THE SOCIALIZATION OF HOME-SCHOOLED CHILDREN IN RURAL UTAH

by

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in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development
Concern over the social development of children who are home schooled has caused parents and educators to question the wisdom of this practice. A review of home-schooling research has not revealed whether a difference exists between the social skills of home-schooled children and children who attend public schools. This study explored the socialization of home-schooled children by comparing Social Skills Rating System scores of home-schooled children with the scores of their mothers and a comparison sample of publicly-schooled children. Forty-six home-schooled children (23 boys and 23 girls), their mothers, and 39 publicly-schooled children (16 boys and 23 girls) participated in the study. Children and their mothers were asked to report the frequency of social behaviors engaged in by the child. Publicly-schooled girls reported engaging in more positive social behaviors than did home-schooled girls. No differences were found between publicly-schooled and home-schooled boys’ scores. Mothers of home-schooled children reported their children’s behaviors as more assertive than did their children, while children reported their behaviors as more cooperative than did their mothers.

Home-schooling mothers’ and their children’s perceptions of socialization were also explored by interviewing 10 mother-child dyads. Results of qualitative analyses revealed that acceptance of, and the ability to communicate well with individuals of varying
ages rather than association with same-aged peers was a key concept in the home-schooling perception of socialization. Home-schooling families believed that their perceptions of socialization were different from non-home-schooling families, who, they believed, focused more on same-age peer interaction. Findings also revealed that the family was seen as the primary socializing agent by home-schooling families. However, they were aware of, and tried to include, other positive socializing agents that could influence their children’s social development.
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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The family is the primary agent of socialization in most Western societies (Berns, 2001). Families both model and encourage the social skills that they want their children to develop. But while children experience their first socializing events with family members, other socializing agents such as the media, peers and schools also influence the social development of children.

The role of schools as socializing agents has risen in importance in recent history. Schools have accepted more responsibility for socializing activities that used to belong to the family or other socializing agents (Nyberg & Egan, 1981). Schools are now considered the most pervasive socialization institution (outside of the family) in the lives of children (Berns, 2001). The growing influence of schools as socializing agents has many people believing that what the schools offer in socialization experiences are essential rather than complementary (Medlin, 2000). Even though school experiences are deemed by many as essential, others are far from pleased with the results.

Concerns about the effectiveness of the public school system to prepare children for life in the larger society have caused some parents to assume more responsibility for their child’s education. A growing number of parents are choosing to provide for the education of their children at home (Ray, 1997). Many of these parents feel that the schools teach morals and values with which they do not agree, while not being effective enough at teaching the academic skills needed in today’s world.

As more and more families choose to home school, concern over home-schooled children’s academic and social skills has been expressed by school administrators, community members and state legislators. While some studies suggest that home-schooled children are not suffering academically (Ray, 2000), less is known about the socialization of home-schooled children.
The question about socialization is difficult because socialization means different things to different people. While no agreed upon definition of socialization is found in the literature, there seems to be some consistency among the various definitions used. Almost all definitions address one or both of the following tenets: 1) socialization refers to acquiring knowledge about, and accepting as one's own, social norms and values; and 2) socialization develops skills that allow an individual to function effectively in that society (Damon, 1988; Souza, 1999).

A better understanding of home-schooling families' perceptions of socialization and the social skills that home-schooled children possess is needed to clarify information we have about the socialization of home-schooled children. A knowledge of the social skills of home-schooled children and home-schooling families' perception of socialization will assist in the formation of policies and attitudes that affect home-schooling families and educational institutions.

The purpose of this study was fourfold: to explore whether differences existed in the social skills of home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children; to examine whether there were differences between the social skills of home-schooled boys and home-schooled girls; to examine the relationship between the mother's perception of her child's social skills and the child's perception of his or her social skills, and to explore home-schooling families' perceptions of socialization. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to explore these issues.

This study employed the Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) to measure the social skills of both publicly-schooled and home-schooled children, and to provide a measure of the mother's perception of her child's social skills. Interviews with home-schooling families were utilized to provide information about their perceptions of socialization and the socializing agents that are active in these homes. The specific research questions are as follows:
1. Are there differences in the social skills of home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children?
   
   (a) Are there differences in the social skills of home-schooled boys and publicly-schooled boys?
   
   (b) Are there differences in the social skills of home-schooled girls and publicly-schooled girls?

2. Are there differences in the social skills of home-schooled boys and home-schooled girls?

3. Are there differences in home-schooling mothers’ perceptions and their children’s perceptions of the child’s social skills?

