home education are inappropriate and not completely in accord with education law.


If there were any policy and procedures that were still inappropriate or not in accordance with the law, I wanted to uncover them in this study. By leaning on Colebatch's (1998:13) concept of policy, I hoped to understand how the policy explains what people are doing, and [makes] it appropriate for them to do it. So it is not simply a descriptive term: it is a concept in use, and understanding "policy" means understanding the way in which practitioners use it to shape the action.

Chapter 10's documentation presentation strongly suggested that the origin of state officials' policies on home education emanate from the laws and the Departments of Education, at a national or state level. Documents either quoted the law verbatim or presented it in layman's terms, to guide both state officials and home educators. Evidence of interpretation of the law was seen in local level policies, but not at the national or state level. Inappropriate policy and procedures was considered rather subjective, depending on the home educators' or state officials' perspective.

Emerging from the quantitative data, and suggested from the literature, were several categories that I wanted to explore more fully in individual interviews with 10 LEAs, 8 SDs, 5 home-based educators and 8 home schoolers. However, in order to preserve anonymity for the participants as far as possible, I did not obtain nor present details that might have identified the individuals. Nor did I intend for the home educators to be a representative sample of the home educating population. Acknowledging that not all perspectives will have been captured, the participants nonetheless lend individual voices to the categories filtered from the literature and quantitative data on curriculum, socialisation, facets of home education law, cooperation and conflict.
Without giving identifying features of the individuals, it was nonetheless useful for the reader to have a general vision of who participated in the interviews, hence the prologues below. Chapters 11 and 12 follow this, where qualitative data is presented in a comparative fashion to illustrate the similarities and differences, as well as discordant or compatible attitudes held by state officials and home educators.

Prologue to the state officials' voices

For the LEAs, there were seven women and three men, as compared to five women and three men representing the SDs. Only one LEA official and one SD official were exclusively working for home educators; all the other participants had a variety of job titles and responsibilities to other matters in the LEA or SD. These responsibilities included work that was diametrical to home education, such as monitoring excluded pupils, or at-risk pupils. Most individuals worked in a team or department that was no larger than three people, and when there were three, one of these was a secretary. The participants had been in their particular job for a minimum of one year, to a maximum of eighteen years (though not necessarily working with home educators for that length of time). Job descriptions for the participating interviewees ranged from comprehensive to minimal. Most interviewees were responsible for the comprehensive range of LEA or SD duties. Only three interviewees claimed no prior experience with home education; several of the LEA or SD officials had been teachers or specialist teachers before taking their jobs. At least one interviewee was previously a school psychologist, another was a school counselor for school dropouts, and another was a social worker. There was potential in this group of interviewees for perspectives towards home education to conflict with other responsibilities or job experiences, which made them a group worth studying.

Each state official will now be briefly introduced, coded as either an LEA or a SD. The randomly chosen three-letter name was to maintain anonymity, as was the deliberate omission of the pronouns 'he' or 'she'. The LEA officials are presented first, followed by the SD officials.

The Local Education Authority (LEA) Officials

LEA EWA\(^2\) EWA works for home-based educators on a part-time basis, having other responsibilities in the department. However, EWA provides the full range of support for home-based educators, from producing information sheets, to home visits, and producing an annual report for the LEA. A former teacher of 5-16 year olds, EWA also worked with disaffected pupils, and tutored privately. EWA has got child protection concerns, especially in relation to Traveller children.\(^3\) EWA's

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1 'Comprehensive' denotes the full range of duties including keeping records, liaising with others in the department, informing home educators, conducting monitoring or evaluation procedures for the home educators. 'Minimal' denotes an administrative category of filing registered home educators with the LEA or SD.

2 A prefix code was used when quoting from particular state officials to show the origin as either England and Wales or Florida. Thus, LEA preceding a code signifies state officials from England and Wales, whereas the prefix SD denotes state officials from Florida.

3 The term Traveller is used to cover those identifiable groups who either are, or have been, traditionally associated with a nomadic lifestyle, and includes Gypsy / Travellers, Fairground families (or Show people), Circus families, New Travellers, and Bargees and other families living on boats. (definition taken from www.exchangehouse.ie , July 10\(^6\) 2005)
interest in being informed about home education has led to communication and information sharing with other LEAs in the area, and to an opinion that LEAs and home educators could work together more cooperatively.

LEA EWB  EWB also works part-time for home-based educators, providing the full range of support. EWB was also a former teacher with twenty years experience. Also believing that child protection issues could exist, EWB seemed especially wary of those home-based educators that have not made themselves known. The teacher mentality was evident in EWB’s view of the home-based educator’s teaching environment, though there was an acceptance that school is not right for all children. Though EWB networked with other LEAs on home education matters, there was a perception held that the local support groups were not supportive of the LEAs. EWB revealed definite views on socialisation, believing school-based secondary socialisation to be best.

LEA EWC  EWC deals mainly with excluded children, with home-based educators taking up 10% of time, in an administrative capacity. EWC believed that some home educators were not working for the child’s best interests, as they had reacted against the school place offered. EWC was also concerned with child protection issues, believing that the law does not protect the child’s welfare, from socialisation to skilled teaching accessibility. EWC mistakenly believed that the LEA’s responsibility included making sure the child was not isolated.

LEA EWD  EWD did not give me as much information as I would have liked, but did inform me that the responsibility to home-based educators is part-time, and part of the overall job that deals with school inclusions, attendance, and exclusions. EWD saw child protection issues as part of the LEA’s responsibilities when monitoring home-based educating children. At the same time, EWD saw the benefit of being encouraging to home-based educators, to develop cooperative relationships, and supported the socialisation opportunities EWD had seen facilitated by the home-based educators.

LEA EWE  A social worker for twelve years, EWE works with home-based educators from an education social worker perspective, alongside an inspector. EWE also had prior teaching experience. EWE believed home-based educators were either doing a good job because they had thought it out well, or were not doing so well because they had reacted to a situation (e.g. not getting their school choice). EWE believed a confident home-based educator would be proud to show the work and his or her child to an LEA officer; if not, EWE became concerned about child protection issues. Having had experience with home-based educators who socialized well or not at all, EWE was open to good socialisation that was not necessarily based on a school model.

LEA EWF  EWF is the administrative officer that deals with keeping a register of home-based educators, liaising with the LEA individuals that do the home visits, giving information to home-based educators, liaising with colleges for Year 11 placements, and liaising with Traveller families. EWF’s particular experiences with home-based educators have created a wary perspective. Most home-based educators were seen by EWF to be reacting to a situation, and considered not to be intellectually
capable of successfully home educating their children. EWF also had specific concerns about child protection issues and socialisation, based on cases that had surfaced in the LEA. At the same time, EWF believed 'mainstream education' (the term used in the interview) is not best for all children.

**LEA EWG**

EWG works as an Education Welfare Officer with another individual to register the home-based educators in the LEA, and complete home visits. Part of EWG's other duties included looking into poor attendance by school pupils, and coordinating the prosecution of parents for non-attendance of their children at school. EWG had concerns that many of the home-based educators in the LEA were not able to meet the challenges of home education, but acknowledged that most of the home visits revealed satisfactory home education. EWG looked for good relationships with the parents, but expected home visits to be the monitoring method laid down by law.

**LEA EWH**

A former teacher, EWH works on all matters of home education in the LEA, and recognized that an increase in numbers could be due to awareness by parents. EWH liked home visits because there was a particular child protection case of a home-based educated child that haunted EWH. Whilst having specific concerns about child protection and isolation (seen in a few instances), EWH organised cooperative efforts with the home-based educating community. EWH believed most relationships with the home-based educators were good, and seemed to be supportive of their decision to home educate if the parents were motivated.

**LEA EWJ**

EWJ's background was not given, but this LEA stood out for being very pro-home education, as long as the home-based educators were motivated to succeed. EWJ saw child protection issues as a red herring, and no more or less prevalent with home-based educators than with children attending school. Advocating compulsory registration was one method EWJ saw to remove the LEA's prejudice towards home-based educators and child protection issues. EWJ also did not accept home visits as the prescribed method of monitoring, and had worked with the local home education support group to improve communication and relationships. EWJ echoed home-based educators when seeing socialisation from their perspective, and accepting their perception, that school-based socialisation is contrived.

**LEA EWK**

EWK has worked for ten years with home-based educators, specifically on home visits. Whilst not totally supportive of home education because of perceived benefits of schooling regarding socialisation and curriculum, EWK had experience with successful home-based educators who maximized their opportunities and progress. EWK had a strong school-based perspective, expecting to see the working environment of the child in a home visit as an indicator for suitable education, and basing monitoring on school-based children. At the same time, EWK recognized the 'conflict of two sets of rights' in trying to accommodate home-based educators.

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4 Events are offered by the LEA such as arts and crafts workshops, exhibitions by publishers, tutor talks, and museum trips.
The School District (SD) Officials

SD FLA  FLA is a former teacher and has been responsible for the home schoolers in the SD for seven years. FLA’s particular policy for home schoolers involved calling in every registered home schooler for a portfolio review in their first three years. FLA was careful to keep records on all the home schoolers, and expected them to maintain their records to an acceptable standard. Though seemingly rigid in gathering more from home schoolers than other SDs’, FLA was quite open to home education. A friend turned to FLA for help with home schooling her seven children, and FLA had read quite well around the subject. Nonetheless, the teacher accountability perspective did permeate through FLA’s dealings with home schoolers.

SD FLB  FLB has had about seven years of experience supervising home schoolers in the school districts. FLB did not have the same need to inspect every home schoolers’ portfolio, seeing the role as more administrative. There was a strong link with this SD and the state home school support group, which FLB felt was important to maintain to validate the SD’s position, and keep up good communication.

SD FLC  FLC seemed to have devoted more time to understanding home schooling, as there was evidence of research into the field. Not only did FLC oversee the administrative part of registered home schoolers, FLC was also involved in a cooperative venture between the home schoolers, local schools and other facilities. By enrolling part-time in the school district school system, home schoolers had access to a variety of programs and events organized by the SD. FLC had a vision, similar to Roland Meighan’s ‘flexischooling’ concept, of home schoolers facilitating local schools, and museums for example, as part of their home education. It was clear that FLC was working with home schoolers in the SD to create programs that will meet the needs of home schoolers and the SDs.6

SD FLD  FLD has responsibility for at-risk students and dropout prevention, as well as the administrative role of registering home schoolers and filing evaluations. FLD had over ten years’ experience as a teacher and counselor, and saw the involvement of the parents as important to successful home schooling. FLD made a point of attending the state home schoolers’ conference, and valued good working relationships with the local support groups. There was a note of concern over socialisation, as FLD believed that home schooling can shelter children too much from the real world.

SD FLE  FLE is secretary to the SD official that has overall responsibility for home schoolers. FLE works in an administrative role, filing registrations and evaluations, answering questions posed by home schoolers. FLE had definite views on home schooling. The lack of standardization over portfolio reviews by certified teachers was an issue with FLE, who felt standardized testing and talking with the child gave a better view of the child’s home schooling year. FLE also felt, in some instances, that home schooling was a form of parental control that didn’t take the child’s rights or needs into account, or expose the children to social opportunities.

6 Whilst the SD does not necessarily want to gain any more control over the home schoolers’ education, the effect of part-time enrollment in the SD gives FTE (full-time education) funding to the district for each home schooled child enrolled in their programme.
outside the family and church. In spite of FLE's views, there was an appreciation that good relationships were forged by not opposing the home schoolers' choice.

**SD FLF**  
I was not given specific information on FLF, but the interview transcript did indicate that FLF did not feel most of the home schoolers in the district were working in the best interests of the child. FLF was frustrated with the law that allows those home schoolers who are not working successfully for their child's education to circumvent the attendance laws for up to two years. At the same time, FLF was impressed with the home schoolers that were doing a good job, with the curriculum and socialisation opportunities.

**SD FLG**  
FLG was a school psychologist who evaluated home schoolers amongst school children, as part of possible special education needs programs. Whilst recognizing that home schoolers could be successful in a variety of ways, FLG was frustrated by the law that gives almost two years of leeway to home schoolers that were not doing a good job, before those home schoolers are compelled to re-enter the school system. FLG did not see socialisation or curriculum issues as a problem with the home schoolers that were motivated to succeed.

**SD FLH**  
FLH has been a teacher and curriculum coordinator, working in the SD for the last eighteen years. The policy in this SD was similar to FLA's as each home schooler is brought in for a portfolio review in the first three years of registration. Though the portfolio had only to show samples of the child's work, FLH felt that a less comprehensive portfolio sometimes did not represent the child's complete development over the year. The teacher perspective emanated through FLH's perceptions, much like FLA.

**Prologue to the home educators' voice**

Keeping the home educators anonymous was one way to access them, especially as two home-based educators were unknown to the LEAs. All home educators were the mothers, primary caretakers and teachers of their children. The smallest family unit consisted of one child, and the largest family unit included five children. Though I was aware at the time of interviewing that some families based their educational choice on religion, I did not ask any home educators for their religious beliefs. If they offered information, I made a note of it.

Anonymity was very important — three home-based educators agreed to be interviewed but would not give me their last name; after the interviews, I could not contact two of these participants to check the transcripts. In addition, all home educators had difficulty finding the time for an interview, as they were looking after the children at the same time. Most of the interviews were much shorter than I would have liked because of the time constraints. Two of the interviews had to be conducted face-to-face, as the telephone technique was not possible.

Each home educator will now be briefly introduced, coded with a prefix of home-based educator (HE) or home schooler (HS):

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6 I decided not to focus on the religious orientations or beliefs of the participants, as research has already stressed the point that many home educators are religiously motivated.
The home-based educators

HE HEA  
Both parents in this family are university graduates, with Dad a chartered accountant and Mum a trained primary school teacher. There are five children, ranging in age from 13, 10, 8, 5, and 2 years old. HEA has always home educated, with the primary reason based on the Bible. The only prepared curriculum used was Saxon Math, for the two older children. Otherwise, HEA told me she used an eclectic curriculum based on the child’s needs or desires. There have been difficulties obtaining suitable resources at times, especially as one of the children is dyslexic. Other difficulties faced included organizing team sports, and finding the time to home educate, as the baby needed more attention. HEA belonged to a Christian support group and took part in organized activities every two weeks.

HE HEB  
Both parents are university graduates with Dad working in Technology Support Systems. Mum was previously teaching at a university. There are three children in the family, ages 5 ½, 3 ½, and 1 year old. HEB has always home educated. Initially they chose to home educate so that the children could be bilingual, as Dad is French. However, HEB said that the initial reason was now insignificant as they were home educating for other ‘good reasons’. There was no prepared curriculum, primarily because of the age of the children. HEB wanted learning to be autonomous and child-led. She was in no hurry to start a formal curriculum. The only problem HEB had encountered was finding the time to home educate around the needs of the baby. She did not have any problems with the LEA as their family was unknown to the authorities. HEB said her life was easier without the LEA knowing about them, but would not be too worried if they contacted her.

HE HEC  
Both parents have diplomas, with Dad working as a computer tutor at a college. There are two children in the family, aged 7 and 3 years old. HEC has been home educating for the last three years. She told me she chose home education because she was disappointed in the education levels, unruly and undisciplined schools. As the family had seen positive outcomes with home education, they felt it was the best choice for their children. HEC noted that their older child was a ‘good reader’ because of the one-to-one education. There was no prepared curriculum used, though HEC says she taught the basics and the subjects she was taught at school. She didn’t leave out subjects, teaching history, science, cookery, maths, English, art, reading, drama and physical education. HEC did not want to be known by the LEA at all.

HE HED  
Parents have both completed university; Dad is a geophysicist and Mum is a former secondary school teacher. Two children, aged 15 and 13 ½ have been taught for five years. HED said that though high supervision of children occurs in primary school with the usual set-up of one teacher per class, the secondary school system has teachers for each subject. It was because it was more difficult for the teachers to know the children well that HED decided to home educate. HED said both children wanted to be home educated as soon as she mentioned it to them. She didn’t follow a prepared curriculum but gave aims of the curriculum followed:

7 As with the coding for the state officials, the three-letter code was randomly chosen and is unique to each home educator.
1- To boost self-confidence, and enable independent learning
2- To look after themselves and become good citizens and family members and to enjoy their leisure
3- To gain qualifications for further and higher education.

[HE HED]

HE HED Both parents had diplomas. Dad was a biochemistry service engineer and Mum was a trainer for adult classes in college. HED had finished home educating her children, but she still volunteered in a relatively large home education support group. The decision to home educate one of HED’s two children was made because one child has Asperger’s Syndrome and was bullied at school. No prepared curriculum was used, but HED taught the basics and allowed the child to follow his own interests. HED’s involvement in a local support group lent a particular insight into the home educators’ perspective.

The home schoolers

HS HSA Both parents are university graduates. Mom was a high school teacher and Dad is a lawyer. There are five children ranging in age from 13, 9, 6, 4, and 2 years old. The family has been home schooling for one year after moving into Florida from out of state. They were unable to find a school comparable to that which the children had attended previously, and were unhappy with the thought of sending the children to public school. The curriculum used was based on the subject matter that was taught in the previous school, with an emphasis on math, writing and the traditional subjects of science, history, handwriting, phonics, spelling, art, physical education, reading, and some music. The only problem HSA faced was trying to teach the 9 year-old maths, though she said she found a way around the stumbling block.

HS HSB Both parents are high school graduates. Mom is a bookkeeper and Dad has a business. They have one child, aged 5, who has always been home schooled. The reason for home schooling was to provide a higher level of education than the parents thought was available with public schools. An eclectic curriculum was used, including Charlotte Mason ideas, unit studies and unschooling. HSB says there were so many resources to choose from that it was sometimes overwhelming.

HS HSC Both parents have diplomas, and Mom has a degree in Art and Design, amongst other qualifications. Mom was also home schooled for part of her education. Dad is an electrician and Mom is a writer and part-time illustrator. They have three children, one of whom has graduated; the other two are 14 and 11 years old. HSC has been home schooling for the past two years, as she was displeased with the public school curriculum, systems of education, testing and promotions. They couldn’t afford private education and worried about safety issues in any school. HSC said one of her children had become physically sick and emotionally withdrawn because of constant pressure and abuse. In home schooling, HSC wanted

To have more control over what my children were learning, their right to express, question and debate their
studies and teachers, their right to a wider variety of courses, minus the busy work. I wanted them to have the tome to explore any and every subject to our satisfaction and not just to the end of a chapter, book, or semester. [HS HSC]

The curriculum used was eclectic and varied because of HSC's educational philosophies. Problems incurred included finding time to home school, as HSC was a student as well, and worked from home.

**HS HSD** Parents are university graduates with Dad a physician and Mom a registered nurse. There are two children in the family, aged 17 and 14, and they have been home schooled for eight years. The initial reason to home school was due to a child's Tourette's Syndrome. HSD said home schooling continued because the family believed it provided a superior education and a more desirable family life. An eclectic assortment of curricula was used, based on the child's individual learning style. Difficulties HSD had included finding the time to teach the children to work within specific timeframes and meeting deadlines. She had also noted lack of support from family, friends, and the local school district. As HSD said,

> When we first began home schooling, friends and family were aghast and feared that the children would receive a substandard education and inadequate socialisation. Most of these objectors are now either home educating their own children or are highly supportive. [HS HSD]

**HS HSE** Parents are university graduates. Dad is a food service manager and Mom is an extension educator. There are three children, the oldest of whom has graduated, and the other two are 18 and 17. They have always been home educated with the primary reason given when the eldest child became anxious and stressed at pre-school. HSE believed Dr. Raymond Moore's philosophy of delayed academics, and wanted to spend time with her children. HSE didn't use a prepared curriculum for most grades apart from 11 and 12, and for math. Instead, unit studies, unschooling and following the child's interests were the focus. HSE has been a volunteer in a local support group for many years and had a particular insight into the home school perspective.

**HS HSF** Both parents are university graduates. Dad is a kitchen designer and Mom is a freelance copy editor and proofreader. There are two children in the family, ages 6 and 3, and they have always been home schooled. The primary reason to home school was that HSF did not want an 'overworked, underpaid stranger' providing for her children intellectually, morally, socially, or safety-wise. There were other, less dominant reasons too, which HSF declined to mention specifically. A prepared curriculum was used, but taken from various sources depending on the subject matter.

**HS HSG** Mom has had some college education, and Dad has a university degree. Both work in a family decorating business and share the home schooling. The two children are aged 8 and 5 and have always been home schooled. HSG gave the
reason for home schooling as primarily academic, although both children were considered a combination between gifted/challenged. HSG did not like the teaching techniques, lack of safety and moral foundations found in the public schools. The parents also wanted the children to be exposed to the family dynamics and home business experience. The curriculum used was Charlotte Mason based, with influence from classical, unschooling and Waldorf. Current thinking, HSG told me, was to change to a prepared package even though it was quite religious. Problems cited by HSG included play-dates when home schoolers didn’t have the same ideas about appropriate behaviour. It was also difficult sometimes to find the time to home school, which HSG said is always a challenge.

**HS HSH**
Both parents have university degrees, with Dad teaching physical education. Mom is bilingual and has a culturally different background from most of the Caucasian American home schoolers that she meets. There are three children, aged 7, 4, and 1½ years old. HSH has been home schooling for two years and chose this method as a way of ‘preserving our family utopia, our unit, our relationships, or truly enabling our children to know and cherish each other’. It was also to preserve Mom’s culture, language and traditions, and they felt they could educate their children best. As HSH wrote to me,

> It is our opinion that the current educational system in the United States is tilted towards indoctrinating children in becoming part of a mainstream that teaches superiority to other cultures, ideals and traditions; against becoming part of a global community; it promotes a false sense of patriotism, and tends to see other countries and governments from the perspective of good vs. evil, rich vs. poor, good vs. bad.
Chapter 11 – Comparison of British attitudes (LEAs and home-based educators)

11.1 Introduction

Drawing on the quantitative work in Chapter 10, and the literature search, it appeared there could be issues over curriculum control, secondary socialization, and child protection, especially from the LEAs’ perspective. Interviewing the LEAs and home-based educators on these specific issues added the individual voice to the information base presented by LEA documentation and home-based educator websites.

In all excerpts of transcripts presented, the individual voice is illustrated as one facet of possible perspectives on the categories explored, and it is recognized that all views may not be expressed. In identifying the individual LEA or home-based educator perspectives, however, it was possible to compare and contrast their views on the issues highlighted. For clarity, the presentation of perspectives on selected categories will start with the LEAs, followed by the home-based educators in this chapter.

11.2 Curriculum control

In documentation from the government websites, LEAs insinuated some degree of curriculum control by state officials over home education. This was more apparent in the England and Wales’ documentation than in that of Florida. Did LEAs perceive that the home education curricula should be controlled in any way, and if so, why?

In answering the question bluntly, not one LEA said that home-based educators needed to follow the National Curriculum, recognizing the parents’ right to choose their child’s education as they saw fit, subject to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. So, it would seem that LEAs did not want to control the curriculum. On analyzing the transcripted interviews however, perceptions became transparent on opportunities, standardization, and assessment, with some LEAs more strongly opinionated than others.

Opportunities

Firstly, the documentation in Chapter 10 revealed LEA perceptions over the possible lack of opportunities or career choices because of home-based education. This concern was echoed by three of the interviewed LEAs. One of them recognized that home-based education is not an easy option in this regard, saying:

...from our experience whilst a number of parents do it extremely successfully, it requires this time, this resource management and often a raft of experience to do it effectively or to buy in the services of what you need to do it effectively. [LEA EWK]

EWK goes on to say that the opportunities for children are best provided by schools:
...there are certain intrinsic things within schools that happen that would benefit the majority of pupils. [LEA EWK]

EWK also had concerns over home-based educators that were driven by their moral or religious convictions. Without getting into moral or ethical judgments, EWK wondered whether some home-based educators were disadvantaging children from opportunities:

And there are some families who have very strong religious reasons, Jehovah Witnesses, members of the Brethren Church and so on...who for ethical, moral, religious grounds are not prepared to put their children into school...

Now there is a question as to whether lack of exposure to ICT is depriving those youngsters of opportunities, but if they are working to a moral code and various other codes that the parents subscribe to, well they get the benefits of that. [LEA EWK]

EWK explained later in our conversation that there was a 'conflict of two sets of rights' between parents and the state:

I think there is a conflict sometimes between, certainly in the UK, what the state would require and say would create a balanced education, not an appropriate education, but a balanced education...and parental rights, parental preferences, parental action...maybe not to teach across the whole broad breadth of the curriculum or to provide equality of opportunities in that sense...

I'm referring to this concept of what youngsters need to be citizens in the 21st century and I think the commonly held view would be that a full access to Information Technology and so on would be an essential element. A significant number of families do not provide that on religious grounds, because they don't think it's appropriate, and there would be other examples...you know, I think there's preparation for citizenship in the world. It's that conflict...it's a conflict of two sets of rights, I guess...[LEA EWK]

This conflict that EWK had with lack of opportunities, specifically information technology (ICT) that is so much a part of society, did not stop the acknowledgment that some home-based educators received a 'rich and varied diet'
through a well thought-out curriculum. EWK even suggested that these children might get more opportunities than their peers at school:

The sort of youngsters I think about who get a rich and varied diet [as home-based educators] have often articulate parents who may be highly skilled in certain areas. You know, have very acute interests. The sort of thing I sometimes see is perhaps a parent who's very skilled with ICT who is giving the child probably more than they could probably get at school because that child is exposed to a whole range of things. Some of these children are very gifted, and talented musically, and that's been delivered because they sing in choirs or they play in local orchestras. [LEA EWK]

Another LEA voiced concern over opportunities that might not have been carefully considered for secondary aged children:

I just like to raise the question of equal opportunities with them when I go to visit them, if they've got secondary aged children, because I think that they need to be aware that when they're competing in the job market, or for college places, it's the ones who have got GCSE qualifications that the employers and colleges on the whole are looking for, and so if their children haven't got them, they may be disadvantaged...

And I say, 'If it's a question of an interview, you may not be called to the interview because they've looked at your application form and rejected it because you haven't got those examination results. If you can get your foot in the door, you may well be able to sell yourself, and succeed in competition with other people who have got examination results', but I think they'd need to know that it's possible that they won't get their foot in the door in the first place. [LEA EWA]

The third LEA had concerns over future litigation against the LEA because of its failure to provide an adequate education for the child. EWF had a particular concern over a group of home-based educators who may not want their children to access education at a secondary level as it conflicted with their culture. Of course, one of the problems LEAs have regarding Romany communities protecting their culture, at the expense of the child's secondary education, could be the conflict they feel this has on promoting citizenship and diversity in England and Wales.

1 LEA EWF was referring to Traveller people, termed Romany communities in the transcript.
...I'm not really sure, but I have an anxiety that at some point in the future, there will be litigation in terms of 'The LEA failed to provide me with an education'...And that's [regarding] the group of families here the parents really just don't want the kids to access an education, which involves some of our Romany communities. [LEA EWF]

It would seem that, as LEAs were not able to control the curriculum opportunities presented to home-based educated children, they suggested awareness along lines of equal opportunities in the job market, or for university places, or to be productive in a computer-literate society.

To answer LEA concerns over opportunities, home-based educators HEA, HED and HEF were aware of having to buy in services if needed, or providing qualifications to enable their child to compete with school-based peers in the marketplace. HEA and HED, who have children of examination age, revealed that their children were doing, or going to do GCSEs, or further qualifications. All three outsourced for other subjects too:

[We outsourced] the physics. We had a tutor for [child] in the end because although [husband] could have done it, he was working all day and not getting home until 6 o'clock at night. [HE HEF]

[Child a] has a French teacher that she goes to once a week...her and [child b] also have piano lessons once a week...[child c] has drum lessons...and they do various sports things, like gym and trampolining and so [we] outsource for those. [HE HEA]

[Question] Basically you outsource when you can't provide it yourself?

Yes, but it's minimal. I would say, other than the oldest boy's music teaching...the oldest one goes to instrumental music teachers, because he's likely to end up as a professional musician so he's gone a bit beyond me now. [HE HED]

The other home-based educators did not currently outsource, partly because of the age of their children. One of them favoured a more autonomous learning style:

Before we actually started properly, I thought, 'Oh yes, this is all very well, this autonomous learning business, but I really believe you need to learn this, this and this'. But I am seeing [child] and she's just ticking along and finding out all these things without me prompting her on anything, and it's all just happening...we don't do any sitting down at the table to do things every day like some
families. Some families seem to need it, they thrive on it, the children thrive on it, but we are not doing anything at all formal or structured in any way, and we're not really... and she's not really reading properly yet, or she's not up there with the ...[other children in school at the same age]... she's just happy. [HE HEB]

Thus, three of the home-based educators showed their awareness of providing opportunities for their children, so as not to disadvantage them from their school-aged peers. Recognising that such provision was comparable to school-based examination subjects, these home-based educators do not represent those who tailor the curriculum more closely to the child's desires, family traditions and values. Such home-based educators that reject Information Technology for example, are more likely to find their defense of preparing their child for society at odds with LEAs who see lack of opportunities for participatory citizenship.

**Standardisation**

Controlling the curriculum to include standardized subjects or testing is beyond the legal duties of the LEAs. With reference to equal opportunities, it has already been suggested by the LEAs that home-based educators should consider studying comparable subjects in the examination years of secondary school (GCSE and A Level subjects). There was evidence of LEAs accepting home-based educators' curricula that did not follow standard school subjects. Two of the LEAs made particular reference to the Traveller families' lack of standardized curriculum, which conflicted with their cultural lifestyle:

> When I go to visit them, they say 'But we are educating them. We're educating them in our culture', which is true, but other people look at them and say 'They're not having any education at all'...puts me in a very difficult position. [LEA EWA]

One of the interesting things is that we've got evidence on one of our registration forms of an alternative curriculum with a distinctive Romany flavour...it's not in their interest, as a culture, as a distinct culture, to access education because if their teenagers do and if they do well and access external qualifications they'll become housed, they will become settled and they will move away from their social group. And the culture will diminish. So in terms of what the traveller community, particularly the Romany travellers are about, it's actually education is working against their way of life as opposed to promoting it. [LEA EWF]

Two other LEAs gave examples of non-standardised, successful home-based education. First EWA noted:
... There are families where it's really successful, education is just part of their whole life, and it goes on all the time, all around, and they've really managed to be so creative and so imaginative and yet keep abreast of their peers in school, although they're probably following subjects that aren't taught in school, and so you can't say 'Well that's at GCSE level' because they're not written down. But really impressive education...you think, this child's not disadvantaged at all, they'll go on, they'll get into university, you know, they're going to be great people. [LEA EWA]

EWJ was the most accommodating towards home-based educators and their variety of teaching, learning and assessment styles:

We have to find ways to enable parents to satisfy us they are giving a suitable education...we have worked very hard with our local [home-based educators' support group] who were terribly antagonistic at the beginning...and [they] also gave us the free services of their solicitor to vet all our procedures and policies. [LEA EWJ]

When asked if the LEA would like home-based educators to follow a set curriculum, EWJ said no, adding that 'A lot of fun has gone out of education' in the schools, continuing:

I would hate to see any requirement for them to follow a set curriculum...Because one-to-one, there's no way...as a qualified teacher, I would not, if I were working with a child one-to-one, I would not follow any sort of National Curriculum, unless I was feeding the child back into a school. [LEA EWJ]

EWJ echoes an important point here that home-based educators would declare - unless the child is being fed back into school, or is intending to access the school system through examinations, colleges and universities, there is no need to follow the National Curriculum. This divides home-based educators into those that use school-based standardization as part of their educational programme, and those that reject it to follow their own educational path.

The evidence in the written word appears to insinuate that the 'broad and balanced education' concept of the National Curriculum guides many LEA policies towards home-based educator's curricula. Yet one LEA highlighted a problem of a curriculum that was too regimented:

...one of our inspectors thought that the parents were being too academically focused on particular subjects and not...the child wasn't being allowed to have enough
outings and enough different ways of learning...They were doing it in a very bookish, very regimented, very austere, slightly old-fashioned way, which [the inspector] actually thought was a problem...They pulled out of state education because it wasn't regimented enough! [LEA EWE]

Over the lack of standardization, EWK pointed to the lack of clear wording in the law that could create conflict:

I think the greyness will be the interpretation of the law and I think a key part would be over this wretched word 'satisfactory' or 'appropriate provision' that concept...I think if we get conflict, it's over how the LEA reassures itself that the provision is appropriate for the youngsters which is open to a whole range of debates then, and how that is then checked, you know, that interpretation. [LEA EWK]

EWK echoes the view of many LEA officials who see standardization of education through examination subjects allowing home educators to compete with their school-based peers. The merit of specific standardisation has also been recognized by two of the home-based educators. HEF speculated, however, that the LEAs are not always familiar with different styles of education:

And they don't actually, although they are there to look at the educational provision, they don't know what they are looking at...because it's something that they normally recently started doing...so they are not familiar with autonomous home education or totally unschooled [HE HEF]

True to say, some LEAs are not aware of non-standard curricula or teaching styles, nor would some be comfortable assessing alternatives to the standardized curriculum. Similarly, some home-based educators are not comfortable veering from the standardized curriculum or teaching styles of schools, especially if re-integration into school or accessing public examinations is part of the child's educational programme. However, as some participants in this study voiced accommodation for the other's perspective, there is room for compatibility. The crux to LEAs and home-based educators accommodating standardization is recognizing when it is most advantageous for the individual home educating family - that is, if reintegration into the school system is planned, if examination subjects culminate with sitting public examinations, if a more formal style is beneficial, or if autonomous child-centred learning is most appropriate.

Assessment

All LEAs interviewed recognized that home-based educators did not have to follow any particular form of standardized assessment. However, that all 10 LEAs preferred the home visit echoed the documentation that suggests the home visit as the
method *de rigueur*. There were examples given by some LEAs, such as EWJ, of other forms of acceptable assessments (sending in reports, or meeting in a neutral place) but most LEAs went into some detail about the home visits.

Though individuals with different backgrounds went on home visits (such as social workers or former teachers), the documentation in Chapter 10 was quite specific about what LEAs would look for in a home visit, tailored to a standardized school curriculum in the first instance. One LEA noted inspectors looked for a school-based pattern:

On the whole, talking about a broad and balanced curriculum...It's like a triangle...the base is really broad when the child is very young, and it narrows down...as they get older, because they specialise and they are then going into much more depth in certain subjects...But that's a pattern in schools. [LEA EWA]

Two LEAs recognized that the law, in not articulating what is specifically assessed, did not give LEAs a great deal of control:

...we have to bear in mind the test cases [that] have taken place which have not suggested that the LEA has a great deal of power to analyse the progress of the child. So really we're looking at fairly basic things. We're looking at if there's a wide range of education, and we're looking for progress, and we're looking for good basic literacy and numeracy... [LEA EWJ]

It [the law] doesn't give any indication of what it means by a broad and balanced education, or accessing education. You know, it's left very, very open. It leaves a hole for families to fall into and it leaves the local authorities without a lever to do anything very much about it. [LEA EWF]

To one LEA, the home visit was seen as a vital assessment tool. EWG goes as far as saying home visits should be law, whilst EWC's frustration shows:

[The] LEA should be able to insist on home visit. There are too many families using it as an excuse to not send children to school...I also think that the LEA needs teeth, to be honest. I mean, it's no good saying the LEA's responsible for ensuring that the child's education is suitable but not giving them the teeth to be able to say to parents 'you must allow me into your home to see what's going on'. [LEA EWG]

I think the big difficulty with LEAs is there is a duty imposed upon us to satisfy us that the education that the
home educated children receive is satisfactory...but then the DfES says we can't require parents to cooperate. [LEA EWC]

A few LEAs detailed home visits in such a way that I could understand the underlying sense of accountability teachers have to ensure a suitable education for students. Two LEAs clearly described how they conducted home visits, and controlled the assessments of the home-educated children. First, EWD told me that most parents showed that the children followed the basic core subjects of Maths, English and Science. Project-based approaches were used for Geography and History, and the core subjects were normally linked with the WHSmith books, available in bookstores. The LEA inspector looked at the children's creative abilities, and how computers were used. Questions were asked about the children having access to a good range of reading material, and whether they went to the local library. Good practice of continual assessment was addressed, as EWD said:

We also check ...their work, to see how it's being marked. So, are they being channelled and challenged around the issue of continuity and progression? [LEA EWD]

Another LEA also detailed the assessment of home-based educated children quite clearly, including looking for structure, a record of what was done week-by-week, dated work, progress being made, and

...the standards that the child is reaching apropos as far as we can gauge it, that child's potential. And we also need to make a judgment as to whether the provision is appropriate for the child. So a lot of judgments are being made in a very short spell. [LEA EWK]

One particular comment made by this LEA, however, seemed too school-based, and incompatible with a motivated home-based educator who would relax the school model to fit teaching and learning into a home environment. Because part of visiting a home, you can see the environment in which a child is normally working, although occasionally a child will be working elsewhere.

But the home environment is a critical one and an important one for the child and for the learning experience, and we would hope that if the child is learning at home, they've got things like wall displays and other bits that support education and learning.

[Question] What would the advisors think if there were no wall displays?

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2 Alan Thomas (1998) details how home-based educators become less formalised in their teaching and learning as they progress through home education.
Judgments would begin on the environment for learning.
A trigger for deeper investigation. [LEA EWK]

Acknowledgment by EWK that assessment was based partially on the
'learning environment' struck an uneasy chord, as it implied a static environment for
the committed home-based educators, who are more likely to draw from multiple
sources for teaching and learning. Such a focus on the learning environment of home
reveals more about LEA school-model bias, than about assessment of the child's
education.

Home-based educator HEF attempted to speak for those that are concerned
about the home visit, offering alternatives that could meet the law’s requirements and
their responsibilities:

Some of them will agree to the home visit just to get it
done and out of the way and in a hurry. But if they don't
want anybody visiting the house then the favoured form
is the educational philosophy. It is beginning, the trend
seems to be that more and more people are going that
route, certainly if they know about it...in which case, it
generally means they have access to people who are
already home educating or access to the internet, and
read it...since the Children's Act went through, the LEAs
are pushing harder and harder for home visits, but they
are using Education Welfare Officers quite often and what
is becoming apparent is that a lot of them are making
judgments based on the look of the person's house, or
whatever...which means that if you can do an educational
philosophy [statement] you are not already starting at a
disadvantage by somebody being morally
judgmental...[HE HEF]

Difficulties can arise when LEAs see the home visit and assessment of the
home learning environment as the best tool to fulfil their 'duty', whilst home-based
educators feel an unfair school-based bias on their child's education through home
visits. In questioning HEF about LEA preferences towards home visits, the response
was:

They prefer the home visit I think...because when it [the
evaluation of the child] is done with an educational
philosophy we don't tend to fill out their forms, and we
don't fit into a nice category where they can tick their
boxes...which, to a large extent, is likely to create more
work for them...because it is not something traditional
that they are familiar with. [HE HEF]

I then asked HEF about my perception that home-based educators are
encouraged to decline the standardised home visit, replacing it with an educational
philosophy statement. HEF was quick to point out that my perception was not entirely correct:

[Question] Why is it suggested that you decline the home visit?

We are not suggesting that you decline it. What we are saying is that if you want to, you can do this [educational philosophy statement] and this is how to do it. So, LEAs like [the home visit] and a lot of home educators don’t but they don’t have the confidence to be able to tell them, ‘No you can’t’ [HE HEF]

The letter referenced above\(^3\) was available on the support group’s website as a sample of what home-based educators could send to LEAs. Part of it states:

Thank you for your letter. Please note that it is not convenient for you to visit us in the near future, and I would ask you to keep all correspondence in writing for the time being. I will not be returning the questionnaire included with your letter as it is not relevant to our style of education.

I will be happy to supply information to you about my arrangements for my child’s education once we have had sufficient time to thoroughly consider all the information available about home education and arrive at a method which is best suited to my child’s age, aptitude and ability.

[WLZZ]

As this letter was the only one offered as a sample of the first contact home-based educators has with the LEA, it appeared to be advocating an educational philosophy statement instead of the home visit. I understood the rationale, that home-based educators then have more control over the assessment of their child’s education, and reject the standardised approach to education. However, on reading the whole letter, I concluded that an LEA could have found it heavy-handed, on the defensive, and vague about providing information.

The topic of home visits was discussed further with the home-based educators, especially as two of them were unknown to the LEAs. Three of them have had home visits. HEA, in spite of hearing from friends that LEAs could be ‘horrible’ has had very good experiences with her LEA. When asked why some of her friends did not want to be known to the LEA, she replied:

Because they don’t want to be given grief from people interfering with what they are doing, and telling them what they should be doing. I know people who haven’t

\(^3\) See Appendix XIX for the full text
done it [registered]. It's easier if they don't have to have visits then, or inspections...I know some of them are really quite horrible. Ours happen to be very nice.

[Question] And how are they horrible? Do they sort of try to dictate...?

Yeah, very much, you must follow...they try to make you do school at home, really. And you've got to be accountable in so...they want you doing all the different subjects, they want you timetabling...[HE HEA]

In her particular situation, HEA found the LEAs very supportive of what she was doing for her children, but she did not see the value to her family of home visits: I do resent them coming still, even though they are very nice, because I think this doesn't benefit us in any way whatsoever...it's not like they are offering me anything, as a payback for their visit. They are taking up our time; it's not like they give us anything at all. We don't get any money back for the money that is available for our children, for taxes and all that we pay towards education. If they could offer us anything, there would be an upside, but there's no upside to their visit. [HE HEA]

HEB echoed that there was nothing to gain from a home visit, though she would have a home visit if the LEA found out about the family. In contrast, HEC was adamant that she wanted to remain unknown:

My LEA have never ever visited my son and I have no intention of inviting them. I am perfectly capable of teaching him without them nosing around...

[Question] Have you heard that they are not a good LEA to home educators?

I have asked, and I heard that they seem to be all right

[Question] Okay, but you would rather not get involved?

I'd rather not, because that's like opening a can of worms...that's a headache I can do without. [HE HEC]

HED, a trained teacher and actively involved with a large support group, revealed how reading negative reports about home visits initially worried her. The reality, for her, was more pleasant than she had anticipated:

Well...people think it's going to be awful...I'd been told that this was going to be an awful experience, and in fact
my elder son was scheduled to have a music lesson that day. So I thought, this was between me and the schools officer, because it's my legal obligation to educate the child, not the child's obligation to be educated. So I let the child go to his music lesson so he wasn't actually there when the schools officer came around. But I let that be known by sending in a report saying what we were doing [that] week. So I didn't draw attention to it, but it was actually written down that the child wouldn't be there. But the man was so lovely, that I wished I had allowed my elder son to be there. The younger one was there anyway. That idea that I got was from reading an [support group] journal, where it had articles about the dreaded visit from the inspector. So if you like, I was actually done a disservice by being told that the visits from the Education Officer would be unpleasant, when in fact it was a very positive experience. So I think that there is more of the worry about the visit, than there is about the visit itself...surely if someone is coming to see your children and they love showing off their drawings and their work and their projects, what could be better? [HE HED]

Later, HED added,
And what will the children think if their parents say, 'Oh, someone's coming from the Education Office, we've got to be on our best behaviour'...I say, 'Someone's coming from the Education Office, be a child!' It can't be good for children to be told that authority is something to fight against...And they are there to help us. I mean, our bloke's wonderful. For instance, we get software, computer software, at student rates....Worrying wears you out. And really, on the face of it, who's going to disapprove of you educating your children at home? Unless they [the children] are obviously unhappy about it, and my children would much rather be at home than go to school. Who can possibly say it's wrong?...we must be open about what we do with our families unless we have something to hide. [HE HED]

To be noted, other home-based educators might not be as confident as HED, finding the whole thought of a home visit too intrusive or intimidating, especially if school-based assessment of the learning environment detracts from the focus of assessing the child’s education.
Did LEAs have or desire curriculum control? It would appear from the evidence that LEAs looked for control of the curriculum through their assessment method of home visits, though home-based educators did not automatically give up such control. Room for manoeuvre was indicated over educational opportunities expected and provided for (e.g. GCSEs), and an awareness of a variety of teaching and learning styles. Do home-based educators have or desire curriculum control? Yes, they expect it as a prerequisite to the home education choice. What is more, as long as they can justify their curriculum as providing an efficient, suitable education, that is balanced and allows for full participation of the educated child in modern civilized society, they would argue that curriculum control should not be questioned. Difficulties arise over the interpretations of what is suitable, owned knowledge, and to this end, understanding attitudes towards home education are important.

11.3 Secondary Socialisation

In several LEA information booklets, advice was given on how to provide social opportunities. The comments about socialisation were generally helpful though many were from a school-based perspective, advocating secondary socialisation. At least one document stood out for questioning whether children would be adversely affected through home-based education. Did LEAs perceive secondary socialisation as necessary for home educators?

Comments from three LEAs indicated concerns over home-based educated children’s socialisation opportunities with a specific comparison to secondary (school-based) socialisation. One LEA spoke about socialisation when support groups were mentioned. Though starting with useful advice for home-based educators to contact others, EWF then went into some detail to describe the particular perspective held towards socialisation, best delivered by the schools:

…it [primary socialisation] still doesn’t give them that special community relationships that you’ll get within a school where they will usually forge their own relationships. You know, there’s a culture in school and I’ve got teenage kids myself. There’s a culture in school that’s inaccessible to teachers and parents...It’s the children’s special preserve, and quite rightly so. I think they need it. It’s almost like a secret world...And they write the rules, they make the rules, and everybody knows what the rules are...and I think in their own way they impose their own sanctions and their own rewards... should children who fall outside, and this is where you come into the bullying regime. And it’s a whole different piece of research isn’t it, why people get bullied, why children become bullies, and it’s a very important issue. But it’s the whole thing that’s tied up with the socialisation of the child, and we are preparing children to take their place in a wider society, not a closed society. And I think that is probably what I’m trying to get at. It’s
one of the concerns that I know my director has and I have in terms of home education... I mean, it comes back to the interpretation of the word 'education' in its widest sense. I mean, we take the view, and when I say we, our LEA, we really do look at or are concerned with the mental, the physical, the emotional, all aspects of child development, and all parts of the child's developmental needs to be supported and promoted. And sometimes, speaking from a personal view, my children need to move away and on from me, and moving into school is a little step in the partition, you know, and that step towards independence. [LEA EWF]

EWF implies here that home-based educators operate in a 'closed society' – though this could be true in a minority of cases, support group networking and involvement in a variety of activities by home-based educators counters this perspective. It would also seem that EWF refers to the developmental push for independence by teenagers, which is not necessarily the case for younger children. EWB even suggested that many home educated children are isolated socially, but later explained the comment:

...I am invariably welcomed with open arms by both the parents and more importantly the children, who are thrilled, it seems to me, to see another adult...and are so keen to show me what they've been doing, especially the younger ones, and it confirms my view that many home educated children are incredibly isolated socially.

[Question] Is a family's eagerness to show you their home-educated life really a sign of isolation? Can you explain?

No I did not mean that. Most children are keen to 'show off' what they have been doing, but it is the level of that enthusiasm, the apparent desire to seek attention and approval in some Home Educated children that sets them apart in my view. I do, however, believe that Home Ed children do not have the chance to frequently experience the range and diversity of social interactions which school ed. children do. [LEA EWB]

What did this LEA consider 'acceptable socialisation'?:

Well I think there are actually very few of my families that reach that level of socialisation. I always discuss it, you know, it's on the form when they originally apply, you know, how you're going to deal with this kind of thing. It's always discussed by me, and to be honest I'm nearly always slightly dissatisfied with the responses I
Because most of the parents think that that is about just letting them go and see other children, and ‘Oh, --- sees lots of the family, and sees lots of the cousins and goes to the gym club’. And yes, they're seeking opportunities to allow their children to mix, but what they're not allowing them to do because they're out of school, is to have that totally informal, unregulated contact with youngsters...i.e. the bit before school in the playground, the stuff at break, you know, the stuff when they're changing for games...it's not the club activity per se, which is supervised, it's the complete and utter exchange between children that happens outside of lesson time and I really believe that that is when children learn the most about social skills...but that's just a personal view. [LEA EWB]

I asked if older home-educated children might get more freedom to socialize in an unstructured way:

'Hard to say. This has not stood out as being a particular difference between older and younger children, but older children are likely to have more independence than younger ones'. [LEA EWB].

When asked to clarify if home educators might have a different view about socialisation, EWB replied, 'Yes, I believe that they do.