4. How do home-school families perceive socialization?

5. What socializing agents are recognized and encouraged by home-schooling families?
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The socialization of children is a topic that has received considerable attention from the research community, with families and schools viewed as major socializing agents (Berns, 2001; Elkin & Handel, 1989). Socialization research is reviewed here as it pertains to the two tenets of socialization: research that addresses the transmission and acceptance of commonly held values, and research that focuses on social skills. A brief overview of schools as socializing agents shows how examining the home-school movement and its outcomes can increase our understanding of schools as socializing agents.

A brief history of the home-school movement and an overview of the research that has accompanied this movement reveals that home schooling is gaining momentum (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992), and that research on this social movement has not kept pace with its growth (Cizek & Ray, 1995; Wright, 1988), particularly in the affective domain. A review of the literature dealing with home schooling, with special attention given to research that deals with home schooling and socialization, or the affective domains, follows.

Socialization’s Two Tenets

Socialization as Learning Norms and Values

Families are seen as the primary socialization arena for young children (Berns, 2001; Elkin & Handel, 1989; Maccoby, 1992). The effects of families on infant and child socialization has been explored from several perspectives including attachment theory, child-rearing styles and temperament (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Kochanska, 1995; Schickedanz, 1995). Socialization research dealing with the first tenet, of socialization, the transmission and acceptance of norms and values, might include studies on the development of morality (Turiel, 1998), gender development (Ruble & Martin, 1998; Thorne, 1993), and
cultural diversity and human development (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). Families have
tremendous influence in the development of gendered and moral behavior, and in the
transference of culture. Some of the socialization is a result of intentional instruction, such
as correction statements directed to a child, but much of the socialization is a result of
interactions that the child observes, or is a part of, that were not intended as socialization
messages (Berns). Children in homes where there is marital discord may develop
interaction skills that hinder rather than foster positive peer relations (Rubin, Bukowski, &
Park, 1998). The roles that schools play also are important to understand because the
messages conveyed in schools frequently conflict with the messages children receive at
home (Greenfield & Suzuki). For instance, families might encourage independence while
the schools stress conformity. Working hard academically may be encouraged by parents,
but discourage by peers (Berns).

Socialization as Social Skills

Socialization research that deals with the second tenet, namely social skills, has also
received considerable attention especially as it relates to schools. Merrell and Gimpel
(1998) assert that the construct of social skills is widely misunderstood because it is so
interwoven with other psychological constructs and human traits such as temperament,
language, perception, and behavior-environment interaction. Social cognition (Rose-Kasnor,
1987), social competence (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995; Rubin et al., 1998), social interactions
(Rubin et al.), social networks (Feiring & Lewis, 1989; Johnson, 1991), and prosocial
behaviors (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998) are all thought of as aspects of socialization.

Socialization research, and specifically that dealing with social skills, is conducted in
various disciplines using different definitions (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998). Synthesizing
various definitions, Michelson, Sugi, Wood, and Kazdin (1983) developed the following
components of social skills. Social skills are (a) primarily learned, (b) influenced by the
attributes of the participants and the environment in which it occurs, (c) interactive by nature
(d) contain verbal and nonverbal behaviors, (e) include effective initiations and appropriate responses, and (f) socially reinforced. As learned behaviors that are socially reinforced, it is important to understand where and how social skills are acquired.

In the 1970s, much of the socialization research focused on social skills and peer relations and their long term effects on children’s development (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998; Rubin et al., 1998). Because of this, the 1980s saw the development of several social skills assessment instruments and intervention programs (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995; Merrell & Gimpel). Social skill assessment and intervention or training programs remain prominent topics in education and psychology (Merrell & Gimpel).

Schools as Socializing Agents

As children move through their life-course there is an increase in interactions with individuals outside of the family. Schools and peers join families as important socializing agents. Brint, Contreras, and Matthews (2001) asserted that “... socialization has long been considered one of the major societal purposes of schooling” (p. 157). Schools function both as an arena for peer interactions (Thorne, 1993; Zarbatany, Hartmann, & Rankin, 1990) and as a transmitter of cultural values (Brint et al.; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). The schools, peers, and family are not necessarily seen as separate, non-interacting agents (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Elkin & Handel, 1989; Parke & Buriel, 1998), but rather as an ecological system that the child moves through, interacts with, and influences (Rubin et al., 1998). The effects from one environment can be seen in the others (Schickedanz, 1995).