One other LEA had concerns about home-based educators, singling out those parents that, 'either through lack of ability or lack or will, do nothing with them, that child is missing out big time':

They are missing out on peer interaction...the sad thing is, certainly in this borough, we've got extremes. We've got families who are doing an exceptionally good job, from all sorts of social backgrounds, you know, there's no judgment there...families who are doing an incredibly good job of it, with a number of children, with one child, with different gender children. You know, the whole range is represented in very good provision.

But we have also got a very firm cohort of people who are doing their children no service whatsoever. They're not meeting other friends, they're not doing anything physical, they're not...you know, they're having a pretty rotten life because their parents...I suppose, a lack of parenting skills, inertia about education...Whatever the reasons, I mean, there are as many reasons as there are
families. I think the majority of children are gravely dis-serviced by allowing that to continue.

But what you don't want to do is bring in something that's punitive to all parents including those who are doing a very good job of it, or intrusive or invasive...And I think the vigorous idea of the best place for any child is in school, however you're allowed to do this but only under sufferance...I mean, that must be very hard for people who have elected to home educate...I mean, that is the attitude of some LEAs. [LEA EWE]

EWE commented that the families that do well find opportunities to socialize their children, 'You know, they've thought about it. They've put something in place.' (For example, Girl Guides, church group, swimming). Families that have not thought about home education, or don't see the importance of socialization, are 'often the more dysfunctional families'; and 'you often find very introverted, very isolated youngsters in that situation' [LEA EWE].

Though three LEAs voiced concerns, EWH pointed out socialisation was not bound up with home education law:

[Question] What do you view socialisation as...where's the LEA coming from?

Well I think for a start, I don't think we feel it's a legal requirement...You know, education is a legal requirement, socialisation isn't.

[Question] So, does this mean that the LEA isn't assessing socialisation provision with the home visit?

I make a comment on it in reports and do encourage but can't enforce. [LEA EWH]

EWH noted that many of the home-based educators had an infrastructure of friends, or belonged to a religious group. Isolated home-based educators were also seen, including those verging on agoraphobia. Such situations can be difficult for LEAs, especially those who look specifically for social opportunities:

When I go to visit them, I do ask about social contact, because sometimes I come across children who just aren't meeting anybody beyond their immediate family. So I'm looking to see if the child has contact with other young people their own age, so their peers, probably friends that they had in school if they've attended school...or if they're meeting young people through social activities, youth clubs, church clubs, or through sporting activities...and
then I'd try to see if they have contact with a wider range of people, adults beyond the immediate family or young people who aren't actually living in their home...that's what I would regard as socialisation. [LEA EWA]

Another LEA described what was measured in terms of socialization, adding that most of the parents made the effort to socialize their child as far as they could:

I'm looking at things like...whether they behave appropriately for their age, whether they can interact with adults. I'm also looking at, do they have the opportunity to access their peer group? Because it can be quite isolating.

[Question] When looking at the home-educated child's social development, what measurements do you compare them against?

Whether they are able to hold a conversation with an adult about a variety of subjects. Whether they are open, whether they have the opportunity to meet with other children of their age on a regular basis, whether their presentation is within reasonable parameters of expected milestones...

Also, if they've got big families as some do, and some of them have brothers and sisters that are attending school and therefore they have the opportunity to access those children...So there...it's about parents making sure that the child has the opportunity for that social activity.

[Question] Ok. The parents have to actively search out the socialisation opportunities?

Yeah...that's what we're looking at. It may be that they might send them to Guides, or Brownies, or Scouts, or dance classes where they're meeting with other groups of children. There are all sorts of ways of doing it. [LEA EWG]

The remaining four LEAs all had generally positive comments, in spite of EWC erroneously seeing socialisation as part of the LEA's responsibility. As EWC stated, '[Socialisation] is one of the responsibilities of an LEA in being satisfied that the child is not being isolated'. However, EWC acknowledged that the large Plymouth Brethren community 'have got a really good system going...and they are interacting with each other remarkably well. It's a very happy environment', adding that socialisation did not have to be school based:
We're not saying you've got to socialise with school children in the school. We're saying outside school time you've got all these other facilities, all these other services you can take advantage of, and often it's a case of ignorance of their existence. [LEA EWC]

EWD also saw socialisation opportunities for home-based educators as separate to school-based socialisation:
I think there are also the socialisation groups that children naturally make with friends down the road. Parents' friends etc...and I think well-balanced families always take their children on a variety of social activities anyway. And often the children don't...they make their friends within school but they are sometimes just the friends that they have in school, but they have a set of friends outside as well [LEA EWD]

One of the most thoughtful LEAs was EWK, who had generally positive comments about home-based educators and socialisation, though the conversation started out with a perspective on a small minority of families:
For the small minority, there are concerns, because there are possibly children being home educated who, in some way, may be within families who don't have the full range of adequacies.

[Question] Can you explain this comment about the range of adequacies?

Lacking social awareness, dysfunctional, low social expectations, low aspirations, 'outside'/'self excluded' from society. [LEA EWK]

EWK was quick to point out that the majority of children in the LEA did socialize outside the home and around the home, 'I've no strong evidence that more than that minority of children who are in insecure homes in many ways, you know, where there are other pressures and issues'. Religious families were seen to socialize the children because of the meetings and church services attended:
Jehovah's Witnesses, where we have a number...they'll be attending with families quite regularly and engaged and involved in a lot of activities...and other children, who perhaps receive very successful home education, are often very talented youngsters or who have a lot of talent will be in choirs or often exposed to quite a wide repertoire of activities. So I don't think I have major anxieties. The anxieties would be [for] children who are not going out of the home, children who are not doing sporting activities,
children who are not getting fresh air, I suppose in a crude sense...and never apparently meeting other children. [LEA EWK]

When I suggested that some individuals might see religious families as having limited socialisation, EWK questioned this:

Now does anybody have a full awareness of society? I'd probably tend to argue they don't. What I think these youngsters are getting and I don't have a problem with this, you know, the church groups, the youngsters from perhaps a Jehovah's Witness background...some people may say they're being indoctrinated into particular activities but that's what life is about, through learning sometimes, anyway...If the argument is, these children are not going to school and therefore not having the opportunity to involve in the hurly-burly of school life, and all the rest of it, I am still not sure about that because I think that children may have an understanding, but I'm not sure children are going to access all the rules of society all the time...I think children from some groups will not get the full range of curriculum, other children may not get the full range of what we may consider to be a balanced set of social activities. [LEA EWK]

Finally, EWJ was able to see the home-based educators' perspective clearer than any other LEA interviewed, to the point of sounding like a home educator:

[Question] How do you view socialisation? Do you see this as a problem?

No! No, I really don't. There's a lot said about this and the artificial place...the only time in your life where you're ever forced to go in a room with people just because they're the same age as you is in school...but every other time in your life, you go where you're interested or where you work, or ...you may not be interested anymore but you go for a purpose of your own, or someone else's, but its' not with people definitely of the same chronological age. So I suspect school is the artificial thing. If we went back in society before schools, children mixed with adults naturally.

[Question] So why does everyone...?

Because we all went to school...so we believe now that it's the norm...and school isn't the norm. And I think as it
[home-based education] builds up and people think there’s going to be a growth and more and more people opt out of schools...then that will then grow. [LEA EWJ]

From the home-based educators’ perspective, they were quick to point out examples of finding opportunities for socialising. HEB’s family belonged to a support group that met often, for trampolining, or drama. The group had recently worked together to put on a show (Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat), which HEB found brilliant:

The...cooperation and group effort that went into it [was] just brilliant. So all those things you wouldn’t really be able to do just as a family, I don’t think. They need peers to do that with...and they get some time to play properly with them after we’ve finished whatever activity. I think they get more socialisation, more quality time than they would if they were kicking around in a playground for an hour every day. [HE HEB]

HEB added social opportunities were as much for the parents as they were for the children, as she enjoyed ‘meeting up with other mums, and having time to chit-chat, bounce ideas off, and things like that’.

In HEF’s situation, she deliberately did not try to socialise her son for a while after taking him out of school. She said, ‘It took us two years for him to actually recover from the trauma, from what he had suffered with the bullying’. She added:

He wouldn’t go out at all...but in the area where we are, after the first couple of years, then he would go out and join home education groups, and we used to go ice skating, have meetings that he would go along to as well. So it was self-imposed initially, the isolation, to allow him to learn to trust again. [HE HEF]

HEA’s perspective on socialisation was grounded in her teaching experiences and her home educating life. She said that school was unique in preparing you to socialise in a school setting but not for the workplace or other situations. She did not see school-based socialisation as the best vehicle to teach her children the values she considered important. HED also questioned socialisation in a school setting, seeing primary socialisation as superior. First, from HEA:

...it seems like the school only prepares you for school, and it’s the only place where you mix with thirty other children of the same age. It doesn’t ever happen in the workplace. In the workplace, you mix all the time with people of all different ages, from all different sorts of backgrounds, and I think in home schooling, the children are very used to mixing with people of all different ages, conversing with people...with home schooling they are
used to going to parties where they only know the birthday child, but they make friends. They're used to constantly going into unusual situation and mixing with people they don't know, and making friends. So they do tend to be much more confident socially than children in school. Much more able to articulate themselves, and to articulate what's going on...

I do feel that children in schools are brought up by their peers...and that's what happens, they are brought up socially and as far as their language is concerned, whereas the language of home schoolers tend to be much more advanced because they converse with their parents. So...their standards and their thinking skills tend to be better. I think home schooled children tend to think more because they've more opportunity to think, whereas in school they are told what to think, and how to think and when to think...

They also, I think the home schoolers...well, I don't know [but] the way I home school is that they have to learn to serve within the family and within the community, and that builds self-esteem. Children in school tend to not serve, because they don't have time to help around the home because of the homework. It's not that the parents don't want it, and they [the children] don't tend to have opportunities to serve because they live out of school...they are then taken from one activity to the next activity, to one skill. Everything is done for their benefit, and I think that's a bad thing. They [don't] learn how to put the needs of others before their own. They are on...this cycle of...they are the centre of it. And socially, I think that's a bad thing. [HE HEA]

When I asked about facilitating opportunities for the children, HEA added:

[Question] ...do you find that you have to go out and get [socialisation] opportunities for the children at the moment?

Well I tend to do a lot of it for myself, rather than the children. I'm not sure the children need it, actually until they are a lot older, because they get a lot of socialising within families. They learn how to have arguments and make them up, they learn how to accommodate each other. What tends to happen at school is that they have an argument with somebody, and they just move onto the next person. [HE HEA]
HED wanted to know what I meant by socialisation. She then offered various interpretations of the word, from the home-based educator's perspective:

If you mean by 'socialise' making friends, I think they are better off at home, because they are not channeled into making friends with children only in their classroom, you know, their age, their ability. My children, well particularly the older one, has lots of adult friends, and he doesn't feel that he can only play with children his own age. He mixes with a lot of children in orchestras, because that's his particular enthusiasm. If you mean by 'socialising' do they learn manners, they are far better off at home with someone to correct them, than at school. Who's going to teach them table manners at school when they have to rush through their dinner and get off to their next lesson? So in terms of learning manners, they are better off learning at home, and I think in terms of making friends they are better off at home because they haven't got this narrow division that you're only allowed to play with children in your age group...my son is just waving his hand up and down, as if he wants to say something, hold on a minute...my older son, who's fifteen, his best friend in orchestra is an eighteen year old, and I've already said my little one, who's thirteen, his best friend is in the Sixth form, nearly seventeen, so their friends are not particularly of their age group, and they are the people that they naturally want to spend time with. [HE HED]

HED continued,

...suppose the children are playing in the playground and one of the children says something which is offensive, unintentionally, but which doesn't follow the convention of what we think is polite. Who is going to correct him? If it's just something that's a convention...you don't mention someone's colour for instance. How are they meant to know that if no one tells them? Or you don't say rude things about their religion? Well you know not to be rude about people, but those are the things that one shouldn't mention because of convention- you're not going to know it unless an adult teaches you...another things actually about their peers...boys on the whole, until they discover girlfriends, will not have anything to do with girls, it seems to me. Now my [older child], who's in orchestra, there are a lot of girls who are musicians, and he will happily go up and chat to the girls as much as
he will chat to the boys. No one's told him that it's a cissy thing to do, talk to girls, so that's good!

[Question] Yeah, so if someone comes up to you who's not a home educator, and they say, 'Well, what about socialisation?' what do you say to them?

Well I try very hard not to lose my temper, which is the first thing. I really find that's an irritating question...I think the problem is that people don't understand what they are talking about when they say that. [HE HED]

As HED commented later, she thought perhaps people were being rude when asking about your child's social life, and yet 'I suppose because home education is so unusual, it provokes unusual responses'.

Pointed out on a website by a home-based educator, socialisation was not considered an issue to anyone apart from novice home-based educators. HEF agreed that information on socialisation was put on the support group's website for those that were unaware of the ways in which to facilitate it:

[Question] Did your [support group] feel that the page [on socialisation] was needed because of the way non-home educators single out socialisation as a problem?

It's because, yes it is that, and of course parents that are now considering home education are not aware of the network of groups and meetings that go on as well...because they are new to it...so it informs them so that they realise that it isn't, it needn't be a problem. It's not obviously the same in all areas. In some of the more rural areas, it can be more difficult... but certainly if you are nearer town, we have, where I live, four groups that are within reach. [HE HEF]

HEF also said that the website gave a list of local groups that have electronic contact information so that home-based educators could facilitate social opportunities. No personal information was given out though, as HEF and the groups were aware that LEAs might use information to find out about unknown home-based educators.

Did LEAs see secondary socialisation as necessary for home-educated children? Not all did, but certainly some of the perspectives highlighted a lack of awareness of socialisation beyond the boundaries of the school institution. For all the home-based educators interviewed, socialisation was not considered a problem, as social opportunities had been found for the children in the home setting, or with other groups of people.
11.4 Child Protection Issues

In my original postal questionnaire to LEAs, I had not thought to explore child protection issues at all, yet potential child protection issues were found in the LEA documents. In the 10 interviews, only one LEA did not mention child protection issues. Four of the LEAs gave examples of case histories to justify their concerns, with a lone LEA who saw child protection issues as a red herring or stereotyping of home-based educators.

I noted that for the cited case histories, each one was an issue over welfare of the child, and not over the education of the child per se. EWF highlighted a family history with a convicted sexual predator, and an elective mute who was not toilet-trained at five years old. EWF was also concerned about the evidence of work completed by the child:

...it's very difficult even in terms of checking the child's progress. The evidence of the work that she's undertaken, I have a suspicion that it's not her work...so I have concerns about that child as well. So I think there are grave concerns with regard to child protection with regard to home education because the children have got no access to anybody else outside their own family.

[Question] Are there more child protection issues, do you think, with home educators as compared with children who go to mainstream school...?

I don't think there is more... I think what we've got on our home education register is probably a reasonable representative sample of families in mainstream schools. But the problem that you have with home education, is that there are less opportunities for suspicion or intervention or assistance being provided...[LEA EWF]

EWH noted that 'whilst not an educational issue there is the matter of child protection'. In echoing EWF's concerns, EWH related the case history of a parent who had Munchausen's by Proxy and was starving the home taught child who came close to death. EWH also noted:

There is also the matter that a parent could fabricate a report while the child was actually doing nothing. These are unlikely cases but have happened. [LEA EWH]

EWD and EWE also mentioned child protection cases to highlight their concern. As EWE explained, one case was particularly difficult as the parent (who was on the child section register) decided to home educate,

To hide the abuse basically...and we obviously let the inspector know that, but it didn't mean that she [the parent] didn't have the right to home educate...but when
[the inspector] went round, he obviously had to be aware of what he might be discovering, what he might need to look out for and also the potential level of violence in the family could be a threat to him...We've had terrific arguments with our social service officer. 'How can you possibly let them home educate – they're hopeless parents, they're abusing their children!' It's their right!...even if their level of care, on some levels, is not as one would like, if they're actually providing a reasonable education, that's what our responsibility is, to be sure of that. Social services have got to accept that.

[Question] So, the law doesn't really protect these children?

No...and I think if you put in the law, one criteria for not being allowed to home educate is if you've ever been on the child protection register, that would be very judgmental. I don't see how you'd actually get that in...because there are presumably families, and we have come across them, that have been borderline, where social services are highly worried about the parents' motivation...they want them in school, not for an education, but they want them in school because they want to see them everyday...and I say if social services want that done and they're home educators, they've got to go and see them every day...you know, you can't...if the education being provided is adequate, satisfactory or whatever, and we'd allow it in any other family, the family that's abusing their child or neglecting them or whatever, it's got to be monitored in a different way...can't expect them to lose their rights to educate because they've proved themselves inadequate in other ways...[LEA EWE]

EWE touched on something that other LEAs stated; that for them to monitor the home-based educated children they needed to see the child. I interpreted this as a form of child protection policy, with some LEAs making the distinction clear: The Inspector must see and interview the child and cannot approve provision until child has been seen. [LEA EWE]

There are always child protection issues around families that are home educating, just as there are around some other families in the community. [LEA EWA]

...I like to visit as often as I do from a child protection point of view. To make sure I have seen the
child...occasionally...a parent will send me a report on what they’ve been doing with their children. But you and I both know that that isn’t necessarily proof of what’s happened! And I’m not physically seeing the child anyway. So, I’ve made a judgment in those cases that it is acceptable providing I can still get in and see the child within the year. [LEA EWB]

For EWC, concerns for child protection issues were raised when parents home educated because of a reaction rather than an intention:

But my concern is for the families who are educating their children at home because they actually haven’t got what they want in terms of the educational provision...in other words, the school that they wanted...and these children are isolated. And they’re the ones I have concerns about...I’ve concerns about the quality of the education they receive, because it’s a reaction not an intention. And I worry that the parents aren’t properly skilled and prepared to educate their children in this manner, and I worry that the children are being isolated from their peer groups. [LEA EWC]

The last word on child protection issues is reserved for EWJ who did not see child protection being associated with home-based educators any more than with school-based children:

And there are other assumptions made as well like home educators who don’t tell LEAs...assumptions are made, very wrongly I think...sort of issues of child protection are raised and things like that...which smacks to me of ‘Big Brother’. That sort of assumption mustn’t be made...I’m sure there’s as much child abuse, as a percentage, amongst children who attend school as amongst home educators. I’m sure it happens but I have no reason to believe it’s any more or less prevalent amongst home educators. [LEA EWJ]

When I asked why EWJ thought other LEAs had issue with protecting children if they were being home educated, the reply was:

Probably for all the right reasons...I think they’re probably just a bit...I don’t know...nervous about their position perhaps? You know, if it did transpire that someone who was home educating was abusing them and the tabloid press got hold of it, I suppose it would be a pretty difficult time, should we say...but no, I think we’re trained, we have our child protection procedures that are designed to protect children. I think if I found a parent
who...you have to use judgment...some parents, some children don't want to meet outside, so you could do a home visit and they're not there...but you get a sense, you just have to go by your experience, your feel of the situation, as to whether it concerns you...It's an odd anomaly really. I just think we have to respect people's rights to behave within the law. And if they're behaving within the law, why should we suspect them of another crime? [LEA EWJ]

Rather than suggesting that it is only 'paranoid' LEAs that consider child protection policies, one only has to look at the Children’s Act (2004), Every Child Matters (2004) to see that governmental policy towards assessment of school children includes their welfare.4

In contrast to the LEAs, only three home-based educators acknowledged child protection issues. HEC informed me:

What we've had... is that parents who have said they are home educating their children haven't been, they have been abusing them...that's what has happened over here, and I think it did happen in America, not that long ago. I mean, it's just the odd family, and I do know of one LEA...and what they have done is put all the home-educated children on the 'at risk' register.

[Question] What! Just because they are home educators?

Yeah. They are paranoid...yeah, I mean, I've only known it to happen a couple of times. They say they are home educating, they haven't, they have been abusing their children. And that was why they kept their children at home, because they were abusing them not because they were being taught at home. It's only happened a couple of times, but some of the LEAs are quite paranoid about it. [HE HEC]

HEB informed me that LEAs did not have to meet the children, to which I replied that they liked to nonetheless. HEB recognised this, saying:

Well I can imagine they would and I wouldn't have any problem with it really because you want to avoid anybody who's not got the best intentions doing this kind of

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4 The five Every Child Matters outcomes are be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being. Within the document, a focus on children missing from education is also policy. Without careful consideration of how home education parallels school education as a legally viable option, conflation of welfare issues with home-educated children could surface.
thing...there's obviously got to be some kind of safety measure, hasn't there? [HE HEB]

HEA also realised that the home visit was as much to check the child as to monitor his or her educational progress:
...that's one of the main reasons that the inspector comes to the home to visit. Which is why we put up with it, because they need to see that the children are not being abused, and I suppose that's the argument against a form. You can say anything on a form, can't you?...and you can say anything in a telephone conversation...but usually, I mean I know from teaching, you can usually tell if a child is being abused...pretty quickly. So I suppose they can find [out] by coming into the home and meeting the children...and she did say, 'Would it be possible for me to meet the children?' It's nice that she wasn't saying that she had to...but I think once you do meet them [the children] you can tell pretty quickly whether things aren't quite right, going on in the home. [HE HEA]

HEF noted that the LEAs might be interpreting the Children's Act (2004) to look for child protection issues:
And a lot of the LEAs are interpreting ...[the Children's Act 2004] to say they have got child protection issues that they have to deal with. And we as home educators are saying, 'You are qualified to, maybe, look at educational issues, but not welfare issues. And also, just because we are home educating does not make the child at more risk. The majority of abuse cases that appear in the media, they children are schooled...and they are still not picked up. So what makes them think that they can do better with a home educated child?...there is also the aspect that the number of home educating families, they are investing a lot more time and energy into their children, which makes them less of a candidate for...the children to require protection...what is happening more and more often that we are finding is that the LEAs are virtually threatening families, 'Either you let us in to see the children, or we will report you to social services'...that is...I have not actually seen that in writing, from an LEA as yet, but it has definitely happened to families on the email list because they come back to us and say, 'What can I say now?'

When I asked what HEF and her support group suggest, she replied:
Well, that is a very difficult one. It is a very new thing that has started happening, so we are kind of treading the ground to see where it will go. The first thing we will do is write and we will say, ‘Well what makes you think the child is being abused?’ and start quoting the law...just because the Children’s Act said this doesn’t actually increase your rights as an LEA...We did produce an LEA bulletin, which we send to all the LEAs in England and Wales, and...That is there pointing out to them that the law says this, it doesn’t mean that you have more rights. It tells them that they are to do their checks etcetera, within the boundaries of the rights they have now. At the moment, I am aware, I am trying to think whether it is one or two families, I am definitely aware of one family on a list that was reported to social services, but social services wrote back and said, ‘Home education by itself is not an issue for us to look at’ and didn’t take it any further. [HE HEF]

Did LEAs have concerns over child protection issues? There seemed to be overwhelming concerns for most LEAs, which could affect the assessment of the child’s education. At the very least, LEA child protection policy is seen by home-based educators to be a conflation of education and welfare assessment.

11.5 Areas of concern?

To compare perceived areas of tension between state officials and home-based educators, I found several categories to be relevant, apart from curriculum control, secondary socialisation and child protection issues. These perceived areas of tension emanating from the interviews encompassed issues over the law, effective monitoring, conflict of interest, and problems with certain groups of children and their families.

On the law...

Only one LEA did not have a particular comment on concerns over the law. Most of the LEAs agreed that the law protected parents’ rights, but were less sure about protecting the child’s rights. Often, the comments would be followed up with child protection issues. As EWC noted, ‘Well, that’s the biding question of the hour. I think it [the law] protects their [the children’s] rights, but does it protect their welfare?’ EWK put down the ‘greyness’ of the interpretation of the law as the problem. As other LEAs concurred, they felt the one problem with the law was the duties imposed on them without the right to enforce their policies:

The law is extremely loosely worded. It just requires that parents provide an ‘efficient’ which isn’t defined, ‘full-time’ which isn’t defined, education, ‘suitable’ again not defined, for the age, ability and aptitude for their children, with any reference to any special educational needs that the child may have. Now, nowhere is that
given any shape or form, and how a parent interprets that is up to them...equally how an education authority interprets whether they're fulfilling that, again is up to the individual authority. So there are cases where LEAs have not been happy with what is happening...and have worked as closely as they can with the family, but without success, and have resorted to saying, 'Right, this child has to have an education. You are not providing it, a return to school please.'...and when the parent has fought that and the case has actually gone to court, every case, we have found, has been found for the parents...it seems to us that the law sides with the parents and judgments are made in the parents' favour.

[Question] Okay, and it sounds as if you feel as if that's unfair?

I feel it's one sided. [LEA EWB]

EWE was more discriminating, as it was only with 'the parents who aren't choosing it [home-based education] for the right reasons' that the law did a 'grave disservice'. EWG saw the law being unhelpful in enforcing home visits, something that was clearly preferred by EWG and perhaps backed up by LEA policy:

...what we find is that the law over here says that we've got, the LEA has the duty...but they don't have the power to do it in any specific way. And so what we get is parents who don't actually want to have a home visit or don't want us to meet the child and that can actually be quite time consuming...finding ways around that. [LEA EWG]

The law also makes it difficult, noted EWA, to return children to school. This might be tied up with deregistration of children who opt out of state schools and thus lose their place.

...the current law doesn't make provision for returning children to school when the home education provided isn't satisfactory. [LEA EWA]

Tension was likely to be created if LEAs or home-based educators, interpreted the law, as in the following response:

[Question] Is this one of the LEA's responsibilities, to assess the working environment?

Yes, in so far as it is adequate for work being undertaken. [LEA EWE]
The law can also be bent to assist LEAs. Some LEAs face a problem with returning children to schools when there are few places available; EWG suggested that the deregistration of home-based educated children was delayed until after the first home visit:

We actually ask our schools to keep children on roll until the first inspection. This is because we have very few school places and if the home education was not satisfactory and we take out a school attendance order then we need to know there is a school place available. [LEA EWG]

A point brought up with LEAs, was compulsory registration. At the present time, home-based educators do not have to register with the LEA; compulsory registration does not exist though every LEA suggested that it would be welcomed. As EWJ put it, 'If you have compulsory registration, obviously you remove instantly that prejudice [towards home-based educators and child protection issues]. EWJ continued:

And I have to say, there is a bit of me that says, it's an odd society where we value education but we ignore the education of quite a large group of children. And it just seems to me, that it's the same with private schools...and I wouldn't make any distinctions. Again, I would say that everybody who sends their child to private school should have to register. And say This is what I'm doing with my kid. This is where they'll be for their schooling'. And occasionally perhaps the local authority should look at all the private schools in this area and say, you know, 'We're not happy with what you are doing'. [LEA EWJ]

EWG voiced concern over the numbers of unknown home-based educators, feeling that 'many of them are not able to meet the challenge of home education which is never an easy option'. EWK echoed EWG's voice, adding that parents' rights should not be too 'harshly offended':

I don't see there being anything about individuals’ rights which will be too harshly offended by that course of action [compulsory registration]...I like the concept, as I said already of positive registration. I think that in a way...I think to know where children are, should we have, as a minority of parents sadly do, some degree of abuse of the child, not doing what they should be doing...you know, we're talking of the poor providers of home education...and sometimes we're talking of inadequate parents. I think within that sort of concept, I can see more advantages than anything about personal liberties getting in the way. So something fundamentally and
intrinsically in me says positive registration, I like. [LEA EWK]

From the home-based educators' perspectives, they all felt the law protected their rights to home educate, though there was some concern about whether the law would be affected by European Union (EU) laws and policy, the Children’s Act (2004) and other measures that were under discussion (such as identity cards for all, or tracking all children). All five knew the law well enough to defend their right to home educate, and where to turn if help was needed.

**On effective monitoring...**

Effective monitoring seemed likely to invite the most tension with most LEAs trying to encourage their policy of home visits. In many examples, problems arose when families did not keep appointments or refused visits altogether. Some LEAs tried to clarify their thoughts. EWH noted that home-based educators refusing home visits were not necessarily trying to hide anything but were strong defenders of their rights:

There are some parents who see it as some sort of a human rights issue...that they have the right to educate their child, and we have no right to be interested in what they're doing...of the people who have resisted [the home visit], they've all been in the category of standing up for their rights. [LEA EWH]

Problems EWJ has had with home visits were usually resolved once contact was made, even though this contact could be hard to establish:

But just to make contact...because generally speaking a lot of it is you've never made contact...so they think you're an ogre. That you're going to go in and do all these awful things, test their children...and once you've met them everything relaxes and they're fine about it. [LEA EWJ]

Though some of the LEAs accepted written reports rather than home visits, the issue of child protection came up with the LEAs’ preference to see the child, even when acknowledging that some families are resistant to LEAs becoming involved with their work [LEA EWC].

In contrast, home-based educators, well versed in the law, sometimes argue for limited ‘monitoring’ from LEAs as their duty is to act only if they perceive education is not efficient and satisfactory. Though three home-based educators had home visits, all had teaching experience and were probably more receptive to monitoring of their work, or showing accountability of teaching their own children. Alternatives to home visits were advocated by HEF, to safeguard against other issues that might cloud an assessment of the child’s education. In the case of the two unknown home-based educators, both felt they were assessing their own child’s education in a satisfactory manner.
There appears to be scope for greater understanding of the benefits of monitoring or assessment of a child’s education if LEAs and home-based educators focus on displaying accountability for their educational choice. This could be achieved through home visits, or educational philosophy statements or other methods, to accommodate interests of LEAs and home-based educators combined.

On conflicts of interest...

A conflict of interest was voiced between the difficult position that LEAs may sometimes find themselves in. They cannot openly discourage parents from home educating, nor can they be seen to be actively encouraging it as an option. As EWK explained,

...whilst one or two schools will actively encourage parents because of other problems, to take this course of action [to home educate]...we don't have the power to 'reprimand' but we have the power to say to a school 'This is not accepted LEA policy'. We would never...we can't as a local authority encourage parents to see this as a positive option. [LEA EWK]

EWE also voiced concern over seeming to encourage home-based education:

I actually have some difficulty with us getting too proactive about encouraging it...because it's a judgment call. You know, it's the parents' right but it's not necessarily ...without knowing a family, without having a lot of information about them, it's a very, very serious decision to make and I think it would be one I'd find hard to encourage without doing a helluva lot of assessment before you encourage them to do it almost...they have the right to do it. That's fully respected. [LEA EWE]

In terms of perspectives given, it was important to be aware that the LEAs encountered a number of home-based educators that were not successful. Though this should not colour their perceptions at the expense of successful home-based educators, it was useful to draw out their concerns. At least four LEAs spoke of problems with ‘disaffected children’ who were in the 14-16 year old range. The children that LEAs were exposed to, who were reportedly ‘home-based educators’ were seen trying to circumvent truancy laws and doing very little education. By the time LEAs were able to make contact with the family, the children might have been only months away from school-leaving age. I asked EWG why children were using home education as a shield in the secondary school age range; the reply was ‘The parents are unable to get them into school or cope with truancy levels and the following poor behaviour’. The frustration over dealing with these children was also voiced by EWH, EWA and EWK, such as:

...sometimes we find another little pattern which is that children do just about enough until they get into about their final year, eighteen months of schooling, and then they become such a burden for the parents, the parents
can’t do very much. But by that time, we really don’t have many opportunities for court action and other mechanisms. [LEA EWK]

In contrast, the interviewed home-based educators see no similar conflict of interest, as they have effectively taken themselves out of the school system, and taken control of their child’s education. They would not advocate school education, for their child, except in those instances where the home-based educators have accessed examination subjects and the children have sat GCSE examinations.

On particular groups of concern...

A group that sometimes caused tension was the Traveller children. They were often difficult to find at home, noted EWK, and their curriculum needed to match their culture, not schools. Two LEAs also had concerns over parents who chose home-based education as a reaction rather than an intention. EWC explained that reactive parents were usually home educating because of something that happened in the school, or because they were unable to get their first school choice. The relationship with these families was sometimes difficult:

…it’s a bit like ‘Well if you won’t give me what I want, I’m going to stamp my feet and do something else!’...now we don’t have a particularly good relationship with those families because they’re resistant to us. They see us as the people who aren’t helping them get what they want. And their reasons for home educating the children are not...it’s in response to being disappointed rather than their intention to educate their children in that particular manner. [LEA EWC]

[Question] Do you find that these families that home educate as a reaction to a situation, that they don’t do...necessarily do it particularly well?

Absolutely. It’s often not what the parents want. More importantly it’s also not what the child wants. And they’re ill-equipped to do it. They do it with a very negative mental attitude. You know, I will show you. I did not get the place I want...you can’t make me send my child to xxx school therefore I’m going to home educate. You know, I’m going to punish you [the LEA] by home educating. Well in fact they’re not punishing us at all. All they’re doing is punishing the children. [LEA EWB]

Some LEAs expressed concern with those families who were unable to deliver a satisfactory education. As EWF explained to me, ‘... my anxiety with home education are with the at-risk groups, not with the families who are doing it well and
whose kids manage to get a good crop of external exams and go on either to university or to well-paid jobs'. EWF continued:

...very often when we are going to lean on a Traveller family because they are kind of semi-permanently housed on a local site, but the minute we lean on them to prosecute, they move. Then they become somebody else's problem and the whole thing starts again. So, with the Traveller community it's a game of cat and mouse. [LEA EWF]

EWA also came across families who were providing an education but the standard was perceived as too low:

Bit more difficult with the ones where there is education provided but you really feel it's too low a standard...probably because the parent's own educational standard is very low and then it's very difficult to tell a parent who feels they're doing their best for their child that they're not and you don't believe they can do any better than they are doing...and you feel the child should go back to school. [LEA EWA]

Views held by Traveller home-based educators could not be compared in this study, but two home-based educators could be classed as 'reactive' parents. In HED's case, disillusionment with secondary school prompted withdrawal of her two sons; for HEF, Asperger's syndrome and bullying of one of her children led to withdrawal from school. In both 'reactive' families, it would be unfair to echo EWC or EWB's arguments that the home-based educators were ill equipped, held negative mental attitudes, or were merely reacting instead of following an intention to home educate. HED has accessed the LEA for discounted software, inclusion into the local school orchestra, examination subjects and Open University courses. HEF accommodated her son's special educational needs, whilst also spending time to let him recover from bullying at school. HEF was aware, though, that in demonstrating that her child was receiving an efficient, satisfactory education she had to be able to provide sufficient evidence that would satisfy a reasonable person. And then I say... as a reasonable person, if this was somebody else's child, what evidence would you ask of them that you would consider to be reasonable, and then you supply that. It doesn't hurt to go a bit further [in the educational philosophy]. [HE HEF]

Undoubtedly, there are 'reactive' families such as those encountered by the LEAs, or other families that cause concerns for the LEAs. These families were not necessarily represented in the study, especially the two 'hidden' home-based educators. However, recognition of the fluidity of education, whether in school or in a home-based education setting, could do much to alleviate tension, as the two home-based educators describe their successes. In the LEA's case where it is perceived substandard education is provided, attempts could be made to help these families,
which may or may not include integration into school. If school is automatically seen as the solution to perceived substandard education at home, the LEA shows bias for an education that might not be delivered in school. In the case of Traveller children, such a school education might also be antithetical to their culture.

11.6 Areas of cooperation

Cooperation between LEAs was seen in Chapter 10 with documentation that was collaboratively drawn up by several local authorities. EWB told me that the LEA groups with up to twenty other LEAs for information sharing. Other LEAs like EWA organized conferences so that they could share ideas, including meeting with a researcher, Amanda Petrie. She had researched LEAs’ cooperation with home-based educators in the 1990s, finding that 75% of LEAs were not totally conversant with the law. Judging by the overall lack of misinterpretation of the laws in documentation, ten years later, recommendations were carried forward well. LEAs like EWA, EWF, EWC, EWG, EWK cooperated with home-based educators by passing information on about the support groups. One LEA even organizes events once a year for home-based educators:

We might employ a tutor of some kind to give a session on something like say creative writing...we might run an exhibition of books by publishers...we've done that several times, and we run arts and craft workshops...we've run trips to local museums...[LEA EWH]

To improve relations with home-based educators, EWJ worked with a support group to vet all procedures and policies regarding home-based education, including information booklets. EWJ reported having good relationships with most of the home-based educators in the LEA. Most of the LEAs strived for good relationships with home-based educators, recognizing their rights and the monitoring duties of the LEAs.

Home-based educators cooperate by working with LEAs to facilitate opportunities for their children (HED’s children accessed Open University placement and the local school’s orchestra through help by the LEA). They can also cooperate with LEAs through information sharing, such as HEF’s role as part of a support group. The support group has a website with information pertaining to the law, and monitoring, freely available to anyone. In addition, HEF’s support group created documents that were sent to all LEAs to inform them about home-based education, and their interpretation of the law (including monitoring procedures other than home visits).

Though two home-based educators were not cooperating with LEAs by staying unknown, the other three were accommodating the LEA’s policies. As suggested by one of the home-based educators (HEA), if cooperative ventures could be seen of benefit to both groups, there is more likelihood of success.
11.7 Summary

This study was undertaken to illuminate my preconceived notion that tension must exist between home-based educators and LEA officials. Focusing on curriculum, socialization and child protection issues, potential for discord was seen from specific LEA and home-based educator perspectives. LEA officials expressed concerns over opportunities, standardization and assessment of education; socialization from the school-based, secondary, perspective; and child protection issues. They were unsure whether the current law protected children’s rights, as they sometimes encountered difficulties enforcing monitoring procedures, or accessing particular groups of children who might miss out on education. LEA officials also voiced their almost unanimous policy of attaching child protection issues to home education. In contrast, the home-based educators interviewed had no great concerns over curriculum, illustrating instances where they accessed the school system for their child (especially at examination ages). Neither socialisation nor child protection were issues of concern with the home-based educators, though they did show insight into the LEAs’ perspective on these issues. The home-based educators were confident with the law and their knowledge of it to protect their rights to home educate, though some concern was expressed over recent laws passed (Children’s Act 2004).

Returning to the crux of Chapter 6 on rights and interests, I believed that an emphasis on balancing Reich’s trilogy of interests between home educating parent, home educated child, and state official, could do much to understand potentially discordant perspectives, and to move towards cooperative endeavours. Indeed, cooperation between home-based educators and LEAs was shown through clear knowledge and articulation of the law, communication of information, collaborating on documentation, and facilitating education through access to courses or examination centres. All cooperative ventures mentioned by the participants show an appreciation for the interests of the other.

Chapter 12 follows, to compare attitudes between home schoolers and school district officials, along the same issues as highlighted in this chapter.
Chapter 12 – Comparison of American Attitudes (SDs and home schoolers)

12.1 Introduction
Following from Chapter 11, this presentation chapter highlights the home schoolers’ and SDs’ perspectives towards curriculum control, secondary socialization, and child protection, as well as areas of concern or cooperation. This chapter also compares the views with those held in the previous chapter, to portray similarities and differences between the two societies.

12.2 Curriculum control
In comparing issues of curriculum control by SDs, in terms of opportunities, standardization and assessment, the lack of involvement by the SDs was significant. No home visits by the SDs immediately created a different relationship with home schoolers. At the bare minimum, home schoolers only have to send in an evaluation sheet signed by a certified Florida teacher. Thus, interaction between SDs and home schoolers might only consist of requesting and filing the evaluation sheets annually. In addition, the plethora of home schooling materials, support groups, websites and community activities would appear to cater to the curriculum needs of home schoolers, making curriculum control by SDs obsolete.

Opportunities
In terms of opportunities, and as compared with the LEA comments, not one of the SDs voiced concerns with home schoolers missing opportunities otherwise found in school. Documentation from one SD detailed the credits needed to graduate from public schools with a high school diploma. In the interviews, only one SD reiterated the need to get the credits needed in the public school system to graduate. It would seem that these SDs either did not feel home schooling precluded opportunities, or they were not in a position to deal with this aspect of home schooling.

However, two SDs told me they did portfolio reviews as a matter of policy, leading to greater interaction with home schoolers than other SDs who just accepted and filed evaluation sheets. One of the SDs justified the portfolio reviews by saying:
Now we require that the parents bring the portfolio to the superintendent’s office during the first three years that they’re in home education.

[Question] Oh, okay! So you check on every home educating family at least once in the first three years?
Right

[Question] Okay. Is that to give you just a starting point to work from?
It’s to help us be sure that they are meeting the requirements. [SD FLH]

For these two SDs, they had written their policies to be more proactive than was necessarily expected in the law. Portfolio reviews, whilst under the remit of the SD, are not usually conducted as a matter of course, especially in the larger districts where thousands of home schoolers live. Where policy promotes portfolio reviews of all home schoolers in the district, one has to assume that there are issues concerning curriculum, which could centre on opportunities, standardisation or quality of assessment.

From the home schoolers’ perspective, advocating an argument against state official curriculum control, HSC catered to her children by taking them out of school because [child b] was having difficulties, and was unable to read in 4th Grade, whereas [child a] was bored. First she described [child a] who was able to cater his learning to his own interests:

[Child a] is very advanced, and he was bored, even in the gifted programme, thoroughly bored. He also has a very scientific mind, and philosophical mind, so he loves to research. But he has his own things that he into at this moment. A lot of technology, which I am not as interested in technology at this point. I have been at times, right now I’m not. So I let him do his ‘wave’ of expansion and exploration. [HS HSC]

For HSC’s second home-schooled child, there was a different style of teaching, especially when HSC had to teach [child b] how to read:

[Child b] on the other hand, is a very hands-on and visual learner. I can talk to her about things. She loves class participation at home, which she didn’t ever get at school. There wasn’t enough of it. She needs a lot of hands-on, one-on-one. And she has to feel she can go off and do her thing, but if she has a question, she doesn’t want to feel inhibited. She can come up and ask a question. In school she was made to feel like, ‘There wasn’t enough time’, or she felt stupid asking a question. And with...both of them we combine a lot of lectures, a lot of reading, a lot of videos, you know like the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, things like that, and a lot of hands-on projects too. And I think that makes for a more rounded teaching, and I don’t think they get that in school.

[I reflected how well HSC’s children were doing and she told me that [child b] could not read when taken out of school]

...however, they evaluated her academically, and at that point most of her reading, writing, everything across the
board was either K, .5 or 1.5...and of course everything hinges on reading, so she couldn't read the material. So we started...second grade books, and phonics...and even though I was tutoring her at home, and it would come to blows and crying, 'You've got to get this through', and I just couldn't visualise a child in our family that couldn't read...it was just incomprehensible to me...and she had a hard time, she was struggling, but we kept at it, and now she is reading 7th grade books. [HE HSC]

As HSC added, she questioned what home schoolers were educating for:
Are you educating just for...knowledge that you want or that you think is pertinent to your life, or the lifestyle that you are going to have, or just a curious nature? Or are you going to home school for college entry children? And if you are, you have to study a lot of what is nationally expected. You know, so we do...we have the science and the geography and the math, and all the core subjects. We do it all and we get online at World Book Encyclopaedia...and I see what the curriculum is for every age group, every grade, for the whole nation. Because you have to stay consistent. Which kind of makes it a pain too, but...everything is sort of a compromise. [HE HSC]

HSG, who follows an eclectic curriculum based on Charlotte Mason, offered her own philosophy on what she saw education for:
I think the kids should have some ability to analyse, and some sense of discernment about their final analysis and what that means for them. I think that they should be able to balance a chequebook and buy enough paint for their walls. And build a shed with right angles!...just some basic stuff. They should know if their accountant has taken them or if their accountant is doing things properly. And they should be able to find beauty in advanced mathematics; they should have some sense of why it is necessary and wonderful and beautiful. And an appreciation of our culture and cultural heritage, and the fairly direct lines from Greece and Rome and England, and you know, to the US...you need to be able to be a good citizen, and understand the importance of voting and change the process from within if you think it needs changing. And have a broad enough base that you can be interesting at a cocktail party!...and not look like a fool in a museum, or a gallery. [HE HSG]
Three of the home schoolers felt the need to outsource for particular subjects or interests as their children were middle or high schoolers and needed more than the family resources could offer. For HSE and HSD, outsourcing meant dual enrolment at the local community college and Florida Virtual High School (FVS); HSC was also looking at accredited courses or examination courses for her older child who wanted to go to university. Other home schoolers outsourced for sports lessons, and dance for example. So, in a similar fashion to their home-based educating counterparts, home schoolers were facilitating education for their children through the state system as and when needed. The flexibility of a non-controlled curriculum or pedagogy gives home schoolers this freedom, and the ability to provide the opportunities they feel their children should have. Both HSG and HSC articulated and positioned their views on education that suggest an awareness of alternatives to the communitarian perspective towards common schooling.

**Standardisation**

There was more feedback over the issue of standardisation of the curriculum, even though one of the SDs indicated that there are a lot of different ways to home educate. It seemed that some of the SDs felt the lack of standardization with portfolio reviews might not always be the best evaluation of the child’s education. As FLH offered:

> Sometimes portfolios are only examples of what has been done, so there is no way to be sure that a child has had a complete program in a subject...we see examples of things that have been done. I think that we're not able to determine completeness...and if there has not been testing of any kind, I'm not sure that the teacher who reviews the child's progress can also certify that it's a complete program. [SD FLH]

FLG explained, “We take the information at face value when it comes in” as their job is to check that home schoolers are complying with the law in terms of keeping records of the work completed, books read and so on. FLG continued:

> Some of them [curricula] soar far beyond where we would expect for them to be. We've got every extreme that I think any school would have with this many students in it. We've got top to bottom and in-between. [SD FLG]

Standardization of curricula does not seem feasible, as there are so many variations in home schooling styles, curricula chosen, and interpretations of portfolios. Only one SD suggested that home schoolers might need a set curriculum, “if they don’t know what they’re doing” [SD FLF]. In this instance, the SD perceived that over 70% of the home schoolers in the district were not doing the best job for their children, which may have coloured the perspective.

Looking at the home schoolers’ curricula choices, the mothers were using a variety of curricula. One home schooler, HSH sometimes looked at the Sunshine State Standards in science for curriculum ideas. Other home schoolers linked in with
Florida Virtual School for high school accredited courses (HSC, HSD, and HSE). The lack of control over the curriculum in law was considered justified as home schoolers' lives, philosophies, beliefs and so on were so individualised. HSB said, 'I think one of the benefits of home schooling is allowing your child the flexibility and the freedom to go at their own pace, whether that be quicker, more advanced than a child their age, or whether they need to slow down in certain subjects...I think it's more of a tailor made fit'. As HSE offered:

I think that the benefit of home schooling over a public or private school approach is that it can be individualistic. And the ability to direct education towards a child's interest or a child's ability is what makes the program successful. [HS HSE]

The teacher-trained HSA also loved the flexibility that home schooling offers with curricula choices that she could not see happening in schools:

I love not following a set curriculum...it's hard to find that perfect balance, but you can if you work hard enough, wanting that perfect [curriculum]...but finding one that suits your child better. So to be able to pick and choose is fun, and I think it's better suited. You cannot do this in the classroom, as you have twenty-five kids, so you cannot pick and choose twenty-five different curricula. It would drive you crazy. [HS HSA]

As with home-based educators, these home schoolers were unlikely to use a standardised curriculum unless they were intending to access the state school system at the upper grades (to obtain high school graduation diplomas), or if such structure benefited the children.

Assessment

In assessing the curriculum, the SDs really did not have any control. At least four of them voiced opinions on the form of assessments they would prefer to see. The certified teacher portfolio review, whilst being the common method used, was considered suitable if used with other methods, or for the lower grade levels. Using a standardized test one year for evaluation, followed by portfolio review, was also seen as a sensible option:

[The assessments] that combine looking at the materials. Talking to the child and actually getting a standardised achievement, it seems to me, is a more realistic view of a portfolio review. [SD FLE]

Well from both a personal and professional standpoint, to me, a standardised achievement test probably gives a clearer view of how a student is comparing with the majority of their age mates, who are schooled. [SD FLB]
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Only one SD felt the home schoolers should be assessed every three months, compared to their peers’ assessment. FLC said:

If you’re a home schooler, you should be assessing your kid every three months...not once a year, and you need a norm amount when you assess them...see what it looks like against the general population...

Every quarter, not every year, assess your kids and find out how well they’re moving against the rest of the kids. Then the curriculum gets adjusted to what you need. [SD FLC]

To the credit of two home schoolers, they were able to see the school districts’ viewpoint towards assessment, in acknowledging that not all home schoolers were successful in their endeavours:

...in any situation, you have kids that fall through the cracks. But the whole system should not be judged on that. You know, if we judged the public school system, based on all the kids that fell through the cracks, then obviously we would no longer have a public school system. And it’s the same thing with home educating, that obviously there are kids that are falling through the cracks, that perhaps are not doing well in home schooling, and we have the annual evaluation, we have portfolio reviews, we have things that can somewhat catch that. Are people still falling through the cracks? Yes, but that shouldn’t mean that the rest of us should be denied our rights. [HS HSE]

In considering the home-schooled children that fell through the cracks, HSD offered that there should be some baseline assessment for the basics. As she explained:

I would have just a basic assessment at fifth grade just to make sure a child could read and write and do basic math...and then another one before graduation from high school...just to make sure that they were reading and writing and doing computational skills at a level that would allow them to secure a job. [HS HSD]

For assessment, there was a mixture between the parents that had their children evaluated annually through a certified teacher (HSG, HSF, HSA, HSC, GT) and those that preferred standardised testing (HSE, HSD, HSA, HSB). Only HSB has not had her child evaluated as he was only just formally starting home education at the time of the interviews. Reasons given for the preference of certified teacher evaluations included:
Testing, she's really too young for testing I think...and she wasn't reading well enough to be tested. So it was just sort of obvious [to choose the certified teacher].

[Question] Okay. Would you consider testing from 4th Grade and above?

I would because I think it's good to know how to take tests ...and I think that it is a good experience even just filling in those stupid circles. You have to do that for student loans for college, and if you fill them in wrong you don't get the loan...it's just a good skill to have, for them to know what it is bureaucrats are looking for, so you can work with them. [HS HSG]

[Child a] was evaluated by her father because he is a teacher, in reading

[Question] Okay, and they accepted that because he is a certified teacher?

Actually yeah, they accepted it.

[Question] And will you use the same method each year?

I think at some point we will probably test her, to see that the whole, what he is observing is not biased! [HS HSH]

[Question] And why did you decide to choose a certified teacher evaluation?

For one thing, [child b] is very intimidated with testing. She freezes, and she doesn't have the confidence to do it. I have no doubt that she can do it, but because of so many years of schooling, she has got this stigma about it. And this was a way for her to feel comfortable, and to be evaluated on what she was learning, and how much she had improved, and to give her confidence in herself, which to me has been invaluable. [HS HSC]

One home schooler, HSA, chose standardised testing to measure her eldest against his same-aged peers, and to reassure herself that her child was learning:

[I chose] the standardised testing. And on purpose, because he has been to a Catholic school before and he has always tested, so we wanted to see if actually what I did this year is helping him or hindering him! And sure
enough, he shot up and he was much higher than he was when he was tested previously. Which gives me a boon thinking I am going along the right tracks. I did it on purpose for myself. [HS HSA]

Did SDs want control of the curriculum? There was policy evidence that some SDs wanted control over monitoring the progress home schoolers made commensurate with their ability, and some concern over standardization. However, any school district desire to have more control would be countered by home schoolers’ rhetoric over their right to home school twinned with their choice to select a curriculum that could be tailor-made to their child’s individual needs and interests. They did not see the need for SDs to interfere with their curricula choices, though there was acknowledgment that some children might fall through the cracks. One home schooler suggested some form of baseline assessment, in this instance, to help families that might not be successful.

12.3 Secondary Socialisation

I was not sure that any comments would be made on socialisation, based on the lack of information in documents reviewed, and the lack of interaction between SDs and home schoolers in most instances. Only one SD gave me limited feedback. Two SDs expressed concerns. FLB did acknowledge that most home schooling had some form of socialisation, though not that which replicated school:

I don’t necessarily believe the extreme position of some people that home educated students cannot be socialized. I think the element of socialisation as it relates to how to get along with other children is something that most home educating parents do see as something that they need to schedule or tend to, the same way they do the academic kinds of things. So to me, whether it’s through church or recreational activities, or working with other home schooling parents and their children, most parents do see that at least the child-to-child kind of socialisation needs are met. Often the home educating parents will tell you that, through the home education, that the socialisation aspect related to child-to-adult probably is established more firmly...than it would be were a child in public education and there may be something to that. I think the thing that perhaps is missing and I haven’t seen it expressed too much nor any response from the home educating community is that aspect of what public education does in terms of engendering shared beliefs and understanding of American society...I don’t know that there is any way that that can be replicated except by having the child experience a public school institution. [Question] Yeah, okay. By that, I think I understand...what you get in public schools...a kind of group identity, a group
understanding, and if they're not there, then perhaps the home schoolers will always be outside that socialisation opportunity?

Well at least they won't learn it at those critical ages prior to eighteen. [SD FLB]

FLB's concern was related to secondary socialization from schools engendering participatory citizenship; obviously from the conversation, FLB did not see home schooling as promoting this communitarian perspective. The only other SD who had concerns about socialisation thought home schooling could be too limiting for the child, in terms of not exposing the child to the wider society:

[Question] Do you think that socialisation of home educated children is a problem?

Oh, yes I do

[Question] Can you explain that?

Well, we have a tendency, I think, to cocoon children in a very, very safe home environment...but that's not how the world is, and what will happen to those children with their people skills when they try to ...sell themselves on the job market? [SD FLD]

FLD went on to say that home schooling parents really needed 'to take into consideration the socializing aspect and that is really a hidden curriculum within the school system'. To explain further:

How to get along with the people that sit next to you and how to get along with the different types of students from all different walks of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, which you will find in the public schools. Because when you get out into the working world, these are the people that you're going to be competing with, and they're the people that you're going to have to live next to. They're going to be in your church, they're going to be in your stores, they're going to be on your streets and so forth. And it really...it's a matter of...again, socialisation is extremely important, and I think it is a problem.

[Question] Do you think...the home educators, they would say. 'Well, we socialize our children by mixing with church groups...?'

And that is the response I get.
Okay, and do you think that’s fair enough, because if they make the effort to socialize their children with different groups, or do you think that’s still too isolating?

I feel as if that can still be a little bit too restrictive...[SD FLD]

In fact, FLD echoed FLB’s concerns that even when home schoolers had a good network of friends and family through their religious affiliations, it might not be enough:

And are they really, really mixing in with a cross-cultural venue of the people that really live in the county, that really live in the state, that really live in the country? ...It’s their choice, but sometimes if the response is that they’re socialising in a church group then that’s great, because everyone needs spiritual guidance, you know, I truly believe in that. But I also question as to whether, again...that’s enough? [SD FLD]

The other SDs, however, did not see a problem with socialisation. One of them, FLA, held a positive perspective based on reading home schooling research, especially Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore’s “The Home Grown Kids”.

What would you see as suitable socialisation of home educated children?

I think that’s a very personal question, and depending on who’s in this position they’re going to answer you differently...I feel because of what I’ve read that a child who is home schooled, is more socialised than a child who’s not. Only because I’ve read the comparisons of children who have been in home school, as compared to those that are in public or private schools. And you get that peer pressure in school, so your children are going to act like other children. At home, your children are going to act like your parents...And that’s a comforting feeling for the child, to have a sense of security, to know who they are, they’re accepted by their parents, by their brothers and sisters. There’s no peer pressure. So to me that socialisation depends upon how you look at it. [SD FLD]

FLH did not see socialisation as an issue, as many of those in the SD were in a home school group or religious group, with regular activities scheduled. Comparing socialisation of home schoolers to their peers in school, FLC saw the issue of compliance to authority as one that had no place in a home school setting:
[Home schoolers] actually do a better job...than government schools.

[Question] Can you explain?

Yeah, in government schools, probably the same is true in Britain, what you tend to do in government structures like a school, is you develop compliance to authority...with home schoolers that's not a big issue with them...You know, part of kindergarten training is getting in line, and going for drinks...I mean we spend half our days getting in line and getting into chairs. That's teaching kids to be overly compliant. So I think home schoolers really do a better job of socialisation...It's management...overcomes curriculum, is what I feel. [SD FLC]

Two SDs highlighted an important fact. That is, the issue of socialisation depended on an individual's definition of the term, and the age of the child. First, FLG said:

One thing you can't do is make the assumption that because a student is a home educated student that there is not socialisation. Because many parents have that built into their program. And some of these students, we've got a lot of athletes, and musicians and even some little actresses who are out and about doing things...some of the students are traveling all over the world doing things that quite frankly some of the other students might not be doing. So I would not make an assumption here one way or another that they are more or less socialized because I'm not aware of many who are living like hermits. I think by and large most of them are involved in different things that would certainly allow them to be socialized. There are a lot of ways to be socialized other that [through support groups] but we make them aware. It's the lead the horse to water thing...and there certainly will be exceptions to the rule but I think from the phone calls I get, I think many of these children are involved in a variety of activities outside their home. [SD FLG]

FLE commented that socialisation depended on the lens taken:

[Question] For you to consider a home educated child to be socialized adequately, or satisfactorily, what are you looking for, what are you looking at?

And there again, I think that might be a little ambiguous, because it all depends upon what you consider
socialisation...some of my parents, their socialisation with their children is limited to their church...they do not want them being exposed to a lot of the things that they're exposed to in schools. And that is their right. You know, that is their right as a parent to do that. It's not realistic of our world...but still that's their choice. And if they choose...however they want to socialize their children. [SD FLE]

When asked if these church-based social opportunities were similar to private school-based social opportunities, FLE mentioned 'the control, the atmosphere, to control the environment'. I then questioned whether FLE had a different view of socialisation, as being something broader, more like the 'real world'. The reply expressed the differentiation between primary and secondary socialisation:

I do believe in sheltering our little people because I just think they're exposed to too much, too early. And I do believe in that. And in probably was guilty of that to a certain extent with my own, because I limited the amount of TV they could watch, and what they could watch, and I was very good at it! [laughs]...but when they reach a certain age, I do think that they need to be exposed to the real world because when they go out and start working, then they come under shock value. It's like, 'Oh gosh, you see what that guy did!'...They don't know how to handle it. They don't have enough exposure to resist some of the pressures they're going to get...and I just think that as they get older they just need to have a lot of social skills.

[Question] Okay, so perhaps when they're younger, then being within the family network is fine, but as they get older they're going to have to go out on their own?

Yeah. I do believe that our little people need to be taken care of and they need to be really watched. They need to learn family values first...

[Comment] Yes, which goes with the home educating viewpoint.

Yes, and then you can get them socialized. Now I do want to protect our babies. Now you realised these are my own personal views!...It's the way you feel internally, in how you're going to answer the question. Because there's no law to go by as far as socialisation. So it has to be how we feel personally about the whole socialisation issue. [SD FLE]
I learned through the interview with FLE that several members of the family were being home schooled and FLE felt strongly that ‘the children who are being home schooled do not have the socialisation skills of the ones who go to public schools, I will tell you that in my opinion, in my own family’. FLE continued: We have three families in my own family who are home schooling. One of them is doing a lousy job; she should never have been a parent, period. Two are doing a good job but their children are very spoiled and I hate to see them come to my house because they don’t know the meaning of the word ‘no’. They have not been taught to respect other people’s property. You know, they think ‘Well I stay home all day, I can play with everything in the house and I can play with everything in everybody else’s house’...Now I didn’t raise my children that way. [SD FLE]

So, in spite of reservations held by some SDs, in terms of the disconnect between their vision of school-based secondary socialization and their vision of home schooled primary socialization, four of the SDs (FLA, FLC, FLE, FLG) articulated aspects of the socialization issue that would be brought up by home schoolers. That is, the individual’s perspective towards socialization will depend on a multitude of factors. Those mentioned by the interviewed SDs include views on compliance to authority; modeling behaviour on parents rather than peers; mixing with people other than peers outside the school system; promoting primary socialization of young children and advocating secondary socialization of older children to prepare them for society. Important to note, all views expressed were individual to the SDs, however, and not promoted to home schoolers in documentation or in interactions.

The home schoolers interviewed, as with their home-based educating counterparts, also found socialisation to be less of an issue that non-home educators would believe. HSE said, ‘I have a hard time, just not being angry that they [non-home educators] focus on that.’ HSE and HSF agreed with home-based educator HEA, and SD FLC, in saying that school-based socialisation taught a particular type of social skill for schools, and not anywhere else. As HSE explained: It [school socialisation] makes them better to follow a group, better maybe to follow order and follow the directions of what everybody’s doing, but it doesn’t necessarily make them get along with people any better. And it’s also this whole age, peer-dependent, kind of segregation. It’s the only place it happens is K through 12. It doesn’t happen anywhere else in your life. [HS HSE]

A few of the home schoolers went into detail about the social experiences that were provided for the children, not all of which were parent-directed. HSC mentioned the friends that her children have kept from their school days, and their neighbours; the field trips with her support group; Teen Night, and a weekly sports programme. HSF saw that her children have a very active life:
Home schoolers, from my experience, and my personal life and my neighbours and my friends, and other home schoolers, make such an effort to make sure these children are socialized. Playdates, home school support group functions, congregational meetings, dance classes, soccer classes...my God, these children have a social schedule that would rival the Queen of England! [HS HSF]

Two home schoolers were aware that they needed to think about socialisation opportunities. In HSB's case, it is because they have an only child; in HSH's case, they have financial constraints in providing every social opportunity they would like:

Because that is a concern of mine, that... I mean that is actually one of the reasons why I decided to home school when I did, because he is an only child. He is around adults or older children most of the time. I wanted him to have interactions with some other children his own age. That didn't mean that I wanted him to be surrounded by kids all day, but I did want him to know how to interact with kids his own age. But yes, it is a concern, but like I said, I have made it...where he has plenty of opportunities to socialize with not only children his own age, but a variety of ages. You know, older ones, teenagers, family members, people from our church, our congregation, people from different backgrounds. And I think exposure is really what I want him to have, to see that there are other types of people in the world, there are other ways that things are done. You know, I don't want him to have a very narrow viewpoint of the world. [HS HSB]

...I mean, you can get them involved in sports, clubs, in classes, music classes, and art. See in our case, we can't afford to be putting [child a] in art and music and gymnastics. I mean, that would be too much money for us...so that's why I tell you that in socialisation, maybe she is not getting as much as I would like. But if you have the money, yes, you can buy all the socialisation [opportunities] you want! [HS HSH]

HSG pointed out that 'socialisation is a broad category', going on to say that she didn't value an individual's definition of the word if it meant spending time with people of the same age:

If they mean socialisation meaning how much time do they spend with people exactly their same age, I don't think that has a value. I don't really see the point. A little is nice, but they need to be able to talk to all kinds of
people. So I usually flip it and make them answer a lot more questions than I answer. [HS HSG]

HSA enjoyed the socialisation opportunities for her children, no longer overscheduled with academic work, as they were in their Catholic school. 'They have a greater opportunity to meet more, different types of people, from all the different programmes that they can be in'. When asked by others about socialisation, she said: Well then I say, 'Look at my family, I have five, they socialize,' first of all. And then, number two...we have ample opportunity through the Parks and Rec. to socialize. And I say the county and the state is very supportive of home school. And I always try to put in people's mind the positive. So that people out there on the street are hearing the state, the county supports home education. So that way...the more we say positive things about the state and county, the more they want to be on our side, and want to work together. So every possible moment I pump, 'Oh yeah, look what the county does for us here. And look what the state allows us to do, choosing the best curriculum for our child.' [HS HSA]

When asked, HSD wanted to know what socialisation meant to the person asking the question. She then explained how she viewed socialisation for her children, and added the caveat that 'some home schooled children are poorly socialized. There is no doubt about it. But, done correctly, I think home schooled children are better socialised': Let me tell you what my goals for socialisation are. I want my child to be able to carry on a conversation and interact well with people of all ages. I want them to be respectful. I want them to be proactive. I want them to be able to articulate their feelings, and their needs in conversations. I want them to share, I want them to... and I'll go through a whole list, and my husband and I have always felt that we are much better equipped to teach our child those things than other children their own age, because those children have not yet learned those skills so how can they teach my child those skills? Yes, experience is a good teacher, but somebody else's experience is the best teacher. [HS HSD]

Did school districts see school-based socialisation as applicable for home schooling? Some had concerns, but most concurred with the home schoolers that felt their choice of education did not reduce socialisation opportunities for their children. They defined socialisation in various terms, but none that mirrored the social experiences that school-based children have. Both home schoolers and home-based educators in the study wanted family-based socialisation for their children.
12.4 Areas of concern

As with the LEAs and home-based educators, there were areas of concern for SDs and home schoolers, which included the law, effective monitoring, and conflicts of interest. Child protection issues were also compared, as there was no evidence in SD documentation that child protection was a problem in specific relation to home schooling.

On the law...

Five of the eight SDs mentioned concerns over the law, especially how lenient it appeared to be for home schoolers. As FLH offered, 'the Florida law is quite lenient, and there may be some instances where parents are not providing the most appropriate program for the child. That I think would be something that should be examined'. The SDs’ problem centres on the timeframe home schoolers have to improve inadequate education. FLA explained it in a positive way:

Well you see the law does protect the child because if the parent who has the evaluation or test at the end of the school year, doesn’t present a test or evaluation that shows the child has done work commensurate with their ability, they’re put on probation for a year. And if they’re not brought up [after a year] they’re out of the program...so there is a span of a year, two tops, where you might lose...but I mean if in earnest, they will try to do something. I’ve had parents who can’t do anything with their child because the child came into the program below grade level...so the parents are trying...so as long as they show me that they’re trying and they’re following the school year...they have to have progressed even though they’re not doing it where they should be, grade wise. That’s another thing, the law doesn’t say anything about grades.

[Question] Right, do you think that’s fair enough? Because if you’ve got these children who are below, and if the parents are trying to get them, even if they are...improving, but not at the same level as their peers, do you think that’s okay?

Well you know there are so many loopholes in all laws, and this is a very general law so it allows parents to home school their children, their own way using their own methods, their own textbooks. [SD FLA]

But the long timeframe to address problems in a home education program was seen in a different light by other SDs:

I wish there was something in place that I could bank on, instead of having to wait an actual one-whole-year [the
probationary period before the portfolio is reviewed again]  
[SD FLD]

[The parent] could in essence go an entire year, and then the student is put on probation. It could literally be two years before the student was exited out based on the way that the laws are written [SD FLG]

The long timeframe to act on home schoolers if progress was unsatisfactory was of concern to some SDs, yet home schooler HSF felt that the one year probation period was useful. In her own situation, if her children’s portfolios were not up to par, she felt the time ‘they would have to take to force my child back into school would give me more than enough time to remedy the situation’. She added:

The fact that they are given a year to make changes is wonderful. People might say, ‘Oh it’s a year that the child doesn’t learn, but when you listen to the news and hear about the public schools saying ‘Well by the next twelve years we’ll have this figured out, and we’ll fix this’... well what about those children that have been in those public schools those years and they are losing out... and again, for a responsible parent, they will make these appropriate changes. [HS HSF]

Home schoolers HSE and HSF also voiced concerns over SDs asking more than the law allowed. In HSF’s words, she felt it was a control issue by the SDs over the home education program:

We are legally required to give the child’s name, address, date of birth, and a parent’s name. They are sending information asking why are you home schooling, what is the child’s social security number, how many hours do you home school, blah blah blah. These things are just, again, control issues and it is one of those things I will draw a line in the sand on... I’m not going to give them something else where they have my child’s social security number and all this, because they can’t justify why.

[Question] Why would they want it?

Control [HS HSF]

HSE, a volunteer at a large local support group who had been to a few portfolio reviews with others, also perceived that some SDs asked for more than was required in the law:

...the two that I went to in xxx county went really well. But then again, I was there, and they knew who I was. I’ve heard stories in xxx county, especially xxx county has
a tendency to ask a lot of superfluous questions, and they can be intimidating to a home educator that doesn't know to say, 'Look, I don't have to do that'. Like, she'll [the school district representative] look through the portfolio and say, 'What do you do for music?' And the correct response to that is, There is nowhere in the law that tells me I have to teach certain subjects'...and then, someone instead will say, 'Oh gosh, you know I don't have a music program'. And then she'll say, 'Well do your children sing in church, or listen to music on the radio, or something like that?' and then she'll note that as part of your music curriculum...and she does that consistently. That can be intimidating. I've also known her to tell people that she doesn't like the information that they have provided. Like, she doesn't' like your log, or she doesn't like the way that you're giving this information...and that also is superfluous. It doesn't matter if she likes your method or reporting or accounting, it just has to be there. [HS HSE]

As HSE explained, part of the relationship that her support group had with the Department of Education and the local School District was to inform the officials about the correct interpretation of the law:

...and I think that's why in our relationship, our meaning the [home school group's] relationship with the Department of Education, the Department of Education always refers the local school officials to the [home school group] to understand the law, because they do not understand it and they do not have knowledge of it. And so they [the Department of Education] say go to the [home school group] go to the Guide to Home Schooling in Florida, so that you can understand exactly what the law says. [HS HSE]

Do SDs want more control within the home schooling law? It would appear from the voices in this study that concerns do exist, though it is likely to be directed at a minority of the home schoolers registered with the SD. The home schoolers voicing their opinions here, however, were adamant about not giving more information than necessary, and not acquiescing to any school-based format if asked as the law is not specific about curriculum or teaching styles.

On effective monitoring...
The year-long probation period ties in with concerns over effective evaluating of home education programs. FLF said:

Our statutes are written so that basically all we do is make sure they submit to us an annual evaluation and as long as they're making 'adequate progress' whatever that
is, then there is nothing we can do. The worst we can do
is tell them they're on probation...A lot of our parents in
our rural small county are the ones that get upset with
the school system, they get frustrated, and they
circumvent the attendance laws. [SD FLF]

The law is also written in such a way that a certified Florida teacher, who was
home schooling, can evaluate his or her children:
There was a home educating parent who was a Florida
certified teacher. She wasn’t employed but she was a
Florida certified teacher. She filled out the portfolio review
statement and then signed it herself on her own
children...we did not want to accept that because to us it
did not seem like a fair measure when the person doing
the teaching was also doing the evaluation...the parent
complained to either DOE [Department of Education] or
the Home School Legal Defense Association [HSLDA] and
we ended up having to go and accept that evaluation
because the law didn't say, nowhere in the law does it say
that you cannot evaluate your own child...so it gets that
sticky and that particular [SD FLB]

In another scenario, FLE described how home schoolers can choose a certified
Florida teacher that will pass a child’s portfolio, even though that child may not have
made 'progress'. According to the SDs, the law did not standardize teacher
evaluations to avoid such problems. Again, the SDs' concerns are likely to be directed
at a minority of cases where unsatisfactory progress is perceived. If such concerns are
incorporated into SD policy, or certified teacher evaluation methodology, problems
could arise.

For example, three of the home schoolers had particular issues with
monitoring, but their individual problems were resolved satisfactorily. For HSF, the
Florida certified teacher that evaluated her child interpreted the law to compare
educational progress with the schools:
I was a little disappointed in my home evaluator last year.
She was wonderful with my daughter, but she sat down
before looking at anything and announced that she was
going to compare my daughter to what the public schools
required of kindergarten children. Now, she is not legally
allowed to do that. Happily it wasn't a problem. But those
standards are for large classrooms. The law in Florida
states that a child simply must prove that they have
learned commensurate with a child’s abilities. So if the
child is not doing very well...let's say the child is officially
two grades behind, and the next year the child has
learned, and is still two grades behind but has learned a
whole year's worth, the child has learned. I don't think that any bureaucrat coming in is going to do anything other than add another layer of, well, bureaucracy. [HS HSF]

This particular teacher was not used again, as HSF felt there was a conflict of assessment against the school-based curriculum and standards.

In HSC's case, she had failed to send in her children's evaluation on the correct date. She was upset at the time with the way the local SD had dealt with the problem:

[Question] Didn't they [the SD] try and say that you hadn't handed your evaluation in on the right date or something?

Correct, and I didn't. So that was my fault.

[Question] And weren't they quite officious about it?

Yes. Well, they said that I needed to ...send in the evaluation or say that I was going to pull [child a] out of home schooling...but you know what, as soon as I had him evaluated, I didn't even send it in, they just told me to fax it...I still have the original. They never requested it [the original]. So they were very happy. The thing with them is that I followed through with...the law that they had. In other words, they wanted to make sure that I actually did have him evaluated. As far as that, they have never given me any trouble...I think it was their formal letter that they sent and then what happened was, as soon as I called them up and said, 'I have it, I'm sorry, I didn't get to it, and do you want me to mail it?' And they were like, 'Well do you have a fax machine...?' [HS HSC]

In her error, HSC had failed to follow her legal responsibility to submit an annual evaluation, and the SD was quick to pick up on their legal duty to file evaluations. One SD told me that they spend part of every day following up late evaluations; some can be simply and satisfactorily resolved as above, by the home schooler.

For HSH, the mistake with timely evaluation submission was due to a typing error by the SD. As with HSC, HSH was concerned with the way the SD dealt with her:

[Question] You had a bit of tension with them?

Yeah, what happened was that they originally, when I sent in the letter of intent, they sent back a little package
saying her first evaluation was going to be I think it was actually two years from the date...and I said, 'Hey maybe they don't evaluate until they are in second grade'. That was my impression from all that so I didn't pursue it further. I just saved the letter...maybe they think it [kindergarten, first grade] is too early for evaluating. But then again, what happened was that December came, of the real date that she was supposed to be evaluated. I didn't send anything in of course, and January they called me and said, 'Where is the evaluation?' and I said, 'Well I have the letter in my hand and it said that it is actually next December.'...She was like, 'Oh, wait'. And then she looked at my file and saw the copy of the letter and she saw that the date was wrong. So she was like, 'Okay, go ahead and send it whenever you can'. But after I talked to her they sent me this really nasty letter which basically said she was withdrawn from the right to home school...they gave me...two days, or something like that to submit the evaluation or else they were basically threatening us with bringing them [the children] to DCS [Department of Children Services]. [HS HSH]

As HSH went on to say,

It was pretty scary. So I called the lady right away and she basically cleared it up. It was signed by the, what is the name of the lady that is the head of...?

[Question] Uh, xxx?

Yeah, it was signed by her. And I called the secretary I think it is ooo, and she said, 'Oh no, we made a mistake. Just don't worry about it. Just send the evaluation whenever you can.' It was pretty sad, because then they send me a letter to clarify this issue, and it has the wrong name, with the wrong student's name...so they are that disorganized over there.

[Question] Yeah. But that is scary to send a threatening letter out. For a start, it is against the law, what they had suggested. They could not have withdrawn [child a] without a one-year probation. Oh really? [HS HSH]

In this situation, even though the mistake in evaluation dates originated with the SD, it was the responsibility of the home schooler to comply with the law that states an annual evaluation submission. Luckily, the situation was resolved with HSH sending in an evaluation. Of note, however, was the inaccurate suggestion by the SD's
secretary that HSH's child would be withdrawn from the home schooling program. When law is misinterpreted, or misused, by either party, conflict is imminent unless swiftly rectified. Additionally, such situations do not breed trust by either party; thus measures should be taken to minimize these instances.

For instance, home schoolers should see the advantages of seeing the SDs' perspective over inadequate education. HSD was the only participant vocalizing the point that home schoolers should be held accountable for their child's education if it was not suitable:

...home schoolers have to learn to not blindly support all home schoolers. They need to blindly support the right to home school...but there are home schoolers who are totally inadequate, do not teach their children. We all, as a group, and as home schoolers know other home schoolers like that. We need to go to them and offer to help them and raise that standard up, because whenever we turn a blind eye to that and then that home schooler fails and puts that child back into the system, and the other teachers see a child that has not been educated at all, it gives us all a black smudge on our record. So we need to pull together and if we see a home school family that is struggling we need to offer our assistance...and if we see neglect in a home, I mean, rampant neglect where there is no education taking place at all, we need to talk to our home school representatives...or whoever it is, and ask what can be done, because it is all of our responsibility to a certain extent as home schoolers to make sure our fellow home schoolers are being supported. [HS HSD]

A point made by HSE, and echoed by all home schoolers interviewed, was to keep the parents in control, rather than the SDs:
Because it is not the responsibility of the school system to judge whether or not my children have progressed. It is the responsibility of the certified teacher to make the assessment as to whether or not they have progressed. And so that's all they're looking for at assessment. And if you give them [the school district] test scores, then you are asking for them to make that assessment...what happens is, I'll give you an example...let's say, you know in seventh grade, your child tests at the 90th percentile at math, and then at eighth grade, taking the test again, they go down to the 75th percentile, because there is algebra on there and they don't know algebra, and then the school system will look at that any put your child on probation, because you haven't progressed commensurate...[HS HSE]
As the law is currently written, SDs could perhaps view progress commensurate with ability from one year to the next, rather than over the grade level. As I was not able to get the SDs to answer this criticism, I was unsure as to the accuracy of this perception.

What is more, when I asked the home schoolers whether home visits would be suitable in Florida, HSE went back to keeping the parental control of education as a reason not to advocate home visits:

[Question] Do you think [home visits] would work here in Florida?

I wouldn't advocate it...because in the Florida law, what we do is really put the responsibility of the education on the parents and then, like an outside source, like a certified teacher, to do an evaluation. In a home visit, first of all, you are opening up your home which can open up a whole other can of worms, like are you a good parent, is your house clean enough, and all sorts of social issues, that are actually a big problem in Florida. So I think that you can...create more of a problem with that. Second of all, you are giving them still more authority than they need to have in the home education of your children. [HS HSE]

HSA said she would not feel intimidated by a home visit, but was not sure that it could be done effectively:

I suppose, first of all, it would not intimidate me, because I think I am doing a good job. And I think I have plenty of, I think I am using enough of the standardized books and things that the school would be using. I think I would pass. On the other hand, I don't think it's necessary. I think some of the beauty of home schooling is that we can go at our own pace, and do what's best for our child that year. And we may be teaching the 12 times table when the child is second grade rather than third grade, because that is what the child can handle, and can do at that time period. And I don't think any outside source coming in can properly, in a one hour time segment or however much time they have, evaluate and know all the ins and outs of how our child learns. So I suppose you could compare it to children who are handicapped in some ways and we do different things to teach them. Now our children aren't handicapped, but we know what their strengths and weaknesses are, so we teach accordingly, and that takes years to learn. No state official, in one hour, could figure that out. [HS HSA]
In considering the home visit to be a good method of assessment for some families who ‘have no business doing it...so that their kid don’t fall through the cracks’, HSH worried that a SD home visit would give ‘these people the power to judge your family on one specific occasion. What if, on that day, the toddler is going crazy?’ HSB added that a home visit could give the SDs too much information:

I think that is giving the authorities too much freedom, too much information. You know, if they had concerns or something along those lines, then I would be willing to listen, or to try to help them to see what exactly we do. But just to invite somebody into my home to check things out...I think people tend to be critical, overly critical of home schoolers. [HS HSB]

When asked, the SDs did not advocate home visits, though one mentioned that they had been done in the past. Though not all SDs were happy with the effectiveness of annual evaluations for all home schooling families, they were united with home schoolers in dismissing home visits as effective monitoring.

On child protection issues...

In complete contrast to the LEAs, only two SDs mentioned child protection issues, and with each SD, it was stated that this was a rare occurrence:

Now this is limited, but there have been cases where people tried to hide abuse in the home, by home schooling...it’s a form of parental control where they keep the child home all the time, so in that case, the school does not know that this is going on, and it’s a hidden factor. It is a minor factor but it is out there. [SD FLE]

Most parents when they do come in, bring the child, and partly it’s because I guess, their own make-up. It would be strange for them to even imagine not having the child be with them...that to me, it’s a part of the whole atmosphere of home educating. The family together. ...It’s comforting to see the child, and hopefully not be presented with a child covered with bruises or so pale that it appears the child was locked in a closet...But again, we can’t mandate it because the law doesn’t require it. It’s a portfolio review, not a child review. [SD FLB]

In contrast to the home-based educators, not one home schooler felt there were child protection issues per se, though some acknowledged that children might be ‘falling through the cracks’ (HSH, HSD and HSE). For example, HSD noted a leniency in the law that could result in home schoolers being virtually illiterate when they graduate:
I think that there should be more criteria for meeting basic competency in reading and writing, and mathematics.

[Question] Okay, so what, like there should be some baseline?

Yeah, because right now you can educate and if you can find somebody to evaluate your child, you cannot have...they can finish home schooling and be virtually illiterate...I'd like to see the standard a little higher than right now. I think even though it's not written, there is no written, like nowhere does it say that your child had to be able to read an application...or anything. There is no standard...yes, you have to have your child evaluated but no one sets what that standard has to be, gives guidelines, nothing.

[Question] Okay, Do you think that the reason that doesn't exist is because people will pounce on it and say 'You're affecting my...[rights]?'

Yes. [HS HSD]

Another home schooler, HSC, told me of a particular case where someone was using the lenient law to 'home educate' her child, though in HSC's view, this was not the case at all:

I think that you have many home schoolers, many people, the majority of people that do educate their children. But I know there is always someone out there that will not teach their children, like my mom! Or this other lady that I know that never sends her daughter into school, and says, 'Well I will home school her', and yet she works this child. I mean this child is like Cinderella, she doesn't have time to study, nor does the mother think it's important to study. You know, and the officials are always back and forth. And I think this year she is going to have to do something about it. I have donated books to her, and I have written out, and done a lot of research on the website and everything...all kinds of educational tools and tips, and gave her the newsletter for FPEA and everything. What she does with it is up to her, but without that yearly evaluation, people like that would wind up with children that don't learn. And not by any fault of the children, because the child wants to learn, whether at home or at school, so therefore I do think it's
important that they do have the yearly evaluation. There’s got to be some kind of accountability, I really believe that, for people who really don’t follow through. [HS HSC]

HSC thought that the mother in this case, who intends to home school her child, will hopefully be held accountable for the child’s education:

I think that in the end, the evaluation definitely protects the child, because this lady hasn’t even taken her child out yet. She is still getting the delinquent notices from school, the truant notices. So sooner or later she’s going to have to make [a decision]. What she does, is just before she’s going to get in trouble, the daughter goes to school for a week or two, and then she pulls the daughter out, which I think is terribly horrible. We have talked to her, and ironically her sister, who she lives with and is always on her case is an English teacher in the public school system. That’s really crazy, as far as I am concerned. But yes...when she does take her child out and put her into home education, she is going to have to be accountable. [HS HSC]

Clearly, instances of child protection issues are considered rare by SDs and home schoolers alike. What is more, SD policy and home schooling law is not driven by child protection concerns. Two home schoolers that have considered child protection issues offer suggestions to address specific situations.

On conflicts of interest...

Both FLF and FLE had an issue with a conflict of interest, much the same as their LEA counterparts. FLF described the information materials sent to home schoolers, saying:

We cannot endorse or really recommend any one so we list all the curriculum sources and resources and then we have a parent newsletter from the state, and I even put in a copy of that because they send me a courtesy copy, because that gives them people to contact...and my idea is if they’re going to home school they ought to try to be the best that they can be...so that’s why we try to help them without endorsing or recommending anyone in particular. [SD FLF]

FLE echoes the conflict of interest, saying ‘We don’t want to encourage them but we also want to be realistic and if a parent is going to do this you want them to be able to do it to the best of their abilities’.
Only two SDs mentioned specific problems with certain groups of people. FLA believed the leaders of home school support groups could pass on a negative attitude to their members:

There are one or two leaders that are just unwilling to cooperate with the authorities...and they pass that kind of an attitude on, not only to the children but other support group members...[So] you do have parents who just don't want to comply with the law unless they really have to and they're only cutting off their nose to spite their face really...it's a terrible attitude to pass down to your children. [SD FLA]

FLC found it difficult to deal with the group of home schoolers that are anti-establishment:

Probably the one group in home school that is adversarial, they're adversarial against government, so it wouldn't matter if it was us or the city council. They're just against government...I don't know how to cross over to reach them...so we just leave them alone. [SD FLC]

When asked if home schoolers encountered problems, HSD had a specific case to tell. Her son needed occupational therapy and physical therapy whilst in school; once home schooled, the SD initially denied the services to him:

My son was in occupational therapy and physical therapy when I withdrew him from school, because he had had a head injury. And they initially did not want to continue to provide me services as a home schooled child, and I showed them that legally they had no choice, they had to.

[Question] Oh! Okay, gosh, so you had to know your law and fight for it?

Yeah. And that did set a precedent in the county, for providing services. [HS HSD]

In this instance, as the child had exited the state school system, the SD were not keen to provide services. As the home schooling mother did not have the skills to provide occupational and physical therapy, she turned to the SD1.

Whilst the SDs interviewed really didn’t articulate many conflicts of interest besides trying not to encourage home schooling, or issues over the leniency of the law, the home schoolers offered their perspectives on what they felt school officials might

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1 This situation also occurred with my son, who needed to be assessed by a speech therapist. Unqualified to assess him myself, I approached our local elementary school, where the services were provided without problems.
have most difficulty with. For example, HSB saw the plethora of curricula choices and teaching styles potentially difficult for SDs to assimilate:

I think they might have most conflict with curriculum choices being open to the parents.

[Question] Okay, I can see that. What, because they are more used to the structure...?

Yes, I have found that most educators I talk to, their concern is about teaching the Sunshine Standards and they question, 'Well how do you know what to teach?' or that type of thing. You know, 'How do you know that they would be at the same level', comparing a home school child to the level that they are teaching. [HS HSB]

HSE described the school system based on an institution that valued the standards set. She saw 'the biggest problem is the variety and assuming that with variety you're getting same results' as those found in schools. The school districts, HSE added, try to understand home schoolers from their school-based standards. HSF likened this concern to the 'relative homogenisation' found in schools, where most children are going to learn generally about the same topics in the same grades. HSA felt that the potential lack of structure to some home school programs could sit uneasily with state school officials. She considered assessment criteria, used in schools, to be useful and perhaps fundamental guidelines for state officials:

...they are used to structure. We are used to guidelines, we are used to criteria, we are used to evaluations. And for goodness sakes, I have seen far too many kids in the public school system that are just pushed through. They are in the high school system and they still cannot read. And I think, okay, maybe criteria and guidelines aren't perfect, but for goodness sakes, if they help the child who is a second grader that just gets pushed through to high school and never learns to read, if because of some criteria or guideline back in second grade, that forces him to return to second grade and learn how to read, then Thank God for those criteria and guidelines. So if I was in the school district, that would scare me the most, being out there with no guidelines at all. [HS HSA]

HSC added that school districts might have a suspicion that home schooling was not being implemented:

[Question] What do you think they might have most conflict with?

Suspicion that it's not actually being implemented. That the children are probably home, watching TV, eating popcorn, not studying, or that they are studying the
minimal. Or that they are studying whatever they want
to study and they won't be prepared for later on in life,
and they will have to flip burgers for the rest of their life.
[HS HSC]

HSG went further, accusing the media as portraying bad parenting as 'home
schoolers':
I think that there are always going to be bad apples and I
don't think that you can say that someone who is not
feeding their children and keeping them in the basement
is 'home educating'. They are simply truant because their
parents are whacko. They are not sitting down with
reading and spelling and math and everything and
saying, 'Okay children, I know you are hungry, but shall
we move on with our lessons today?' It is not happening.
They are not being home schooled. That is just a socialist
media ploy in my mind, for making home schoolers look
bad. [HS HSG]

HSG also saw the political perspective affecting the state officials' view of
home schooling:
I haven't run across it, but I know that when I talk to
people who generally sound sort of sour I assume that
they don't believe in home schooling having something to
do with John Locke and the social contract. I have no
idea. Or they think that we are fascist or something. I
mean, I don't even know. I don't know where they are
coming from. But I know that people have serious
political problems with...usually to do with some
misunderstanding and/or their own personal politics
being so strong there is not really anything to discuss.
[HS HSG]

HSE felt negative media reports about home schooling underscored tensions
on public vs. private school funding:
...there's always going to be those that are going to try to
pull home schooling down, and basically they're doing it
because the public school systems are losing the money
that is attached to the students that aren't going through
the public school system. But I think that in general, the
general attitude in this country, and even in the state, is
very much supportive of home schooling. [HS HSE]

What is interesting here is the home schoolers' perceptions of school district
officials' conflicts. The most common perception is that SDs are blinkered by their
need for standardisation when formulating perceptions towards home schooling. This
perception would be exacerbated by documentation that portrays a school-based bias, or portfolio reviews that rely too heavily on comparable curricula and standards in school. The evidence by SD documentation and the voices of the participants does not support the home schoolers' perceptions to a great extent, indicating grounds for better communication and information sharing.

12.5 Areas of cooperation

Like EWH, the school district official FLC has organized annual events for home schoolers to attend. This was in addition to the statutes that allow home schoolers access to interscholastic activities in their local schools, or attendance in virtual schools. There was not much evidence of other cooperative efforts between SDs and home schoolers, though giving information, including the statutes and support group details, was mentioned.

A unique situation in Florida is the committee that meets with home schoolers monthly if they are suspected of using the home education program to avoid truancy laws. Here, state officials, teachers and home school volunteers meet with the family to check the child's portfolio every thirty days. If satisfied, the child continues on the home education program. In this way the SDs and home schoolers come together to deter individuals from using home schooling as a shield to circumvent attendance laws. Such cooperation is for the benefit of home schooling parents, their children and the state, and exemplifies Reich's concept of balancing the trilogy of interests.

In spite of cooperative ventures written into law, and opportunities taken by home schoolers (e.g. Accessing virtual school classes), most of the home schoolers were happy that there is little or no interaction with the school districts. Only one home schooler, HSH, thought that promoting a relationship with the school district and local public schools would be good:

I think it would be a wonderful thing if they would reach out to us and get themselves organized and say, These people are part of our community. These kids are part of the same future as the kids in public school. Let's get together.' I would be the first person there in that meeting, and getting involved and helping them. [HS HSH]

Judging by the voices in this study, cooperative efforts by SDs and home schoolers other than mentioned above might not be endorsed by either group.

12.6 Summary

As a companion to the previous chapter, this chapter highlighted perspectives over potential areas of tension, curriculum control, secondary socialisation, issues over the law and conflicts of interest. Though some SDs suggested that the leniency in the law made effective evaluations of home schoolers difficult in certain cases, any control of the curriculum, or perceived changes to the current home schooling law would be met with defensive measures by home schoolers. Over the curriculum, some SDs felt that the lack of a standardised portfolio review did not always enable
effective evaluations, and suggested a combination of standardised tests and portfolio reviews as more realistic. Two home schoolers were also astute enough to show concerns towards home schoolers that might fall through the cracks.

Both home schoolers and SDs were fairly united in being unconcerned about the socialisation aspects of home schooling, especially when weighing the individual’s perspective in defining ‘socialisation’. Thus, one SD considered primary socialisation for younger children appropriate, gradually giving way to secondary socialisation for older children to achieve autonomous citizens for society.

Though some SDs had concerns over the leniency of the law regarding portfolio reviews and the probationary period, the law also enabled cooperative efforts between SDs and home schoolers over truancy issues. Compatible perspectives were also held on the lack of child protection issues and the lack of desire to have home visits as part of evaluations.

Home schoolers displayed similar attitudes over the issues covered to their home-based educating counterparts, but seemed more confident in the laws to defend their choices, and allow for opportunities such as dual enrolment. As mentioned in the previous chapter, issues that present cooperation show an appreciation for the interests of the other, and issues that present potential conflict need to be addressed.
SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE DATA

Introduction

Chapters 11 and 12 drew out the comparative perspectives of LEAs and home-based educators and SDs and home schoolers respectively, on the categories that had emerged from the group perspective of the quantitative data in Chapter 10. In order to discuss all data as well as the theoretical framing of culture, rights, attitudes and ideologies that differentiate perspectives, it is first useful to display the main perceptions in tabular form. Thus, this prelude to Chapter 13 presents the perspectives held by both groups in both societies on the law, socialization, curriculum, child protection and monitoring/evaluation.
Table 12.1  Perspectives on the law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home-based educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The law is too vague.</td>
<td>• The law protects their rights.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The law needs interpretation to accommodate LEA duties.</td>
<td>• Home-based educators need to be well versed in the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The law doesn’t always protect children.</td>
<td>• There are no issues of child protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compulsory registration welcomed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

• The lack of definition in the law gives rise to interpretation, from both groups, and the possibility of one group trying to legitimize their interpretation over the other.

• LEAs pushed compulsory registration with the attachment of home visits. Although not voiced, compulsory registration is unlikely to be popular with home-based educators under the current climate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDs in Florida</th>
<th>Home schoolers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The law is too lenient.</td>
<td>• The law protects their rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is no standardisation for certified teacher evaluations.</td>
<td>• Home schoolers need to be well versed in the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child protection issues are not part of education law.</td>
<td>• There are no issues of child protection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

• Records and correspondence between SDs and home schoolers are not properly maintained.

• SDs ask for more information than the law allows. Home schoolers might feel this is encroaching too far into their lives; SDs might need standardised records as part of departmental policy.

• SDs or home schoolers interpret the law, to gain/retain control over the other.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home-based educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Socialisation opportunities should include children mixing with same-aged peers, as well as independently from families.</td>
<td>• Socialisation is an issue only to novice home-based educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life chances may be adversely affected by home-based education, through isolation or lack of peer interaction.</td>
<td>• To be initially primary and family-based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Socialisation is best met by opportunities found in schools.</td>
<td>• Opportunities for socialisation exist if families network with others through support groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School socialisation prepares children for school community, not the real world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- LEAs truly believe that socialisation cannot be adequately met in the home education setting. Home-based educators cite school socialisation as a reason to opt out of the school system, so reject this form for their interpretation of socialisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDs in Florida</th>
<th>Home schoolers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Socialisation in schools is not replicable in the home school setting.</td>
<td>• School socialisation prepares children for the school community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Socialisation within schools exposes children to many different types of students.</td>
<td>• Socialisation should be initially primary and family-based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Socialisation is dependent on the individual’s definition of the word.</td>
<td>• More social opportunities exist for home schoolers, especially with the large number of support and networking groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- SDs truly believe that socialisation cannot be adequately met in the home education setting. Home schoolers cite school socialisation as a reason to opt out of the school system, so reject this form for their interpretation of socialisation.
**Table 12: Perspectives on the curriculum**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home-based educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A good curriculum can be broadly based on school-based models.</td>
<td>• A good curriculum can be based on a variety of philosophies, and styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Home-based education does not always provide suitable education.</td>
<td>• The family’s choice of home-based education fits the needs of their child best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents who ‘react’ to a situation to home educate are not as prepared as those parents who have an intention to home educate.</td>
<td>• The school-based curriculum model can be useful for examination subjects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- LEAs believe ‘reactive’ parents are cause for concern because their choice is not premeditated. Parents reacting to situations in school may indeed have initial difficulties.
- LEAs that document a ‘good curriculum’ that closely mirrors school subjects, or teaching styles may miss the point. Home-educating families require individualized curricula that meet the child’s needs and the family’s lifestyle. Balancing educational provision with enabling a child to be a productive citizen may require more than home-based educators envisage. Tension could arise if either LEAs or home-based educators cannot see past their own vision of what constitutes a ‘good curriculum’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDs in Florida</th>
<th>Home schoolers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There is a wealth of good curricula courses available, regionally accredited correspondence courses, virtual school, or preferred textbooks.</td>
<td>• The wealth of curricula available allows home schoolers to individualise their child’s programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have no right to either oversee or exercise control over the curricula.</td>
<td>• Baseline assessment for home schoolers can assess literacy and numeracy before graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Home schoolers have dual enrollment and interscholastic extracurricular opportunities.</td>
<td>• Home schoolers have dual enrollment and interscholastic extracurricular opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- SDs place their vision of curriculum when evaluating a portfolio. Home schoolers might feel uncomfortable if they perceive that their child’s education is lacking; or resentment that the SD is not acknowledging their individualized educational programme.
- Home schoolers are not meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards. As long as they show ‘progression’ within the letter of the law, such home schoolers could graduate with little or no skills.
Table 12:4 Perspectives on child protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAs in England and Wales</th>
<th>Home-based educators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The educational needs of the home-educated child include assessing child protection issues.</td>
<td>- LEAs conflate home education with child protection issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The home-educated child, and his or her environment, should be assessed as part of the LEA’s duty.</td>
<td>- Differences of opinion over educational provision could become mixed up with judgments about welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social services cases involving child protection issues should not colour their views on home-based educators who are reticent to make contact with the LEAs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- The perception persists amongst LEAs that home education is somehow equated with child protection issues. This may compound the problem of misunderstanding.

- Home-based educators refuse to let the LEA meet with their child, or meet in their home. Whilst within their rights to do so, this might cause more concern for the LEAs.