Schools function as a socializing agent by transmitting values. They do this in two ways: as organizational systems, and as arenas for peer interactions. Passe (1999) asserted that schools cannot be value free and should therefore actively teach values. This, he claimed, is a primary purpose of public schools. In another publication advocating the
active teaching of values by schools, Kim Suh and Traiger (1999) proposed that teachers integrate the teaching of values by selecting literature and discussion topics that provide opportunities to examine our culture’s historical and contemporary values and behaviors.

Some recent school-socialization research has looked at how schools, as institutions, transmit cultural values and what those values are. Brint et al. (2001) examined whether the values schools transmit have shifted from an emphasis on traditional moral virtues such as honesty, fairness, and reliability, towards a set of modern values that include a celebration of cultural diversity, self-esteem and self-expression. After visiting 64 classrooms in Southern California, and interviewing both teachers and principals, as well as reviewing the curriculum used in the schools, Brint et al. reported that both traditional moral virtues and modern values are encouraged by the schools. They also reported that more than either traditional or modern values, schools send socialization messages that emphasize work effort and orderliness. These have been historical values of schools over time because schools rely on organization and procedures to run effectively.

Brint et al. (2001) also examined the ways that socialization messages are transmitted, and found that socialization messages are delivered on several different levels. These levels include teacher-child interactions and the rules that frame these interactions, subject-matter curriculum, the routines embedded in everyday school life, school sponsored or endorsed programs and rituals, and the use of public space in visual displays. The values of work effort and orderliness were most commonly transmitted through teacher-child interactions and school programs while both traditional moral values and modern values were embedded in the school curriculum and routines.

Two studies investigating the socialization of students into the school’s culture found that peer influence was stronger than the school’s socialization messages. In an examination of the socialization of students into an alternative school setting, Souza (1999) stated, “Teachers often communicate the expected norms and attitudes of the school to
students..." (p. 94), but found that fellow students’ behaviors and communications with each other were more influential in establishing behaviors acted out in the schools. While expected behaviors were communicated to the students, they followed the disruptive behaviors displayed by classmates rather than the adult’s directions. In a study of adolescents’ adjustment to school in a regular school setting, Berndt and Keefe (1995) reported that friends influenced all aspects of school adjustment, but that it was particularly noticeable in disruptive behaviors. When their friends were more disruptive, individuals adopted similar behaviors. Disruptive or anti-social behaviors might be more readily associated with peer influence than prosocial behaviors since the schools already encourage prosocial behaviors and peer influence in this direction is more difficult to recognize.

In 1993 Thorne asserted that the development of social skills during middle childhood is related to peer interaction at school, and that these interactions are different for boys and girls. The natural sex segregation which occurs in schools results in different social interactions for boys and girls (Berns, 2001; Thorne). Boys generally engage in more competitive and physical activities and have groups that are larger and less homogeneous than groups of girls (Berns; Lewis & Phillipsen, 1998). Girls interact in smaller, more intimate groups and engage in more cooperative and conversation based activities (Berns; Thorne). Gender-appropriate behavior is rewarded by acceptance into groups while gender-inappropriate behavior results in rejection (Berns; Thorne), thus encouraging children to adopt the norms of their peers. Whether it is by direct instruction, embedded in the organizational system, or taught through peer interaction, schools do transmit values and expected norms for behavior.

The school’s role as a socializing agent is well recognized and accepted, but perhaps not well understood. Brint and colleagues’ (2001) recent examination of the school’s methods of conveying socialization messages, coupled with school-multicultural studies, has helped us to understand the schools’ influence on the transference of norms and values.
History of Home Schooling

Jane Van Galen (1991) asserted that it is institutionalized, compulsory education that is new to our education history, not home education. During the colonial days, it was the common practice to educate children at home (Carper, 2000; Cremin, 1977; Kirschner, 1991; Knowles et al., 1992), and attendance at petty schools or grammar schools was more the exception than the rule (Cremin; McMannon, 1997). Early Americans felt that the responsibility to educate children rested on the parents, not the state (Carper; Tyack, 1967). Attending school was not mandatory and parents used schools as a resource for, not the primary means of, educating their children. This home-based education system continued into the early 19th century (Kirschner; McMannon).