- Linking assessment of home-based educators to child protection issues may be warranted in social service cases, but conflates the LEA’s duties within the law to assess the child’s educational provision. Home-based educators who have concern over this welfare assessment could remain hidden from LEAs, compounding suspicions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDs in Florida</th>
<th>Home schoolers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Child protection issues rare with home schooling families.</td>
<td>- Some home schoolers might ‘fall through the cracks’ in terms of educational provision, but not specifically about child protection issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No great concern over child protection issues that drives policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- Parents reportedly ‘home schooling’ are found to be negligent in educating and/or caring for the children. Such ‘home schoolers’ could portray a negative image of the home schooling community.

- Parents trying to circumvent truancy laws by reportedly ‘home schooling’, when little or no education is taking place.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspectives on monitoring/evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAs in England and Wales</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The home visit is the usual method of monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Home visits, whilst offering a cursory overview of educational provision, allow the LEA officials to assess the child and working environment. This is more useful to the LEAs than other methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other methods of monitoring are acceptable, including reports, tutor assessments, or a neutral location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- LEA policy insists on home visits, or seeing the child to assess educational provision. Not all home-based educators are accommodating.
- Other methods of monitoring are less than satisfactory, in the LEA’s view, but there is no compromise made by home-based educators.
- Concern over child protection issues guides monitoring policies.
- Assessment of educational provision by LEAs is so structured to a school-based questionnaire as to be irrelevant to home-based educators. Conversely, the educational philosophy statement offered by home-based educators may be hard to assess by LEAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SDs in Florida</strong></th>
<th><strong>Home schoolers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Evaluation of every home-schooled child in the SD meets policy requirements to ensure the children are progressing 'commensurate with their ability'.</td>
<td>- Home schoolers need to know how to take standardized tests, to develop test-taking skills, and to place the children among their same-aged peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Portfolios don’t always show the completeness of a taught program.</td>
<td>- Certified teacher evaluations allow the child to avoid tests, and are useful for younger children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Standardized tests give a clearer view of how a home-schooled child compares with their same-aged peers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tensions could exist if:**

- Home schoolers feel uncomfortable with SD portfolio reviews. Though not mandated in law, SDs have the right to call in home schoolers for a portfolio review at any time.
- Home schoolers are not proficient at organizing and collating papers the child’s portfolio. SDs might assume progress is not being made if a portfolio is poorly presented.
Chapter 13 – Discussion and Conclusions

13.1 Introduction

From a macro perspective, the collated literature and data presented could justify educational pluralism in both societies on the grounds that public and private education co-exist to accommodate the interests of the state, the parents and the child. What is more, through the political perspective extremes of communitarianism and libertarianism, education was seen as both a public and a private good. The micro perspective looked at home educators, a unique sub-set of the private education sector, and their perspectives towards state officials who interact with them on points of law. The state officials’ perspectives towards home educators were deemed equally important to explore, as such comparative work is limited in the field. In addition, in spite of my initial premise that tension must exist between the two groups, there was more indication of toleration of educational pluralism than of contestation.

As this comparative work produced a great deal of information, it is discussed in several sections. In order to address the research questions, this chapter starts by detailing the British perspective, followed by the American perspective. A recap of the symbolic interactionist framework for analysis is then offered; this precedes a discussion of the state officials’ and home educators’ vision of the other, and the public and private faces shown through the data. To revisit the concept of ideologies, issues of control, education ownership and normalization of home education are considered, before the research questions are answered. A final conclusion in this chapter illustrates how assumed perception and tension at the outset of the study have been replaced by a suggested shift, emanating from the data, towards a degree of attitude convergence.

13.2 The British Perspective

It was determined from the literature review that the modern home education movement started in England and Wales at about the same time as in the United States, but has not reached the same stage as the homeschooling community in Florida. Despite growing public acceptance through generally positive media reports and increased visibility, and support of equal opportunities, the historical and cultural differences have set up a scenario that is unlike the homeschooling movement in Florida. Mandating religious education in state schools as part of the 1944 Education Act, as well as introducing the National Curriculum in the 1980s reveals the government’s control dilemma in the face of promoting educational diversity. That is, though home education, faith-based comprehensive schools, and private schools exist to accommodate the parents’ right to choose their child’s education beyond state schooling, an undercurrent of conflict accepting home-based educators’ complete control of education must be considered. Not only based on past research, which defensively portrays home education as a viable educational alternative, this conflict can also be based on the cultural attitude of British people acquiescing to the status quo of state education rather than home-based education. Thus, home education, by its very nature, is antithetical.

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1 The use of the Internet search engines can quickly illustrate media coverage of home education
It would seem surprising that the Education Acts that accommodate home education as ‘education otherwise than at school’ would be so vague, if control of education was such as issue. However, if one sees the law written in 1944 penned in the spirit of the communitarian mentality, as well as during the Second World War, it is easier to see that a prescriptive law for ‘education otherwise’ was not considered necessary. Neither was the omission of compulsory registration, nor stipulations on what constituted evidence of educational provision. Yet, with the state mandated National Curriculum and initiatives to measure educational attainment (SATs), for example, coupled against the growing number of home-based educators who needn’t follow such standards, potential for discord was initially presumed unavoidable. Moreover, the 1996 Education Act’s generalized provisions for home-based education have not addressed the government’s conflict over perceived control of home education; consequently, tension was expected from the outset of the study from LEA state officials.

Ideologies from the state officials’ and home-based educators’ perspectives have been proffered, continuing the expectation that there would be tension based on dichotomous communitarian/liberal views that would support the common good versus the private good of education respectively. Such views were based on a homogeneous group attitude, and largely supported in the quantitative documentation data. Thus the state officials’ vision of multicultural, inclusive citizenship; a broad and balanced curriculum based on the National Curriculum; secondary socialisation as offered in state schools, was determined to contrast with the home-based educators’ vision of citizenship based primarily on the family, faith, culture; child-based curricula; and primary socialisation from the family.

Relinquishing control of education, or laying a claim to ‘education ownership’ appeared to be an issue with state officials or home-based educators respectively, although individual voices revealed subtle differences from the group attitude. Curriculum, secondary socialisation, child protection and monitoring/evaluation were considered the areas most likely to cause dissonance, and were all based on control issues.

All the home-based educators, looking to the lack of prescription in the law as their defense, expected complete control over the curriculum. That is not to say that National Curriculum or public examination subjects were not followed – the choice depended on the individual family and their aspirations for the children. These home-based educators would also argue that a school-structured curriculum has less resonance in home education than a more flexible, individualized curriculum (for e.g. the Asperger’s syndrome child was not able to follow the school-based curriculum). The committed home-based educators were also convinced that a lack of teaching

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2 One of the reasons that the quantitative data was drawn primarily from LEA and SD officials, rather than home educators, was based on the premise that tension would emanate from their perspectives, and colour their policy and practice. Such policy and practice would then have an effect on home-based educators’ perspectives of LEAs and SDs, and subsequent interactions or non-interactions.

3 This concept of education ownership is brought up more fully in Section 13.5
qualifications need not interfere with the child’s education, as shown by those that bought in services when necessary.

Some of the LEAs would counter this view, citing lack of opportunities, standardisation and assessment in justifying some measure of control. For most of the LEAs interviewed, their perspective was firmly rooted in the standardized National Curriculum, testing and public examinations that ensure accountability of the state schools. Policy dictates that most of the information offered to home-based educators is based on the broad and balanced National Curriculum as a ‘good’ model, with professional teachers providing the best opportunities for the children. Only LEA EWK was able to concede that some children had access to a rich and varied learning experience, when the parents were highly skilled and motivated. Most of the LEAs however, voiced some concerns over curriculum and pedagogy.

Apart from possibly affecting assessment of an ‘efficient’ and ‘suitable’ education, such concern or desire for control of the curriculum invites a question over education itself. Returning to Peters (1966) and Paechter (2001), education is an essentially contested concept, and owned knowledge is dependant on who has power or control of it (institutional or individual level). Recognising potential conflict, the law courts sought middle ground when defining ‘suitable education’ as that which prepared children for life in modern civilized society, enabling them to achieve their full potential, as well as primarily equipping a child for life within the community of which he or she is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child’s options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he or she wishes to do so. 4 This middle ground, coupled with Reich’s trilogy of interest, would do more for collaborative thought on home education than discordant individual perspectives. However, it appeared from the data, that control and owned knowledge issues were underscoring both group and individual perspectives on home education curriculum.

The issue of socialisation was another contested notion between LEAs and home-based educators. The group LEA perspective, emanating from the written documentation, clearly placed socialisation within the home education remit. Many documents that detailed how home educators could ensure socialisation opportunities, or how socialisation was to be assessed by LEAs, revealed the LEAs’ conflict. Hard to see from the home educators’ perspective, some state officials tied socialisation and citizenship into the culture of school to encourage, for example, multicultural, religiously tolerant citizens. Some LEAs also showed their concern about social opportunities lost when home educators were not in the school system, viewing home-based education as built around a closed society, with structured, planned socialisation as the norm. One LEA (EWE) felt the majority of home-based educators were dealt a grave disservice in terms of social opportunities, though a counter perspective by LEA EWJ largely dismissed school socialisation as the ‘norm’. Moreover, in spite of one LEA (EWC) erroneously believing that monitoring socialisation was part of the LEA’s responsibility, one point needs to be amplified here. Socialisation is not specifically part of the law pertaining to home education. Why?

4 See Harrison v Harrison (1981) and Justice Woolf’s comments (1985)
Trying to define socialisation and what entails a socialized citizen of society will always be contestable. For example, state schools given control over socializing children could encounter accusations of indoctrination. Or home-based educators, socializing children within the narrow confines of their community, could be seen as precluding opportunities for social access to the wider society. So the concept of socialisation needs greater definition. Who would have the definitive vision of socialisation? Considering the sociologists’ differentiation between primary and secondary socialisation, and the notion of autonomy that underscores the LEAs’ or home-based educators’ view of socialisation, any mention of socialisation within home education needs to adopt dual perspectives.

Hence, the socialisation concept can be debated from both the primary and secondary angle. Both state officials and home educators would probably accept primary socialisation as the family’s responsibility prior to compulsory education age. Only when socialisation was considered in terms of school-based, institutionalised socialisation, could discordant perceptions exist. Secondary socialisation, from sources other than the family, is the socialising force for individuals later in childhood and into maturity (Giddens 2001:28). Tying into the symbolic interactionist’s perspective, it is the social interactions that help people learn the values, norms and beliefs, which make up the patterns of their culture. In justifying the child’s best interests in education, most state officials saw the social interactions at school as best to develop the child for active participation in a civil society and to make them autonomous from their parents. This was seen stated in documentation and from the state officials’ voice. For example, the school community has a culture that is inaccessible to teachers and parents (ref. LEA EWF), that enables the children to make and follow the rules. LEA EWB also believed that school educated children had a greater range and diversity of social interactions than home educated children.

The home educators in this study would reject the argument that their educational choice undermines the interests of the child, especially in becoming autonomous. Primary socialisation, from the home educators’ perspective, was seen as preferable and continuing for a longer time period than if their child went to school; yet secondary socialisation opportunities can still be facilitated and welcomed. Such opportunities would not be based on the school model however, as most home educators would echo HEA’s sentiments, that school children are primarily socialized by other children.

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5 Both groups would see primary socialisation delivered by the family, teaching basic values, roles, statuses, norms and so on. It would also begin with the development of one’s self-concept, as described by Mead’s ‘self’, ‘I’ and ‘me’.

6 See the discussion on the child’s autonomy by Reich, Galston’s “expressive liberty” and Callan’s “zone of personal sovereignty”, Chapter 6.

7 Home educated children are known to belong to support groups for social outings and meetings; church groups; organised groups such as Guides or Scouts; sports clubs and so on. Granted, these are the home educators that are aware of, and embrace the advantages that selective secondary socialisation can offer their child.
Promoting the child's autonomy could be arguably achieved through the flexible, child-centred curricula that home educators can follow. At least one home educator favoured a more autonomous approach to teaching and learning. Two home educators expressed their desire to expose their children to people from different backgrounds (ref. HED, HSB); this indicates that home-educated children might well be presented with competing viewpoints and worldviews, especially from mixed media portrayals of society.

So, if autonomy is equated with independent functioning, as described by Reich in Chapter 6, home-educated children who mix with other adults and children can explore their independence, question values and morals, and become autonomous citizens. If autonomy is defined along a school-based context to create multicultural, religiously tolerant, politically active, twenty-first century citizens, I considered that there might be a problem. Not all home educators will want their children to be autonomous in the state school definition of the word. Especially for religiously motivated home educators, children accepting a different religion would probably not be desirable in most families. Yet, the home educators' rejection of other religions as justified by their own creed should not be viewed as promoting servility to the family. Similarly, if a home educating family believes that homosexuality has no place in their vision of society, instead promoting marriage and unions between men and women, they are not necessarily acting against the child's best interests in terms of socialisation or autonomy. As brought up in Chapter 6, and resonating from the various participants' voices, there is no one overriding conception of 'socialisation', 'autonomy' or the 'good life'. Likewise, education, however defined by state officials and home educators, must be recognized in individuals' pluralist conceptions of the good life, autonomy, and socialized citizens of society.

Thus, if autonomous citizens are the culmination of socializing influences, both LEA and home-based educator perspectives should coexist. In addition, primary, family-based socialisation naturally precedes secondary socialisation that prepares the individual for autonomy. To be brought up later, discordant perspectives over socialisation could be diminished with each group's recognition of the other's perspective. Suffice to say, this study revealed through the data and individual voices that state officials and home-based educators are sometimes talking at cross-purposes about 'socialisation' — an understanding of the other's viewpoint could be illuminating.

The final issue that stood out was the LEAs' apparent conflation of education with welfare. This drove them to seek time and labour-intensive home visits in their effort, amongst other things, to look for child protection issues. Such actions shouted out the assumption that most of the interviewed LEAs consistently perceived home-educated children to be more at risk than school-based children. In fact, it seems apparent that monitoring the child's educational progress has a two-fold agenda in England and Wales, intertwined, as it is, with child protection issues. Whilst monitoring or evaluating the educational provision or progress of a child is warranted

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8 Through advertising, news articles, fashion, television programmes, and Internet activities such as blogs and chat rooms
to ensure some basic standards of literacy and numeracy\(^9\), conflation with welfare is not. Laws were written with the presumption that parents are acting in their child's best interests, providing the basic necessities of life. This includes the welfare of the child, as most families are not considered to have child protection issues. The concerns that LEAs have over child protection issues seem rooted in the state's welfare mentality, drawn from their personal experiences, or as a result of using social service officers as part of the home education monitoring team.

It was shown in the data that home visits predominated as the monitoring method LEAs used to satisfy any concerns held. Whilst the child's best interest may indeed be served by home visits that can successfully assess educational provision and progress, some LEAs admitted that such a service is only a cursory assessment. As some home-based educators mentioned, they could see the home visit as more about child protection and control issues than about the child's educational provision. So, is the child's educational interest being served, or the state's welfare interest?

With recent legislation such as the Children's Act 2004, and the latest research paper by Arthur Ivatts (2006) that suggests protecting the educational rights and safeguarding the welfare of children, the state's agenda for welfare control of home educating families may be all the more transparent. Interesting that Ivatts draws parental rights and children's rights into his research on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, a minority group in the larger home educating community. Not that he spends much time debating the perspectives of parents, children and state interests and rights. More importantly, Ivatts' paper illustrates, to me, how easily the trilogy of interests can be upset by the ideology of one group to legitimate control over the others. In a specific sub-group such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, the researcher Ivatts should not have dared to generalize to the wider home educating population. Granted, there are concerns over certain individual families within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children who have difficulty accessing a suitable education for the children. However, extrapolating problems within this group to recommend 'Legislation [that] should apply uniformly to all families with children currently being educated at home and those wishing to elect for home education in the future' (Ivatts, 2006:23) is an incoherent leap from his conclusions. Rather than a careful balance of the issues facing LEAs and home-based educators from this specific sub-group, Ivatts has presented a biased paper to push the state's agenda. This is a pity, as one part of the legislative recommendation (compulsory registration) has credence in Reich's trilogy of interests concept, and is carried out in Florida with little fuss. Compulsory registration of home-based educators can meet the interests of the child, as he or she is visible, and the education provided can then be measured as suitable; it can meet the interests of the state as the child's education can be assessed; it can meet the interests of the parents as they show accountability for their educational choice. Yet as long as LEAs conflate welfare issues with education, compulsory registration in England and Wales will always have 'strings attached'.

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\(^9\) This was one of the original arguments for compulsory education in the 19th century to educate the masses.
In considering areas of cooperation between LEAs and home-based educators, documentation revealed the progress made by LEAs since Petrie’s (1992) suggestions that LEAs become fully conversant with the law (and display such knowledge with home-based educators). Specific examples of collaboration with the LEA were given (ref. HED, HEF), but were not the norm. Opportunities for cooperative ventures between LEAs and home-based educators seem more likely only when issues of control and conflict had been addressed.

13.3 The American Perspective

With the modern home schooling movement starting at about the same time in Florida as in England and Wales, it is clear from the data that home schoolers enjoy far more acceptance and opportunities than their home-based educating counterparts. Although encountering similar battles over the legality of home education, aggressive lobbying by individuals such as Craig and Brenda Dickenson put the bespoke Home Education Law in the Florida Statutes in 1985, clarifying the subsequent direction for home schoolers and SDs alike. Bound up with Lockean concepts of liberal individualism and self-ownership, Constitutional freedoms of religion, speech, liberty and the limitations of federal interference with the family, home schooling in Florida presents a perceived greater degree of acceptance by the state.

Cultural differences with the British perspective were seen through the lack of curriculum control by SDs in the Florida home schooling community. Acceptance of a plethora of curricula that would enable a child to learn ‘commensurate with his or her ability’ emanated from the SD documentation, by the lack of prescriptive ‘good’ curricula, and supported by many of the individuals interviewed. Where concern was shown for opportunities missed, or lack of standardization, the individual SDs recognized difficulties in addressing such concern (e.g. SD FLG). Even with recognition by one of the home schoolers (HS HSE) that individual families can struggle with providing a suitable education, the question of rights was raised. That is, judging home schooling should be based on the parents’ ability to provide successful home education, upholding their rights. Judgment or legislation that suggested admonitory measures would meet stiff opposition from Constitutionalists protecting the rights of parents to educate their children; as such, it was rarely an avenue the SDs felt worthy of travel.

Socialisation, ubiquitous in LEA documentation, was noticeably absent from SD documentation in Florida. This was understandable when considering the more administrative nature of SDs’ interaction (or lack thereof) with most home schoolers.

10 Most LEA documents and participants’ responses regarding legal duties and responsibilities were accurate.

11 Home education can exist under ‘the religious liberty and free speech provisions of the first amendment; the due process and liberty provisions of the fourth, fifth and fourteenth Amendment; and the limitation on federal interference in the family that would be the necessary result of a government bound by the strictures of the Tenth Amendment’ (Klicka and Phillips, 1997:82, Dare, 2001)
Two of the SD individuals did express similar concerns to their LEA counterparts regarding the perceived home schooling society as closed and not conducive to engendering participatory citizenship (SD FLB, FLD). However, four of the SDs were able to articulate perspectives similar to home schoolers—such as attitudes depending on what is meant by socialisation, and promoting primary socialisation with younger children. None of the home schoolers interviewed felt they had issues with socialisation, even when they were aware that they had to actively facilitate opportunities for their children (ref. HS HSB). That only two SDs expressed concerns over socialisation spoke volumes about the difference between the American and British home educating communities. Namely, the greater visibility and media acceptance of home schoolers, the larger network of support groups (national and local), and the accommodation in the law for dual-enrollment, all lend support to a more positive attitude towards socialisation in home schooling families.

Whilst child protection issues were not obvious in SD documentation, there were nonetheless concerns with the law pertaining to the child's best interests. Some individual SDs expressed concerns over the leniency in the law that enables inadequate home schooling to continue too long (ref. SD FLA, FLD, FLG). Yet one home schooler (HS HSF) felt the one-year probationary period was useful to remedy weaknesses in the home education programme. Some SDs felt the lack of standardization of evaluations could be a disservice to the home-schooled child (ref. FLB, FLE). So, in spite of the more prescriptive nature of the Florida Home Education Law, conflict could be seen between SDs' and home schoolers' visions of the child's best interests being served. Understanding that conflict would be directed at a minority of cases in the home schooling community, moderated attitudes towards the majority of home schoolers who successfully comply with the law.

Interestingly, voiced by some of the home schoolers, were their perspectives on conflicts the SDs might have towards home schooling. These included SDs' perceived need for control and standardization; yet evidence in SD documentation and the participants' voices did not completely support such perceptions. The mismatch in perceptions held by home schoolers towards SDs indicated grounds for better communication and information sharing. Indeed, when collaborative efforts succeed, for the benefit of the child, the trilogy of interests can be balanced as seen in the Florida examples. Thus, dual enrollment, the truancy committee to circumvent truanting 'home schoolers', and attendance in Florida Virtual School, all reveal attempts to balance interests.

13.4 The Symbolic Interactionist Framework

Symbolic interactionist researchers observe interactions between their subjects to interpret meanings and symbols. This study did not observe interactions between state officials and home educators, yet aspects of symbolic interactionism were used for structure and analysis purposes. Based on the fact that people learn meanings and symbols, modifying them after action, interaction and the other's perceptions of them, I determined that analyzing the group perspective through documentation and the individual voices could provide meanings and symbols from both perspectives. Before an individual is shaped by the other's perspective, or creates a vision of self through
the perspective of the ‘generalised other’, the first impression is of an individual’s defined symbols.

Categories that were chosen to focus upon in the LEA/SD group perspective, and compared with the home education group perspective, were illustrated in Chapter 10. The British and American perspectives towards curriculum, socialisation, child protection and monitoring/evaluation were highlighted above, with the differences noted. The individual perspectives, between LEAs and home-based educators, SDs and home schoolers, were highlighted in Chapters 11 and 12. The symbols, or language, that can be drawn from the data as most likely to be interpreted differently by the other group were seen as ‘curriculum’, ‘socialisation’, and ‘monitoring’. The different interpretations also incorporate how state officials and home educators might see themselves, and the others.

13.4.1 How did state officials and home educators see themselves, and the other group?

Though categorizing and discerning compatible and discordant perspectives was part of the outcome of the study, what was also useful to understand was how such perspectives had developed in general terms. I believed, as a result of analyzing the material, that compatible perspectives between state officials and home educators resulted from each group being aware of themselves as seen by the other, and how they positively viewed the other group. The use of language or symbols between each group with compatible perspectives was mutually understood. Discordant perspectives were seen when one group did not accept the other’s perspective, or was dismissive of the other’s perception of the group. Interpretation of language used by both groups, or ambiguity over the same words could also lead to discordant perceptions.

One symbol, or word, that held potential for misunderstanding was ‘socialisation’ as perceived by LEAs, predominantly based on the school model. This was understandable, as most LEA officials are products of the school system and base perceptions on their experiences. LEAs that supported their definition of the word with a school model never seemed completely satisfied with the home-based educators’ version of socialisation. Peer interaction, including how to deal with difficult children, was seen as an experience that most school children have; yet, LEAs could view home-based educators as not having the chance to socialize independently from the family. However, Daniel Monk (2003:161-162) makes an interesting comment, applicable here, based on Bainham’s argument, that depriving a child of the school life experience is a denial of the child’s rights and a failure to discharge parental responsibility. Monk sees that establishing a right to school life assumes that social and developmental benefits form part of the right to education, and that only school attendance can provide this. This cannot be a viable argument, as the diverse range of schools, public and private, attests to accepted plural conceptions of ‘educational life’ rather than ‘school life’. As upheld in the law, a child’s right to education is paramount, not a child’s right to school.

In contrast to the LEA viewpoint, many home-based educators rejected the secondary socialisation model outright, considering there to be no need or desire to
replicate it in their life. Home-based socialisation was primarily family-orientated, especially in the child's younger years. Opportunities were facilitated through support group networks, church groups, sports clubs, for example. Though most socialisation opportunities engineered by home-based educators involved groups of like-minded people, this did not mean that home-based educators would not experience bullying, peer pressures, and alliance groupings; there just might be less than found in a school setting, and of a different nature.

For Florida school districts, socialisation was also seen as secondary, school-based socialisation. There was accommodation from some SDs though, who recognized that some families interpreted the word differently and satisfactorily. Examples of home schoolers' socialisation, especially based on religious groups, were acceptable to some SDs. Awareness of the networking support for home schoolers may also have alleviated some SDs' concerns over primary socialisation. Home schoolers themselves were in concurrence with home-based educators' views above.

'Monitoring' was another word that symbolized something different for each group. For LEAs, the home visit was the common form of monitoring. Within their interpretation of their duties in law, many LEAs seemed to consider monitoring to involve an assessment of the working environment, access to the child, and consideration of child protection issues. Whilst the LEAs accepted other forms of monitoring, it would seem that most were not completely satisfied unless they had a more active involvement with the home-educating family. Only one LEA was able to see the home-based educators' perspective, accepting any suitable form of educational provision (ref. EWJ).

On the other hand, home-based educators who felt they were providing the best education for their child did not necessarily equate monitoring with a home visit, nor with issues of child protection. Participants who were accepting of home visits felt comfortable with the LEA's involvement and relationship. If perceived as a cooperative venture between parent and LEA to benefit the child's education, monitoring appeared to be less of a power struggle.

SDs had difficulty with monitoring if the evidence produced was so sketchy that it didn't present a complete picture of the child's progress. Some SDs, whilst accepting there are five ways to comply with annual evaluations, preferred standardized testing. They also had concerns that certified teacher portfolio evaluations did not address educational provision that was perceived below par. On the other hand, home schoolers were generally happy with the evaluation leeway, in spite of having to file such evaluations annually.

'Curriculum', was another word that invited different interpretations from each side, and potential for discord. From the LEAs' group perspective, curriculum was consistently equated with National Curriculum subjects, and the prescriptive 'broad and balanced' curriculum. Home-based educators saw curriculum as tailor-made for the child, which encompassed autonomous learning, to eclectic curricula, to formal public-examination subjects. Education, provided by state education, was generally seen as most relevant for future citizens of society by LEAs; yet only when home-
based educators wanted to access public examinations did their perspectives gel with LEAs. Subtle distinctions in what was meant by education and curriculum were apparent between the LEAs and home-based educators; understanding the differences could lead to more accommodating perspectives as seen by the SDs and home schoolers. Whilst concern about the home schooling curriculum was voiced at an individual level, tolerance for the other’s perspective emanated from the group documentation.

Linked to how home educators and state officials see themselves and the other group was a consideration of how the public and private faces of state officials’ and home educators’ communities could affect perceptions. The public face, perceived by people outside of the community, is symbolically simple and prone to stereotypes. The private face, in contrast, is symbolically complex and is the perception by the members of the community that see differentiation and variety. Much like an insider or outsider, it is only by viewing the community as an insider, that one can really understand the community’s nuances. As an understanding of compatible or discordant perceptions could be based on the groups’ awareness of themselves and the other, I have detailed the perceptions below.

13.4.2 Home educators’ public and private faces

First, the private face of the interviewed home educators is portrayed. The home educators who spoke with me, or the documentation from support groups that were reviewed all represented a group that felt they were reasonably successful in their home educating life. The participants in my study probably saw themselves as motivated parents who have the child’s best interests at the forefront of their educational decision-making and implementation. They have chosen the best educational path for their child, though circumstances may alter their choice later. They would have seen themselves as unique to each family they encountered, based on the particular cultural, moral, intellectual and spiritual characteristics of their family. They would probably have realized that as they progressed in their home educating life, they were adapting to situations, both inside and outside the family and community. These families were probably reflexive enough to envisage how others viewed them, and the home educators may also have been affected by subtle social control from others (perhaps unsupportive family members, or pressure from support groups to stay within the letter of the law).

Now, the home educators’ public face, as they felt state officials perceived them. The perceptions of how the state officials saw them vary slightly in the two societies. In England and Wales, some home-based educators felt they were viewed with suspicion — e.g. they were unable to do as good a job as schools, were not providing ample social opportunities, and may have child protection issues. Other home-based educators were comfortable enough with their LEAs to welcome relationships, and accept perceptions held that might be different from their own beliefs. Some home schoolers in Florida may have thought they were viewed as not able to provide the same standards of education as trained teachers, but were likely to be less worried about how they were perceived regarding socialisation.
As two home-based educators were 'unknown' to the LEAs, their voice explained how they perceived their public face by the authorities. These home-based educators did not want interaction, or more to the point, perceived intervention, from the LEAs. Such people saw their educational provision and opportunities for socialisation as the best fit for their children; they had complete ownership of the child's education and wanted no interference. Other like-minded individuals who wanted to keep the LEAs separate from their child's education looked to advice from support groups and website information.

The other home-based educators who were more accommodating had confidence that the LEAs would not overstep their authority, or conflate education with welfare issues, and were equally convinced that their child's educational provision was appropriate. As all three were home-based educators of five or more years' experience, it was likely that such experience helped make the individuals more comfortable with LEA interaction. Their perception of the LEA was more likely to be the differentiated private face of the community. They were also more confident that the LEAs would not take them at public face value, but would look at the complex private face of the home educating community.

Not one of the home schoolers felt that the SD should have any direct involvement with their family, unless it was to clarify a specific point, upheld by the law. Their public face, for the SDs, was a mask based on the generally positive media portrayal of home schoolers in Florida. Home schoolers in Florida were considered aware of their rights and responsibilities within the law, as few SDs spent time explaining how to home educate. Home schoolers seemed to be one degree of separation further from home-based educators and LEAs. Their perception of the SD's public face was based on the authoritative, administrative role they perform.

13.4.3 State officials' public and private faces

Just as the home educators had their private, insider view of their community, and the public, outside view, state officials held two viewpoints. Their public, outside view of home education had to be 'politically correct' to some degree, as they needed to defend comments made or statements written. Thus, the public perception of the home education community in England and Wales, and in Florida was generally positive and could be complimentary to this alternative educational option. Written documents that voiced subjective realities were not acceptable, and yet individuals will still carry their perceptions and realities with them.

In documentation, the public face of the home education community was portrayed in generally positive terms, though some potentially negative comments were picked up in the analysis. The public vision of home educating parents who are committed to their child's best interests, with well-intentioned, well-thought out educational programmes, mirrored much of the research to date that testifies to these home educators' successes. I considered some of the LEAs and SDs interviewed to be very pro home education. I also felt such individuals who saw success in home education could do more to raise the level of acceptance amongst non-home educators than home educators themselves.
The other side of the picture was the private face; of state officials as members of the home education community (in their capacity to ensure the child’s education is satisfactory). This symbolically complex construction of the community cannot be completely captured, as each individual’s vision was an expression of their experiences. For example, one LEA was very pro-home education and had worked hard to develop and improve relationships with the families and support groups. This LEA had a unique way of seeing the home-based educators’ perspective, not seeing child protection issues as synonymous with home education, and welcoming all varieties of educational provision evidence (ref. EWJ). Other state officials were so impressed with home educators that they went beyond their duties to encourage and establish cooperative ventures with the home education community.

And then there were the group of state officials that had concerns, or doubts as to the success of some home education programmes. These individuals spoke to me, and told me how particular social service cases affected them to the point of looking for child protection issues among home educators. These state officials had experiences with the disaffected children who didn’t want to go to school, didn’t want to be home educated, but also didn’t want to fall foul of truancy laws. Such children did just what was necessary to pass along the system until they were no longer compulsory school age. Other state officials had experiences of evaluating home education programmes that were not suitable, or not at a standard that would equip the child for independence. Their symbolically private vision of the home education community was complex, with a variety of families; not all were the success stories portrayed by home education advocacy groups.

There is an important point to make here. The home educators that took part in this study all considered themselves generally successful in their endeavours. These were not the home educators that caused concern for the state officials. Those home educators were not interviewed, and were considered unlikely to take part in my study (based on my difficulties with access)\(^2\). Recognition that some home educators might not be doing the best job for their children was voiced by state officials, but only by two home schoolers. Consequently, I believed there was a possibility that state officials and home educators communicated at cross-purposes when neither group acknowledged both visions of the other’s reality.

13.5 Ideologies, control and ownership

The structure of this study was based on comparing perspectives between state officials and home educators in two societies, highlighting the differences that separate the home education movements. Preconceptions of tension at the forefront of the research were explored through the law, historical developments, and presumed competing ideologies of state officials and home educators. The competing ideologies were sketched as revolving around pedagogy and curriculum, socialisation and citizenship, and the political overture of what constitutes a civil society; this included a concept of rights and a consideration of balancing Reich’s trilogy of interests. What is more, ideological characteristics were understood as bound up with issues of

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\(^2\) It is noted, however, that Rothermel (2002b) was able to access a diverse group of home-based educators over a longer timeframe.
legitimisation, power/control, and conflict (Giddens 2001). It is the characteristics of the state officials’ and home educators’ ideologies that are now discussed.

In legitimizing the interests of the dominant group, there is always potential for one group to impinge on the other’s interests, which in turn leads to control and ownership issues. Several authors have specifically looked at legitimizing state versus home education, voicing concerns over home education – see Callan (1997), Apple (2000a, 2000b), Lubienski (2000), and Reich (2002). Though the past thirty years’ research has defended home education, a shift in the critique of home education is seen in Chris Lubienski’s (2003) work. His critical view of home education was precipitated by the arguments driving its growth. He looks at four of the most prominent arguments for a mass movement into home education: parental rights, academic achievement, improvement of schools and parental claims. Lubienski sees the best argument for allowing parents to educate their own children resting with parental rights, yet he notes two caveats. First, while parental rights are valid, they are not absolute as parents act on behalf of their children. Second, a right is not an imperative, as rights ‘are set in the context of responsibility, and so the exercise of any right needs to be considered in terms of its consequences for others’ (Lubienski 2003:170). The weakest argument for home education, is seen by Lubienski as that based on home educated children having greater levels of educational attainment, on average, than state educated children. Concurring with Lubienski, Welner and Welner (1999) would echo concerns that studies extolling the educational attainment of home-educated children are fraught with bias. The third argument for home education stems from the benefits the movement can have for public institutions by developing alternative institutional strategies for schools and competition. Lubienski (2003:173) counters the choice of education as part of a market model, as he sees the private choice over public education ‘likely to have a detrimental impact on institutions designed to produce and distribute a good in an equitable manner’. The fourth argument, that parents are best situated to know the needs and interests of the children, shielding them from destructive influences whilst imparting appropriate values and experiences clashes with Lubienski’s vision. He feels public education exposes children to more diverse experiences and people that they would likely encounter within their own family and that home schooling is inherently structured to reproduce family ideologies, class positions, worldviews and so forth.

What is clear from Lubienski’s critique is his concern over the ‘anti-institutional element of the home education movement’ that contrasts with the concerns of equity in a democratic and meritocratic society that is better supported by state education. Though far more balanced than papers that blindly expound the virtues of home education, or the papers that dismiss home education as aberrant, Lubienski illustrates the public versus private education debate and the attempts to legitimize one group over the other. However, as illustrated in this study, though the group perspectives and public face of the community display one common attitude, it is the individualized private faces of community that should hold more weight in a society that promotes educational diversity and pluralism.

13 For example, promoting home education as academically sound, or even superior to public school children’s academic achievements.
By looking at Rothermel's stratum approach of categorization, she proposes the 'strength in diversity' element of the home education movement in England and Wales. That is, though the superficially homogeneous group of home-based educators represent a movement, their heterogeneous layers paradoxically give them a higher profile with the media and authorities as they can no longer be singled out as 'hippies and religious fanatics' (see Rothermel 2003). In legitimizing the interests of the group, then, consideration has to be given to the diversity of home-based educators, rather than relying on the more homogenous view of home education as expressed through policy and practices of LEAs and SDs.

Control and ownership of education has been touched upon in this study from the group and individual perspectives. The group perspective of the state officials in England and Wales appeared to display a desire for influence over curriculum, socialisation, monitoring and child protection issues, which can be extrapolated as desire for control over education. This was countered by the individual and group perspectives of home-based educators, where ownership of the child's education was intricately woven into the parent's right to choose this educational alternative, as upheld in the law. Though a concept of 'education ownership', or who owns the education of the child, will be contested by advocates of public or private education, and by communitarians or libertarians, the home educators' argument for ownership remains contextualised in the present laws that accommodate it. It is accepted that control of education, based on public versus private education perspectives, will always be seen as standing at the intersection of two legitimate rights, as Henry Levin (1987:629-630) explains –

From the public school perspective, public education encompasses the right of a democratic society to assure its reproduction and continuous democratic functioning through provision of a common set of values and knowledge. The other, private school and home educator perspective, involves the right of families to decide the ways in which their children will be moulded and the types of influences to which their children will be exposed.

As Levin adds, 'To the degree that families have different political, social and religious beliefs and values, a basic incompatibility may exist between their private concerns and the public functions of schooling'.

Daniel Monk (2003) also considers the rights of home educators, and education as a complex human right. His conclusions include exploring the meanings of democracy and the purpose of education. Whilst not diminishing the contestable nature of the public versus private education debate, looking at balancing home education within the debate could alleviate potential tensions. This balance, borrowed from Reich's trilogy of interests, recognizes the other's perspective forming part of a measured response. Using the study's American data analysis, the greater acceptance and legal protection of home schooling suggests a more balanced approach to the
interests of the state, parent and child, and can also be seen to be paralleling Mitchell Stevens' (2003) concept of the normalization of home education.

In his paper on *The Normalisation of Homeschooling in the USA*, Stevens cites the cultural and institutional features of the USA that have given home schooling wide legitimacy in American culture. Explaining 'normalisation' as the process whereby unconventional activity comes to be seen as acceptable (Vaughan 1996:409-422, cited in Stevens, 2003:90), Stevens sketches home schooling as a social movement by progressive educators and Christians, popularized through the media and visibility in the public arena, and aided by a decentralized government. In contrast to the cultural climate in England and Wales, Stevens (2003:95) paints the appeal of home schooling:

...the fact of home education's appeal to families across a wide ideological spectrum is testament to the resonance of the practice with more general features of American culture. Specifically, homeschooling is one manifestation of an enduring American skepticism about the legitimate role of the state in child instruction, and of the culture's increasingly elaborate presumptions about the importance of children's individual needs.

Moreover, Stevens argues that the normalization of home education, as a taken-for-granted feature of US culture, is a common indicator of a social movement's success. He predicts the movement of home education in other countries begins with

'households at the margins of mainstream culture. Early in the course of its normalization, home education is deviant activity, and it will appeal initially to those who already are comfortable with living unconventionally...Those groups that both believe themselves to be different and which have the organizational muscle to change the rules in their favour are most likely to be successful champions of home education' (Stevens 2003:97).

Stevens' predictions have resonance for home-based educators in England and Wales, where the social movement appears to be gaining greater acceptance. This statement is partly based on the changes in perspectives by state officials and home educators from research in the 1990s to now, and even within the timeframe of this study. Rather than finding the tensions expected between home-based educators and LEAs, there was evidence of attitude convergence. This was seen in documentation that acknowledged the other's viewpoint, or individual voices that visualized the other's private face of their community. In spite of the cultural and historical features of British perspectives creating a climate different from the United States, this study indicates potential for convergence of attitudes and a step towards 'normalisation'.

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14 As evidenced in the follow-up Internet data analysis of LEA/SD and home educator documentation.
Thus, balancing the trilogy of interests that Reich advocated in his 2002 paper, may already be weaving its way into home educators' and state officials' symbolic interactions with one another, especially in England and Wales.

In light of the conclusions drawn from the data, the concept of 'education ownership' may be a useful lens for further research. A model of the overlap areas of education ownership is offered, and subsequently described:

**Graph 13:1 Overlap areas of education ownership**

![Graph 13:1 Overlap areas of education ownership](image)

This model shows the balance of education owned by the home educating parents with areas of overlap. These areas of overlap could include assessment (monitoring/evaluation), registration, curriculum (dual enrolment/examination subjects, re-entry into state schools), and socialisation (primary versus secondary). Potentially points of tension, or control, the areas of overlap also have potential for convergence of attitudes and collaboration between state officials and home educators. Though only these two groups are shown, as drawn from the data, other groups could be sketched in a similar format (e.g. teachers and parents; private schools and public schools) with further research.

Education ownership and the model shown are proposed in light of this study's data stemming from the cluster of categories of curriculum control, secondary socialisation, monitoring/evaluation, and child welfare issues. In addition, the historical and cultural differences between the two societies, and the ideological differences between the two groups, set up education ownership to be a contested concept (This is in spite of Stevens' normalisation concept, more recognisable in Florida than in England and Wales). That is, the rights and interests of one group are not absolute, and cannot legitimate control over the other. The question of who owns the education of the child could always be contested in these democratic societies, where balancing interests is paramount, and the debate over the private or public good of education continues. Though no state official would explicitly claim ownership of a child's education, the suggestion of a 'good' curriculum or pedagogy, or best means of socialisation, for example, could be construed by home educators as conflict over control. Perhaps those who have more vested in their vision of education ownership (e.g. financially, emotionally, spiritually, philosophically) will be less likely to accept a contrasting view of education ownership? If so, understanding the cluster of categories that could be potentially discordant is a means towards a convergence of...
attitudes and subsequent interactions. As this study sought to identify categories, and clarify them through a comparative multi-stage approach, such a concept of education ownership is proposed as a potential direction for further work, rather than a hypothesis to be proved/disproved here. In addition, the potential for focusing on converging state official/home educator attitudes towards home education may be a useful direction for further work, as would be the normalisation concept of home-based education in England and Wales.

13.6 The Research Questions Answered

The guiding research question, 'Are there fundamentally different attitudes between home educators and state officials towards home education?' was considered from two aspects. Firstly, comparing the societies highlighted historical and cultural considerations, which placed the home education movement at different stages, and consequently revealed fundamentally different attitudes. Secondly, in both societies, there were fundamentally different attitudes towards certain aspects of home education that had the potential to lead to tension or discordance. Group perspectives, as portrayed through documentation or website information, were more likely to display homogeneous attitudes towards home education, with individual perspectives naturally portraying a more diverse range. For all group or individual perspectives, my contention was that differences were based on control/education ownership issues.

Firstly, in comparing the two societies, I originally expected to see more discordant attitudes displayed in England and Wales than in Florida, to answer the sub-questions, 'To what extent are there discordant attitudes between state officials and home educators towards home education?' and 'To what extent are there compatible attitudes between state officials and home educators towards home education?' This was based on pre-existing personal perceptions, as well as historical and cultural indicators that highlighted the different stages that the home education movement had reached in each society. Thus, discordant attitudes included the LEAs' group perspective towards curriculum control (through advocating a broad, balanced curriculum based on National Curriculum standardization), secondary socialisation, the method of monitoring (home visits), and child protection issues (as compared to the home-based educator group perspective). These contrasted with the SDs' group perspective towards greater curriculum acceptance, secondary socialisation through home school support group networking, flexible methods of evaluation, and the absence of noticeable child protection issues to drive policy. Such differences in attitude towards home education were recognized as having historical and cultural foundations. Historically and culturally, then, the home education movement has advanced further in Florida than in England and Wales, as it is still seen as inherently antithetical to the status quo of state education, stifling its acceptance, and 'normalization' in society. In contrast, propelling the generally favourable attitude and acceptance of home schooling in Florida is the bespoke home education law, twinned with the American mantra of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' that facilitates diversity in educational options.¹⁵

¹⁵ Florida is one of the states that actively promote charter schools and virtual schools as educational options. Note that such progressive educational choices are not common in England and Wales. At the time of the study's submission, one virtual school, Briteschool, was found at www.briteschool.co.uk
general consensus is to support non-compulsory registration, and non-intervention, as there is still concern towards the state’s agenda of monitoring home education and child protection issues, which is believed to be blinkered by state-school bias. In contrast, the home schoolers in the study had no discernable problems with compulsory registration, or the five methods to satisfy the law regarding annual evaluations, as they viewed the SDs role as mainly administrative (as long as home schoolers comply with the law).

Compatible attitudes held by LEAs versus SDs were not originally expected, but it would seem from both group and individual perspectives, that common ground was reached if each group was able to view home education from the other’s perspective. Contention over aspects of the law, curriculum, socialisation, monitoring or child protection issues were less noticeable when the particular individuals interviewed espoused the view of the other. Home-based educators and home schoolers were considered to hold attitudes more compatible with each other, as they are bound by similar interests to defend their educational choice. Where subtle differences occurred in the two societies, such as home schoolers’ acceptance of collaborating with state officials, historical and cultural differences could be attributed to the further development of the movement.

Secondly, in comparing LEAs with home-based educators, and SDs with home schoolers, more discordant attitudes were expected in the British examples. Though the group attitudes were generally homogenous and ‘politically correct’, subtle differences were nonetheless seen. Already described in earlier chapters, discordant attitudes were found between LEAs and home-based educators over curriculum, socialisation, monitoring and child protection issues, more so than between SDs and home schoolers over the same issues. Though attributing such differences to historical and cultural factors, it is more helpful to look forwards, to the compatible attitudes that engender cooperative ventures, to balance the trilogy of interests. Such compatible attitudes towards home education, I would argue, underlie the ability of individuals to recognize the public and private faces of the other’s community, and the appreciation of the other’s symbolic use of language to convey meanings inherent to the group. Whether realizing it or not, Florida lawmakers that gave flexibility to home schoolers in being accountable for their child’s education, and the general acceptance of compulsory registration and annual evaluations, have gone further to balance Reich’s trilogy of interests compared with the current situation in England and Wales.

There is one last point to make in answering the research questions that drove this study. Though I started with the expectation that fundamental differences would be found between home educators and state officials, and more so in England and Wales than in Florida, there is evidence of a convergence of attitudes on the major issues of focus. Why were the discordant attitudes not as apparent as originally perceived?

16 Collaboration includes working on the truancy loophole in the home education law, scholarship and dual enrolment options for home schoolers.
13.7 Convergence of attitudes

Though potentially discordant perceptions were found in the data, I did not feel that tension would necessarily ensue. Why? There was evidence of toleration, of home educators and state officials agreeing to disagree. For example, one LEA insisted that home visits should be allowed, and yet accommodated other forms of monitoring (ref. EWG). A good curriculum, perceived by state officials to follow school-based models and subjects, was nonetheless re-evaluated with home educators’ examples of rich, diverse, knowledge and skill building programmes (e.g. ref. EWK). Though school socialisation may have been seen as beneficial to most children, state officials recognized that their duties within the law were to assess education, not socialisation (ref. EWH).

What is more, I realised that policy decisions complying with the law, or laws that expressly state the responsibilities of home educators, will have the effect of tethering discordant perceptions to an extent. The only issue that I thought stood out from this comparative study was the LEAs’ apparent conflation of education with welfare. This drives them to seek time and labour-intensive home visits in their effort to look for child protection issues. Such actions shouted out the assumption that most of the interviewed LEAs consistently perceived home-educated children to be more at risk than school-based children. Such issues did not consume SDs — why? For a start, their role is more administrative than the LEAs have taken on. Secondly, education is not entwined with the concept of the Welfare State in the way it was introduced in the Beveridge Report of 1948. And thirdly, the social services department has responsibility for the child’s welfare, not the education department.

Instances of convergent attitudes were found when state officials and home educators saw that a child’s education did not need to be met by a particular curriculum or teaching style. State officials that saw socialisation through the home educators’ eyes understood that the school community might be construed as artificially constructed, and not the best fit for all children. Recognizing different ways to teach a child to meet their needs was more likely to result in acceptance of different forms of monitoring or evaluation. If trying to promote good avenues of communication and relationships between state officials and home educators, both perspectives were accepted.

In fact, to consider all LEAs to have concerns does a disservice to those state officials who welcomed an opportunity to learn more about an alternative form of education, and who tried to cooperate with families for the benefit of the child. Many LEAs went beyond their concerns to view the child’s education as the primary interest.

I had thought that SDs would be far more accommodating; yet, their relationships with home schoolers were completely different. They were more likely to interact only with those home schoolers that had problems with their educational programmes (apart from the few that made it a policy to see all home schoolers in their district). They also seemed to have perceptions compatible with successful home
schoolers who strive to facilitate socialisation opportunities and a broad and balanced curriculum.

So, this study was originally expected to highlight the characteristics of an ideology, namely legitimisation, power and conflict, in two groups of people, in two societies. Clustered around laws, history, culture, and attitudes towards specified categories, different attitudes were expected to surface and cause tension between state officials and home educators. A political perspective of what constituted a civil society, including communitarian to libertarian perceptions towards owned knowledge, as a public or private good, was considered probable, but subsumed within perspectives. Home educators who held passionate views on their control of and legal claim to educate their child, were considered likely to clash with state officials’ dismissal of this educational alternative. Yet in spite of different attitudes towards various facets of home education, toleration for the other was found. Most surprising over the six years or so of this part-time study has been the LEAs’ subtle shift in official documentation for potential or current home-based educators. Such attitudes towards home education, more obvious between home-based educators and LEAs, show signs of convergence. The question for further research is to understand on what grounds - though cultural shifts, the normalization phenomenon towards home education, and education ownership, could be starting points.

13.8 Summary

The comparative approach to this study looked at several communities in home education, in an effort to illustrate answers to the research questions posed. From the British perspective, the home educating community has not reached the same stage as their American counterpart, with aspects of control and the concept of education ownership surfacing to potentially divide state officials and home-based educators. The American perspective highlighted the ‘normalisation’ phenomenon of home schooling more visibly, as well as the more compatible attitudes held. The symbolic interactionist framework was also discussed in this chapter, as it was felt certain symbols, such as ‘socialisation’ could elicit convergent attitudes if one group was expressly aware of the other’s interpretation when defining their own symbol. Acknowledging the differences in public and private faces of the community, as held by home educators and state officials, also lent understanding to attitudes that have the potential for discord or compatibility. Finally, though tension and discordance was expected between home educators and state officials, and more so in England and Wales than in Florida, the data evidence of toleration and attitude convergence did much to address Reich’s trilogy of interests concept. That the balance of interests of the state, the parents and the child have been more evident in documentation and through the individual voices researched, illustrated potential and future attitude changes towards home education. As a consequence, Chapter 14 summarises the study with recommendations on areas of further research to capitalise on the conclusions drawn here.

17 For example, almost 80% of all LEAs provided access to home education information, with many of them including links to home education support groups (See Chapter 10 data results).
Chapter 14 – Summary, Recommendations for Further Study

14.1 Introduction

Assumptions were made before I started my study, based on three premises: that home education was a legitimate form of private education in England and Wales, and in Florida; that the home education population was increasing; and that I expected tension to exist between home educators and state officials. As both societies accepted educational diversity, seen by the existence of public and private schooling, this study helped illustrate to what extent interviewed state officials accepted home education, and how far interviewed home educators accepted interaction with the authorities. This study also revealed the complexity of home educators’ and state officials’ attitudes, which provided useful indicators of compatibility or discordance towards home education.

This chapter summarises the main features of the study. Recognising and detailing the strengths and weaknesses of the study enables the reader to consider the rigour of the work. Finally, policy implications and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research, are bound up with an appreciation of balancing the trilogy of interests and facilitating compatibility and cooperation between home educators and state officials.

14.2 Summary of the study

This study was constructed to explore attitudes held by home educators and state officials, to understand if there were fundamental differences, and if so, to what extent. What is more, though a legitimate educational choice in England and Wales and in Florida, I began the study with the preconceived notion that I would find tension or discordance, more so in England and Wales than in Florida. To an extent, this preconception was realised, as fundamental differences in attitudes were more apparent from the British perspective, and yet tension was not felt to necessarily ensue.

Fundamental differences in attitude were first explored in the literature and the laws of each society, focusing on historical, cultural and ideological differences. Attitudes held by the group, or the individual, were described as being affected by the public or private faces of the community and the construction of an individual’s own symbols as compared/contrasted to symbols constructed by the other. Based on the initial literature search, and quantitative data analysis that highlighted several areas for consideration, several areas were then dealt with through individualized voices of home educators and state officials.

In spite of different attitudes over various facets of home education, less tension was inferred than anticipated. This could be seen as a justification for home education in both societies, along the lines of promoting educational diversity and pluralism. It also adds weight to Stevens’ ‘normalisation’ phenomenon of home education. That compulsory education is a tenet of both societies necessitates the provision of public and private education, including home education. In this way, education is realised as a common or private good, accommodating the interests of the
state, the parents and the child. Thus, Reich’s trilogy of interests could already be at play, and more so in Florida as a consequence of compulsory registration and flexible evaluation choices.

Toleration of the other’s viewpoint was also apparent, from the group and individuals. For example, the state officials’ policies were seen to be generally positive towards home education, and accepting of the parents’ ownership of the child’s education. Policies were likely to be tethered by procedures to override personal opinions or experiences that could colour state officials’ perceptions. However, there was evidence that home education policies were prone to oversimplify the nature of home education, as well as homogenizing home educators, to the extent that disparities could occur. Credit for the lack of tension also went to the home educating lobbying groups and national or state support groups. They had made it their mission to inform the public and potential home educators about home education, with generally positive media reports in both societies aiding the success stories. Particularly in Florida, where a previous loophole in the law enabled truanting children to claim they were ‘home schooling’, the home schooling community worked with lawmakers to close the loophole. In spite of positive information, home educators also showed evidence of homogenizing ‘the authority’ to the extent that defensive interaction (or non-interaction) with state officials was sometimes promoted.

I believed, as a result of this study, that tension could exist if an individual’s ideology of education or subjective reality of home education conflicted too strongly with others. Thus, for example, if a state official held a strong communitarian perspective, seeing state education as best, their perception towards home education would be coloured by their vision of a ‘good’ curriculum, socialisation, and suitable monitoring. Conversely, a libertarian-minded home educator advocating minimal intervention from the state would not accept compulsory registration or monitoring, or school-based secondary socialization. Neither extreme was identified in the data, though there were instances where perspectives were not totally inclusive of the other. In fact, Stevens’ concept of the ‘normalisation’ of home education as a social movement was much more visible from the American perspective than the British perspective.

The convergence of attitudes towards home education seemed to be dependent on a number of factors, such as normalization, or fulfilling the trilogy of interests within a mutually agreeable framework. If one group seeks to legitimise their control by impacting too strongly on the other, cooperation could be compromised. For example, the fact that some home-based educators view LEAs with suspicion, and do not want interaction/intervention, can be seen to result in a complete lack of a relationship between the two. The unknown home-based educators are able to remain so by law, but this does not necessarily demonstrate the trilogy of interests being met. Whilst upholding their rights to choose the education for their children, their defence might be dented by Lubienski’s critique, and unsustainable when promoting compatibility between the two groups.
14.3 Policy Implications and Recommendations

The benefit of doing a study such as this, that incorporated state officials and home educators' voices and concerns, was the opportunity to build on the analysed data. LEAs' policies suggested that though they were accepting of home-based educating parents' right to choose their child's education, reservations existed. Most obvious, when talking to the LEAs or by understanding the home visit agenda, was the conflation of assessing education and welfare. Other policy procedures that overtly promoted the school-based model (in terms of socialisation, and curriculum, for example) were less meaningful to home-based educators that did not identify with the school perspective. As LEAs and home-based educators were most likely to interact because of monitoring procedures, and the issues LEAs felt accompanied their duty to ensure children accessed suitable education, I felt policies might need redressing.

In comparison, the legal requirement for home schoolers to register with their local school district did seem to make it easier for SDs to fulfil their duties. For SDs, the policy procedure of placing complete responsibility on the home schooling parents usually started with the SD furnishing the statutes to the families. In this way, they made it clear that the parents were given access to the law and had the opportunity to understand their responsibilities. Little or no attempt was made by SDs to provide information on the merits of one curriculum over another, or how parents should ensure socialisation opportunities for the children. However, the more administrative nature of their policy was seen to leave less scope for developing relationships and collaborative ventures with home schoolers. Nonetheless, examples of collaborative work, at state or local policy level, were shown, such as dual enrollment, the blended schools project or Florida Virtual School.

I considered several recommendations, arising from this study, based on the understanding that home education was accepted as a legitimate educational choice. With the myriad of perspectives, interwoven into the continually evolving attitudes and perceptions of home educators and state officials, one point was clear to me— in order to balance the trilogy of interests, both groups' perspectives must be fully considered when making policy decisions or promoting home education. Moreover, though education ownership was attributed to the parents in the suggested model for further research, the overlap areas with state officials should also be considered especially when interacting on points of law (reflecting accountability through registration, and monitoring/evaluation).

To begin with, I would recommend a deeper understanding of the other's community. There was evidence of oversimplification and stereotyping by both state officials and home educators when they spoke to me. State officials might have negative impressions about home educators who do not comply with the law, or who make it difficult for the LEAs or SDs to fulfil their duties— these home educators have to be seen as particular cases, and not representative of the whole community. Home educators might be fearful of interaction with authority because they assume there will be conflict over control of the child's education— they might have false assumptions based on hearsay; they need to consider alternative ways to address their accountability to their child's education. Perhaps home educators and state officials
need to step into each other's shoes to really see the complexity of the other community. Though it seems unlikely that such home educators would accept state officials into their world for an extended time, or vice versa, a third party might be able to bridge the gap. A retired teacher, or a teacher who has become a stay-at-home parent, or a home educator whose children have grown up, might be more acceptable to both groups. Perhaps even someone like me, with experience in the classroom and school community, and a current home educator/private tutor, would be more accepted in both groups to understand all the issues at hand.

I would recommend discussion of compulsory registration - it immediately gives the state officials an account of the home educators in the area (assuming all comply with the law). That can surely go some way to remove lingering doubts about child welfare issues among suspicious-minded LEAs. Compulsory registration fulfils the trilogy of interests, and need not negatively affect parents' or children's rights, as seen in Florida. The difference in England and Wales rests with the home visit and conflation with welfare provision. So, if LEAs want compulsory registration, which is perfectly reasonable, they may need to construct other methods of suitable monitoring. The Florida model of five methods of evaluation might be a starting point for LEAs. There were other methods suggested in the LEA information booklets (such as writing reports), but it seemed the LEAs who still wanted to visit with the child did not readily accept them. If compulsory registration could be seen only as an administrative tool to keep a record of numbers, it might be more successful to implement.

Recommendations for monitoring and evaluation have been touched on briefly above. If LEAs wanted to be reassured that the home education programme was providing suitable and efficient education, a third party could assist. I would visualize qualified teachers offering a review of the child's work and speaking with the child at prescribed times. For example, LEAs could offer teacher assessments at school sites during the holidays or half-terms. Such teachers would need to recognize the plethora of teaching and learning styles that are successfully used by home-based educators. Those families that could not make the teacher assessment days could satisfy their responsibilities and the LEAs duties in some other way (home visits, educational philosophy statements, or reports, or standardized test results sent electronically).

Home schoolers who already select teacher assessments of the child's portfolio sometimes submit the bare minimum for assessment. Though home schoolers should be entitled to submit what they consider a reflection of progress commensurate with ability, perhaps some record of the complete program should also be readily available. The mandated reading log already includes any reading material, and the teaching log cites lessons and subjects. An inclusion of the subject material covered could help parents and SDs to see what was taught in the year, as well as being part of a diagnostic tool for skills or material not properly understood.

Whatever discussions arise from monitoring and evaluation choices in England and Wales and Florida, the trilogy of interests has to be forefront. This means balancing the interests of the state to ensure each child has the opportunity to a 'suitable' education, the interests of the parents to choose and direct the child's education, and the child's interests of receiving an education that is fit to his or her
age, ability and aptitude. As far as I could see, home visits did not balance interests, because of the conflation with welfare. I felt that LEAs visiting homes were more likely to place value judgments on the home education programme based on the surroundings (positive or negative) that would digress from assessment. The home-based educators that remain hidden are also not serving the child’s interests or considering the duties of the LEAs. Accountability must be equated with assessment, with the method of assessment reflecting the variety of home educating styles.

Another recommendation, on curriculum, conflicts with Reich’s suggestion that home educators submit their curricula to the authorities to ensure it meets with the ethos of a liberal multicultural education. Recommending a set curriculum, in any shape or form, is counter to the variety of successful educational philosophies and teaching styles that encompass home education. So LEAs that equated a ‘good curriculum’ with the National Curriculum followed in state schools were doing themselves a disservice. To me it showed their disregard for the flexibility and variety of home education programmes that are perhaps embarked upon to avoid prescriptive curricula. Following the SDs’ lead, by not supporting any curriculum, but making home schoolers aware of a variety of home educating resources that are available, might be more valuable. If the issue were ensuring the child had an opportunity to access a broad and balanced education, and assessment of such an education, perhaps baseline checklists would be suitable. Standardised tests could assess the basic numeracy and literacy skills of children, and may be a way forward, from a certain age.1 Borrowing again from the Florida model, more emphasis could be put on assessing progression over the year in annual assessments rather than assessing the child against the national norm (this might be offered as one form of assessing the curriculum of the child who has a more autonomous style of learning). LEAs and SDs could collaborate with home educators to create an information packet on all curricula resources. Looking at home education magazines or websites would be a start.

Home educators and state officials could also realise the other’s concept of socialisation. This would require an appreciation of each definition of the word, and toleration of both. School-based socialisation, rejected by many home educators, can have a part to play in making the child autonomous. That is not to say that socialisation has to take place in school, but home educators should explore the secondary socialisation aspect. Primary socialisation, considered by some state officials to be cocooning the child from the ‘real world’, can help to teach the child the family’s values. This family-based socialisation need not necessarily isolate the child from other socialisation opportunities, and should be given more thought by state officials.

The last recommendation stemming from the study concerns child welfare issues. Though I found it difficult to accept LEAs conflation of welfare issues with educational assessment of home educated children, I did sympathise with the LEAs predicament. The assumption that all home educating parents are acting in the best

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1 Not all children respond well to standardised tests, and should be given the option of illustrating basic numeracy and literacy in a less structured, formalised style. An alternative to standardised tests would thus also have to be offered.
interests of the child is the basis of the law, and rightly so. However, in their experiences, some LEAs have had difficulties with parents who may have been using the shield of ‘home education’ to circumvent truancy problems; may not have been providing a suitable education that will equip the child to be an autonomous, productive member of society; or may not have been providing an education at all. Some LEAs expressed their personal experiences with social services cases that undoubtedly coloured their perceptions.

For the future relationships and potential cooperative ventures that could be realised between home educators and state officials, the concerns over child protection have to be further discussed by both groups. No research has suggested the prevalence of child protection issues amongst home educators — so why does it affect LEA policy and home-based educators’ assessment fears? This issue seems prejudicial towards the general home educating community, and not targeted towards the minority of individuals that may cause concern.

Most of the recommendations were specifically for LEAs and home-based educators, as I drew comparisons from the Florida model. I didn’t believe the Florida model was perfect, but it went further to consistently address the trilogy of interests, and to indicate attitude convergence. Additionally, whilst it is unlikely that many home educators will have access to this study, I did feel that there was scope for them to consider redressing the balance as well. I believed home educating groups, through word of mouth or freely available materials (in print or electronically), that do not consider the parents’ accountability and the state’s interests, might do a disservice to the child. Considering how to meet the trilogy of interests need not compromise the home educators’ ownership of their child’s education. The bottom line in considering policy or practice with regard to home education should be the child’s best interest, even though the state and the parents simultaneously subsume it.

14.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

Validity of research work is essentially seen as the ‘truth’ of the work, or the extent to which the study accurately presents the material studied. As the nature of case study qualitative work is that the reality of the situation is ephemeral and not reproducible, assessing validity is left to the reader’s interpretation. Rather than trying to analyse the ‘truth’, as perceived by home educators or state officials, I consciously sought to illustrate both visions. What is more, though perceptions towards home education were categorised into several areas, I was cognizant that not all state officials or home educators felt the same way. When one group suggested a phenomenon, I looked from the other’s perspective. Constantly comparing the analysis between state officials and home educators helped me extract a truer picture. Furthermore, I believed that the qualitative, comparative construction of the study enabled me to present results that had ‘pragmatic validation’ (Patton 1990:484-485). That is, the perspectives presented will be judged by their relevance to, and use by those to whom it is presented. For this study, I will be furnishing the results to state officials that have requested them, the national or state home educating support groups, and any of the participants that have requested a copy. So I wrote this study to include state officials and home educators as the audience — the perspectives
presented and my interpretations needed to be relevant to, and resonate with, state officials and home educators.

I felt that the multi-stage, comparative approach of the study was another strength. The research methodology and methods were designed in this study to facilitate comparisons between the two groups, as seen in the comparative matrix (see Chapter 8). The quantitative phase of gathering questionnaire data and documentation from the state officials elicited information useful for further elaboration through the case study approach. Though the questionnaire was not well worded in some sections, it was still able to reveal a group attitude towards home education in both societies. Having an inkling of some concern over child welfare issues emanating from the documents and questionnaires, and then hearing more strident comments from the participants, reassured me that the qualitative phase would produce more data with which to compare. In addition, analysing the group attitude with the individual attitudes highlighted the complexities of the subjective realities and private faces of the home educating and state official communities. The internal weakness with the questionnaire could be overcome with a structure that produced less ambiguous answers.

I also considered myself, as the research instrument, to be a strength to the study. Having the unique perspective of dual cultures, combined with experiences as a qualified teacher and home educator, facilitated access and an insight into both perspectives. I was able to easily understand state officials’ jargon, especially as I had taught in the British state school system. The home educators were more accommodating towards me, I felt, because I was one of them and not out to judge them. On the flip side, my biases could have affected my ability to analyse and portray results. I knew that I started this study with a teacher’s mindset, not believing that home education was a truly viable option. Because of circumstances, I became a home educating parent, and my perspective changed. I still believe that schools can be the best for many children, but I have learnt to appreciate the benefits of home education. In spite of my inherent biases, I strived to present only the perceptions of the state officials and home educators, and not my particular views.²

The selection of cases was difficult because state officials had limited time to offer me, and home educators might have been initially wary of me. In order to gather as many perspectives as possible, I selected state officials based on the responses they had given in the initial postal questionnaire. I was also fortunate enough to interview two home-based educators that were unknown to the authorities. Only one home schooler was politically articulate enough to see her choice as counter to her perceived perception of authority, but that sufficed. Though the small number of socially homogeneous home-based educators could be seen as a weakness, further research might reveal the same potential areas of discord (socialisation, curriculum,

² My decision to present the participants’ voices in Chapters 11 and 12, with limited commentary was deliberately done to avoid impacting the reader with my views early on. I preferred that the reader immersed himself or herself in the ‘voices’ and understood the experiences that affected perceptions. By allowing the participants to ‘speak freely’ with limited commentary in the presentation chapters, I had confidence that the discussion Chapter 13 could crisply and concisely give my interpretations of the analysed material that the reader and I were both privy to.
monitoring/evaluation, child welfare issues) more clearly among a more diverse sample of the population. Thus, the small number of cases in the study can be viewed as providing a basis for further investigation. A further study, that focused on LEA-labelled ‘reactive parents’, might also provide a wealth of information that develops the public/private faces of state officials’ and home educators’ perspectives.

I also felt longer interviews or observations of home educators in their daily lives might have given me the opportunity to extract more information. This would have required building up a relationship with each family, and would have taken some time. Never having experienced the state officials’ duty to assess or maintain records of local home educators, I might have tried to observe state officials on home visits or their daily job responsibilities. I was less sure that I would have been granted this permission though, which is why it was not pursued at the time.

I was satisfied with the choice of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical strand, as it helped construct the way I tackled the information gathering and analysis. I was unsure if I would have been able to draw out how state officials and home educators defined their public and private faces, or the miscommunication over the similar use of language, had I not used symbolic interactionism. However, one weakness that I recognized but felt unable to address at the time was exploring the interaction between the two groups. SDs and home schoolers rarely interact, in normal circumstances, so trying to observe interactions between these two groups would have been skewed with complex cases of non-compliance. As for LEAs and home-based educators, I was unsure if either group would have welcomed a researcher on one of the home visits. Observing interaction between state officials and home educators would probably have enhanced the findings of the study, and is another area for further research.

In considering the strengths of the content of the study, I was satisfied with my choice of questions. Guided by one overall question about attitudes held, I used it to clarify what needed to be understood from the literature. Perceptions held by state officials and home educators were influenced by many factors and I recognised they were likely to be multifaceted and subject to change. Moving forward with the telephone interviews was only done after analysis of the quantitative data that helped focus further study. So, each question set (within the chapters) helped me understand a particular aspect of the field that then led to the formulation of the next question. Additionally, the comparative nature of exploring the group and individual attitudes, in two societies and between home educators and state officials did more to enhance my knowledge base than if I had chosen one group in isolation.

Could I have done more? Undoubtedly. The construction of the telephone interview questions could have focused on more pertinent issues, or drawn out more information. The sample of participants could have been larger, especially with the home-based educators — how to access more home educators would need careful thought and development from Rothermel’s (2002) work. If I did the study again, maybe I would consider how to question state officials and home educators on balancing the trilogy of interests, or investigate the normalisation phenomenon within the British community. Observation in the field would produce a different set of
questions that could be more illuminating than the results produced here. Nonetheless, I am satisfied that my study was undertaken with enough thought to academic rigour that allowed conclusions to be extrapolated.

14.5 Further Research

By looking over the conclusions of the study, policy implications, recommendations and strengths and weaknesses, I was able to find several areas for further research.

Research is needed to address concerns over the law, from both state officials' and home educators' perspectives. An example of successful redressing of the law was shown by home schoolers who have already collaborated on the law to red flag habitual truants who opt to 'home educate' with no intention of follow through. Concerns over other issues in the law could be a topic for research. The long time lag between home schoolers being put on probation and then exited from the home education program has caused some SDs concern. Interpretation of the law to satisfy one's needs at the expense of the other could be another area. This is especially important to consider in documentation that is disseminated to home educators, by both state officials and home educating groups.

Dual enrollment, found in the Florida statutes, could be explored as an option in England and Wales. Benefits could include funding for part-time home education, and provision of specialist subjects. This study would involve gathering information from schools, home-based educators and LEAs. Though some home-based educators want nothing to do with the authorities, from fear of losing control or autonomy of the child's education, this is not true of all home-based educators. Informing parents and state officials of the potential benefits and drawbacks of cooperative ventures could be an outcome of research into this area of the field.

Research to discover why LEAs might confuse education assessment with child protection issues could be illuminating to LEAs and home-based educators alike. It might also lead to policy recommendations to explore other, less confused, education assessment methods. The appropriateness of the procedures used to evaluate a child's education could be useful for state officials and home educators in both societies. Maybe research could reveal baseline skills that all home-educated children should reach on completion of elementary/primary years, and prior to completion of high school/secondary years. In Florida, some packaged curricula are regionally accredited. Perhaps a study by LEAs on the current home educational material might assist them in accrediting particular curricula. In that way, both home-based educators and LEAs would understand that the accredited curriculum was recognized and acceptable. More emphasis could then be placed on assessment of the child's educational progress.

As socialisation creates polarized perspectives, a study could extract the essence of secondary socialisation that benefits the child (of secondary school age?) for discussion by both groups. Such research could also reveal the benefits for
children mixing with others, and how to facilitate such opportunities, which may be helpful to home educators.

Of primary importance to me, I would recommend a collaborative study by state officials and home-based educators to understand the issues that concern LEAs over welfare, and the problems home-based educators have when perceived as having child welfare issues. That this issue impinges on assessment, control, and the possibility of compulsory registration, makes it a more immediate problem to consider.

What I consider important, in any further work undertaken in this field, is that it includes both home educators and state officials. One perspective is not enough, and would only lead to the loudest voice being heard. From my direct experience with this comparative study, I feel more can be gained from comparative work that researches two groups aiming for a similar goal - the child's education. Additionally, further work could test one suggestion stemming from the conclusions, that there is a degree of attitude convergence towards home education by state officials and home educators, based around the cluster of categories identified from the data; or that a parent's education ownership has points of overlap with state officials', to balance educational interests. Researchers who require a larger, more socially diverse sample of home educators to elucidate attitudes, can use the cluster of categories found in this study to comparatively test against, alongside state official attitudes.

14.6 Summary

Fundamental differences in attitudes towards home education were expected and explored in this study, and summarised in the chapter, along with evidence of toleration and convergence of attitudes. Policy implications and recommendations were based on balancing Reich's trilogy of interests, and included considering compulsory registration, and a deeper understanding of the other's concept of curriculum, socialization, monitoring/evaluation and child welfare concerns. This chapter also outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the study, placing it as a body of work that could be developed by areas of further research.
I have always been a teacher. The experience of specifically researching home education, has greatly added to my understanding of the field of education. It has helped me clarify my thoughts on education, in the school setting and the home education setting. This study will personally help me, as I try to pursue a vision of a hybrid between a school and home education, for my children and others. Virtual teaching and tutoring is another avenue that I want to explore, that can incorporate the benefits of home education and a structured curriculum, with accountability to teachers outside the family. Any further research opportunities or development of my teaching career will be a direct result of the research and knowledge-building of this current study.

I know that I began this research with years of school-based teaching primarily guiding my perceptions. Initially, the notion of home education was not viable to me. Even when I started to research the literature that extolled the virtues of home education in terms of academic merit, and positive socialisation experiences, I could not see past my view that the research was biased. Only the home educators that were succeeding took part in the research that was documented and displayed to represent the population. Where was the other voice, of state officials who saw successes at school but not in home education? Would they be so biased that only their agenda would spill from the study? From my personal perspective, as I began home educating two, then three, and finally our last child, would our home education work successfully? Would I see as clearly, immersed in the field?

I perceived tension must exist, and felt it would be more prominent in England and Wales, partly because home education is not as widespread as in Florida. Our children had also been questioned, at times, from family members to strangers about their unusual educational arrangements. Typical questions of ‘Why are the children not in school?’ when answered, were met with more questions from individuals in England and Wales (‘But what about socialisation?’). Conversely, it was more usual when questioned in Florida to have affirmation that the individuals knew others who were home schooling.

Though I found instances of tension from individual participants, such tension did not affect how these people said they dealt with the other. More evidence reflected the ability of home educators and state officials to agree to disagree on various facets of their ideologies of education. This was promising to me, as I felt the benefits from cooperation between state policy implementations and private educational options could help the true clients of education, the students.

As I end this research, I have taught my four children, at four different grade levels. Each new academic year, we give the children the option of going into the local schools. As a family, we have moved to Arizona, where the home education laws are less regulated that in Florida. Currently, one of our children has opted for full-time school, whilst another is dual-enrolled in the local school (for Art, Music and Physical Education). Our eldest is going to enrol in the Arizona Virtual Academy, which is provided by the same company that provides the Florida Virtual High School. This option is a compromise between home educating and full-time enrolment in a traditional school, as the Virtual Academy is a public charter school. As such, it provides the opportunity for children to learn at home, with assessment and feedback
from other professional teachers. I personally welcome interaction and cooperation with educators that can advance my teaching experience and facilitate learning for the children.

Our children have friends in the home educating community, as well as from the local schools, and they make friends easily. So I don’t worry about what they are missing from traditional school as I contemplate what we are gaining from having more control and great flexibility of their educational choices.

I have become a home educator, but I remain a teacher. The potential for home education is realised with our continued choice, but the wider community of a school is still a resource that my children can access. The children, especially my own at the moment, are the reason I have always loved teaching, being a part of the puzzle, helping to facilitate their learning. Through this study, I found that more individuals, from both the state officials and home educating communities, are of the same mindset. With the common ground of the best interests of the child, and home education clearly defined by law, I am confident about the educational choices available. At the very least, if parents are committed to the best interests of their child, and can see state officials as partners rather than adversaries (and vice versa for that matter), there is room for state officials and home educators to continue knowledge building of the other’s perspective. This may lead to more cooperative ventures for both groups of individuals.

1 The K12 Curriculum is available in a number of states and uses interactive information technology to deliver the curriculum (Elluminate). To learn more about this innovative approach of state / home school compromise, see www.k12.com
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ESTIMATED PERCENTAGES OF PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND HOME EDUCATING STUDENTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES, USA, AND FLORIDA

The figures below are the estimated numbers and percentages of the student population (of compulsory school-age) in public versus private schools in England and Wales, USA and in Florida. Home-educated students are estimated as a proportion of the total number or percentage of privately educated students. As figures have been drawn from a variety of sources to compile this table, each source will be referenced as a footnote. This table was my best attempt to provide comparable figures from the statistics available and freely published. The year 1999 was chosen as the easiest to compare statistics from both countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1999</th>
<th>Total Compulsory School Age Student Population (1000s)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total School Age Student Population (%)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales¹</td>
<td>9,276</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America ⁴</td>
<td>46,857</td>
<td>6,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida ⁶</td>
<td>[2,618]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The figures for the total public and private school-age populations were taken from Social Trends 32 (2001 Edition) Table 3.1, p.54 and the accompanying text. The private school age population was calculated after subtracting the total public sector school figure from the total of all schools. The percentages were worked out on the basis of the figures calculated and the text information.
² As no statistical information was found in government websites on the home-based educating population, estimates were based on other sources.
³ By calculating the number offered by home education advocates as 20,000, the percentage of home-educated students is 0.2% of the total school age population and part of the 7% of privately schooled students. Figures quoted but not substantiated in reputable UK newspapers in 1999-2000 suggested about 1% of school children were home educated. One report, in the Independent, had a shockingly incorrect estimation of 1.6 million children home educated (Cook, Y. 1999).
⁴ The figures for total public and private school-age populations were taken from the National Center for Education Statistics, 2002 (NCES 2003-060).
⁵ This figure was taken from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Fast Facts on Homeschooling. The percentages were calculated on the basis of the figures collected.
⁶ This figure represents the total number of public and private school-age children, combined, as I was unable to collect separate statistics. The figure was retrieved from the Digest of Education Statistics Tables and Figures, (NCES). The percentage of home schoolers in the final column was calculated from the figure of estimated home schoolers in Florida in 1999.
⁷ The Florida Department of Education report on Home Education Programs gave the home school population as 37,196 in 1999.
### APPENDIX II

#### LEVEL OF STATE REGULATION ON HOME EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Notice</th>
<th>Low regulation</th>
<th>Moderate Regulation</th>
<th>High Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No state requirement for parents to initiate any contact with the state.</td>
<td>State requires parental notification only.</td>
<td>State requires parents to send notification, test scores, and/or professional evaluation of student progress.</td>
<td>State requires parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements (e.g. curriculum approval by the state, teacher qualifications of parents, or home visits by state officials).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


[Taken from the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) as the most up-to-date information on state home education regulatory laws. Retrieved from www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp on August 14th, 2003]
APPENDIX III

HOME EDUCATION LAWS – ENGLAND AND WALES

- Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, regarding compulsory education, it states:
  
  7. The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-
  (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at
  school or otherwise.

- Section 8 outlines the age range when a child is considered to be of compulsory school age.

- Section 9 makes clear that education for a child is in accordance with parental wishes:

  9. In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State, local
  education authorities and the funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in
  accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training
  and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

[Taken from www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1996/1996056.htm, checked September 6th, 2005]

- In Sections 437 to 443 of the Education Act of 1996, a duty is put on the local education authorities to take certain actions if it appears that a child is not being properly educated:

  If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education. (s 437 (1))

- The support group Education Otherwise gives information regarding home education law freely to interested parties on their website. In addition to stating the Education Act 1996, the duties of the LEA are clearly outlined. This information is also disseminated to all LEAs, in the form of a booklet:

  The LEA's legal duty is concerned solely with children who appear not to be receiving suitable education. Beyond this, nothing in the Act requires an LEA to carry out regular monitoring of provision where a child is receiving education otherwise than at school. However, case law (Phillips v Brown, Divisional Court [20 June 1980, unreported]) has established that an LEA may initially ask
parents who are educating their children at home for information in order to assess whether it appears to the LEA that no suitable education is being provided.

In Phillips v Brown, Lord Donaldson said:

Of course such a request is not the same as a notice under s 37 (1) of the Education Act 1944 [now s 437 (1) of the Education Act 1996] and the parents will be under no duty to comply. However it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course ... of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LEA will have to consider and decide whether it 'appears' to it that the parents are in breach of s 36 [now s 7 of the Education Act 1996].

If an LEA chooses to approach a family and informally ask for information, parents may establish that a child is receiving an efficient and suitable education in a number of ways. Parents might, for example, offer either

- a written report,
- samples of work,
- a meeting at their home, with or without the child being present,
- a meeting elsewhere, with or without the child,
- an endorsement of the educational provision by a recognised third party, or
- information in any other appropriate form

The DfES make it clear that parents have a choice about how they provide information about their educational provision:

LEAs have no automatic right of access to parents' home. Parents may wish to offer an alternative way of demonstrating that they are providing suitable education, for example through showing examples of work and agreeing to a meeting at another venue.

Another point mentioned by Education Otherwise:

Occasionally, after examining all the information provided by the parents, an LEA may have genuine concerns about a child's education, but the way that information is presented should not form the basis for these concerns. Parents need only present information that would, on the balance of probabilities, convince a reasonable person that a suitable education was being provided.

[Taken from www.educationotherwise.org/Legal/SummLawEng&Wls.htm#DefSuitEduc, checked on September 6th, 2005]
Appendix IV: Home Education Law in Florida

- 1002.41(1) (Home education programs) states:
  
  A 'home education program' is defined as the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent in order to satisfy the attendance requirements of ss. 1002.41, 1003.01(4), and 1003.21(1). The parent is not required to hold a valid regular Florida teaching certificate.

- 1002.41 (1)(a) states the initial responsibility of the parent:

  The parent shall notify the district school superintendent of the county in which the parent resides of her or his intent to establish and maintain a home education program. The notice shall be in writing, signed by the parent, and shall include the names, addresses, and birthdates of all children who shall be enrolled as students in the home education program. The notice shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days of the establishment of the home education program. A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the district school superintendent's office within 30 days after said termination.

- 1002.41 (b); (b) (1); and (b) (2) gives information on the portfolio of work:

  The parent shall maintain a portfolio of records and materials. The portfolio shall consist of the following:

  1. A log of educational activities that is made contemporaneously with the instruction and that designates by title any reading materials used.

  2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student. The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for two years and shall be made available for inspection by the district school superintendent, or the district school superintendent's agent, upon fifteen days' written notice. Nothing in this section shall require the district school superintendent to inspect the portfolio.

- The parent also has to provide for an annual evaluation in sections (1)(c) 1-5:

  (c) The parent shall provide for an annual educational evaluation in which is documented the student's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability. The parent shall select the method of evaluation and shall file a copy of the evaluation annually with the district school superintendent's office in the county in which the student resides. The annual educational evaluation shall consist of one of the following:

  1. A teacher selected by the parent shall evaluate the student's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the student. Such teacher shall hold a valid regular Florida
certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level;

2. The student shall take any nationally normed student achievement test administered by a certified teacher;

3. The student shall take a state student assessment test used by the school district and administered by a certified teacher, at a location and under testing conditions approved by the school district;

4. The student shall be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s. 490.003(7) or (8); or

5. The student shall be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the district school superintendent of the district in which the student resides and the student's parent.

- The state official's responsibilities include:
  (2) The district school superintendent shall review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of the student in a home education program. If the student does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability, the district school superintendent shall notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved. The parent shall have one year from the date of receipt of the written notification to provide remedial instruction to the student. At the end of the one-year probationary period, the student shall be re-evaluated as specified in paragraph (1)(c). Continuation in a home education program shall be contingent upon the student demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.

- Other points in the home education program statutes:
  (3) A home education program shall be excluded from meeting the requirements of a school day.

  (4) Home education students may participate in interscholastic extracurricular student activities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.15

  (5) Home education students may participate in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1009.53-1009.539

  (6) Home education students may participate in dual enrollment programs in accordance with the provisions of ss. 1007.27(4) and 1007.27(10)

  (7) Home education students are eligible for admission to community colleges in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.263

  (8) Home education students are eligible for admission to state universities in accordance with the provisions of s. 1007.261
(9) Home education program students may receive testing and evaluation services at diagnostic and resource centers, in accordance with the provisions of s. 1006.03

- Also referenced in the study were statutes relating to children intending to 'home educate' when there were issues of truancy. These statutes fall under Section 1003.26, Enforcement of school attendance, (f)(1); (f)(2):

  (f)(1) If the parent of a child who has been identified as exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance enrolls the child in a home education program pursuant to chapter 1002, the district school superintendent shall provide the parent a copy of s. 1002.41 and the accountability requirements of this paragraph. The district school superintendent shall also refer the parent to a home education review committee composed of the district contact for home education programs and at least two home educators selected by the parent from a district list of all home educators who have conducted a home education program for at least 3 years and who have indicated a willingness to serve on the committee. The home education review committee shall review the portfolio of the student, as defined by s. 1002.41, every 30 days during the district's regular school terms until the committee is satisfied that the home education program is in compliance with s. 1002.41(1)(b). The first portfolio review must occur within the first 30 calendar days of the establishment of the program. The provisions of subparagraph 2. do not apply once the committee determines the home education program is in compliance with s. 1002.41(1)(b).

  2. If the parent fails to provide a portfolio to the committee, the committee shall notify the district school superintendent. The district school superintendent shall then terminate the home education program and require the parent to enroll the child in an attendance option that meets the definition of "regular school attendance" under s. 1003.01(13)(a), (b), (c), or (e), within 3 days. Upon termination of a home education program pursuant to this subparagraph, the parent shall not be eligible to reenroll the child in a home education program for 180 calendar days. Failure of a parent to enroll the child in an attendance option as required by this subparagraph after termination of the home education program pursuant to this subparagraph shall constitute noncompliance with the compulsory attendance requirements of s. 1003.21 and may result in criminal prosecution under s. 1003.27(2). Nothing contained herein shall restrict the ability of the district school superintendent, or the ability of his or her designee, to review the portfolio pursuant to s. 1002.41(1)(b).

Statutes:
The 2005 Florida Statutes – Chapter 1002: Student and Parental Rights and Educational Choices; Chapter 1003: School Attendance
[Taken from the Florida State Statutes website at www.fl senate.gov]
APPENDIX V
COMMON TEACHING STYLES USED BY HOME EDUCATORS

School-at-Home: This approach most closely resembles traditional school as children have a set schedule and assignments each day, with their work evaluated and graded. The curriculum is either a purchased packaged curriculum, or one created by the parents. Griffith (1997) notes that most people envisage this style of teaching when they hear about home education.

Unit Studies: Unit studies are taught in themes, or topics, incorporating multiple subjects. Depending on who is using them, a unit study approach can be "more or less formal, more or less lengthy, more or less comprehensive" (Griffith 1997:59). Unit studies can either be bought as a commercial package (e.g. Konos units) or created from the interest of the child (e.g. a dinosaur unit).

Eclectic Homeschooling: As the name suggests, this style of teaching uses a mix and match approach to suit individual needs. For example, some subjects can be tackled in a highly structured manner, such as mathematics or grammar, whilst other subjects can be developed as the children develop their interests.

Unschooling: Not to be confused with deschooling as argued by Illich (1973), unschooling is "a deceptively simple concept that defies easy definition" (Griffith 1997:62). It is 'natural', interest-initiated, 'child-led', or 'learner-led' learning, and is essentially learning through everyday life, based on what interests the child. Unschoolled children don't learn in a vacuum, Griffith notes, but rather they learn for example by observation, and desire, just as children learn to walk and talk because other people do. Although this form of schooling first sounds very laid back to the point of educational neglect by the parents, it is easier to grasp if one considers that children learn to talk, walk, and socialize in their pre-school days just by being. Their exponential learning curve in the first five years creates a sponge of a child, who absorbs and grows from one stage of development to the next, sometimes in spite of their parents' influence. Thus unschooling is an extension of the child's observations, interactions and reactions to their environment.

Outside Structure: For families who want guidance and support without going as far as a complete curriculum, they can turn to both state and private schools that offer programs designed to assist home schoolers. Alternatively, correspondence programs such as Calvert School, tend to be fairly traditional in their courses offered and instructional approach. Independent study programs offered by state and private schools will meet the needs of the families, such as to accommodate children expelled or suspended from regular classrooms in state schools, to allowing the parent to take a much greater role in developing and carrying out the learning plan. Charter schools are another option, in Florida, whereby a 'charter' is drafted to govern the school that is generally free of most of the legal rules and regulations that apply to a conventional school. The charter school in the US is one answer to school reform, where a new school or a smaller branch of an existing school is run according to the drafted charter devised by the teachers, parents, and sometimes, local businesses or community.
leaders. The charter school has to satisfy its existence each year to the local county education board, but has the freedom to be quite innovative.

**Trivium Approach**: This approach focuses on grammar, logic, and rhetoric. A classical form of teaching.

**Delayed Academics**: Dr. Raymond Moore and his wife popularized this style of teaching, where the philosophy is to allow children to mature into their skills at their own rate. Young children are not pressured with instruction in the 'academic subjects' such as reading, writing and maths; they pick up these subjects when they are academically ready.
POLICY LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE - LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES, ENGLAND AND WALES

There are two sections in this questionnaire, based on facts (section A) or opinions (section B). To be most useful to my research, please answer all the questions in both sections.

SECTION A

1. How many children of compulsory school age attend school in your local education authority (LEA)?

Actual numbers ________ OR Estimated numbers ________

2. How many children of compulsory school age are currently being home educated in your LEA?

Actual numbers ________ OR Estimated numbers ________

3. Has the number of children who are home educated changed in your LEA in the last ten years

 Increased □ Remained the same □
 Decreased □ Not known □

4. Who is responsible for monitoring the children who are home educated in your LEA?

[please tick all that apply]

Chief Education Officer □ Education Adviser □
Social Worker □ LEA Officer □
Inspector □ Other - please specify title □

5. How are families (that intend to home educate) made aware of the law regarding home-based education and the LEA’s legal responsibilities?


6. Does the LEA provide support services for children who are temporarily or permanently home educated, through choice rather than through exclusion or illness?

Yes □ No □

7. If yes to question 6, what services do you provide?
| Provision of educational materials | Provision of specialist equipment |
| Provision of a home tutor | Access to school library services |
| Access to school resource center | Consultation and help from the LEA |

Other (please specify) ____________________________________________________________________________

8. Has the LEA ever encountered problems with families that intend to home educate or who are currently home educating?
   Yes [ ] No [ ]

9. If problems do arise, how are they dealt with?
   [please tick all that apply]
   
   By legal recourse [ ] By home visits [ ]
   Through face-to-face visits [ ] By providing extra help for families (please specify) [ ]
   Other (please specify) __________________________________________________________________________

10. What different educational philosophies has the LEA seen being practiced in home-based education settings?
    ___________________________________________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________________________________________
    ___________________________________________________________________________________________
### SECTION B

For each of the following statements, please put a tick in the box that most closely agrees with your opinion.

*(please tick one box for each question only)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is no need for home-based education in today's society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Home-based educating families cannot always get support from local schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All parents are adequately informed about the educational choices available to them, including home-based education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Only home educated children can get an education which is matched to their individual needs.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Local education authorities are not able to provide support services for home educating families.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. A less structured approach to the curriculum is more appropriate for the child.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. A home educated child will reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a state school educated child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The National Curriculum in state schools is broad and balanced enough to provide an effective education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Home educated children will not be able to make friends easily.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. A structured curriculum is more appropriate for the child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Parents are only informed about home-based education if they are actively interested in this option.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. School education cannot be individualised for every child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The curriculum of an home-based education can be too narrow to provide an effective education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. A school based education will enable a child to reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a home educated child.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Home-based educating families are difficult to monitor by the LEA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Once home educated, a child cannot be enrolled in a school at a later date.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Home-based education provides a flexible education, suitable for today's society.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Home-based educating families are always monitored effectively by the LEA.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Home-based education is seen as a low priority area as so few practice this alternative.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. State schools provide a child with good social skills for today's society.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Home-based education is seen as a suitable educational alternative.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Once enrolled in school, a child cannot be home educated.</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
<td>☐️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. In the opinion of your LEA, what valid reasons do you perceive parents to have when deciding to home educate?  
   *please tick all that apply*

   - Dissatisfaction with existing school provision ☐️
   - Geographical remoteness from nearest schools ☐️
   - Based on religious grounds ☐️
   - Based on ideological/educational grounds ☐️
   - School phobia problems ☐️
   - Child has special educational needs (gifted/handicapped) ☐️
   - Geographical mobility ☐️
   - Other (please specify) ____________________________

Please add any further comments

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

*Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire*
POLICY LEVEL QUESTIONNAIRE - LOCAL DISTRICTS

FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

Annotated version

There are two sections in this questionnaire, based on facts (section A) or opinions (section B). To be most useful to my research, please answer all the questions in both sections.

SECTION A

1. How many children of compulsory school age attend school in your local county?

   Actual numbers ___________________________________________ OR Estimated numbers ___________________________________________

2. How many children of compulsory school age are currently being home schooled in your county?

   Actual numbers ___________________________________________ OR Estimated numbers ___________________________________________

   Questions 1 and 2 were designed to enable me to calculate an estimated percentage of home-schooled children in the SD. No research has shown consistency in numbers of home schoolers reported, and there was no way to compare home schoolers between two areas without a consistent measure. Whilst not attempting to be anything more than an estimate, this data allowed me to compare the estimated percentage of home schoolers with the estimated percentage of home educators.

3. Has the number of children who are home schooled changed in your district in the last ten years

   Increased [ ] Remained the same [ ]
   Decreased [ ] Not known [ ]

   Most of the literature suggests that the home educating population is growing rapidly though there is little comparable evidence to back up the statements. I wanted to know if the state officials shared the same perception in their experience with the numbers of home schoolers in their particular SD.

4. Who is responsible for monitoring the children who are home educated in your county?

   [Please name the job title]
Question 4 gave me job title names for those responsible for the home schoolers in the SD. When I did my pilot work, I found it very difficult to contact the correct person as each SD seemed to give different titles to the individual responsible. On other occasions the person responsible had many other responsibilities in addition to monitoring home schoolers.

5. How are families (that intend to home school) made aware of the law regarding home schooling and the state's legal responsibilities?

When asking individuals about home education I became aware that some educated teachers and parents believed home education to be illegal. The literature also suggested that the true number of home schoolers in Florida cannot be known in spite of compulsory registration. Many families choose to home educate their children under the private '600 school' title rather than the 'home education program' and remain unknown to the school district as a result. Relating to the issue of law, I wanted to know if SDs were aware of the ways families became knowledgeable about home education.

6. Does the district provide support services for children who are temporarily or permanently home schooled, through choice rather than through exclusion or illness?

Yes ☐ No ☐

I was aware that home schoolers had some support from the school districts (SDs) and local schools in dual enrolment and other services, I wanted to compare any support with that provided by the LEAs or schools. Question 7 gives suggestions of other support services that could be provided.

7. If yes to question 6, what services do you provide?
[please tick all that apply]

- Provision of educational materials ☐
- Provision of specialist equipment ☐
- Provision of a home tutor ☐
- Access to school library services ☐
- Access to school resource center ☐
- Consultation and help from the county ☐
8. Has the district ever encountered problems with families that intend to home school or who are currently home schooling?

Yes ☐ No ☐

As my focus was on potential tensions between home educators and state officials, this question and the next explored problems encountered and dealt with by the state officials. This issue was further explored in the telephone interviews.

9. If problems do arise, how are they dealt with?

[please tick all that apply]

- By legal recourse ☐
- By home visits ☐
- Through face to face visits (other than by home visits) ☐
- By providing extra help for families (please specify) ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

10. What different educational philosophies has the district seen being practiced in home schooling settings?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

The last question helped me understand if the SD officials were aware of the myriad of educational philosophies that guide home schoolers. If the officials had experience with a number of home schooling families, successful in their practice, these officials were more likely to be accommodating of educational philosophies and practices that might be unfamiliar to the school-based teacher (such as delayed academics or unschooling).
SECTION B - QUESTIONNAIRE SDS - ANNOTATED VERSION

For each of the following statements, please put a tick in the box that most closely agrees with your opinion.