Public opinion about the necessity of schools changed in the late 1800s, largely due to the industrial revolution and the large numbers of immigrants coming to America. As families migrated to the cities, the roles of fathers, mothers, and children changed, and as work moved from the farm to the city, the education of children moved from the home to the school (Kirschner, 1991; McMannon, 1997). The swelling number of immigrants also caused political leaders to reflect on ways to integrate and socialize the masses. The common public school system was then recognized as a means to socialize immigrant children into American society (Carper, 2000; Kaestle, 1983; Knowles et al., 1992; Tyack 1967).

This move to use schools to Americanize immigrant children illustrates just how powerful the socialization influence of schools was perceived to be. Many Americans looked at the public schools as the best place to prepare children to be responsible and contributing citizens to their communities (Carper, 2000; Gutek, 1970), and to address social concerns such as the socialization of immigrant children (Cremin, 1977; Kaestle, 1983; Kirschner, 1991; Tyack, 1967).
Compulsory education laws emerged beginning in Massachusetts in 1852 (Burridge, 1970; Kirschner, 1991) and, by the late 1850s, few children were educated at home (Carper, 2000; Knowles et al., 1992; McMannon, 1997). During the years between the 1840's and the 1900's, enrollment in public schools grew, as did public support for them (Carper; Kirschner). It should be recognized that these early public schools were descendents of the common schools and were influenced by local religious traditions (Carper).

As control of the schools moved away from communities and toward the state in the early 1900s, questions of educational philosophy and curriculum became central issues of educational reform (Butts & Cremin, 1953). Educational reformers such as John Dewey, called for less rote memorization and greater socialization towards society's common goals (Burridge, 1970; Kirschner, 1991). By the 1930s, the inclusion of Darwin's theory of evolution and secular humanism in the curriculum was established, and the use of the Bible in the schools was challenged (Butts & Cremin; Carper, 2000). In 1963, the Supreme Court ruled against prayer and Bible reading in the public schools, a marked contrast to what public schools reflected just a half century earlier (Carper). By the late 1960s, schools were criticized for not meeting the needs of diverse groups of people, and a call for more local and community control was made by educational reformers (Knowles et al., 1992).

The resurgence of home education in the 1970s was due in part to parents' dissatisfaction with the public schools turn toward secular humanism and rejection of practices encouraged by predominately Christian religions (Carper, 2000). The resurgence of home education also was aided by the writings of reformers such as Ivan Illich (1971) and John Holt (1981), who encouraged parents to take charge of their children's education again and leave the public school (Franzosa, 1991; Knowles et al., 1992).

Ivan Illich (1971) was perhaps the most outspoken advocate of the "deschooling" movement. He maintained that learning was not a result of instruction, but rather a result of
social exchanges between people, and that these exchanges could best occur outside of the public school setting. John Holt (1981) encouraged home schooling further by founding the newsletter *Growing without Schooling* which was very influential in the early stages of the home-schooling movement (Knowles et al., 1992).

**Growth of the home-schooling movement.** While modest at first, the home-school movement has grown and gained momentum. It is believed that in the early 1970's, between 10,000 and 15,000 families (20,000 to 30,000 children) were home schooling in the United States (Holt, 1983; Lines, 1991). A decade later the estimated number of home-schooled children had grown to somewhere between 122,000 and 244,000, and by 1988 between 150,000 and 300,000 (Lines), an increase of more than 10 times the number in the early 1970's.

The actual number of families who currently home school their children is difficult to ascertain. In most states, parents who choose to educate their children at home are required to notify local school districts, yet many do not (Lines, 1991). Rather than using government records, which leave out an unknown percentage of noncomplying families, Lines has estimated the number of home-schooled children using organizations which provide curricula and services to home-school children. The most current estimates made by Lines (2000) places the number of home-schooled children between 1.5 million and 2 million, an increase that suggests the home-school movement is growing.

**Home schooling as a social movement.** Gerlach and Hine (1970) identified five factors that are necessary for a phenomenon to be considered a social movement. These factors are: organization, ideology, recruitment, opposition, and commitment. Knowles and colleagues (1992) claimed that these factors have been associated with home schooling since the 1970s. These five factors will be discussed in order to establish that home schooling is more than a passing phase or minor educational movement, but rather a social movement that deserves attention.
The organization of the home-school movement is not modeled after a centralized bureaucracy with clear-cut leadership. Every state has a home-school association (Lines, 1991), but these operate independently with no national leadership or state representatives. The number of home schoolers who are members in these organizations is believed to be much less than the actual number of home schoolers (Lines). Many of these state associations hold conventions, publish newsletters, lobby politicians, and defend legal rights (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988).