(please tick one box for each question only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is no need for home schooling in today’s society [P]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Home schooling families cannot always get support from their local schools. [C]</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All parents are adequately informed about the educational choices available to them, including home schooling. [C]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Only home schooled children can get an education that is matched to their individual needs. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Local districts are not able to provide support services for home schooling families. [C]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. A less structured approach to the curriculum is more appropriate for the child. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. A home schooled child will reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a public school educated child. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. The average curriculum in public schools is broad and balanced enough to provide an effective education. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Home schooled children will not be able to make friends easily. [S]</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. A structured curriculum is more appropriate for the child. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Parents are only informed about home schooling if they are actively interested in this option. [C]</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. School education cannot be individualised for every child. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The curriculum of home schooling education can be too narrow to provide an effective education. [E]</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Once home schooled, a child cannot be enrolled in a school at a later date. [L]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Home schooling provides a flexible education, suitable for today's education. [P]</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Home schooling families are always monitored effectively by the local district. [L]

17. Home schooling is seen as a low priority area as so few practice this alternative. [P]

18. Public schools provide a child with good social skills for today's society. [S]

19. Home schooling is seen as a suitable educational alternative. [P]

20. Once enrolled in school, a child cannot be home schooled. [L]

21. A school based education will enable a child to reach a higher standard of numeracy/literacy than a home schooled child. [E]

22. Home schooling families are difficult to monitor by the local county district. [L]

23. In the opinion of your county, what valid reasons do you perceive parents to have when deciding to home school? [please tick all that apply]

- Dissatisfaction with existing school provision
- Geographical remoteness from nearest schools
- Based on religious grounds
- Based on ideological/educational grounds
- School phobia problems
- Child has special educational needs (gifted/handicapped)
- Geographical mobility
- Other (please specify)

Please add any further comments

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire
Codes for questions numbered 1 - 22:

[P] These questions explored perceptions of the SD official towards certain aspects of home education. I had designed them with the intention of checking perceptions that I felt emanated from the literature. Some were more accommodating to home education as an educational alternative, whilst other statements could be viewed as more negative. When I presented these scaled statements to individuals in the pilot work I was surprised at the strong reactions received. Either people were quite defensively unable to agree or disagree with the statement that allowed too many variables, or they strongly defended / criticized the choice. I was so fascinated by the reactions from people that I wondered if similar reactions would surface with the participating LEAs and SDs. Rather than using these particular statements as definitive findings, I was more interested in annotated questionnaires or finding other alternative routes to uncover perceptions about home education.

[C] Counter to my focus on potential tensions between those who choose to home educate and those officials who primarily support state education, I designed a few questions around a cooperative theme. I was aware that home schoolers in some US states have a great deal of support from the local education authority and schools (Iowa is one example, as is Florida to an extent). I wanted to explore if participants knew of support for home educators, or support that could be conceivable.

[E] Knowing that home education is a unique form of private education, and the division in attitudes towards private or public education, I designed a few statements to explore perceptions towards the educational aspect of home education.

[S] One of the common themes in the literature and an issue that home educators always faced from non-home educators was the notion of socialisation. I knew very little about the state officials' perceptions on socialisation - much of the literature defends socialisation of home educators from their perspective. These socialisation statements provided a useful springboard to further questions in the telephone interviews.

[L] Whether or not legal issues can create tensions, I wanted to move on from two researchers' work (Petrie 1992 and Mayberry et al. 1995). They suggested that state officials did not always have a proper grasp of home education laws. Questions 16 and 22 were deliberately worded to see if the state officials would acknowledge that they were incorrect.

The last question (23) and the space for further comments were included to help me formulate further questions for the interviews. I also wondered if any participant would consider home education to be an unsuitable form of education - again I was focusing on my notion that tension towards home education was likely, especially with individuals whose priority is to oversee the public education system.
APPENDIX VIII
EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES DRAWN FROM INFORMATION BOOKLETS

The following boxed examples have been taken from a variety of information booklets. At times, the exact wording was seen in several state official booklets, revealing collaboration across LEAs/SDs. If there were variations on a particular category, more than one example has been included to illustrate the material that needed to be coded and analysed. Where I have explained headings or paraphrased information, the type will be in italicised, handwriting style font.

Examples of categories drawn from LEA information booklets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education law verbatim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Act 1996, Section 7 states: “It shall be the duty of the parents of every child of compulsory school age to cause him (or her) to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his (or her) age, ability and aptitude (and to any special educational needs he (or she) may have) either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education law in layman’s terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For most children this means they usually attend their local school, but for some the parents decide to take on the responsibility for their education outside of the school system, i.e. educate them “otherwise” than at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental duties explained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You only need to contact the LEA when your child is of compulsory school age. If your child is of compulsory school age and is registered at school you should write to the LEA saying that you intend to educate your child at home and the date this education will start. Please could you include your child’s name, date of birth and the school at which he/she is registered. You should also write to the headteacher of the school at which the child is registered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you decide to teach your child otherwise, then you assume responsibility for your child’s education, and are outside the school system. |
**LEA’s duties explained**

The LEA has the responsibility of ensuring that all children of compulsory school age and living in the area are receiving an efficient full-time education. The LEA will visit you at home. After the visit a report will be written and will indicate whether the education you are providing:

1. Meets the requirements of Section 437-443 of the 1996 Education Act;
2. Needs some changes in order to meet the requirements;
3. Is unsatisfactory and unlikely to meet requirements.

You will receive a summary of this report. If the report indicates the second or third outcome, you will be given information about what it is that does not satisfy us and given one month to address those issues. A follow up visit will then be arranged and if, after this visit, the situation has not improved satisfactorily we may make a School Attendance Order which will require your child to attend a named school.

**What is the LEA’s role...?**

First, it is not to try to stop parents providing education for their children outside the school system. Parents have a legal right to make arrangements according to their own wishes. The LEA’s responsibility is to the child. It has a duty to make sure that all children in the Borough are receiving a suitable education. The LEA does not have preconceptions about what that means or how it should be provided. Instead, it looks at each child individually, taking into account her or his circumstances, age, abilities, talents and skills to establish what education is taking place. To carry out its duty, the LEA will ask you to provide evidence that the child is receiving an appropriate and effective education at home. You may do this in a number of ways. Parents might for example:

- Accept a visit from a LEA officer in their home, with or without the child being present;
- Write a report;
- Provide samples of work;
- Meet an LEA officer elsewhere, with or without the child being present;
- Have the education provision endorsed by a recognised third party;
- Provide evidence in any other appropriate form.

The advantage of a home visit is that it allows parents to present a wide range of evidence in context and to discuss their child’s work in a comfortable environment.

The Director will then contact you to make arrangements for two inspectors to visit you at your home. It will take some time – a month or so – to arrange this first visit, since the number of inspectors is limited and most of their time is spent working with schools. The inspectors will not wish to discuss your reasons for the decision nor will they try to persuade you to change your mind. They will not tell you how to educate your child.
Monitoring procedures explained

Once your completed questionnaire has been received an LEA Officer will visit at home to assess the educational provision you are making for your child. At this meeting you will be asked a number of questions and also requested to make available some of the resources you are using and examples of your child’s work.

The Officer is not visiting in order to tell you how to educate your child as it is your responsibility to plan your child’s education and to implement it. Although the LEA will not provide books or other equipment you may need, we will be happy to discuss any areas of concern that you may have and offer advice and guidance.

It would be helpful if you could have available a timetable that you follow, curriculum plans and records of your child’s progress as this will enable the officer to see how you plan each day. Work that your child has done and is currently doing in a range of different subjects will help the officer to assess progression. A selection of resource books and materials will give an indication of the level at which your child is working. You do not have to follow the national curriculum and there are no compulsory subjects. You may of course choose to provide an education that closely relates to the national curriculum or that incorporates a number of subjects.

Parents should make themselves available to meet Inspectors at a suitable venue which can include the home, or agree some other suitable means of communication, so that the Inspectors can talk with both child and parent and view the child’s completed work.

The Inspector will wish to speak with you and your child(ren) about the work which is being undertaken. Additionally he or she may ask a series of questions – for example:

- How are you planning to ensure that your child is offered a broad and balanced curriculum?
- What are your short- and long-term plans?
- Have you considered how you might link together different subjects or topics?
- How do you provide for your child’s physical development? How do you arrange for your child to interact socially with others?
- How is the work to be organised? How do you plan a mixture of work including practical activities as well as written tasks?
- Are you likely to enlist the support of a tutor?
- How will you record your child’s progress/difficulties?
- Will your programme allow later access to further/higher education if appropriate? Will a wide range of career opportunities be available?
### Definitions of terms

**Compulsory school age** – This means from the beginning of the term following a child’s 5th birthday until the end of the school year following his/her 16th birthday.

**Efficient, suitable education** – These words are not defined in the Act. However, education has been held to be ‘efficient’ if it achieves what it sets out to achieve and ‘suitable’ only if it prepares the child for life in modern civilised society and enables the child to achieve his/her full potential.

**Full-time** – The length of time is not specified.

**Special Educational Needs** – This usually means children have learning difficulties that require special educational provision to be made for them. For the majority of children such needs will be met by their school without the need for a Statement.

**Regular attendance at school** – If a child is a registered pupil at a school they must attend regularly or the parents, subject to certain defences, are guilty of an offence.

**Otherwise** – This would include being taught at home by parents, including the use of correspondence courses or by private tutors.

### Useful resources, useful contacts, addresses, websites

This would include the LEA contact person, local home education support group leaders, and addresses for Education Otherwise, Home Education Advisory Service, and the Home Service. Also included would be examinations boards and contact details, home education correspondence courses, useful websites for learning, social activities and so on.

### Government information on home education

This is taken from the DfES website, under the Parents Centre information on home education, as well as the Direct Gov site.
Curriculum information

The subjects studied at school are: - English, Mathematics, Science, Technology, History, Geography, Information Technology, Art, Music, Physical Education, A Foreign Language (usually only after the age of 11), Religious Education.

Whilst we will be looking for a broad and balanced education you do not have to provide evidence of learning in all of the separate areas as project work will incorporate links between a number of subjects, especially with younger children. Your long-term educational plan should, however, clearly show the relevant links.

Some home educators choose to use a 'discovery' type of education without any formal instruction. The interests of the child at that moment are followed, supported and developed until a new spark sets the child off in a different direction. Others have found a formal timetable such as you would find in a school and pre-planned courses of study are followed. Yet others do a mixture of both these methods. In fact all styles of education are valid as long as they are suitable. The LEA's interest is in establishing that a suitable education is taking place rather than endorsing any particular method.

The important thing to remember is that your child can only start and progress from the point they are at, not some arbitrary level determined by their age. Find out your child's starting level of attainment and provide work that will allow him/her to move on from that point.

Caveat to home educators

Do:

- Think long and hard about it before making a decision. It is a great responsibility and a considerable commitment of time and energy.
- Plan what you intend to do with your child before making a decision.
- Look at the costs involved including visits, equipment, books and tutors.
- Provide opportunities for your child to be involved in social activities, contact with other children, and joint activities with other children and groups. The impetus which comes from such activities may provide a useful social setting and improve your child's motivation to succeed with his or her learning.
- Keep your options open. Your child's needs will change at different ages. We will always be willing to find a place for your child at a school which can best provide for his/her needs.
- Seek an opportunity in cases where opinions differ, to talk to the headteacher or to consult the Education Welfare Officer.
- In the event that the LEA is not able to approve the arrangements you are making, there is no guarantee that a place will still be available in your child's original school.
- You may fear we will be very restrictive about how you teach your child. Be reassured that, if we are able to see that you are trying to meet the educational needs of your child, we will be helpful and supportive. As parents, we hope you will understand our concern for the needs of all children whether they are in school or not.
Useful information for home educators

The LEA recognises that children learn in many different ways and at different speeds. Education does not only take place between the hours of 9.00am and 4.00 pm but is an on-going process throughout the day whether children are being educated at school or at home.

For some parents the experience of educating their child at home is positive and rewarding, but for others it is not. Please do not underestimate the amount of work this will involve for you as the prime educator. Finally, if you have decided that home education is the most appropriate solution for your child, may we wish you every success.

Usually parents will make use of the following resources in such a way that the combination brings about the most efficient and suitable education provision:
- Funding private tutors
- Using the Internet including educational websites
- Visiting libraries and museums
- Getting support from education otherwise groups
- Buying educational books and tests from reputable book shops and engaging the child in creative and sporting activities

A postal survey was completed in one LEA to assess home educators' satisfaction. Overall suggestions for improvement from the LEA were for more funding to be available for sports/arts groups, science equipment and books, exams, and running groups to allow children to socialise.

It is clear that young children acquire their learning in many different ways; in the primary school the curriculum will possibly not be taught as separate subjects but will be delivered through integrated and whole-curriculum activities. In secondary schools it is most likely that the subjects will be taught separately. But what you teach (or leave out) is up to you, provided that you can describe the ways in which the education is ‘suitable’ and ‘efficient’.

There is no one form of education; children learn in many different ways, at different times and speeds, and from different people. Education does not always need to follow a set plan of ‘lessons’ or even a ‘timetable’ but it is a good idea, when trying to justify what you are doing to someone else, if you can at least show a longer term plan and the ways you are getting there.

In our view you are more likely to succeed in home education if you take note of the following suggestions:
- Try to see that the learning process is as active, practical and participative as possible and systematically planned.
- Try to take full advantage of all the resources available around you
- Give great importance to reading in your programme
- Have a programme of educational visits and broadcasts planned. Make sure they are planned in advance and followed up afterwards.
- Provide opportunities, which help with physical development, and ones which allow social interaction to take place in different contexts.
- Make your approaches to learning more enjoyable by varying the style and
content, and the processes it involves.

- Where necessary give opportunities for independent study and research, and provide a quiet area for sustained study/work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General evidence, which is useful, includes showing evidence of:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Your daily and weekly diary of what you planned to do and what you actually did. This is invaluable in filling in any gaps where your child’s work may not have been recorded in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The originals of any models made, or a picture or photo of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where experiments have been done in science and technology, some record of the work — a picture, photo will show what you did and will help to jog the child’s memory too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- All books, files, folders for your child’s written work. If you can get into the habit of always dating this is a tremendous help, both to you and to us in seeing what has been achieved over a period of time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Any text books which you are using.</td>
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</table>

In devising the programme you want your child to follow, you may find it useful to focus on the key skills that are essential to effective learning in any context. These are the skills that will help learners to improve their learning and performance in education, work and life. The skills are:

- Communication: Speaking, listening, reading and writing
- Application of number: this includes developing a range of mental calculation skills and the ability to apply them in a variety of contexts. It also includes developing the understanding and use of mathematical language related to numbers and calculations in order to process data, solve increasingly complex problems and explain the reasoning used.
- Information Technology: including the ability to use a range of information sources and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) tools to find, analyse, interpret, evaluate and present information for a range of purposes. It also includes the ability to decide when it is appropriate to use ICT tools, using ICT for enquiry, problem solving and decision making.
- Working with others: this includes the ability to contribute to discussion, work with others to meet a challenge, awareness and understanding of the needs of others. It includes the ability to consider different perspectives and to benefit from what others think, say or do.
- Improving one’s own learning and performance: this includes reflecting on and critically evaluating one’s own work and identifying ways to improve it. This involves identifying the purpose of learning, reflecting on the process of learning, assessing progress in learning, identifying obstacles or problems in learning and planning ways to improve learning.
- Problem solving: this involves the skills of identifying and understanding a problem, monitoring progress in tackling a problem and reviewing solutions to problems.

Children who are home educated:

- Do not have to follow the national curriculum — but you may choose to so that your child is not disadvantaged compared to his/her peers
- Do not have to take tests or exams — but again you may prefer your child to sit at least GCSEs
- Do not have to have a timetable, work during usual school hours or work a particular number of hours a week — however it will be very much easier to
satisfy the LEA that the education you are providing is satisfactory if you have evidence of regular studying and structure. The LEA recommends a minimum of 3 hours a day during normal school days.

- Do not have to be taught by a qualified teacher – although employing a tutor can take some of the pressure off parents especially as the child gets older. There are now a number of Internet based tutorial packages available to support home education and some FE colleges offer courses for under 16s.
- Do not have to mix with other children – but clearly this does not help their personal and social development. Home educators usually have a carefully planned programme of social, artistic and sporting activities, which gives their child opportunities to mix with their peers.

| Education at home can be a natural and continuous process, which does not need to take place at specific times of the day, nor do you need to observe school hours or school terms. Some children, of course, benefit from some form of structure to their day. You may also want your child to be free in the evening and during school holidays to maintain social contact with school friends. |
| Your child does not need to be a part of a large group in order to learn the fundamental skills of sharing, co-operating, taking turns and communicating. These skills can be learned within the immediate family, particularly if there are brothers and sisters of a similar age. A visit to a playground, for younger children, will give plenty of opportunities to learn both assertiveness and consideration. As your child grows older then they can be encouraged to take part in a variety of activities, which involve working and playing with others. |
| If educating your child at home is likely to be a temporary arrangement, then it may be advisable to work with the National Curriculum in order to ensure that your child is not at a disadvantage later on. |
| You will be in a good position to have a detailed awareness of your child’s strengths and weaknesses and so will be able to start from where your child is and progress at a suitable pace. |
| It is not necessary for you to have any teaching experience or qualifications, as the task of educating a child on a one-to-one basis is very different from the work of a teacher in a classroom. |
| Do not worry that you are not an ‘educational expert’. You are an expert concerning your own child and that is the first step. |
## Interpreted law, open to misunderstanding

...an Inspector of the LEA will contact you and make an arrangement to visit you at your home to approve the plan for educating your child.

There is no duty in law for LEAs to approve home education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Authority Responsibility – Under Section 437, 443 and 444 of the 1996 Education Act, the authority has powers to ensure that children are receiving suitable education through a ‘school attendance order’ which means a parent is required to register their child at a school named in that order. Failure to do so would lead to a parental prosecution.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This text implies parents need to register their child at school, in the same section that informs them about home education. This needs to be omitted or revised to clearly state that the school attendance order is a last resort used in cases where the child is not receiving an education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your child remains legally entitled to the National Curriculum whilst they are on the school roll (until the Education Authority is satisfied that the education to be arranged by the parent is suitable).

This implies that the child should follow the National Curriculum in a home education programme until the LEA is satisfied that the education is suitable. The National Curriculum is not mandatory in home education.

Please be assured that the main concerns of the LEA are your child’s academic progress and welfare. However, the LEA will consider formal action if it is evident that education is not taking place, or if there is serious concern for your child’s welfare.

The statement conflates the LEA’s duty to be satisfied that education is taking place with the child’s welfare.

Parents/carers are under no obligation to agree to a home visit after the initial review by the Education Welfare Officer but they must, by law, provide satisfactory evidence to the Local Authority that a broad, balanced, appropriate and suitable education is being provided and this process can be complex. For this reason the home visit is recommended as the most beneficial, suitable and simplest way of meeting the requirements of the law for all concerned. Failure to comply with the above requirement will indicate a cause for concern and a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

Stating that the home visit is recommended for all, and that failure to comply will indicate a cause for concern is tantamount to bullying by the LEA to ensure adherence to policy.
You will need to ask the Headteacher of your child’s school for leave of absence as your child’s name cannot be taken off the school roll until the Local Education Authority have completed its inspection of your arrangements.

This statement is likely to be LEA policy, as it is not an accurate interpretation of the law.

The length of time children spend under instruction is not specified, but it must be full-time and approximately comparable with the time the child would have spent in school.

The law does not state ‘full-time’ in recognition of the many ways teaching and learning can occur, either in less or more time when compared to schooled children. This statement is not applicable to home education, as it does not recognize such time flexibility.

Parental duties open to misunderstanding

If your child is of statutory school age and is attending school, we suggest that first of all you seek a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss your plans.

This suggestion could be seen as a parental duty, when there is no need for parents to comply. Perhaps if the suggestion were expanded upon, it would be more useful to home educators.

We will need you to complete the form by providing as much information as you can on the following [for example, who will educate the child and their qualifications...]. If the form is not completed the LEA will request a meeting with parents of the child.

There is no need for parents or others teaching the children to be qualified. To suggest that an incomplete form warrants a meeting is also not helpful to LEA or home educator, as the cause and effect relationship of the statement is LEA policy, not a legal parental duty.
## Monitoring misinformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The LEA will visit your home to assess your child’s education.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The almost ubiquitous home visit is stated as the method of 'monitoring' or assessment of the child’s education. This is not stated in law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You will almost certainly be required to answer some questions and may be required to allow the Adviser to see the child at work.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another statement that indicates LEA policy rather than legal duties or responsibilities. Parents do not have to comply with the policy of allowing the Adviser to see the child at work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These visits will be arranged in advance, normally at home so that the working environment can be seen as well.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By stating that the LEA policy is to view the working environment as well, parents might feel that this is part of the monitoring duty of the LEA. It is not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents will be visited at least annually by an LEA Inspector with the child being present.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no stipulation in law that children need to be seen. Many home educating parents will have the children present because that is their lifestyle (to be with their children).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As part of this evidence, we would contact the Education Welfare Service and ask them to arrange to visit you at home in order to complete a 'home circumstances report'...Upon receipt of the report, the Inspector will contact you as soon as possible to arrange a mutually convenient date and time to visit you at home and discuss with you, and if possible your child, what education you are providing and what programmes of work you intend your child to follow.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A clear example of conflating education and welfare, this LEA policy uses a 'home circumstances report' before satisfying itself that a suitable education is taking place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Misleading or incorrect information

**Information on the Access and Attendance Team related to truancy and poor attendance found within information on home education.**

By including home education information within information on truancy and poor attendance, one is led to assume a conflict of interest must exist in this policy decision.

There are no compulsory subjects for children being educated at home because the National Curriculum does not apply to them. However, we are sure that you would not wish to see your child disadvantaged because he or she has not benefited from a broad education similar to that received by other children.

Use of the word disadvantaged is unfortunate, as there are examples of LEA policy that states the caveat in less emotive terms. It is also important to set a timeframe on such a statement, as it is more likely that comparable school subjects would be advantageous to take at GCSE or A Level, and of less importance before.

The equivalent of four hours teaching time a day, for 200 days a year, is sufficient time for providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

There is no stipulation for ‘full-time’ to be stated as the equivalent to four hours, for 200 days a year. This statement has little relevance to a home educator.

The Education Authority will need information about the study facilities you are going to provide...the Authority will need to know the background and experience of the teacher (or tutor) to assess their suitability to provide the education programme for your child.

Whilst it is helpful to have information about the teachers/tutors, this does not necessarily give evidence that a suitable education is taking place. It also makes the assumption that the parents or tutor need experience as a teacher.

If you decide to educate your child at home, it is important to inform the Education Authority promptly, so that a visit can be arranged to determine whether your child’s name can be taken off the school register (de-registration). Once your child has been de-registered, s/he is not bound to follow the National Curriculum.

This does not follow the law. Once the parent informs the school that the child will be home educated, it is the duty of the school to de-register the child, and to inform the LEA. The parent is wise to inform the LEA of the intention to home educate, but this is not his or her responsibility in law.
Schools are required to be open for 190 days a year and the recommended times during which children should be taught if they attend school are between 5 and 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day. Adhering to school term dates and recommended hours would ensure that the requirement to provide 'full-time' education were complied with.

'Full-time' is not stipulated in law, and to tie statements about full-time into comparable times in school is not applicable, nor relevant to home educators.

It can also be argued that the development of social skills takes place most appropriately in a school.

Interesting statement. Who argues this? On what grounds? Backed by what research? Such a statement would be best omitted, as it clearly shows LEA policy that ignores home educators' perspectives.

The skills, knowledge and abilities of the educator(s) are of prime importance in determining the quality of the education your child(ren) will experience. For this reason a suitably qualified teacher(s) may be the best person to be the child(ren)'s educator.

Arguably, a skilful, knowledgeable educator can help a child achieve their full potential. However, this school-biased perspective does not take into account skilled individuals who are not 'qualified' teachers (such as artists, musicians). Nor does this statement accommodate the belief held amongst many home educators that a child can become self-led and self-taught (see John Holt's work for example, or Maria Montessori's philosophies).

---

**Additional information provided/requested/expected**

You will receive a form to complete showing how you intend to educate your child at home. You are asked to return this form.

No forms are needed to be completed, though they are helpful to LEAs as a form of standardisation.

If you are ever concerned about the welfare or safety of a child, please contact the Child Protection Team...

Found in a policy document, such a statement linked to monitoring home educators reveals the concern with child welfare issues, connected to education assessment.
What constitutes a sound curriculum? The Government White Paper, *Better Schools* (1985) recommended that the curriculum should be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated.

As useful as the government paper is, this document is inherently school-based, and needs to be carefully interpreted to be relevant to home educators.

You should state that it is your intention to education your child "otherwise than by attendance at school”. We will then write back to you asking you to provide as much information as you can on:

- Who will educate the child; qualifications and/or relevant experience of adults working with the child;
- The time allocated to teaching different subjects and how this is organised into a daily and weekly pattern.

As found in other documents, such statements are school-biased and do not necessarily equate with home educating programmes adopted, especially those that are eclectic, unstructured or unschooled in practice.

As an LEA we would naturally recommend and hope that you send your child to school. We are always willing to discuss the reasons why you would wish not to do this with a view to helping you as much as we can. We do, however, respect your wishes and we know that some parents can do a very good job of educating their child at home.

By stating that the LEA is willing to discuss the reasons for home educating with a view to helping the family, the LEA's agenda becomes ambiguous. Is the LEA trying to assist the home educating family with their endeavours, or is the LEA interested in the family resolving issues and sending the child to school?

It would not be in your child’s or your best interest if you decide to educate at home because of a disagreement with a teacher or a school. Also, it is not a solution for the problem of getting a reluctant child to school.

This statement needs more careful wording. Parents who have disagreements with teachers, school, or problems with reluctant children might see home education as an opportunity rather than a last resort.

Do consider very carefully whether in later years your child may feel that his or her life chances have been adversely affected by being educated at home.

This statement needs careful rewording as it implies home education may negatively affect a child’s life chances. The same could be stated about state schools, and would be equally judgmental.
Do not make the decision final. You may manage well when your child is of infant age but may encounter difficulties later when he/she may need to study for examinations.

With careful revision of the words, this statement could be a much better caveat for home educators to consider.

The Adviser will not be able to give you guidance on the content of your programme or your methods of delivery. If you need guidance of this kind, it may indicate that your child would be better off in a school.

Not a helpful statement at all. A good home education programme is, like school education, a flexible programme that attempts to best meet the needs of the child. Not every lesson goes according to plan, and guidance, advice, information sharing are as much a part of school as of home educating life.

Examples of categories drawn from SD information booklets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutes verbatim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See Appendix IV for the statutes verbatim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutes in layman’s terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home education law is broad and gives the parent quite a bit of freedom to choose and direct his child’s education. Parents who choose to teach and direct the education of their own children at home, must notify their district school superintendent and meet the other requirements of this law. Parents bear the teaching responsibility in this option and the child must show educational progress each year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter of intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your written notice of intent must include each of the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of each child (6 – 16 years of age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth date of each child named</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A parent’s signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The notice must be filed in your district school superintendent’s office within 30 days of beginning your home education program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Letter of termination**

File a notice of termination with the superintendent’s office within 30 days of the time you terminate. The notice of termination should include the same student information as the notice of intent.

**Parental Duties**

Essentially, six stipulations must be followed to be in compliance with the law as a home educator:
- Send a notice of intent to your district school superintendent.
- Maintain a portfolio of records.
- Make your portfolio available for inspection by the superintendent upon a 15-day written notice.
- Submit an annual evaluation for each child to the district school superintendent.
- Preserve your child’s portfolio for two years.
- Submit a letter of termination upon completion of your home education program, enrollment in a public or private school, or if moving from the county.

**SD Duties**

After you send in your child’s evaluation, the superintendent is directed to ‘review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation’. When the Florida certified teacher evaluates and concludes that your child has progressed sufficiently according to his ability, then the superintendent ‘shall accept’ this conclusion and the report goes into your child’s file. However, if your child’s evaluation does not indicate sufficient progress, the superintendent will notify you in writing that your child will be on a one-year probation. During the one-year probation period, you should provide remedial instruction. At the end of the year your child is again evaluated and must show sufficient progress according to his ability. If sufficient progress is not shown, your child will no longer be eligible for a home education program. Your child would then be required to attend a public or private school.

**Useful information**

This would include information on dual enrollment, Bright Futures Scholarship eligibility, how to re-enter school especially for high school credits and graduation diplomas, extracurricular activities.
Curriculum information

Though never specifically stating a particular curriculum, curriculum information includes regionally accredited correspondence courses.

Useful Resources

This includes information on textbook purchasing suppliers, educational material suppliers.

Useful contacts, addresses, websites

Useful contacts include the Florida Parents Educators Association (FPEA) booklet, home schooling support group addresses and websites.

Government information on home schooling

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) produces a frequently asked questions booklet (available on the Internet) that provides useful information for home schoolers.

Interpretation, open to misunderstanding

Florida law requires that a home education program, as well as the public schools, be in session for 180 days each school year. In order to document your child’s attendance please circle the dates he/she attended a home school program.

There is no stipulation in law for home educated children to document attendance, under the Home Education Program of 1985.

What happens if an annual evaluation on a home education student is not submitted to the district? Section 232.0201, F.S. requires the parent to provide for an annual evaluation of the home education student. Failure to do so places the home education program in non-compliance and permits the superintendent, after notice to the parent, to terminate the program.

This is not accurate. If the home schooled child is in non-compliance, he or she is first put on a one-year probation, during which time he or she must resolve the issues of non-compliance. If, after the one-year probation, the child is still in non-compliance, the superintendent has the legal right to terminate the home education program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Additional information provided/requested/expected</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Home education Renewal</strong> – Name and address of school, agency or company providing home school materials. If a school, agency or company is not providing materials, describe type and source of materials that are being utilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No duty by parents to complete an annual renewal form. There is also no legal requirement to provide any information of curriculum materials used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Notice of intent form** that requests birthplace, grade, last school attended, social security number, sex and race of the child. |
| No legal requirement for grade, last school attended, social security number, sex or race of a child. |

| **I intend to maintain a home education program consistent with requirements established by the local board and the office of the superintendent. Attached are educational plans for each of the students listed above.** |
| **There is no legal requirement for home schooling parents to submit educational plans for their children.** |

| **Affidavit form included in home schooling packet, to be signed and notarised. Also requests social security number.** |
| **NO affidavit is required by Florida law, nor social security numbers.** |
HOME-BASED EDUCATORS' QUESTIONNAIRE – ENGLAND & WALES
Annotated version

Please answer the following as completely as possible.

1. Level of education attained by the parents of the home educated child/children: (please tick one)
   Secondary school ☐ University ☐ Post Graduate Degree ☐

2. Ethnic background: (please tick one)
   ☐ White
   ☐ Asian
   ☐ Black
   ☐ Chinese
   ☐ Mixed Race
   ☐ Other

3. What is the occupation of the parents?:
   Mother __________________________________________
   Father __________________________________________

4. How many children are in the family, and what are their ages?

   ______________________________________________________

5. How long have your child/children been home educated? ______________

6. Please describe the reason or reasons for deciding to home educate your child/children:

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

7. Do you use a prepared curriculum?

   Yes ☐ No ☐
8. If yes to question 7, can you describe whether the curriculum is based on one of the following: (please check one)

- The National Curriculum;
- A particular religious philosophy;
- A particular educational philosophy such as Montessori, Charlotte Mason, delayed academics;
- A prepared curriculum package from a correspondence source;
- None of the above. The curriculum used is

9. If you do not use a prepared curriculum, please briefly describe the education that the children follow:

10. Have you ever encountered any of the problems mentioned below? (please check all that apply)

- Difficulty socializing the child / children with others;
- Difficulty obtaining suitable resources for teaching and learning;
- Difficulty teaching any of the educational material successfully;
- Finding time to home educate the child / children each day;
- Lack of support from family and friends;
- Lack of support from the local education authority;
- Other problems

11. If you have checked any of the problems in question 10 above, can you please give more details?

All the questions set for home educators enabled me to get a brief sketch of the home educating family without taking too much of their time. I had to keep the questionnaire short as I was told that more than a couple of sides of paper to answer would be hard to complete. I thought about the most relevant points to ask, including questions 10 and 11 relating to problems that could lead to tension.
HOME SCHOOLERS QUESTIONNAIRE - FLORIDA
Annotated version

Please answer the following as completely as possible.

1. Level of education attained by the parents of the home schooled child/children: (please check one)
   High school       University       Post Graduate Degree

2. Ethnic background: (please check one)
   □ White
   □ Black/African Americans
   □ American Indians/Alaska Natives
   □ Asian
   □ Hispanic/Latino
   □ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders
   □ Mixed Race
   □ Other ________________________________

3. What is the occupation of the parents?:
   Mother ________________________________
   Father ________________________________

4. How many children are in the family and what are their ages?
   __________________________________________

5. How long has/have your child/children been home schooled?
   __________________________________________

6. Please describe the reason or reasons for deciding to home school your child/children:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Do you use a prepared curriculum?
   Yes □    No □
8. If yes to question 7, can you describe whether the curriculum is based on one of the following: (please check one)

- The Sunshine State Standards;
- A particular religious philosophy;
- A particular educational philosophy such as Montessori, Charlotte Mason, delayed academics;
- A prepared curriculum package from a correspondence source;
- None of the above. The curriculum used is ____________

9. If you do not use a prepared curriculum, please briefly describe the education that the children follow:


10. Have you ever encountered any of the problems mentioned below? (please check all that apply)

- Difficulty socializing the child / children with others;
- Difficulty obtaining suitable resources for teaching and learning;
- Difficulty teaching any of the educational material successfully;
- Finding time to home school the child / children each day;
- Lack of support from family and friends;
- Lack of support from the local school district;
- Other problems

11. If you have checked any of the problems in question 10 above, can you please give more details?


All the questions set for home schoolers enabled me to get a brief sketch of the home schooling family without taking too much of their time. I had to keep the questionnaire short as I was told that more than a couple of sides of paper to answer would be hard to complete. I thought about the most relevant points to ask, including questions 10 and 11 relating to problems that could lead to tension.
Introduction – Hello, my name is Samantha Eddis Finbow and I’m a research student from the University of Surrey [England]. I’m calling about my research work comparing home education in the UK and in Florida. I would just like to check if this is still a good time for me to conduct my telephone interview with you. [pause for response] The phone call will be recorded so that I can transcribe the interview and you will have the opportunity to check for inaccuracies.

Q1 First of all, could you please state your current job title, and the length of time in this role?
Q2 What was your job prior to this one?
Q3 Can you briefly name the members of your home educating team, by job titles. [Questions 1-3 give me some background information on the participant without giving too many details about the individual. I was careful to protect anonymity, as several officials had indicated that participating would be difficult if sensitive information was requested]
Q4 There are a variety of job title names and terms for home education in the different LEAs. Why do you think there is no common job title or name used? [I was curious about the variety of names, and the difficulty locating the correct contact person to send my postal questionnaires to. I was not sure why there was such a lack of uniformity with job title or names for home education.]
Q5 Can you please describe the work you do in the department for home education? [Another background question so that I could understand what aspect of home education the participant dealt with]
Q6 Recent research has suggested that the estimated population of home educating families in the UK is about 1% of the school population, and about 3% of the school population in the US. My research gathered from figures given by the local education authorities suggests a much lower %. Do you think the upward estimates are truer reflections of the number of children home educated? Why do you think some home educating families choose not to make themselves known to the LEAs? [I was curious that no literature statistics had shown consistency over measurement of home educators in the local area. It was also interesting that home educators do not have to make themselves known to the authorities. Did this create problems for the officials monitoring home educators in their area? Did it raise suspicion as to the reasons for home educators who remain hidden?]
Q7 From my research, the number of home educating families has remained the same or increased in each local education authority studied. Can you suggest any reasons for the increase?

[The research suggests that the home educating population is growing. This question attempts to see if the participants perceive the same growth occurring.]

Q8 It is the duty of the LEA to assess whether home-educated children are receiving a suitable and efficient education. Is this assessment usually made by a home visit to the family by an LEA official?

[I was unsure about the most common method of monitoring home educated children, as there is no one method prescribed in law. The initial postal data did reveal documentation that, almost without exception, promoted the home visit as the monitoring tool used]

Q9 Please can you tell me what factors are used to decide who will monitor home educated children in your LEA? What kind of job experience is necessary? Are educational qualifications necessary?

[Was a particular type of person more suitable for home visits? Were teachers used, or social service personnel?]

Q10 About how many home visits are made annually by the LEA?

[The documentation received suggested most LEAs did an annual visit to the home educator's home. I asked this question to see if there was agreement with the documentation]

Q11 In Florida, parents need to have their home-educated child registered with the local school district, and evaluated annually in one of five ways. Are there any other monitoring procedures that could be carried out by your LEA to ensure home educating children are receiving an efficient and suitable education?

[In comparing home education in England and Wales with home schooling in Florida, I wondered if other monitoring methods had been considered or carried out.]

Q12 One researcher noted conflict between LEAs and home educators when the LEA was not totally conversant with the law. How would you respond to this statement? Do you think the current law regarding home education adequately protects the parents' rights? Does the law adequately protect the child/children's rights?

[One of the first research papers I read on LEAs and home educators (Petrie 1992) began my line of thought on tensions between home educators and state officials. More than ten years down the line, was there still the same conflict?]

Q13 Do you think home educating families need to follow a set curriculum? [Why or why not?] Does home education have to be comparable to school education to accurately monitor the educational provision?

[With the plethora of styles of teaching and learning, and the flexibility of homes and children to accommodate]
different styles, I asked the question to see if officials were able to see outside the standardized school curriculum.

Q14 How much information do you think should be in the printed material that acts as guidelines for the parents?

[Based on a conversation with a couple of pilot work individuals, I wondered if there was a line between giving too much information (and perhaps encouraging home education) and not enough information (to remain neutral to state and public schooling)]

Q15 Should the printed guidelines for parents be positive, negative, or neutral towards home education?

[Was there a conscious effort made to present a certain tone in the documentation? In my preliminary data analysis of the material, I perceived positive, negative or neutral language towards home education.]

Q16 How would you define socialization? Do you think all the home educating children that are monitored by the LEA get adequate opportunities to socialize with other children or people? Please explain your answers.

[Socialisation is one of the biggest issues that home educators face, and are confronted with - could officials define socialization for me? Was this the same definition that home educators would use?]

Q17 As far as you are aware, are there provisions within the LEA to help home educating families socialize with other children or people? If there are no provisions, should there be? Why or why not?

[Did the LEAs have any form of cooperative provisions to help home educating families with socialisation? Was this even considered appropriate?]

Q18 Most LEAs do not provide support services for home educating families. If the LEA were paid an allowance for having a home-educated child on their register, would this make a difference to the type of support services offered? Are there other considerations to take into account?

[A hypothetical question, to try uncovering any support that LEA officials thought could be forthcoming from them for the benefit of home educators.]

Q19 It has been argued that good home education can provide a child with a tailor made education on a one-to-one basis. Have you encountered instances where the educational provision is not adequate? Please can you describe any of these instances? Are there any examples where the educational provision could be adapted for schools?

[Criticism about home education has centred on the lack of academic abilities of parents to teach their children in place]
of trained professionals. Defensive home educating literature refutes this criticism. The question sought to get an insider's viewpoint on the matter]

Q20 Policies on the dissemination of information to parents who intend to home educate and monitoring procedures exist within each LEA. In your experience, have you ever had any problems implementing policy? Have you ever had problems monitoring home educating families? Please can you give examples.

[Another area I wanted to explore that may have shed some light on problems or tensions faced by the LEAs]

Q21 Can you describe the relationships you have with the home educating families in your LEA?

[I hoped this question would be illuminating.]

Q22 What perceptions do you think others in the LEA might have about home education?

[Dealing with perceptions of home educators and state officials, I wondered if they were aware or were influenced by other's perceptions]

Q23 It seems that home educating families represent a very small % of the total school population. Is the amount of time and money spent on the home educating families proportionate to the numbers involved?

[Not very well worded, and I didn't know if it would be answered properly. I wondered if the officials felt they spent too much time on home educators when they represent such a minority of the school population.]

Q24 If you could suggest any areas of development or improvement regarding home education, or linking home education to the LEA, or linking home education to the local schools, please elaborate on such ideas.

Thank you for taking part in this telephone interview, which has been taped and will be transcribed. Your answers have been given with the understanding that they are to be used in this research only, with coding to ensure anonymity of the interviewee. You will be given an opportunity to read over the transcribed interview to check for inaccuracies.
APPENDIX XII

EXAMPLE OF A TRANSCRIPT WITH AN LEA OFFICIAL

Introduction

The following transcript was sent to the LEA official for clarification of points raised, and to check for accuracy. This was done via email, which made it easy and cost efficient. Once the transcript was returned from the interviewee, with his/her corrections and answered questions included, it was read over and annotated. The main annotations are included in this example, in handwritten font form. Whilst reading and annotating each transcript, I looked for the main categories that had emerged from the literature review and quantitative data. Any other comments that were of interest were also annotated. Then, when I had read and annotated each transcribed interview, I looked at the whole group of LEA transcripts for patterns, categories and themes. I pulled out similar patterns, categories and themes from the transcriptions, and then looked for counter examples. I pulled out themes that I assumed would conflict with the home-based educators' views, so I could compare to their analysed transcripts. I went back to each transcript once I thought I had the main themes to work with, to check once more. Examples from the transcripts to back up the points I wanted to illustrate in my presentation chapters were taken. The comment-laden chapters (10,11,12) were deliberate, so as to clearly show the individual's words and thoughts. This gave me confidence to discuss the quantitative and qualitative material without too much further reference to the data, which was transparently displayed in three chapters.

It is difficult to recreate the total chain of analysis here, as it involved physically looking through each transcript on its own, and then comparing to the group, and then comparing to the other group. Many transcripts were laid out over the table and on the floor during the process of analysis and reduction of data! I had to physically touch, and re-read each theme that I felt was developing from the data. Knowing that computer analysis software is available, I nonetheless preferred the old fashioned approach. Also, not included here to save space, are the pages of notes that condensed the main themes or points from each transcript that could be more easily compared to other transcripts and then to the other groups. With so much data, condensing and reducing statements was necessary to become comparable. The condensed data becomes apparent in the presentation of data chapters that leads to a discussion of all data in a comparative fashion.

The transcribed transcript now follows, as it was sent to the interviewee. The additions of handwritten font, my annotations, were only added once analysis began.
TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH LEA OFFICIAL

DATE: June 28th 2002
TIME ELAPSED: 35 minutes

Introduction - The call begins with me introducing myself, and asking whether I was speaking to the person I wanted to call. I then confirm that it is still a good time to conduct the interview. The interviewee says it is fine, so I proceed by thanking the interviewee for sending me information via email on some of the preliminary questions. Then I continue by asking questions, as noted in this transcript.

Note – The transcript will be typed out with ‘S’ denoting when I speak, and ‘I’ when the interviewee speaks. For clarity in the typed format, extra ‘umm’s or repeated words are omitted, as long as the meaning of the sentence is not altered. The transcript sent to the interviewee, to check for inaccuracies, will also include added questions that will clarify points made that may be unclear.

S You mentioned [email correspondence prior to the interview] that not all the LEAs monitor home educated children which I found very surprising because I understand it’s the duty of the LEA to monitor children. [my mistaken assumption, but not brought up by interviewee. So, do most LEAs assume it is their duty to monitor? Seems to be widespread policy, along with home visits.]

I Yeah, I find it pretty surprising too.

S Now what do you base this on? How do you know?

I I know in one particular case, and it is only one case, because I know a person who works in that LEA...

[Interviewee has direct evidence, from networking with another LEA in the same position]

S Right

I And what they do there is, they actually do collect the names and keep a register but they don’t visit them and they don’t do anything else about it. I know that the person who told me this feels that the LEA is probably acting illegally, but they’re not doing it.

[but not illegal. Who thinks this then? What is policy?]

S Is that because they have no funding for home educated children?

I I don’t know the reason. I can only imagine they just never got around to it.

S Right

I I mean, anecdotally, I think that there may be others that are not doing it [monitoring]. I’ve certainly known of parents in the past who’ve told me they’ve lived in other places where there was no monitoring.

S Right

I But I think that the situation has changed. I mean, I think that ten years ago there was a lot less than there is now. I think that there may be still; I know of one LEA and there probably are a few others, but most are doing it.
Ok, that's very useful because I've only had a response from about 60% of all the LEAs.

I Right

S I wrote to all 172, so there's 40% who didn't respond and that could be one of the reasons why....

I My feeling....this is entirely, I don't know this, sorry, I'm guessing this....

S Ok

I I think xxx boroughs may be weak on this...

[Names specific LEAs, in cities. One city LEA said they would not answer the questionnaire because there were no home-based educators in their area!]

S Ok.

I Any of them, I mean I don't know specific ones... I certainly know some who are doing it, but I suspect some xxx boroughs are more chaotic as local authorities than some other places...

S Ok

I If I can put it like that!

---

QUESTION: By chaotic, do you mean disorganized?

RESPONSE: YES. & there are far more problems in those areas also they have suffered from more polarized and extreme party politics than in our area.

---

Policy and law issues - Interviewee sees lack of monitoring as problem, disorganized...but law does not state monitoring has to occur. Only if there is a perceived problem does LEA intervene. Typical policy is monitor through home visits. Almost expected from LEA angle. But not law, and not necessarily welcomed by home-based educators. Check against home-based educator perspective.

S Ok, yeah. That's fine. That's great. Another answer that you put in the email....when I asked – reason for the increase in numbers, you wrote a big part of the increase is simply parents have become more aware.

I Yeah

S Is that through the media that they become aware?

I It's partly through the media, and certainly in the years I've done this job, there have been a number of TV programs.

S Yes

I There have been magazine articles, newspaper articles. I'd say there are several every year, and certainly a few years ago, we used to notice after such a thing, we'd get a sudden increase...

[Media attention, growth in numbers, acceptance?, all articles favourable?]

S Right. Ok

I I don't notice that anymore, but I think also since the Department of Education has got a website......

S Yes

I It is actually up there on the website, details about the fact that you can actually educate your children at home...
S: Yes, it's a very small.... I did actually go to the website and there's a very small amount on home education. It's not particularly user friendly.
I: No it isn't but it kind of gives an official seal to it, doesn't it?
*S: government policy towards home-based education includes being more open with information. Conflict with promoting state schooling?*

*NOTE* After analyzing all transcribed data, and whilst writing up the chapters, I did a secondary analysis of LEA and government data available on the Internet in 2006 (after a general request for good practice by one LEA that I was in contact with). The websites in 2006 were far more detailed, and user-friendly than they had been in 1999 when I started the research. So, has governmental policy in England and Wales promoted this improved provision of material? Is Stevens' 'normalisation' concept of home education at play?]

S: Yes. Ok. And you'd say that the media reports, or magazine and newspaper articles, they're fairly positive towards home education nowadays.
I: Usually, yeah.
S: Ok, great.
I: They usually give a case of someone who’s done it.
S: Yes
I: And you know, there are always people who’ve, at least by their own report, done it fairly successfully.
S: Right. Yes, they're the ones who’ll come forward.
[only home-based educators with vested interest in promoting home education as successful come forward to the media. Or the horror stories would be pounced upon. not sure able to interview unsuccessful home educators.]
S: Right, ok. Another... last point in your email... You occasionally get a report from parents instead of a home visit to prove that they're educating.
I: Yeah
S: Is that satisfactory in the LEA’s eyes?
[reports are sometimes advocated by home-based educators, to keep a degree of separation from the LEAs. Obviously preferred by some home-based educators, but by LEAs? Not this one]
I: It’s not really...I’m not entirely happy with it, and I’ve only done it twice in five years....
S: Ok
I: But it is [the law]...again, we have no right to enter people’s homes...
[ah...interviewee does know law. Prefers home visit though]
S: Right
I: I think the DfES website actually suggests that there are various ways that monitoring could take place....
S: Right
I: And the home visit is one of them but parental report is another, and that meeting in a neutral venue is another.
[this follows guidelines by Education Otherwise, so cooperation sought, or advice taken when suggesting monitoring methods.]
And I have, on one occasion, met a parent and a child in a McDonalds!

That was their suggestion because they weren’t prepared for me to go to the house.

I’m not personally very happy…. I wouldn’t accept a report from a parent where I had never been there and met the child

You need to meet the child?

QUESTION: Why do you need to see the child in a home setting?
RESPONSE: Whilst not an educational issue there is the matter of child protection. We did have a case some years ago where parent had Munchausens by proxy and was starving home taught child, who came close to death! There is also the matter that a parent could fabricate a report while the child was actually doing nothing. These are unlikely cases but have happened.

In a case where I had met the child, and it was satisfactory, and I felt there were no particular issues, I might accept a report the next year….

[compromise between what LEA official wants and what home-based educating family wants]

Rather than going back and then go back the following year. Do you see what I mean? I have done that twice.

Why do you think parents don’t like the home visits, or why do you think some parents resist home visits?

There are some parents who see it as some sort of a human rights issue...

That they have the right to educate their child, and we have no right to be interested in what they’re doing.

There aren’t many like that, but there are some
problem here. Home-based educators who are this defensive invite suspicion by LEAs. Even if their right to educate at home. Privately educated children do not have to give information to LEAs, but accountability in the private schools. Problem with home-based educators and accountability? Issue of control over child's education and accountability? Note, no interaction here between LEA and home-based educators if so defensive. Is interaction always bad? Can there be more conciliatory views?]

S  Alright, ok
I  Clearly it's possible that a parent who wouldn't allow you into their home might have something else that they didn't want you to see.