Van Galen (1991) has identified two different ideologies common among home-schooling parents: (1) the schools are teaching objectionable information; and, (2) the schools are inefficient in teaching the children important skills and information. While she has labeled parents with these ideologies as ideologues and pedagogues, she has concluded that home-schooling parents from both camps share the belief that schools, in their current practices, are failing to serve their families' best interests.

The area of recruitment is not as clearly identifiable as organization or ideology in the home-school movement. New home schoolers are recruited, mostly by word of mouth, as parents share their ideologies with other parents (Knowles et al., 1992). And while there may not be a formal recruitment mechanism in any of the support groups or organizations, the growth in home-schooling participants supports the idea that recruitment by word of mouth is effective (Lines, 1991).

The right to educate children at home has been challenged repeatedly ever since states adopted compulsory education laws (Richardson & Zirkel, 1991). As early as 1923, court rulings have acknowledged the right of parents to choose how their children are educated (Guterson, 1992), and several cases in the 1970s clearly established that home schooling was constitutional (Richardson & Zirkel). Therefore, instead of insisting on public school attendance, public school policy makers have turned to regulating home-school activities, a move strongly resisted by home schoolers (Cibulka, 1991). In addition
to local school districts and state school boards, home schooling has also been opposed by large national organizations such as the National Educators Association (Cibulka; National Education Association, 2000). Even with this opposition, home schoolers have been successful in their efforts to protect their right to educate their children at home and avoid state and local school intrusion through restrictive regulations. Cibulka reported, “With only some exceptions, home schoolers have been remarkably successful in reshaping state laws and regulations so that these are favorable or at least neutral toward their interests” (p. 104).

Commitment to home schooling is evident in the time and effort home schoolers put forth in litigation and in opposing school district regulations (Cibulka, 1991) as well as the longevity of the home-school practice. A study by Rudner (1999) that gathered demographic information and compared home-schooled and publicly-schooled children’s Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or Tests of Achievement and Proficiency test scores, reported that over half of the respondents had been home schooled their entire school career.

These five factors: organization, ideology, recruitment, commitment, and opposition are evident in the home-schooling movement, and, as a social movement, home schooling could impact public education in the United States (Hill, 2000). Home-school critics suggest that home schooling reduces public school’s funding by reducing the number of students attending public schools, thus reducing the amount of money state governments provide to the local schools and by influencing bond issues (Hill). Critics also claim public schools are negatively affected when they no longer feel the influence of concerned, involved parents and actively supported children (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000). As a social movement, one that could potentially influence such a substantial institution as public education, little research has been done to determine the effects of home schooling on children or on public schools.
Review of Home-schooling Research

While the home-school movement has not commanded a lot of attention from the research community, enough research has been undertaken to help develop a clearer picture of the home-schooling phenomenon. Cizek and Ray (1995) have pointed out that home-school research has developed through four phases. They have labeled these phases: (1) Who is doing home schooling? (2) Why are parents choosing home schooling? (3) Inquiry related to cognitive outcomes, and (4) Investigations of the socialization of home-schooled children. Cheryl Wright’s (1988) research analysis supports the work of Cizek and Ray as she describes home-school research through the 1980s as being in the early stages of systematic development, namely exploratory designs. She points out that the majority of the first studies on home schooling focused on descriptions of home-schooling families and the motives behind their choice to home school their children. A review of studies conducted during these four stages and a summary of their findings follows.

Phase One: Who Is Doing Home Schooling

Home schooling as a topic of research interest began in the early 1980s, with the majority of the studies being master’s theses or doctoral dissertations (Wright, 1988). Gustavsen’s (1981) dissertation entitled “Selected Characteristics of Home Schools and Parents Who Operate Them” is credited with being the first major work focusing on home schooling (Wright). From these early studies Ray (1988) synthesized the family demographics of home-schooling families. Eleven years later, in a study with a sample size of over 20,000 students and almost 12,000 families, Rudner (1999) found very similar home-schooling family demographics.

From Ray (1988, 1999), Rudner (1999), and other studies (Gladin, 1987; Gustafson, 1988; Lines, 1991; Mayberry, 1988), a sketch of home-schooling families can be drawn. Most home-school families are traditional nuclear families, with 98% of the
fathers working and 77% of the mothers not participating in the work force (Rudner).