[suspicion again and conflict with child protection issue. Why are LEAs so suspicious? culture-based? Historical? What do they think of home-based educators?

What is the US mindset? Compare child protection issues with SD interviewees, though don't expect much as documentation data didn't throw this issue up.]

S  Um-hmm
I  But that isn't the impression...of the people who have resisted, let's put it that way, they've all been in the category of standing up for their rights.


S  Ok, alright. That's fair enough. Right, ok, great. Some of my other questions....the recent research, or printed material says that the estimated population of home educators in the UK is about 1% and yet the information that I've got back from the LEAs responding to my research has a very much lower percentage...

I  We have 0.002%.
S  Yes, right. I mean, I think the highest % I've got is 0.18 from one of the LEAs
I  Yeah
S  Why do you think there's such a discrepancy between the two...?
I  Well, there is no compulsion on parents to register...

[problem with estimating home educating population. Does this impact suspicions, policy...?]

S  Right
I  And there certainly are people home educating who don't declare themselves and are not discovered, therefore are not known to us. However, I don't personally believe that 1% figure.

S  Oh, you think that it's....
I  I think it's way over the top.

[interviewee thinks percentage of home-based educators is much smaller. Doesn't trust the figures.]

S  Right! Ok.
I  It's claimed by an organization called Education Otherwise.
S  Ok, why would they inflate the figures so?
I  I don't know, I really don't

[yeah, but interviewee doesn't seem to like inflation of figures. Does this relate to mistrust of the home education support groups, or home-based educators in general?]
Alright. That's interesting.

But I feel that we've got our ear to the ground here, fairly firmly..... yes of course there are some we don't know about but these figures would indicate that there are far more that we don't know about than we do, and I just don't believe that to be the case.

Ok, that's fine. For those that don't make themselves known, why do you think they're not coming forward?

Again, the same reason as some won't allow a visit, because they just....they're the same sort of people, I mean this sounds awful, they're the same sort of people that you have in the United States somewhere out in the far west, in Montana, who sit behind walls with shotguns and don't like the federal government...

[rights issue, libertarian, isolationist, mistrust of government that then breeds mistrust]

They're those sorts of people who want to be, not anything to do with society.

Yes. I understand.

And there's less scope for being like that in a small country like this.

Yes

But I think that [for] those [parents]... the mentality is there.

Ok, and they do have protection from the home education law in that respect, in fact, in the UK, don't they, because they don't have to make themselves known.

No they don't

[showing my hand. Personally don't understand law that doesn't try to have some sort of measure on children educated at home. Is this really over rights? Perhaps problem is with conflation of education monitoring and child protection issues. Compare with situation in Florida.]

Right, ok. You gave me your educational qualifications, your background, your experience...

Yeah

To do the job you do. Do you have to have educational qualifications or certain job experience to monitor these children?

[criticism by home-based educators, anecdotally, that LEA officials who monitor the home-based educators are not qualified teachers, but everything else. Conflict of interest sometimes, with social workers, educational welfare officers monitoring home-based educators. What should a monitoring LEA be? Conversant with laws, sympathetic to home educator viewpoint, knowledgeable about different educational philosophies and pedagogies, able to step outside the monitoring guideline boxes, and policies? Compare with home educators' perspective]

I don't think anywhere is it laid down...No...I mean I'm employed by this local authority. I would say, I know about 25 or 30 people doing similar jobs in other authorities and most of them have similar qualifications but not all. There are some local authorities where the job is done by Education Welfare Officers.

Ok, yes. So it's just whatever experience you bring. You don't have to ...

No
Ok, alright. That's fine. Right, actually something... I don't know if you're aware of, in Florida they have compulsory registration here...

But at the same time, home visits are not the usual method [of evaluation]. The usual method of evaluation is the parents getting their child's portfolio, their materials, their work...

Evaluated by a certified teacher and then that evaluation is sent in...

In fact the onus is...

Who pays for that?

The parents

The onus is on the parents. It's a legal requirement for the parents to get their child evaluated in one of five approved ways.

Now I have spoken to some of the other LEAs and they have found this difference to be quite interesting.

Yeah. I find it interesting.

I've done a table of comparisons of laws and procedures, would you like a copy?

Can I just tell you something else, which I don't know if you know, but xxx Education Authority is actually being... the education function is being taken out by a private company as of April 2003...

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So something like that might happen here.

It does seem to be... I was going to ask, what are you thoughts on the Florida model, because the funding, and I don't know whether there is funding in your LEA for home educators, would really rest in the parents hands...

There is no funding.

Ok. They [the parents] have to be accountable for the evaluation of their child.

Yeah

And they would have to comply with compulsory registration which I know some of the LEAs would like to see.

Who keeps the register there, then?

Well, when a parent wants to home educate their child, they must file a notice of intent to home educate their child with the local school district.

Aah, the school district... right, that is the equivalent to our LEAs...

Yes, that's right, there are 67 school districts over here
Yeah
And then the school district sends them the Florida statutes, which again you might find useful to look at...
I'd love to.
I'll give you the website for that, the statutes, and they are very detailed as to what the responsibilities of the parents are, and the responsibilities are with the parents. And then they have to get their child evaluated every year.
Yeah, every year?
Yes, every year. And if the evaluation fails, they're not allowed to home educate for 180 days...

CORRECTION TO STATEMENT ABOVE – Whilst the parents have to submit an annual evaluation to the local school district, to be able to continue to home educate their child, they are given a one-year probationary period if the evaluation is not satisfactory. At the end of that one-year probation, they are only allowed to continue to home educate their child if they can show that the child has made “educational progress commensurate with his or her ability at the end of the probationary period” [Section 232.0201 (2)]
This provision seems to give a much longer time frame than found in the LEAs.

Right
And then they can...
How strictly is this enforced?
[LEA's interest is piqued. Thinking about how this could be implemented in the LEA? Benefits to LEA, benefits to home-based educators?]
Well this is something, I've only done one interview with a school district, from what I can gather, it seems to be fairly well done. If the parents do not get their child registered with their school district, they fall foul of truancy laws.
Yeah
So, I don't know how many fall by the wayside. I know there are problems in the UK because the law is so woolly in some respects.
Yeah
It has to be clarified in the courts the whole time.
That's right
In fact, you passed me onto Amanda Petrie...
Yeah
Who's been very helpful
Oh, good.
And so I've found a lot of information out. Alright, well I'll send you that table of comparison, I'll give you two websites which may be of interest to you.
Yeah, thanks
Now I'll carry on with my questions because I know your time is important. In fact, Amanda Petrie, this is my next comment...ten years ago when she did her research, she suggested that where there was conflict between the LEAs and home educators, it was because they [LEAs] weren't fully conversant with the law. Ten years down the line, do you think this situation still exists?
What, the LEAs are not fully conversant with the law?

S  Yes

I  No, I don’t think so, although some head teachers aren’t.

[LEA believes the LEAs are more conversant with the law but not the headteachers. Problem, break in the link between LEAs, schools and home-based educators. Shows up in some documentation where misinformation found, or details given that try to circumvent breaking the link – especially with deregistration]

S  Oh! Ok.

I  There are still head teachers who tell parents that it’s not legal

L  really no excuse for ignorance of the law. Why are head teachers not better informed?

S  Such a small part of their population base? Inability to deal with issues at school?

I  Conflict over home education, as probably can’t suggest home education as a resolution to bullying, truancy, etc. Any middle ground?

S  Right. Oh dear.

I  But, not many. I mean, I’d say that knowledge, in the same way that media attention has improved parental knowledge of the existence of this provision, people in LEAs are much more aware and much more systematic in [monitoring], you know, although I’ve told you one authority who’s not doing it, the vast majority are, and they’re doing it in a very systematic way.

[Governmental policy help? DfES guidelines for LEAs dealing with home-based
educators found. More to come, ongoing issue, especially if numbers and awareness increases]

S  Ok, great. Alright, a couple of questions with the law as well. Do you think that the current law adequately protects the parents’ rights?

I  Um [pauses] Yes, I do

S  How about the children? Do you think it adequately ...

I  No, I think…possibly not.

[Laws and rights - LEAs believe law protects parents. Compare with home educators’ perspective. When children rights are mentioned though, LEA responses are not so definite. Shown here. Revealed in documentation with subtle issues of control over education - monitoring, socialization, curriculum]

S  Ok, and why would you say that?

I  It would be very difficult to ascertain...if a child, say a child really wanted to go to school.....

[Interesting point, but isn’t it always the parents who decide the education for the child, state or private or home education? Too much emphasis given to child, especially if child is young. May be more of a debating point if child is older and sees benefit to school-based education and the child’s future beyond school]

S  Right

I  And the parents didn’t want them to, and the situation I see that arising in, would be where particularly a parent is of a particular religious persuasion...

S  Yes

I  What I might regard as quite extreme…..they might be forcing the child to stay away from school and afraid of the indoctrination, I guess.
Religious issue and home education - based on stereotypes? Realistic nowadays in the UK? Perhaps at the beginning of movement, and more so in USA as bargaining tool to allow home schooling. Fear of lack of autonomy? Assumption that schools will provide autonomy? Religiously-based family may not want opposing views - is this wrong? Fear of religious extremists? Post 9/11, so maybe.

Yeah, ok

It's a matter of age... I mean, clearly with a younger child it's much harder for a child to articulate those rights. I think when you get up to the kids I deal with, which most of these are teenagers, then it would be more difficult for a parent to do that. But then if they've been doing that for five years then a child wouldn't know any different anyway.

Child protection issue? Talking about age differentiation and child's rights. Better. Own cases based on teenagers, and withdrawing from school to home educate. Fear over socialization opportunities missed, including religious tolerance. But home educating families would disagree. Most strident comments about socialization slam the school-based socialization. Compare.

Right, that's true. Ok, fair enough. Actually before I forget, you just mentioned something... what is the average age of the home educators that you deal with?

I deal with 11 - 16

And is that the group definitely 11-16, or you've got more in the 14 -16 age bracket?

Yes there will be more in the 14-16 age bracket.

Oh alright. Do you find that you have more difficulties with that age group, the GCSE group or not?

Yes

Ok, this is something that's been echoed by one or two of the other LEAs. Would you consider that these 14-16 year olds are using home education perhaps as a shield to avoid truancy?

I'd say that about 25-30% at the moment

Ok. Alright. This is again something that I've heard from a couple of the other LEAs... Do you think home educating families need to follow a set curriculum?

No I don't personally.

You feel that some provide the educational provision by project work, or by using a different format?

Yes, I mean, I think that given the law which says 'suitable' for age, aptitude and ability, I think yes that is the case.

Do you find it's more helpful, or do you think it's more beneficial if the education that's being provided at home is comparable to the school model?

It is obviously much simpler, for someone like me to make an assessment if it's comparable, but I do understand why some people offer something quite different.
Ok, alright. Have you found in your experience, any educational provision different to what is offered in schools, that you think is very good?

Yes I think I have, yeah. But I mean, it depends whether it's different in content, or different in style, I suppose.

I suppose different in style?

For example, you do get some very self-motivated people who study one subject at a time for quite a short period.

And that actually can be quite a successful strategy to build a big portfolio of exam passes!

Right, ok. Yeah. On the flipside, have you seen, in your experience, educational provision which is not adequate?

[Curriculum issues - generally seems to support different methods of teaching and learning though admits format similar to school model makes it easier to assess. Problem with home-based educators who don't fit the mould]

Oh, yes

And how is it not adequate? Because you mentioned in your email something about if children are bordering on a fail...what makes you think 'oh gosh, this really isn't working'...?

It isn't working? ...I think it depends largely on parents’ motivation

Alright

I mean, if a parent was simply motivated to evade the authority and stop truancy action and so on they may have absolutely no interest in real education or home education or no idea how to do it.

Ok. And you see that when you do a visit?

Oh I see that, several times a year.

[Separating true home-based educators from those wanting to avoid education, evade truancy laws, disaffected children. Important point, as differentiation of types of home educators needed rather than generalizing about home educating population. Compare with generalizing about state officials by home educators.]

When you do see a home visit, if you see that the parents are trying to educate their child but there are a couple of areas that perhaps need to have more focus, you bring that up with the parents?

Oh yes.

And is that usually well received?

Yeah, it is usually. I mean, I will talk it through with them at the time, and then I'd write to them telling them that....

[Communication, interaction, advice, help. How much can they give? What is good interaction or communication, what is too much, too little? What do home educators want from the LEAs in terms of information, communication? Compare with home educators' perspectives]

And try to give them some positive advice, perhaps what books they could use or something like that.
S Ok. Alright, great. I've actually got quite a few information booklets from the LEAs, guidelines...
I Yeah
S How much information... I noticed yours was very, very well done, because I've rated them. How much information do you think should be in the printed material? Yours has been very encouraging and gives more that just the law and the legal duties of the LEA.

[Note - before interviewing, analysis of documentation gave me impression that this LEA was supportive of home education. Documentation was detailed and written in non-threatening way. One of the best documents reviewed at the time.

*NOTE* Since this analysis, checked the documentation on the website. Still very good, informative and non-threatening.]
I Yeah, I suppose....actually I saw one the other day that was even better....
S Oh! ok
I ....xxx. Have you had that?
S Yeah, actually I'll be having an interview with xxx next week, and I'm hoping to shadow the department, as I'll be in the UK in December.

Talking about LEA that was the only one to stand out in overtly positive support for home-based educators. Initial impression very good towards this LEA mentioned. Interesting that interviewee knew about this other LEA. Shows networking and interest in home education, and doing the best job. This LEA seems very approachable. Is it because LEA knows I am a teacher as well as a home educator?
I Oh right! Well I mean, I think it's useful to give a lot of information. I'm not sure how many people really use it.

---------------------------------------------------------

QUESTION: Would these guidelines be available in schools for parents considering home education as an alternative?
RESPONSE: There aren't but there is no reason they should not be. EWO's based in each secondary school have them.

---------------------------------------------------------

S Oh really! I suppose the parents who actually are intending on home educating, they will take the guidelines.
I This sounds silly, but I think it can sometimes serve to discourage someone who was kind of thinking about it, but may see that it looks like there's quite a lot to do, and it puts them off.

[Interesting comment. Home education does involve much more than people might think, especially if information is only obtained from home education support groups and websites. Giving a more measured view, in the LEA's eyes, may bring reality to the fore. Interesting - useful to show both sides of home education, from state officials and home educators.]
S Oh, I see. Ok
I It's not intended to do that!
S No, of course! I thought your booklet was very good.
I Thank you - very kind.
S  Ok, alright....I shall move on – socialization.
I  Yeah
S  A big thing with home educators who will argue that they socialize their children
well enough. How would you define socialization?
I  Define it?
S  Yes. What’s your concept of socialization for the home educated child?
I  You mean ‘normal’ socialization, as it were?
S  Yeah. anything.....what do you view socialization as…where’s the LEA coming
from...
I  Well I think for a start, I don’t think we feel it’s a legal requirement...

QUESTION: So, does this mean that the LEA isn’t assessing socialization provision with
the home visit?
RESPONSE: I make a comment on it in reports and do encourage but can’t enforce.

S  Ok
I  I encourage people to, if they haven’t naturally got an infrastructure of friends and
so on, would encourage them to go on and join organization so they get that.
Quite a lot have got that. I mean, if they belong to a religious group, then they
almost by definition have got that straightaway.
S  Alright, ok
I  However, I do see people who are very isolated.
[personal experience affecting judgments?]
S  And with suggestions does that improve?
I  It does for some people, it doesn’t for others. The problem is, I occasionally come
across people who are verging on, if not actually agoraphobic
S  Ok
I  And that’s the reason they couldn’t hack school
[but some children are not happy in a school setting, and are perfectly ok in smaller
group settings. Thinking from own case with oldest child, very unhappy in school.
Now home educating, makes friends easily, though does not like big groups of
children. Likes to stay at home, in comfort zone. School not the place for her, and she
knows her own mind. Other siblings are less wary of school.]
S  Right. Wow, and in that situation if they remain isolated, then is that satisfactory?
I  Well it isn’t good, but I would certainly encourage them to get in touch with
counseling authorities and things like that, but that actually is quite difficult. It
takes months, and sometimes very often a child who was agoraphobic say, or
verging on that, and who wouldn’t go to school and therefore was being taught at
home, almost certainly won’t go to somewhere that’s going to offer counseling
and they almost certainly have either been there in the past or have refused to go there, already...

S Yes
I Before it gets to the fact of withdrawing them from school for home education. Home education will be a last desperate measure for someone who's just not prepared to mix with others.

[concerns over socialization and child protection?]

S Alright
I This isn't a huge number of people we're talking about, but I have encountered several each year.
S Yeah, ok. I was going to ask numbers.
I I can think of three at the moment.
S Wow
I They're all girls, about 14, 15
S Ok, that's interesting to note.
I But I can remember boys in the past. But I think it's mostly girls

[brutal age for girls, they can be very nasty to each other. Experience teaching in schools showed me this. Own experience in school much more positive, but I was very confident. Children who lose confidence in schools use home education as a way out - is this wrong? Seems to be so from this LEA perspective. Is this failure of the system? Why does it have to be, when it pertains to an individual. Each child different. Home educator perspective, but not state official perspective? Inability to look at individual level, need to homogenize?]

S Ok, right. If you notice that these families aren't socializing well, then does the LEA have anything to help socialize these children, like group work, groups that they can get together, or social clubs or is that not your responsibility?
I It isn't our responsibility. We do organize an event for home educators
S Oh! Ok
I Approximately annually.
S Oh, ok... what's this event?
I Right well, it varies. We might employ a tutor of some kind to give a session on something like say creative writing...
S Uh-hmmm
I We might run an exhibition of books by publishers...
S Ok
I We've done that several times, and we run art and craft workshops.
S Right
I We've run trips to local museums...
S Ok
I We do that about once a year. We're doing it next in September or October, and we invite, we normally invite all the people or maybe all the people in one particular age range...
S Ok
I If it's more specific... We get a pretty good response. A lot of people want to come.
Right, that’s excellent because you’d probably have self-help groups within your LEA anyway...

We’ve got two, yeah, no three. I mean, that’s the other thing, we’ve got the addresses and phone numbers of people who are running self-help groups and we give those numbers to anyone who expresses an interest in home education.

Right. I get the impression that you’ve got a good relationship with the self-help groups.

Yeah

Ok great. Alright, now you mentioned that you don’t get any funding for home educating families.

Well, they don’t get any, the home educators

Well effectively they’re doing private education. So they’ve made that choice.

Yeah

If the LEA were paid an allowance for having a home educated child on their register, would that make a difference to the type of support service you could offer?

It certainly would, and certainly I heard yesterday that this is done in Tasmania.

Home educating parents get $1000 per child.

Right!

[laughs] But I guess they have to fulfill some kind of criteria for that...and I think that would be the big difference. I think if we were the gatekeepers for a sum of money for parents, I don’t think we’d be able to give it out except on criteria which we set down.

QUESTION: Out of interest, what sort of criteria would you set down?

RESPONSE: Hard one in short space. I suppose in general terms it would be to meet the child’s needs (As indeed it is now without the cash) Practically I would want to negotiate each case with the child and parents.

Oh yeah. So there might be other considerations to take into account other than monetary? There would be strings attached?

I think there would be. You know, this is a publicly funded authority and I don’t see how we could act otherwise.

[cooperative issues - if help provided, strings attached. Over compulsory registration? How would home educators feel? Good that LEA recognizes cooperation between LEAs and home educators is not simple, but could be done. Seems to be encouraged by examples from other countries. Shows awareness for home education policies outside]
own LEA. Could be useful advocate for home educators and LEAs as seems to be able to see both sides."

S Right, ok, fine. In your experience have you ever had any problems implementing policy or monitoring home educating families?

I Yes, as I've mentioned earlier, the people who don't really want to be monitored.

S Right

I And put up quite a lot of resistance, whether quite assertive resistance, or non-assertive resistance, like just never answering the door...

S Oh my...

I Things like that

S And in those cases you have to go forward with school attendance orders?

I Eventually yes.

S I suppose you try to avoid that

I Well, I mean what we would do before that, we would... it depends on the circumstances... if this was someone who had said they were going to home educate but we never actually saw any samples of what they had done.....

S Yes

I You know, they were new home educators... then I think we might well go that route. But if they were an established home educator, who might for example [have] moved in from another area, or who we had been to see in the past, and had not wanted to see us again.....

[seems a bit heavy handed for new home educators. Is this to show control, power?]

Potential for conflict here]

S Right

I Then we would certainly call them to a meeting and ask them if they would come and talk about it, and try to sort out what the problem was

[seems more reasonable. Problem associated with lack of home visit, so trying to push this as part of policy. Goes back to child protection issue or control]

S Yeah ok. So following on from that, the relationships you have with some of the home educators, would you say they are mostly quite good?

I Yes, I would say they are mostly very good.

S Ok great

I There are exceptions, but mostly good

S So quantifying that, that would be 'mostly' being 50%?

I Can I go right back to when the system we're operating now started, which is 1993, and I was appointed at that time and specifically told by a senior person in the local authority... said, 'well look, we know that there are several hundred people out there educating their kids at home, what we want to do is to say well, this is their legal right, so we'll help them rather than hinder them' [policy came about to actively help home educators. May be perception from other LEAs was to hinder this group. This LEA has gone a long way to be positive and supportive. Definitely worth emulating or building upon]

S Yes, good, ok. Yeah, I think that actually comes out in your guideline books. You seem to be one of the LEAs that's working very hard to show that you're working with them...
Yeah, well I mean also it does mean since we don't have any kind of compulsory registration, it means that we hope, by that means, to at least know of more...

Right
[Yeah, there is an agenda. They want to know how many home educators are out there. But positive way to go about it. Of course don't know the whole story, as I didn't interview home educators from here.]

You know, a local authority that's going to take a strong anti-stance is clearly going to encourage more people not to admit that they're doing it, isn't it?

Yeah, right yes. In fact, I can't remember because I'm a bit tired, sorry...

[laughs]

Would your LEA like compulsory registration?

I think what you're asking is would I like it?

Yes

[pause] It would make the job easier.

Ok

Yeah it would make it easier. Funnily enough, I've just been discussing this. I've spent yesterday discussing with some members of the government in Ireland, in Dublin, about all this....

Because they have just introduced compulsory registration...

Aah! I didn't know that.

And so it's something that's on my mind. I'm ambivalent about it but yeah, I suppose I would [like compulsory registration] because I'm an official and it would make my job easier.

[compulsory registration - note that the LEA official makes a distinction that it is a personal preference, not necessarily an LEA preference. It would make the job easier, and perhaps reduce suspicions?]

Right ok, especially as you don't have funding....Do you have other job responsibilities or are you just doing....

No, just this

Aah, that's interesting because most of the other people I've spoken to ....home education is one part of many other parts of their job...

[attitude towards home education perhaps because this LEA official is only involved with home education. Not truancy, or other minority groups of the school population.]

But it's changing. It's moving more towards this, I'd say. When I first started doing this, it might have been the only place in England doing it this way, but there are quite a number now.

And that's because the number of home educators are growing.

No, I think probably the main reason is because it used to generally be done by school inspectors and the inspection service was privatized, you know, with OFSTED...

Yes

About 12 years ago, so that those sort of people were then charging quite a lot of money to schools to do the inspections and they just didn't become available to do this...I think that's really the reason

[policy change and implications]
I [pause] I mean, I don't think there's any one perception but I think.... I think a lot of people see it as quite a useful safety valve when other systems don't work.

I Ok...ok that's good to know. So it's an option?

I Yeah. And I mean whilst they shouldn't do it there certainly are Welfare Officers who would put this in front of someone and say ' look you're either going to go to court because your kid doesn't go to school...'

I ‘Or you could do this’. Now I don't really approve of them doing that

I Right

I But I can see why they do it

I Yeah, ok...

I Especially where kids are say, six months off leaving age, and nobody can do anything with them...

I Yes

I By the time they’ve registered with us and we’ve investigated and found out they’re no good, they’re left.

I does this add to the problem of home educating children who are not doing a good job, are disaffected? Shouldn't these children get more support if they are soon to leave the school system...it could still be through home education, but supported by the LEAs.

I Yes, I’ve heard this echoed in other LEAs as well. Alright, those are all the questions I’ve put down. Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you feel is worth mentioning, because I really do believe that my work is going to be of value to LEAs if I’m able to give the LEAs’ viewpoint. I haven’t heard it in the research, and I’d like to get your viewpoint.

I No I think you’ve probably ....it’s incredibly comprehensive, what you’ve done

I Ok...

I I can’t off the hip think of anything else at the moment. As I say, I suppose that my area of greatest concern, and I mean this in the sense I wouldn’t want to have my name put to it......

I No, this is all anonymous

I Is that we, as an LEA, sometimes avoid and evade responsibilities towards young people by this method...[of suggesting home education to children who are close to the school leaving age]

---

QUESTION: Have I interpreted your words correctly?
RESPONSE: YES

---

I You know, it’s a cheap and easy way out, under certain circumstances.

I And is this to do with a certain age range, the 14-16 year olds?
Yeah, that’s exactly what it is...

Ok, yeah, again I’ve heard this echoed in other LEAs. The parents can’t get their children to go to school, they want to stay at home and so they say they’re home educating but actually they’re not.

Yeah, but I was going to go further that that… I mean, I think say, for example children with psychological problems...

Right

Where that isn’t able to be properly addressed, you kind of got a [situation] where [children] will not go to school and although there are alternative school systems for them like.

Pupil Referral Units [PRU] and things like that, but they cost a lot of money, and sometimes home education is a cheaper alternative and so people are kind of steered in that direction by the pressure of the fact that they’re going to face the prosecution if they don’t

So they’ve got to make the children go to school or they’ve got to withdraw to do this… a lot of pressure is put on people sometimes to do that

**QUESTION:** The pressure is put on by the LEA?

**RESPONSE:** Not in any formal sense, there is no ‘paper trail’ but this is sometimes the effect of the pressures from various officials and departments.

Ok, alright, that’s useful [information]

I feel sometimes the appropriate response from an education authority would have been to actually provide them with something different from the regular school [ahh. LEA recognizes the difficulties that might result from this informal method that some officials might take with difficult students. Raises an interesting point. Problem stems with lack of funds? What alternatives are there? Compare with Florida law and the truancy loophole. Issue of policy and implementation]

But then again, it becomes a monetary factor, doesn’t it?

It is, absolutely a monetary thing

Alright yeah, ok. Well, thank you very much for your time….

The interview was transcribed and sent to the LEA official on July 10th, 2002. It was returned on 17/09/2002.
APPENDIX XIII

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH HOME EDUCATOR, ENGLAND

Introduction

As with the previous appendix, illustrating an annotated transcript from an LEA participant, this annotated transcript illustrates a home-based educator's perspectives. Annotations are added in handwritten font form, which were later condensed and compared to other home educator responses, and then to the state officials. (Please see previous appendix for explanation of process of analysis).

As this interviewee was also a member of a home education support group, some of the identifying details of the transcript have been omitted to preserve anonymity. This transcript was chosen as an illustrative example, to give an articulate voice to the home educators, from someone with a large amount of experience, who could also add dimension to home educator support group material.

After I had introduced myself on the phone, I asked if the timing was still okay to have the interview. The home educator had about twenty minutes to speak, but said we could speak again another day if the interview was not finished.

S I know some of the questions I am going to ask may sound really obvious but I am trying not to make any conclusions myself.
I Fair enough.
S A few background questions – the level of education that you and your husband have attained. Was it university level or was it just...
[background information]
I Well neither of us went to university.
S Okay
I But we have the next stage down.
S Okay, what, diploma?
I Well, here, it is from college. I have got an HNC, I've got City and Guilds, which are not the same thing as what you have over in the States, are they?
S Well, actually I am more familiar with the English system...
I Ah, right. Well, [my husband] had City and Guilds, I have City and Guilds, and HNC.
S Okay, all right. Great. And occupation of both of you?
I [My husband] has died now...
S Oh, I am sorry
I But he was home educating with me until two years ago. He was a biochemistry service engineer, so he fixed instruments, hospital instruments for the pathology lab. I was a trainer, trained adults in business studies and in using computers.
S Okay. And you have one child?
I Two.
Two children, okay. Both home educated?

No, the oldest one was at school and the younger one was home educated.

Okay. And they are both past compulsory school age now?

[still active in home educating community, but children are past compulsory school age]

Yes they are.

Okay. Great. Can you tell me the reason why you and your husband decided to home educate?

Two reasons. One, [my son] has Asperger’s syndrome, and the schools just weren’t coping with it at all. And that exacerbated the second problem which was bullying from other children.

[Special needs and bullying reason for home educating. Family answer to problems not dealt with in school. Would the LEA see this as the best solution? Not judging from most documentation]

Yeah, okay. Of my four children, we were in the UK for about a year and a half and my eldest was bullied very badly in school. She became school phobic, so that was one of the reasons we decided to home educate. It is wonderful that we have got the option to do it.

Very much so.

Okay, and when you home educated your child, did you use a prepared curriculum?

No.

Okay, what kind of educational curriculum did you follow?

[Maths, English and one Science, and we allowed him to follow his own interests for everything else]

Excellent, okay. When you were home educating did you ever encounter any problems? Things that spring to mind are ... the one that I am always asked, socialisation? [laughs]

[laughs] We didn’t, but it took us two years for him to actually recover from the trauma, from what he had suffered with the bullying.

Yeah

He wouldn’t go out at all... but in the area where we are, after the first couple of years, then he would go out and join home education groups, and we used to go ice skating, have meetings that he would go along to as well. So it was self imposed initially, the isolation, to allow him to learn to trust again.

[Socialisation issue - note need to deschool and allow child to recover from negative school experiences]

Yeah, okay, that’s fair enough. And, other problems that I know I have asked others... was it difficult trying to obtain suitable resources especially if he had Asperger’s syndrome?

Because he is into physics and electronics, the most problems we had with resources was actually finding things he could use for doing that... but yeah, it
was the physics and science resources. We managed them but we had difficulty on some occasions.

[c]urriculum issue - problems meeting child's needs with available resources. Does LEA help in this situation? Not usually, it would seem, from lack of funding, time etc.

S Right, okay. Yeah, I think schools have some advantages with the facilities they can provide
I That's right.
S Okay. Did you ever have any difficulty teaching any material and think 'Right, I can't do this, my husband can't do this, we've got to outsource to somebody else'?
I That was the physics. We had a tutor for [child] in the end because although [husband] could have done it, he was working all day and not getting home until 6 o'clock at night.

[recognising need to outsource. This seems common among home educating parents interviewed. Compare with other home educator responses]

S Right, sure. Did you ever find it hard to find the time to teach your child, you know, with life's commitments, everything that gets in the way?
I Well I gave up work to do it, so I couldn't have done it had I not done that. So obviously it was a financial change for the family... but no we fitted it around. We... had a timetable for the mornings and we kind of got used to the idea that that was the mornings. We... timetabled it for ourselves.

[difficulty with logistics of home educating - financial, timing]

S Yeah, okay. It sounds pretty similar to what we do as well. Did you have any lack of support from ... your family and friends or from your local education authority?

I Local education authority washed their hands of us, and refused to help at all...
S Gosh
I But that is standard. Family were perfectly okay with it, mother-in-law was concerned about the socialisation. She thinks I am a bad influence because my nephews are about to home educate their sons. Friends just thought I was mad!

[support from family important, and influential for others in family]

S Yeah. It's funny. I think I get the most anti-thoughts from my brother who is a teacher at [a private school in England]...
I Oh, right, yeah...
S He says I'm doing the worst thing, how could I be doing this to my children. Okay, you said that you didn't get any support from the LEA... Was [child] statemented at school?
I Yes
S I thought in those situations that the LEA was meant to help out?
I The LEA's statement is only valid for in schools. What they do is they still check up on you, and say, 'Are you doing what you should be doing'... but certainly here they wanted the annual meetings to check that we were doing things... They offer help but as soon as you say 'Yes please' [they say] 'Well I'm sorry, you chose to electively home educate and I can't help you'
[this gives some insight, but what did interviewee ask for? LEA policy is probably not to offer too much assistance. Fear of supporting home education?]

S Oh well, gosh...They can be quite funny...I have actually interviewed some LEAs as well. Some of them are wonderful about what they say they do and how they help home educators and others, I just think, I would be a hidden home educator in the UK if that is how they were going to deal with us. The relationship that you did have with the LEA, was it non-existent then?

I Yes. We had more of a relationship [with the LEA] when he was in school and things were a problem.

S Oh okay, gosh. Not very positive.

Okay, now I went onto the [support group] website and I have actually interviewed...four home educators in the UK and eight in the US, in Florida, so I am trying to gain a perspective. I am actually a UK-trained [teacher]. I was home educated myself for two years in the Philippines, then I went to traditional school. I then went to University in the UK and got a teacher's certificate. So I have been in the system, I have been teaching in the UK or in Hong Kong for several years. Of course when we decided to home educate, I have been with the children for the past five years, but I feel that I have got a perspective of both the UK and Florida. I don't feel as confident with the UK perspective, so this is one of the reasons that I am asking questions.

I Okay

S On the website, there are several things that I thought 'oooh'. So again, these are questions that you may think, 'why is she asking this?...' 

I Okay

S In Florida, we do not have home visits, and to me it is quite a scary thing if the LEAs are authoritative or pushy, then I would not welcome them myself. I know that they are not stipulated in the law, but they appear to be the favoured method of monitoring by the LEA

I Yeah

[clarifying home visit issue]

S In fact all the LEA brochures that I had sent to me, they all say 'well, we will do a home visit'. And I think, gosh, they are making such an assumption there. On the website, I noticed the educational philosophy statement or the statement of educational provision.

I Yes

S Did you ever use that?

I No, because [child] was statemented, we had to accept the visit.

S Oh, okay, right, to comply with the law

[statemented children must have home visit to comply with law?]

I Yeah, because they actually said to me later on that it is actually the way they hold on to monitoring the children if they have got a statement. They have got a right to an annual review.

[does annual review have to be home visit?]

S Right, okay. I also [think] there is a financial incentive on the register then they can say 'well, we have got this many children on the home education register' so it does help financially if they know who they are dealing with.
There is a problem with that, because... do you know what... I have just forgotten what I was going to say!

Say what you said and it will trigger me...

Okay. The LEAs gave me the impression that if they know who the home educated children are in the area, then there is some financial...

[funding for home education and problems. Tension from interviewee over lack of funding that should be available for statemented child]

Ah, now I know what I was going to say, yes. According to what the education authorities tell us as home educators, they say that they only get funding for the children registered at school. So what they tell us as home educators is that the funding is only there if the child is in school. They don’t redistribute funding that was for us, they don’t have any for us because we are not registered in school.

Right. I agree with that as well. I think when it involves a statemented child though, then I think they have funding... I think, I am pretty sure. There was a case, some girl had ME and she couldn’t go to school. Her parents actually went to court to fight for the LEA to give funding because she was meant to have the funding, you know a certain number of hours.

Under those conditions it is not classed as elective home education and then they will do it.

[clarification of point in law. ME child couldn’t attend school so she was given home tuition under a different section in law. Not electively home educating, but doing so because of sickness]

Okay, okay, yeah... the sick children. Okay, all right. I have to be very clear when I think about that.

[Thank you for clearing up points for me!]

Okay, do you know about the... educational philosophy statement... it is on the website. Do you know if it is popular?

That is the favoured form for most home educators.

Okay, now I didn’t know that.

Some of them will agree to the home visit just to get it done and out of the way and in a hurry. But if they don’t want anybody visiting the house then the favoured form is the educational philosophy. It is beginning, the trend seems to be that more and more people are going that route, certainly if they know about it...

[evidence that if home educators are fully informed, they choose non-interaction monitoring methods rather than home visits. Only one opinion, but as a member of a support group, an opinion that might proliferate]

Right

In which case, it generally means they have access to people who are already home educating or access to the internet, and read it.

Right

Since the Children’s Act went through, the LEAs are pushing harder and harder for home visits, but they are using Education Welfare Officers quite often and
what is becoming apparent is that a lot of them are making judgments based on
the look of the person's house, or whatever
[concern for home educators. Child protection issue. Conflation of education and
welfare. Justification for reports and non-interaction methods of monitoring]
S Yes!
I ...which means that if you can do an educational philosophy [statement] you are
not already starting at a disadvantage by somebody being morally judgmental.
[Problem here - defensive, and perhaps rightly so, but not seeing other perspective.
Homogenising LEA as having one agenda. Room for manoeuvre?]
S Yeah, right. That is the problem I have, with someone...because with four
children, my house is always a wreck! [laughs] You know, my home educating
friends, they know that our life is non-stop and they don't judge me. But someone
who, like you say - an educational welfare officer they see things through a
different perspective I guess.
I Yes.
S They are looking for the welfare of the child, which entails everything that goes
on in the home
I And they don't actually, although they are there to look at the educational
provision, they don't know what they are looking at
S Right.
I Because it's something that they normally recently started doing...so they are not
familiar with autonomous home education or totally unschooled...
[concern over LEA inability to see home educating family as individuals responding
to individual needs of child and family. Opinion, based on assumption that LEAs
have school-based mindset - evidence from LEA documentation would seem to support
this.]
S Yeah, and that can be scary for someone who is used to the structure of the school
system, you know, what they have seen
I Yeah
S Okay. Wow, I didn't know that [about the educational philosophy statement]. You
said that it is obviously more popular with the home educators, especially if they
know about it.
I That's right
S Do you think it is popular with the LEAs?
I Umm.
S Do you think they prefer the home visit?
[Clarifying preference by LEAs for home visit. Based on inability of LEAs to think
outside the box or tick outside the box. Indicates static policy of LEAs when
interacting with home educators, or drawn from current documentation? How to dispel
such stereotypes of LEA officials?]
I They prefer the home visit I think...because when it [the evaluation of the child]
is done with an educational philosophy [statement], we don't tend to fill out their
forms, and we don't fit into a nice category where they can tick their boxes.
S Right, okay
I Which, to a large extent, is likely to create more work for them...because it is not something traditional that they are familiar with. [home education seen as non-traditional, against the status quo. Potential for tension, defensive thoughts?]
S Right. Okay that is fair enough. One of the things...I interviewed several LEAs and I sent a questionnaire (all the LEAs in the UK) and I got a 50% return rate...
I That's good
S And I am quite happy to give my results to [your group]
S But one of the things that the LEAs sent back, and I was actually quite horrified, in several instances they said they liked doing the home visits so that they could see the child.
[child protection issue]
I Yes
S And that again caused fear with me. It's like, what do they think we are doing with the children?
I That's right
S Um, so I guess that is a problem I have with home visits, and you have just told me, I really didn't know about this statement that people use. It is a way of keeping one step away from them, isn't it?
[the home education statement report is the home educator's way of avoiding child protection concerns, they think. But is it, or does it just cause more suspicion. compare with LEA views]
I That's right
S Okay that's fine. I know that we have only got a little bit more time, and I still have a few more questions...
I That's all right. If we stop now you are welcome to ring back later. That's not a problem
S Okay, that's great. If I don't finish now I'll do that. At the moment all my children are asleep! [laughs]
I And don't you wish you were as well! [laughs]
S Yes! You know what, this is the life where I am at. [My] 10 year old is the oldest, 3 year old is the youngest, and it is just where I am at...Okay this question, I never quite know how to answer it. Socialisation? I am always asked it. Sometimes if I am in a good mood I am quite kind. Other times I can be quite snippy because we always get asked this, especially when they see all four children with me and ask 'Oh, are they all yours?' And the questions start, 'Why aren't they in school?' Although that comes up more in the UK, not here as much. Which is again why I find that there are different perceptions. On your website there is a page on socialisation. Did your [support group] feel that the page was needed because of the way non-home educators single out socialisation as a problem?
[socialisation issue]
I It's because, yes it is that, and of course parents that are now considering home education are not aware of the network of groups and meetings that go on as well...
S Yes
Because they are new to it...

[Socialisation issue more of a concern to new home educators. For veteran home educators, this is less of an issue?]

Right

So it informs them so that they realise that it isn’t, it needn’t be a problem. It’s not obviously the same in all areas. In some of the more rural areas, it can be more difficult.

[Socialisation issue, if a problem, can be related to geographical location]

Okay

But certainly if you are nearer town, we have, where I live, four groups that are within reach.

Okay, all right. Actually that is useful...over here it is very much more open and we know about all the home schooling groups. They are all on the web. I think they are in the newspapers as well, so they are almost advertised here.

Right

But I don’t get the impression that it is as up-front in the UK

[Socialisation opportunities much more apparent through media channels in Florida. Secrecy of group lists, and unwillingness of some to be known to the LEAs problems for networking]

No. We have, on the web, a list of local groups that have electronic contact info...but we don’t put private numbers or addresses or anything out because a lot of the home educators may have been home educating from scratch (in other words the children have never been to school) and therefore they are unknown to the LEAs. And if you start telling them where all the meetings are...

[Evidence of mistrust of LEAs finding out about the unknown home educators. Would they do this? Compare to LEA views if possible]

Yeah, right

We don’t want people turning up and saying, ‘Ah, we didn’t know about this one’, and using it [the lists] that way.

Yeah, that’s right

So, they are available if you belong to one of the organisations like [support group] or [another support group], you have much more information available because the information only goes out to members.

[Note - this becomes a problem for researchers to get more than a voluntary sample of home educators. Note my difficulty to access home educators until I became one myself. Distrust of anyone outside the home educating community?]

Yeah, that’s right

But as I say, if you have got an electronic email address or website, then it is possible to do it through that, the local groups that are there.

Yeah, and I understand that as well, because I did interview someone who is a hidden home educator, and she says she doesn’t want the hassle. The local education authority...she has heard from friends that they gave [her friend] a really hard time. And I guess I would be the same. Even though I am a law-abiding citizen and whatever...I wouldn’t want to do it [be known to the LEA]

That’s right
Okay, before I move off the question of socialisation, do you ever, have you ever thought how you would define socialisation yourself?

[definition of socialisation by home educator]

I

Okay, that's good enough. Yeah, I think the problem I have when I am asked the question of socialisation is... I think my definition of socialisation might not be the same as someone who is school based, who thinks kids should all mix together.

This is it. Just because school is enforcing like-mindedness in lessons doesn't mean that the children want to socialise together

[primary versus secondary socialisation. School-based concept of socialisation]

Yeah, right. Then you get the question of... my eldest is school phobic, although she is getting better, and I would like her to take some classes. In Florida you can do dual enrolment where you can be in school part-time or go to college classes, and I do want her to have the confidence to do that because I feel she would have gone further than the problem that she got from school.

I

Think, as well, when they get older then there isn't the bitchiness between children...

Yeah!

They have all matured a lot more and it becomes a much more enjoyable social experience.

[recognition of socialisation differences, needs as children get older]

Yeah, I agree. Again the life stage that you are at, especially when you are starting out then it is quite hard. Maybe as the kids get older then it will be easier to deal with the socialisation [question]

Yeah

And I am not that worried about that now. The only thing that still throws me is when they say, 'Well you know what they should be in school because they need to be bullied to be tough enough to deal with the real world.'

[school socialisation = real life socialisation. One home educator's response to stereotype]

Well the answer we have with that is, if you were in a job as an adult where you were being bullied and pushed around, you would go and find another job.

Right

You are not forced to stay in the same place like that. Yes, people do have to be able to put up with a certain amount of it, but you have the choice as an adult to move away from it. Children don't have that choice and that's what I want for my child.

Yeah, okay, that's fair enough. It was soul destroying for our [daughter]. She was four and a half when she started [school] and she had an American accent and the kids teased her. She was very... she didn't fit into the mould of everyone else, she didn't do things the same way. She was a free, artistic spirit... just different, and I didn't want to squash that, but I had a really hard time with the school.

I

I can believe it
They really were not impressed, because they knew that I was a teacher, and that
didn't go down very well. Very interesting experience!

Okay, now you mentioned the hidden home educators, the unknown home
educators and I understand why they don't have to make themselves known if
they start from scratch

That's right

And I think I understand why they don't want to make themselves known — too
much trouble or sometimes they might have moved in from another area and they
are not aware...

That's correct

Do you think by being unknown that it causes problems to the LEAs?

Um, I think it's self-imposed problems on the LEA, but yes. I don't see why they
should be having concerns because they don't help home educators anyway. But
they just don't like not having a finger in the pie

Okay, yeah, that's the impression I get. Someone, and I think it was a home
educator who said, no it was an LEA [official] who was very positive about home
education and he said, 'Well if you decided to educate your child privately we
don't know about that either'

That is true

So if you put it in that perspective, home education is private education. Okay, it
is a very unique form

And it is a very elite form

Yes, I think that also causes concern with people who support the public, sorry
not public, state school system and think you are doing something elitist and why
should you.

Yes

Okay. A few more questions. The sample letters, again this caused me to think, oh
gosh, now there are lots of questions that came up with that...

The interview continues, three days later, when I have checked that the timing is good

Right, I was looking at the sample letters. We don't have them over here with our
support groups and I was very interested in the way that they were worded. I think
that there is a huge difference between how home education is viewed there by
the authorities and here. So, again, these questions might sound really obvious to
you, but I am asking because I don't understand

Okay

One of the first things I noticed was, it says, to keep all your correspondence with
the LEA in a written form. Why is that suggested?

[paper trail and accountability, control, protection for home educators]
Mainly because if you keep it in electronic form, you could have a computer crash and lose it...

And as far as a phone call is concerned, it is a case always of your word against them and there is nothing, no verbatim record of what has been said.

So if it is kept in writing...if you are on the phone...it could be that someone is pressuring you and you are having to answer without having time to think about what you are going to say.

Okay, yeah, fair enough. So it is a way of protecting the home educator.

It is indeed.

Okay. The letter also declines the home visit, in one of the samples. [The home visit] is almost always requested, the LEAs...like the home visit.

Yes

Why is it suggested that you decline the home visit? Is that again...

[clarifying my perception that home visits are declined by home educators. if home educators want to decline the home visit, information is given on how best to do it to protect interests and stay within the law]

We are not suggesting that they do decline it, what we are saying is that if you want to, you can and this is how to do it.

Okay

So, LEAs like [the home visit] and a lot of home educators don’t but they don’t have the confidence to be able to tell them, ‘No you can’t’

Right, so it falls back on the law. It is clearly stated, it is not actually requested in law.

That’s right

Okay, all right...that’s a good point, especially with new [home educators]. I mean, I have been a professional teacher for twenty years and I thought, okay sure I can home educate, because my husband suggested [we should] do it when we were here [in Florida]. And I was still very nervous and very unsure of myself in my first year of home educating.

Exactly

That really surprised me. I think probably the thing that saved me was having a support group.

[value of support group. community that shares experiences and problems]

Yes. I mean we have the support groups here, but of course not everybody wants to go to them and they don’t have the written resources available that they can draw on, whereas [our support group] backs up what they feel or what other people say to them... [Support group] has information freely available on the website be they a member or not

Oh! And is that to just make people informed before they...are considering it?

From our point of view, yes...if it is something that is freely available, like the interpretation of the law, we produce leaflets for example (like how to cope with dyslexia, or how to deal with school anxiety, leaflets you can use as a home educator). All these things are freely available.
Right. Okay, that is very helpful, especially when you have got new home educators starting out. It is quite scary.

Yeah.

I think you are right... We have got a similar group over here, and they give you every piece of information that you need and you don’t have to necessarily to join, but it is always helpful to, just for support.

Yes.

Okay, one of the other points, in the sample letter, I know that the LEAs tend to include a questionnaire that they want you to fill out.

Yes.

That is again, in the sample letter, ‘I am not going to fill out this questionnaire because it is not relevant’... is that again suggested so that it gives the home educators a way out?

[LEA policy and practice, school-based perspective towards education]

Um. Not quite so much. But ... when they do the forms the LEA put them together knowing what education is like and structured like in schools...

Okay, yeah.

And an awful lot of people who home educate do not follow the same sort of structure and the forms that they tend to send out are ‘What amount of time do you allocate to maths every day?’

Okay! Yeah!

Like that, and of course home educators don’t do that. They may go shopping and the day’s lesson may very well be dealing with VAT and sums and things by going around a shop. And of course you don’t go shopping every day. The same with art, maybe you go along to ... a local group has an arrangement with a resident artist at the local art gallery and he gives lessons as such about once a month just to home educating groups. So of course none of that fits into a nice little box that is written around the National Curriculum, because we don’t know what this resident artist is going to do. It may not be art, painting, it could be sculpture or anything.

That’s a good point. I know that, I approached the LEAs as well... I was quite intimidated by some of the questionnaires because it does try to pigeon hole the home educators, as you say. How much time, or giving a whole timetable of what you are going to do for the year. I then tried to flip it back to seeing it from an LEA’s point of view, and I thought, yes, it is to fit into the school schedule. But I thought, now could there be a problem if I, as a home educator, turned around and said ‘No this questionnaire isn’t relevant’. Do you sometimes find there are problems by not filling in questionnaires?

[Standardisation, monitoring, not resonating with home educators who are individuals rather than homogeneous group]

Well what we do say is, don’t tell them the form isn’t relevant and you won’t fill it in, but don’t actually ignore what is asked for on the form.

Oh, okay.

So what we do, people send off the educational philosophy, which we mentioned the other day, and so that everything in it that is on the form tends to be covered by that but in a format that is relevant to the way the home educator works.
Ref.: Ch 9 407 Appendix XIII

[evidence of how to compromise to meet monitoring needs that LEA wants, and individual home educating family’s teaching and learning styles and experiences]

S Okay. Yeah that makes sense. And, because you work for [support group] then have you known of any disputes that arise because the LEA thinks ‘well this is insufficient’. I noticed another form that was ‘insufficient information’ ...

[example of area of conflict]

I That’s right. There are instances where, we just had recently, I think it was last week, it was in the press, that the home educator had been prosecuted for not providing a suitable education.

S Mmm

I It is unusual for things to get that far because, this particular family we did know of. They were refusing to give information. They were assuming that just by saying ‘we home educate and we are doing it well’ that the LEA could be satisfied with that.

[no compromise, no balance of interests of state, parent and child. Suspicions, problems with accountability etc]

S Yeah

I Obviously nobody is going to be satisfied with that. We don’t expect them to be satisfied with that, but this particular family were not cooperating in any way. There are instances where they say, ‘right we want to see the child’s work, we want to mark it’

[LEA overstepping authority in law to monitor. This doesn’t help improve relations]

S What! [laughs]

I [laughs] Well of course there is nothing in law that gives them the authority to do that. So that the evidence that...what it is, the law says that the LEA is entitled to make informal enquiries and if they are not satisfied then they can ask for more information.

[well versed in law]

S All right

I The LEAs tend to work from the position that they are not going to be satisfied right from the start

[opinion that LEAs will not be happy with alternative to monitoring unless it is their preferred home visit. This is defensive, perhaps from experiences, but apt to create conflict]

S Right, yeah

I And a lot of families are very resentful of this fact, which is why some of the education philosophies that we talk about tend to get more detailed, depending on which LEA you are in. Because it is very much a case of the personnel within the LEA decide how that LEA are going to be working with home educators. Some of them are lovely, some of them are obviously ex-school teachers, ex-headmasters, in-school inspectors who have their own way of doing things and aren’t very open to alternative methods.

[recognition that LEAs are not monolithic group. Evidence of good relationships with LEAs. Seems that teachers are not thought of as being able to be flexible to home educators’ philosophies and pedagogies. Hmm...I am a teacher, and very flexible to all]
methods of educating a child, as long as the child can become learned and independent of the teacher. Am I really that unusual? Meighan suggested a quarter of home educating parents are teachers. Are they of the same mindset?

S Yeah, good point. That seems fair enough. Oh gee, I am just so glad that I homeschool over here!

I [laughs] Imagine, some of us we are fighting for this [home education] all the time and we are talking about it, but I have a friend in Pennsylvania and I would hate to home educate in Pennsylvania. And [friend], another friend, well we all get to know each other with networks, and [friend] home educates in New York State...

S That's very, they are quite strict as well

I Oh they are as well. A bit like Pennsylvania. So I think I would pick and choose where I went in the US before I started home educating...

[Florida is one of the less regulated states, more like the UK than New York or Pennsylvania.]

S Well, it's funny you should say that. We are actually relocating to Arizona next month and their home education laws are even more relaxed than here. I don't have to keep any kind of record of my child's work. I just have to say my child is home educating and that is it.

I Yes

S Here we have to keep a portfolio of their records and get them evaluated once a year but we can do that in one of five ways, so it is much easier to do it here. And yet there are some guidelines to help us. I love the way we do it here, so I just...like you say, some of the states, you have to be a certified teacher, you have to say which subjects you are teaching...

I Yes

S Takes all the joy out if it

I Absolutely

S ...Just talking with you, and the other home educators, I would hate to have the battle all the time or feel like I have to be defensive all the time

[cultural perceptions of the other's home educating community]

I Yes, that is something that none of you have to do. You might have strict rules, but it is an acceptable thing to do all the time. Whereas although it is enshrined in law here, or since 1944 and reaffirmed in 1996, the actual LEAs themselves don't like it

[perception that LEAs do not think favourably towards home education. Seems like tension and conflict ensue. Compare with perspectives from LEAs for balance]

S Is that...I am trying to get underneath why that is? Is it a cultural thing, like it is just "not done" to turn your nose up at what is provided?

[cultural aspect of home education, against the status quo, perceptions of professional teachers]

I To a large extent it is a way of saying that unless you are qualified as a teacher, then you are not qualified to teach

S That is just so untrue
It is. I mean originally the law was done and allowed home education so that the rich and the aristocracy did not have to send their children to school, but could have governesses or governors to teach their children from home...

S Yeah, right

I And now the proletariat, utter yobs on the bottom, are using the law that was written for the aristocracy. But of course, we are not qualified to do that...and they very much, I am sure you have a similar thing with the unions over there, haven't you, where you don't do somebody else's job

S Yeah, I think so, yeah

I That is a carry on here in that regard, in that parents don't teach. A parent might be qualified to be a plumber, or a parent might be a qualified accountant, but they are not qualified teachers. Therefore with an awful lot of people, especially civil servants are a bit 'jobsworth' wherever they are...

S Yeah

I And if you fall outside of their square, they wouldn't be civil servants if they weren't pernickety about admin work, and ticking off boxes...

S Yeah, that's true

I And so they find it very difficult for people who have stepped outside the mould, to understand it and accept that it is a valid way of doing things.

S Yeah, that's true. Wow. Okay, good point.

I Am I making your work harder or easier? [laughs]

S No, you are actually backing up things that I have read in the literature about home education being the oldest form of education...

I Oh, right

S You are just clarifying things for me, which is great. You are making it much clearer, so...okay. More questions, sorry! The law is clearly reiterated to the LEA on the sample letters

I Yes

S Why is that considered necessary...to restate the law that you send to the LEA?

I We tend to do that so that it points out to the LEA that although we know they should know the law, by proving to them that the person writing the letter also knows the law, they can't be bamboozled into doing something against ...

S Right

I I can't say 'against the law', that implies that it is illegal, but something that fits in with an LEA's criteria, rather than what the law actually says. So really, and it also helps the parents by giving them, they know then that they are talking from a position of knowledge.

S Yeah, that's true. Wow. Okay, good point.

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S Right
I And it gives them more confidence to deal with things as well
[home educating need confidence, because they are against the norm. points to
defensive attitude, which may encourage tension. Better way?]
S Okay, good point. All right. The next question, as a [support group] member, how
are the home educating parents guided on giving evidence of a suitable education?
By that I mean, is the suggestion to give as little information as possible to the
LEA so that they are satisfied, or to give the whole, to give as much information
as possible in the educational philosophy or in the home visits that are done?
What guidance do you give home educators?
[meeting the law, on home educators’ terms. Fair comments below, and seem to be
more of a compromise than libertarian-minded home educators who want no contact
with LEAs. Of course, interviewee is only talking about those home educators known
to LEAs that have to provide information. Note individual responses to supplying
information - can lead to conflict]
I On the ground, what tends to be said does tend to be relative to the feelings of the
individual who is speaking to the home educating family. I have one colleague
who feels you should be able to write half a page and that is sufficient, whereas
there are others who want ten pages. What I personally do is say that under the
law, you have to be able to provide sufficient evidence that would satisfy a
reasonable person. And then I say to the family that I am talking to, as a
reasonable person, if this was somebody else’s child, what evidence would you
ask of them that you would consider to be reasonable, and then you supply that. It
doesn’t hurt to go a bit further...
S Yeah, I like the way you say that if it was somebody else’s child, how would you
prove that this child is getting a suitable education. I like that point...Do you
think that it is best for the home educator to be well armed with the law and with
as much information as possible?
[issue with laws and rights, and best interests of the child]
I Yes, I do. I think it empowers them to stand up to people who are not informed
correctly or who are trying to superimpose their will. If you wanted to have their
way of educating being done you would be sending your child to school. You
obviously have a reason for home educating your child. It may be religious, it
may be philosophical, it may be because the child has special needs. It may be
just because they have been bullied and they have become school phobic, but
whatever the reason is, you are choosing to do it because the school is not
working.
S Right
I And therefore an LEA which is pushing for you to work the way a school does is
working against the best interests of your child
S Right. But they might think that they are doing things in the best interests of the
child
I Yeah.
S Yeah, okay. Something that you just mentioned...rats, it has gone out of my
head!...oh, I know what it was. I guess that there is an undercurrent of alarm I
have with some of the...LEAs...the way they deal with home educators. I have
looked at many of the documents from all over the LEAs. I told you I have got a 50% response rate...

I  Yes
S  Some of them almost try to persuade the child to go back into school
[evidence in documents seems to persuade parents that home education might not work and how easy it would be to reintegrate into school]

I  Yes
S  That causes me concern. Do you have any way of helping home educators if LEAs are going to come with that standpoint, thinking ‘well we are going to persuade this family to send the child back to school’?

I  We can support them in several ways, in that...

[Interviewee has to deal with the washing machine man and the postman!]

I  ...where were we?
S  Yeah, I said that the LEAs sometimes, in the information booklets that they send...

[support group help and advice, rights, law.]

I  Yes, that’s right. We do have instances where that happens. We will support them by pointing the home educators to information that they can say, ‘I am entitled to home educate, and I want to.’ If they think that they have to have a meeting with the LEA, a local contact, and we are getting more and more of them...it used to be we had one local contact per county. We are now trying to expand it so that we have one per local education authority area. And then that person is likely to know the way that particular LEA works. And then, if they have to have a meeting, a lot of them will go along and sit beside them in the meeting and invariably they don’t have to say anything. They are introduced as the local contact from [support group]

[cooperative efforts to improve interaction between LEAs and home educating support group. Support, rights, control]

S  Ah, good

I  Which automatically then says to the LEA concerned, this person may not be very confident, but is tied in with people who do know what they are doing...

S  Right. Good point. We actually do that here as well if we ever have to go in and see the authorities. We get someone from our group who knows the law better, who has been doing it...because after about two years or so, when you feel more confident in what you are doing then you know how to deal with the questions, or how to roll with the punches, so to speak.

I  That’s right. You become more confident, you’ve got through most of the hurdles yourself and you are able to pass on that confidence to people newly going down that road.

[support network among home educators. Can this be used positively in cooperation with LEAs? Networking with support groups as mentioned above, with LEAs? Petrie managed to hold a conference with LEAs who then became better informed about the law, policy and practice.]
S Good point. That support, I know I have leant on that support in my first few years. I know I am giving that support to other people who say ‘oh, what do I do now?’

I Yes

S And that is only because, this is my fifth year. I am not cocky about it, I just know how I have dealt with certain things, and I also say, ‘I’m not sure but this is how we have dealt with it’

I Yes

S Just helping each other

I Yes... we don’t put ourselves up as legally qualified about anything. And if they come up with something that we don’t know we do advise people to have a solicitor. We are gathering a list of solicitors around the country, it’s very slow, but solicitors if not particularly sympathetic towards home education, have worked with home educating families and do know the law.

[compare with current support in Florida at a national level, and political lobbying groups]

S Right, okay

I And by actually keeping that information, when it goes over the range of this is what the law says and this is what we have done, when it starts going into the realms of the LEA saying ‘Right we are going to issue a school attendance order because we don’t think it is good enough’ that is when it goes beyond what we can do

S Right, okay. That is again another way of supporting by having solicitors who can be the voice. Okay. We have touched on some problems that might occur. Do you know of any other problems with LEAs that home educators have that you can mention. One thing that I know, from the interviews I have done with the LEAs or the information that I have got from them, they worry about child protection issues, and it is almost as if they say ‘we need to see the child’. Which really makes me think, you just don’t trust us

[child protection issues, and current situation with Children’s Act 2004. Problems of interpretation, policy implementation, suspicion, control. Compare with all]

I Yes. And that is a lot of what is going on here at the moment. And a lot of the LEAs, we have the new Children’s Act, 2004, which actually became law in November 2004...

S Oh, okay

I And a lot of the LEAs are interpreting what that says to say they have got child protection issues that they have to deal with. And we as home educators are saying, ‘you are qualified to, maybe, look at educational issues, but not welfare issues’. And also, just because we are home educating does not make the child at more risk. The majority of abuse cases that appear in the media, the children are schooled... and they are still not picked up. So what makes them think that they can do better with a home educated child?


S Yeah.
I There is also the aspect that the number of home educating families, they are investing a lot more time and energy into their children, which makes them less of a candidate for requiring, for the children to require protection

Wone home educator's counter argument to child protection concerns]

S yeah

I What is happening more and more often that we are finding, is that the LEAs are virtually threatening families, 'Either you let us in to see the children, or we will report you to social services'

[ evidence of conflict issues. Would be good to compare both sides of a conflict issue, but thought it unlikely to be given access to such sensitive topic by either LEA or home educator]

S No way!

I That is... I have not actually seen that in writing, from an LEA as yet, but it has definitely happened to families on the email list because they come back to us and say, ‘what can I say now?’

S Yeah. What do you suggest?

I Well, that is a very difficult one. It is a very new thing that has started happening, so we are kind of treading the ground to see where it will go. The first thing we will do is write and we will say, ‘well what makes you think the child is being abused?’ and start quoting the law. Just because the Children’s Act said this doesn’t actually increase your rights as an LEA.

S Yeah

[home educators trying to inform LEAs, change policy?]

I We did produce an LEA bulletin which we send to all the LEAs in England and Wales, and ... it has had changes made to it and sent to the EAS in Scotland where the law is slightly different...

[Please can I get a copy of the LEA bulletin that you have sent out?]

S Yes

[issue of law rights interests]

I That is there pointing out to them that the law says this, it doesn’t mean that you have more rights. It tells them that they are to do their checks etcetera, within the boundaries of the rights they have now. At the moment, I am aware, I am trying to think whether it is one or two families, I am definitely aware of one family on a list that was reported to social services, but social services wrote back and said, ‘home education by itself is not an issue for us to look at’ and didn’t take it any further

S Oh well, that was quite responsible and mature

I Which was very good... we had another one, where a headmaster, where a child had been deregistered, he reported the family to social services saying it was bad. And the social services in that area did exactly the same thing...

S Okay

I But because it is actually being said by LEAs more now, we know that not all ...social service departments are not going to respond in the same, what I consider to be, sensible fashion.

[problem of critical mass? How do LEAs determine policy implementation?]

S Yeah
We had one family, in [area], where social services had been involved. It is still ongoing with court cases because they wanted to take the children into care.

So we have solicitors, we have a Children’s Rights officer. The judge has actually thrown out a couple of the LEA claims, but there are others that are ongoing. Whether there are other issues involved with that particular family, I am not aware of. There may well be. I know one of the children is dyslexic, quite profoundly dyslexic. But that doesn’t mean that home education won’t work for them. My own son is dyslexic, mildly. But it is becoming more of a problem, and I think this case in [area] is likely to be precedent-setting in the long term, so it is being watched.

Oh, right. Gosh. I was trying to think what we do here in Florida and how the LEAs could compromise. Because it seems to be, from what I have read in the literature and from the analysis I have done already that the LEAs want to have ownership of the child’s education. That battles against the parents who also want to have, or who want to resume ownership of their child’s education. So it is as if you have got two interests fighting over the child...

I thought, what is a compromise? If I was in the UK, and I know I would not want a home visit, because my house does look like... like I said before, it is a normal, typical home educating house. We have got stuff all over the place. We don’t put maps or things on the walls because my husband wouldn’t like it, but we have plenty of material. These guys are learning all the time, and not necessarily in the traditional school sense...

One of the things we did with [son] - we didn’t like posters and maps up. That for him made it seem too much like school. He wanted to learn what he wanted. One of the things we did, which my husband was not too happy about, we got some balloons and we measured from the front of the house to the back of the house and we blew up the balloons as far as we could to a scale that looked like the solar system.

Oh funny! And we had various balloons from the front end through... and we had balloons at various stages of being blown up to indicate... Pluto I am afraid didn’t actually make it, we couldn’t fit it in!

We had drawing pins holding the balloons in the ceiling. Now it was the little holes in the ceiling that my husband was most unhappy about.

That’s funny. But [son] loved choosing the colours for the balloons...

Yeah, it sounds as if you had fun with it.

Yeah, we had all the maths to work out the ratios. It was fun.

Yeah. That is why I enjoy doing it. I actually really enjoy being around my children. They teach me stuff as well.
I Oh definitely!
S And I just wouldn't want home visits so I wondered what kind of compromise
there could be with this battle that could exist between the two...

[compromise over monitoring]
I What we advise, or the sorts of things we have suggested, is that they could meet
in neutral territory...
S Yeah, yeah
I At a local library, a park or whatever. If the children really don't want to, I mean a
lot of them feel under pressure because they are afraid that the LEA has got the
intention to send them back to school. That is more valid for those that have been
drawn back because they have had problems in school.

[Is it only the children who feel this, or parents too? Perceptions taken from parents?]
S Right, yeah
I But what we would say to them then is, 'well, give them a letter from a third party
saying that the child is well cared for, well fed, okay' and say 'you don't need to
see my child. If you want evidence that the child's not being abused, here's a
letter from our local GP' or it could be a letter from the local club where we go
swimming once a week, or something like that. It is a third party, it is not your
mum or dad, or whatever, and that should be sufficient evidence because again, it
is reasonable. If I just got a letter from a GP and it said 'I have just seen this child
and he is perfectly healthy' then how would an LEA inspector have more
knowledge on whether a child was healthy than somebody who sees that child on
a regular basis.

[question - do children in school have the same scrutiny over child protection issues?
in private schools?]
S Good point. And all those alternatives seem very sensible, very fair. Do you know
if the LEAs like them, they don't mind that, or do they still want to see the child?

[child protection issues]
I There is the odd one or two LEAs that are holding out to see the child or
threatening with social services, but generally speaking, that seems to have
worked so far.
S Okay, that's good. Do you think, you have mentioned before it depends on the
individual in the LEA, that it could be just a... you know, rather than following all
the policy documents that they have, they think, 'you know what, I am going to
fix these home educators'...
I Yes, there are one or two like that...
S Okay.

[educating particular LEAs to the letter of the law, from the home educator's
perspective. Seems to have to do it constantly]
I Sometimes we nicely educate an LEA into what they are allowed to do, and then
they do change personnel again, so you have to start all over again
S Wow.

[cooperative efforts and evidence of good practice propagated by home educators. Not so
helpful to shame the LEAs by name that are not doing a good job. Wouldn't
cooperation to improve bad practices be more effective?]
So that is one of the things. We have an email list that has recently been set up, where people are working on to actually educate all LEAs across the board, so we can say, instead of dealing with each LEA as an individual, we can say, well look [LEA] has produced a very nice set of guidelines, they get on with their home educators, why can’t you work like [LEA]...What we tend to do is pick up on the ones that are good and then shame the others!

Right. Have you looked at [other LEA]. They have a website and they seem to be quite good. I was looking at it this morning

I haven’t looked at it myself personally, because I leave that to those that know what they are looking at...at the moment I am in the middle of trying to, I am talking to all the examination boards, and talking to LEAs with a view to, because our young people have great difficulty in finding a venue to sit exams when they want to sit exams. So the thing I am involved in at the moment is trying to get together a database of schools and colleges that will allow electively home educated students to take exams...which is another issue there. That’s why there are other people looking at the LEA work and everything as well. But that is not my speciality

Yeah, that’s right. See, you have got your hands full. Right a couple of other questions I was going to ask, and then if there is anything you can think of to say. I can give a brief synopsis of what I have found out so far. But the other two questions are both with the law. Do you think that the law, the 1996 Act and the 1944 Act that preceded it, protect the parents’ rights to home educate?

Yes...actually it reaffirms it in ’96 saying it is up to the parents to ensure that the child receives an education. The Scottish law says it is up to the parents, the parents have to say that the child has received and education. English law says the parents have to have provided an education...

Which changes the emphasis slightly in that the Scottish children, they have to, a parent can provide lots of education but that doesn’t mean to say the child has taken that in

Sure

Whereas Scottish law, it more or less says the child has had to have taken it in. But either way, the emphasis there is on the parents’ responsibility to ensure the child has an education.
Okay, fair enough. So we are protected by the law... which seems to be quite a flexible law, more flexible I would think than the law over here which says you can home educate but you must do this, this and this. The other question, because I asked this same question of the LEAs, and then they said 'Well I think the law protects the parents rights but what about the child's right to receive a suitable education?'...

And I thought that was quite a good question that they threw back at me and I didn't know how to answer it! [laughs]

[rights of children and laws. Belief that rights are covered, subsumed by parents committed to best education for their child]

Yeah, and can operate within the society but did not exclude them from moving to another. So, in other words, if you brought your child up in a hippie commune that is all well and good, but you mustn't do it to the extent that they are not able to move out of that commune to be, I don’t know, working in a busy London office.

Right, yeah, they are considering the wider society [rather] than just the family unit

That's right. And so that's what has been written in law. The other thing you can always come back with is what right do the LEAs put on children. When I mentioned to me the Children’s Act of 2004, it started out as the Children’s Rights Bill...

...they are effectively denying children any rights.

Gosh
So we are actually also claiming, and looking at the Human Rights Act, and the …there is another one, the European Rights of the Child…

That’s right. I think I have seen that on a website as well.

So we are looking at that one as well when it comes in, and aiming to use that since what we actually billed as a Children’s Rights Act became a Children’s Act and it lost the word ‘rights’

Yeah, quite an important word!

It is!

Gee…you sort of wonder what people’s agendas are…

Absolutely

Well, those are all the questions I have.

I then finished the interview by telling the interviewee a little about my background as a home-educated child, school-educated child, school teacher and home educator. The interviewee could tell by my accent that I was not a full Brit, so I mentioned that I am a dual American/British citizen.

The interview ended with me thanking the interviewee for giving me time to conduct the interview.

The tape was transcribed in April 2005 (started at the beginning of April and finished on April 30th as we were packing up and moving house which disrupted my work), and sent to the interviewee by email on April 30th, 2005. It was checked by the interviewee via email, and I was told it was fine.
EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME EDUCATORS AND THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES IN ENGLAND AND WALES, AND IN FLORIDA, USA.

Under what precepts do home educators and local education authority representatives interact?

Interim report on findings for participating local education authorities in England and Wales and participating school districts in Florida © 2003 Samantha Eddis Finbow, Research Student, University of Surrey, England

Introduction

The research I have undertaken compares home education in England and Wales with that in Florida, and specifically focuses on the relationships between the authority figures and the home educators in each region. These two regions were chosen because the laws on home education gave similar flexibility over the parents’ rights to choose the education of their children, and they were easy to access for primary and secondary data sources. Before I was able to consider my guiding question, namely 'Under what precepts do home educators and local education authority representatives interact?' an historical and legal overview of home education was necessary. This is dealt with in detail in the final thesis.

The home education movement is detailed as part of many studies alongside answering the main concerns of academic merit and socialization of this alternative to traditional schooling (see Ray & Wartes 1991, Ray 1997, Lines 1991, 1995, Meighan 1995, Shyers 1992, Taylor 1986). As there is a body of research that has outlined the various types of home educators, including their educational philosophies or rationale for home education (see Ray 1997, 1999, Lines 1991, 1995, Mayberry et al. 1995), I wanted to focus on the authority perspective. Very little has been done to investigate the perceptions of local education authorities that are involved with home educators in their area, though Petrie (1992) and Mayberry et al. (1995) have looked at this perspective in England and Wales, and in the USA respectively. At the time of their research, it was reported that most of the local education authorities were not totally conversant with the laws on home education. This was one of the questions I addressed in my research, finding that now almost all participating local education authorities (LEAs) and school districts (SDs) know the law, articulated it well in the telephone interviews or in the questionnaires sent, and/or illustrated their knowledge of the law in documentation sent to parents wishing to home educate.

Another concern was the inability to compare numbers of home educators in England and Wales with that of Florida, as different figures were used throughout the research. Thus, one of the questions asked of the LEAs and SDs was regarding the numbers of home educators in their area, which was then converted into a percentage of the total
school population in the area. Comparing the reported home educating populations in both regions was then easy, though it is recognized that such figures are not static.

On researching the laws in both regions, I discovered that despite similarities in the rights parents had to home educate their children in any way that constituted ‘suitable education’ or allowed for ‘progress commensurate with their ability’, a marked difference exists between the monitoring or evaluation of home educated children in England and Wales with that in Florida. This created a different set of interactions between the home educators and local education authorities as a result, and formed the basis of the theoretical model I have developed in the research.

The theoretical model developed is based on the progression from being uninformed about home education and the law to becoming fully informed and confident. The progression from one stage to the next is seen with the local education authorities as well as with the home educators. When the two groups of people interact, they will be at one of these stages described. The relationships that develop between the home educators and authority personnel that interact on monitoring or evaluation issues will be influenced by the stage they are at in the model proposed in the research.

In this document, I intend to feed back information to the participating local education authorities on the research findings to date.

All 172 LEAs in England and Wales and 67 SDs in Florida were originally asked to participate in the research in 2000-2002, which consisted of answering a postal questionnaire, sending information on documentation for parents, policy documents on home education, and volunteering to take part in a taped telephone interview. In the initial request for information, 63% of LEAs responded by providing information on home education and answering the questionnaires, whilst 58% of SDs responded. The questionnaire, collected in 2000-2001, furnished information that was used to answer several questions, as well as guiding me in the formulation of the telephone interview questions. The telephone interviews were conducted in 2001-2002, with 10 LEA representatives and 8 SD representatives.

**How many home educators are in England and Wales and in Florida?**

This is not easy to establish, as the authorities and home educators alike recognize that not all home educators make themselves known or want to be counted. For the purposes of the research, I wanted to be able to compare the numbers of home educators, to see if the population was a similar size. To do this, I asked the LEAs and SDs to give figures for the total number of children of compulsory school age in their area (approximately 5 – 16 years of age), as well as an estimated or actual number of home educators in the LEA or SD. [The resulting figures are an estimate, but give comparable figures of the percentage of home educators as part of the total school age population in the LEA or SD]
The average percentage of home educators in an LEA stood at 0.16% of the total school age population whereas 1.85% home schoolers were in the SDs. This is more than a one hundred fold difference in the proportion of home-educated children to traditionally state educated children.

Considering 57% of LEAs and 87% of SDs responding to the questionnaire stated that the number of home educators had increased in the last ten years in their area, there could be logistical or policy implications for the growing number of home educators in both regions. One of the contributions of this research is to illuminate potential issues that may need to be revisited as a consequence of a growing home education population that receives generally positive media (and political) coverage.

How do the home education laws compare between England and Wales with those in Florida?
The right to home educate one's own children is based on the 1944 and 1996 Education Acts in England and Wales, and the 1985 Home Education Act in Florida. How parents comply with the law, and the duties of the local education authorities are points of difference, however.

In England and Wales, parents are able to home educate their children in accordance with the Education Acts,

**Section 7, 1996 Education Act**

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

(a) to his age, ability, and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

**Section 9, 1996 Education Act**

"In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State, local education authorities and the funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure."

In Florida, the 1985 law that allows for home education is defined, sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent or guardian in order to satisfy the requirements of ss. 1002.41,1003.01(4),NS 1003.21(1) (FPEA 2002 online, at www.fpea.com, retrieved 7.7.03)

Statute 1002.20 states that all children of compulsory school age (between the ages of six and sixteen) must attend school regularly during the entire school term. This 'regular school attendance' may be achieved, according to 1003.01(13) under

A home education program as defined in s.1002.01, provided that at least one of the following conditions is met:

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a) The parent holds a valid regular Florida certificate to teach the subjects or grades in which instruction is given and complies with any other requirements prescribed by law or rules of the state board; or

b) The parent does not hold a valid regular Florida certificate to teach and complies with the following requirements:

1. Notifies the superintendent of schools of the county in which the parent resides of his or her intent to establish and maintain a home education program. The notice shall be in writing, signed by the parent, and shall include the names, addresses, and birth dates of all children who shall be enrolled as students in the home education program. The notice shall be filed in the superintendent's office within 30 days of the establishment of the home education program. A written notice of termination of the home education program shall be filed in the superintendent's office within 30 days of said termination.

2. Maintains a portfolio of records and materials. The portfolio shall consist of a log, made contemporaneously with the instruction, which designates by title the reading workbooks, and creative materials used or developed by the student. The portfolio shall be preserved by the parent for 2 years and shall be made available for inspection by the superintendent, or the superintendent's agent, upon 15 days' written notice.

3. Provides for an annual educational evaluation in which is documented the pupil's demonstration of educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability. A copy of the evaluation shall be filed annually with the district school board office in the county in which the pupil resides. The annual educational evaluation shall consist of one of the following:

   a. A teacher selected by the parent shall evaluate the pupil's educational progress upon review of the portfolio and discussion with the pupil. Such teacher shall hold a valid regular Florida certificate to teach academic subjects at the elementary or secondary level. The teacher shall submit a written evaluation to the school superintendent;

   b. The pupil shall take any nationally normed student achievement test used by the district and administered by a certified teacher. Such test results shall be reported to the school superintendent;

   c. The pupil shall take a state student assessment test. Such test results shall be reported to the school superintendent;

   d. The pupil shall be evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active license pursuant to the provisions of s.490.003 (7) or (8). Such results shall be reported to the school superintendent; or

   e. The pupil shall be evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually agreed upon by the school superintendent of the district in which the pupil resides and the pupil's parent or guardian. Such results shall be reported to the superintendent. The school superintendent shall review and accept the results of the annual educational evaluation of the pupil in a home setting.
education program. If the pupil does not demonstrate educational progress at a level commensurate with her or his ability, the superintendent shall notify the parent, in writing, that such progress has not been achieved. The parent shall have 1 year from the date of receipt of the written notification to provide remedial instruction to the pupil. At the end of the 1-year probationary period, the pupil shall be reevaluated as specified in this subparagraph. Continuation in a home education program shall be contingent upon the pupil demonstrating educational progress commensurate with her or his ability at the end of the probationary period.

Statute 1002.41 defines the home education program, which includes the fact that the child needs to meet the regular attendance law via home education. It then continues in a very similar fashion to statute 1003.01(13), so it will not be restated here. An important additional section to the statute, however, notes that

A home education program shall be excluded from meeting the requirements of a school day.

Statute 1002.41

There is also provision within the law for students to participate in interscholastic extracurricular activities, from the 9th grade onwards.

(www.flsenate.gov, retrieved 7.7.03)

Home educating parents can teach their children using any method that allows for progression and which is appropriate for the child. This allows for a great deal of flexibility in teaching methods or styles in both regions. LEAs and SDs have reported seeing the whole spectrum of home educating methods and styles, from the more formal, rote-learning or strictly curriculum based programmes, to the highly individualized, child-led programmes that constitute the unschooled approach, to eclectic methods that borrow from Charlotte Mason's or Maria Montessori's philosophies, to delayed academics, to the classical approach. Of course, such home education examples are from those families who are committed to educating their children – there are a small minority of reported ‘home educators’ who are not working within the letter of the law, and seem to be using home education to circumvent truancy issues. Most LEAs and SDs concurred in the telephone interviews that only a small minority of home educators gave them cause for concern.

Stemming from the law is the method by which parents provide evidence that their child is being suitably home educated, which is markedly different in England and Wales compared to Florida. In England and Wales, the onus is on the parents to satisfy the authorities that their home-educated child is receiving efficient, full-time education that is suitable for his or her age, ability or aptitude. Terms such as ‘efficient’, ‘full-time’, and ‘suitable’ have had to be clarified in the courts (see Petrie 1995,1997). Parents are expected to provide evidence of the child’s educational progress, which usually involves a home visit by an inspecting local education

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authority representative. Though not stipulated in the law, all LEAs interviewed saw
the home visit as the most common and usual method of monitoring home educated
children in their LEA. Reports submitted by the parents, or the meeting of the parents
and the children at a neutral location were also accepted, but not favoured.

As the law states the duties of the LEAs, they are duty bound to inform the parents to
provide evidence that their child is receiving a suitable education if they have reason
to believe this not to be the case. In other words, the law does not state that LEAs
have to monitor the home-educated child if they believe the child is receiving a
suitable education. However, to be informed that the child is being educated, the
LEAs usually request a home visit, with repeat visits that can be annually or more
often as deemed necessary.

The monitoring of home-educated children in England and Wales is much more
labour intensive and time consuming that the evaluation procedures found in Florida,
where such home visits do not occur.

In Florida, the law articulates the responsibilities of the parents in providing an annual
evaluation of their home-educated child. This evaluation is then furnished to the local
school districts to be accepted and filed, thus reducing the involvement of the SDs to
more of an administrative role.

Parents in Florida need to keep a portfolio of the child’s educational materials that
show progression, and the list of reading materials used. This portfolio of records and
materials need to be kept and maintained for two years, and made available for
inspection by the superintendent upon fifteen days’ written notice. Most importantly
in Florida, it is in the statutes that the parent or guardian shall provide an annual
educational evaluation of the child to show evidence that the child had progressed at a
level ‘commensurate with her or his ability’ Statute 1002.41. Again, the wording in
law allows considerable flexibility to satisfy the terms. In addition, the evaluation of
the home-educated child can be completed in one of five ways:

1. A Florida certified teacher evaluates the pupils’ portfolio and has a discussion
   with the child
2. The pupil takes a nationally-normed student achievement test administered by
   a certified teacher
3. The pupil takes a state student assessment test, used by the school district and
   administered by a certified teacher at a location and under testing conditions
   approved by the school district
4. The pupil is evaluated by an individual holding a valid, active teaching license
5. The pupil is evaluated with any other valid measurement tool as mutually
   agreed by the school superintendent of the district.

So, whilst the parents can choose one of the five options above, their child is
evaluated by a third party, and not by the parents. Yet, the time and labour involved

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completion
in completing the evaluation rests with the parents, and not the authorities. The SDs follow up on evaluations not filed within a year of the last evaluation, or specifically ask the parents to come in for a portfolio review if the last evaluation has been deemed unsatisfactory.

What documentation is provided for parents who intend to home educate?
As part of the research, I was interested in examining the guidelines that are sent to parents who notify the authorities of their intention to home educate. The guidelines received were graded in terms of aesthetics and content. Grading for aesthetics included the best presented documents that were word-processed, stapled booklets, with or without graphics, with headings and easy to read paragraphs, that could have been numbered or bulleted. The less well presented documents were photocopied sheets, and not necessarily always legible.

The content of the documents was based on a number of factors, including stipulating the law on home education, clearly defining the parents' and authorities' responsibilities within the law, definitions of terms used in the law, and procedures stated for monitoring or evaluation of the home educated children. Those documents that were highly graded for content included useful, pertinent advice for new home educators, useful addresses and contacts, and useful resources to access. Those documents that were less well graded contained negative comments or comments that could be construed as negative, ambiguous or misleading information.

A full analysis of the documents sent to parents will be part of the final research thesis. Of note, however, were the examples of documents that had been constructed with guidance from other LEAs, SDs or home educating support groups – several documents had a similar style. In addition, several LEA documents had been produced with an award of National Lottery funding in England and Wales.

Under what precepts do home educators and local education authorities interact?
The guiding question in this comparative research involves looking at the relationships between the authority representatives and home educators, from the authority perspective. The interaction between home educators and local education authorities seems to be legally dictated, as the duties of parents and LEAs or SDs result in a relationship being formed. How the LEAs and SDs perceive home educators will have a bearing on their relationships, though there are other issues at play. In the first instance, authority representatives and home educators will interact by telephone or letter, usually when the latter inquires about home education in the area. A packet of information is sent out to the home educating family, with follow up action as necessary. In England and Wales the follow up action after the initial packet of information, is to arrange a home visit with the family to assess the home education programme. The home visit can be undertaken by one LEA official, or two, with differing responsibilities within the LEA. For example, whilst many home visits

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will be conducted by Education Welfare Officer (EWO), other personnel may be chosen to complete the home visits - such as a social worker, principal welfare officer, education otherwise officer. In most cases cited in this research, the officer responsible for home visits has many other job functions to perform, and monitoring home education is one portion of their total job responsibility in the LEA. In Florida, by contrast, no home visits are undertaken, though one SD representative informed me that they were undertaken some years ago. The follow up expected after furnishing the home educating family with the information packet entails the SD receiving a written notice of intent to establish a home education program from the parents. Stipulated in law are the requirements of the parents to supply the child’s name, age and address, with a parent signature on the notice of intent letter. Once the SD receives the letter, it is filed. The next interaction comes on or before the anniversary of the filing of the notice of intent. At this time, the parents must furnish an evaluation of the child’s progress, again stipulated in law.

In both regions, if the authorities consider that unsatisfactory progress has been made in the home education program, certain procedures are followed. Such procedures, and the legal requirements of the LEAs and SDs to satisfy themselves that each home educated child is receiving an efficient and suitable education commensurate to their age and ability, is reviewed in the final thesis. There are similarities, but it is the differences that become the focus of discussion.

To understand the relationship with home educators from the authority perspective more fully, I interviewed 10 LEA representatives and 8 SD representatives by telephone. All interviewees had some or total responsibility for home educated children within their local education area, and were able to answer all questions posed. To improve the validity of the transcribed interviews, I emailed a copy of the transcripts to the interviewees to check for inaccuracies, and to clarify points about which I was unclear. A full analysis of the transcripts, comparing LEA and SD responses is part of the final thesis. However, several themes can be seen that are worth comment here:

**On the issue of conflict issues with the law**
Petrie (1992) and Mayberry et al (1995) both commented on conflict issues between the home educators in England and Wales and in the USA respectively, finding that one of the problems was the authority’s apparent lack of complete understanding of the home education laws. In this research, most of the LEAs and SDs were fully conversant with the law, which was illuminated in the information documents sent to parents, and also amplified in the interviews. It was reported that conflict with the home educators was minimal, and that most LEA and SD officials felt they had good relationships with the home educators.

**On the issue of socialization**
Many of the authority representatives were able to see home educators socializing well by interaction in a variety of groups, clubs and so on. The networking and
support groups in Florida is much more apparent and accessible, as opposed to the support available in England and Wales. There was some concern noted by a few individual LEA representatives that the socialization home educating children received, in spite of affiliation with groups and clubs, was no match to that found in school. These LEA officials felt that dealing with and overcoming socialization issues within schools was a 'rite of passage' that most people received, and not to have the experience could be a disadvantage.

On the issue of inadequate home education
All reported research that extols the virtues of home education, and the high academic achievements that are obtainable as a result of individualized education from committed parents, have been collected from volunteer samples of home educators. Whilst the high standards of education cannot be disputed, these volunteers may have a vested interest in acting as the mouthpiece for the home education movement. So, from the authority perspective, I was interested in understanding cases of inadequate home education. This is an important concern for LEAs more so than for SDs, it seems, as the Florida laws have tried to circumvent potential truants using home education as a loophole to avoid education.

On the issue of unknown home educators
As home educators in England and Wales do not have to make themselves known to the authorities if they have never been to school (that is, they reach the compulsory school age of five, and decide to home educate rather than take a place in the local primary school), there is more concern over the number of home educators that are unknown to the authority. There are no national databases that alert the LEAs to children within their area that are not in state or private school, and unaccounted for. Furthermore, research on home education in England and Wales that proffer figures on estimated numbers of home educators differ vastly from estimates quoted by the LEAs.

In Florida, in order to establish a home education program, the parents must register the child's name with the authorities. There is less concern about unknown home educators, though some of the SD representatives I spoke to admitted that it could be an issue.

Summary
This interim document highlights some of the findings of the comparative research that is currently ongoing in England and Wales as well as in Florida. First, I needed to consider how large the home education population was in comparison to the total school age population. Having found the Florida home educating population to be larger, I then looked to the laws to see if there was a reason that better accommodated the home educators. The differences in the law centered on the compulsory registration of home educators, and the methods of monitoring or evaluation of home education programmes. Documentation and policy procedures are analyzed to give a better overview of the interactions that occur between home educators and local authorities. Information in this document is for internal use only and is not to be reproduced without prior permission from the author. This is research work in progress, and may need subsequent revision before completion.
education authority representatives. A full analysis, with suggested avenues for each region on the basis of the research form part of the final thesis.

The scheduled completion date for this research is late 2004, after which time I will write another report, summarizing the chapters, findings, points of discussion and suggestions, for those LEAs and SDs that participated and who request a copy. To save postage costs, the final report will be available as an emailed Word document. Please let me know if you would like a copy of the final report by contacting me at sameddis@aol.com.

This research would not have been possible without the generous time given, and support from the participating LEA and SD representatives. Thank you.
Samantha Eddis Finbow
I am currently researching the field of home-based education as part of my MPhil/PhD degree at the University of Surrey (School of Educational Studies Dept.). As an alternative form of education to that at school, home-based education is seen to be growing in numbers in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In my research I plan to explore the perceptions that people have towards home-based education, to better understand this educational field. My study will be comparative in nature, as I will seek similar information from both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Could you please send me any policy documents or guidelines that you may have relating to home education in your LEA? Are there any documents or guidelines that are sent out to families that are intending to home educate, or who are currently doing so in your LEA?

I intend to approach local education authorities in England and Wales, and their equivalent in the United States, with an aim to obtaining a balanced view of home based education from a government perspective. Would you be willing to answer a questionnaire on home-based education that represents the LEA's viewpoint? If so, is there a better time of the year to send out a questionnaire; and is an email questionnaire preferable to traditional mail? Do you have a personal email address that I can send further information to, or would you prefer traditional mail for all correspondence? Following the questionnaire, I would also like to have telephone interviews (the most logistical, especially to gather information over such a wide geographical area). Is there a better time of year, or time of day to conduct such telephone interviews?

Thank you, in advance, for your co-operation. Please use my personal address (traditional or email) at the top left of the page for any correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

Samantha J Eddis
Home address, 
Naples, Florida

Email address
Fax address

March 7th, 2001

Dear

I am currently researching the field of home schooling (home-based education) as part of my MPhil/PhD degree at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom. As an alternative form of education to that at school, home schooling is seen to be growing in numbers in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In my research I plan to explore the perceptions that people have towards home schooling, to better understand this educational field. My study will be comparative in nature, as I will seek similar information from both the United Kingdom and the United States.

I intend to approach local education authorities in England and Wales, and local counties in Florida, with an aim to obtaining a balanced view of home schooling from a policy maker's perspective. Would you be willing to answer the enclosed questionnaire on home schooling that represents the local county's viewpoint? Following the questionnaire, I would also like to have telephone interviews (the most logistical option, especially to gather information over such a wide geographical area). Would you be willing to be interviewed, and if so, is there a better time of year, or time of day to conduct such telephone interviews?

Could you please send me any policy documents or guidelines that you may have relating to home schooling in your county? Are there any documents or guidelines that are sent out to families that are intending to home school, or who are currently doing so in your county?

Thank you, in advance, for your co-operation. Please use my personal address (traditional or email), or fax number, at the top left of the page for any correspondence, as I am working from Naples on my research.

Yours faithfully,

Samantha Eddis Finbow
April 27th, 2002

Dear

As part of my MPhil/PhD research into home education, I originally approached your local education authority (LEA) for information on home education in your area. Thank you very much for the completed questionnaire and information received in 2000-2001, which has been collated. I am sending you the initial data results for your perusal. The full analysis of all the data will be completed after the second phase of my research.

As you may recall, you had agreed to participate in a telephone interview as a follow on from the initial data. I hope that you are still willing to take part in this research, which I anticipate completing by mid 2003. If you cannot grant me a telephone interview, it would be helpful for my research if you could indicate why. Please contact me via either of my contact addresses above or by email at your earliest convenience, to indicate your availability and the best time of day and best month to call. The telephone call will be taped, transcribed and sent to you to check for inaccuracies before it is used. All information gathered will be coded for anonymity.

As part of this phase of the research work, I am enclosing a second questionnaire. Please could you take a few moments to answer it. The questionnaire can be returned with confirmation of your participation in the telephone interview. If you can fill in the questionnaire but cannot grant me a telephone interview, the data can still be used for the research.

Thank you once again for your participation. You will see from the data results that I have had 60% response rate from all the LEAs in the UK and 50% response rate from the Florida local school districts. I consider this research to be useful to the local education authorities in both countries, as the comparative nature of the work reflects different practices that may be of interest to you.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha J Eddis Finbow
Encl.
Dear

As part of my MPhil/PhD research into home education, I originally approached your local school district (SD) for information on home education in your area. Thank you very much for the completed questionnaire and information received in 2000-2001, which has been collated. I am sending you the initial data results for your perusal. The full analysis of all the data will be completed after the second phase of my research.

As you may recall, you had agreed to participate in a telephone interview as a follow on from the initial data. I hope that you are still willing to take part in this research, which I anticipate completing by mid 2003. If you are unable to grant me a telephone interview, it would be helpful for my research if you could indicate why. Please contact me via either of my contact addresses above or by email at your earliest convenience, to indicate your availability and the best time of day and best month to call. The telephone call will be taped, transcribed and sent to you to check for inaccuracies before it is used. All information gathered will be coded for anonymity.

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Yours sincerely,

Samantha J Eddis Finbow
Encs.
APPENDIX XVII
SAMPLE LETTER TO LEAS, FROM SUPPORT GROUP

Dear

Thank you for your letter. Please note that it is not convenient for you to visit us in the near future, and I would ask you to keep all correspondence in writing for the time being. I will not be returning the questionnaire included with your letter as it is not relevant to our style of education.

I would like to clarify my position with regard to supplying evidence of the provision I am making for my child’s education. I am aware that under Section 7 of the Education Act, 1996, I have a responsibility to cause my child to receive efficient, full-time education, suitable to his age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs. As you are aware, I consider it to be in my child’s best interests if this education takes place at home, rather than in a school.

I am also aware that an LEA has a duty to act if it appears that a parent is not discharging this responsibility. Further to this, I understand that case law has established that, since no such ‘appearance’ can exist or not exist in the absence of any information, it is reasonable for LEA’s [sic] to make informal enquiries about provision. I understand that, although I have no legal requirement to respond to these enquiries, this could be perceived as an appearance of no provision. In consideration of this understanding of my rights and responsibilities, I will be happy to supply information to you about my arrangements for my child’s education once we have had sufficient time to thoroughly consider all the information available about home education and arrive at a method which is best suited to my child’s age, aptitude and ability.

I understand that I am under no legal responsibility to accept home visits from you and that there are various ways in which this information may be supplied. I am currently considering which will be the most convenient and effective way of communicating our plans and provision to you.

I feel that a number of months will be required for us to settle in to home education and establish our provision. I will therefore contact you around ( ) concerning my child’s education.

I am sure you are aware that, as a home educator, I am under no obligation to follow a curriculum, give formal lessons, cover a school type syllabus or to expect my child to match school based age-specific standards. The education provided does not have to be academically based but suited to the individual child’s age, aptitude, ability and special educational needs.
I would like to point out that XXX is not a student undertaking academic studies, but a young person/child taking advantage of the opportunity to initiate and follow a course of education uniquely suited to him as an individual, with the full time support of his (mother) as one-to-one facilitator and assistant. As such, any work he produces is his own property, and I am not at liberty to share it with you or anyone else.

Further, it is neither your duty, nor your right to pass the home education as satisfactory but rather, to collect such information and evidence as would be sufficient to convince a reasonable person, on the balance of probabilities only, that a suitable education is taking place. I will consider this requirement when preparing information concerning my children's education.

I enclose a copy of the Summary of the Law produced by Education Otherwise for your information.

Yours

General points when writing to the LEA.

1. Always send by post. Use recorded delivery if you want to have proof of delivery.
2. Keep a paper copy of all correspondence.
3. If the letter you have received is copied to anyone else (ie CC'd on the bottom) make sure your letter is also copied to all concerned. Don't forget to CC your letter so all parties know.
4. Make sure all correspondence contains details of your and your child's name, address, dob etc so there is no excuse for it getting lost.
5. Always write assuming that the person reading the letter/report doesn't know anything about you. If the file is then transferred or needs to be passed to a legal team etc they know exactly what's gone on from your point of view.
6. The Summary of the Law is available at http://www.education.otherwise.org/Legal/SummLawEng&Wls.htm