Home-schooling families generally place more importance on religious activity than do non-home-schooling families with children at home (Gladin; Lines; Ray). Home-schooling parents tend to have more formal education and the family typically enjoys a higher income than does the average family with children at home (Gladin; Gustafson; Lines; Mayberry; Ray; Rudner). Home-schooling families commonly are comprised of an average of three children, with over 70% of the children in home schools between the age of 9 to 12 years (Ray, 1988). Formal instruction usually begins at 5.5 years of age (Gladin; Ray) with both parents actively involved in the home-schooling experience (Ray). Actual instruction generally lasts 3 to 4 hours a day, with additional time spent in individual learning endeavors (Ray).

The earliest studies of home schooling focused on describing what home schooling was and who participated in it (Cizek & Ray, 1995; Wright, 1988). While these questions are still being asked by current researchers they are not the main focus of current home-schooling research.

Phase Two: Why Are Parents Choosing Home Schooling?

The question of who is home schooling, asked by early home-school researchers, quickly expanded to include why families were home schooling. Knowles (1988) listed several reasons why families choose to home school their children. These range from dissatisfaction with school discipline and academic standards to a desire for closer family unity, and to address spiritual, socialization and moral issues in a manner families desire. Jueb (1995) reported that families choose to home school for a variety of reason including socialization, family, academics and religious reasons. Van Galen’s (1991) work, which included a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with mothers who home schooled their children, identified two major reasons parents choose to home school their children.
She reported that parents home school their children because they see the education of their children as their responsibility and duty, and they are dissatisfied with the curriculum taught and methods used in the public schools, or they feel that the schools are not teaching the children adequately, and that they could do as well or better at home.

The reasons families choose to home school vary from family to family. While some parents choose to home-school because of their dissatisfaction with the public schools, others choose to home school because of the opportunities afforded the family to educate their children in subjects and with the methods they prefer.

*Phase Three: Inquiry Related to Cognitive Outcomes*

Just as home-schooling research branched beyond the exploratory questions of who home schools and why, home-schooling research also has expanded to include investigation of the outcomes of home schooling, usually focusing on the academic achievements of home-schooled children (Ray, 1988, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Wright, 1988). In 1988, few studies with sound methodology and design could be cited in Ray’s synthesis of existing research. Likewise, Wright only included five studies in her critique of home-schooling research that used a comparison design while looking at academic outcomes. By 1991, however, Ray and Wartes (1991) cited 15 studies dealing with academic outcomes. Several of these studies used ACT or SAT scores of home-schooled students and compared them to scores of students educated in the public school system. Whether or not the groups were demographically similar was not reported. The results of the studies cited by Ray and Wartes prompted them to write, “The several studies that we have described consistently show the achievement scores of the home-schooled to be equal to or better than the scores of their peers in traditional schools.” (p. 57)

In the most comprehensive study to date, Rudner (1999) included a survey and analysis of standardized achievement test scores. The survey provided demographic
information about home-schooling families, and the analysis of standardized test scores provided a basis for evaluating the academic success of the children in these families. Rudner’s study also included the largest and most diverse sample used in a study of home schoolers. While previous studies focused on geographic regions, either states or school districts (Cizek & Ray, 1995; Wright, 1988), Rudner’s study was conducted on a national level with all 50 states included. It compared the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) median scores of 18,030 home-schooled students and the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP) median scores of 2,730 home-schooled students to the national median scores of the ITBS and TAP. As a result of this comparison, Rudner wrote, “the median scores for home-school students are well above their public/private school counterparts in every subject and in every grade” (p. 14).

The results of these reports should be interpreted with extreme caution. No studies could be found that used a design that took into account factors such as family socioeconomic status, or parents’ education, marital, or employment status. Home-schooling families have been shown to differ from traditionally-schooling families in each of these areas (Ray, 1999; Rudner, 1999). Rudner points out that his study was not a comparison of home schools and public or private schools, but rather an investigation to see if home schooling works for those who choose that style of education. The scores used in Rudner’s study were obtained from the Bob Jones University Press Testing and Evaluation Service. This testing service is contracted out by some home-schooling families but these families may or may not represent the general home-schooling population.

Phase Four: Investigations of the Socialization of Home-Schooled Children

The fourth phase discussed by Cizek and Ray (1995) deals with investigating the issue of socialization. This may more appropriately be considered a companion phase of academic inquiries since the two have been occurring at the same time. This phase might
also be more appropriately labeled "investigations of affective domains" since the meaning of socialization is so ambiguous (Brezinka, 1994). Several researchers have attempted to address the issue of socialization by studying affective domain topics, such as self-concept and self-esteem, which have been linked to socialization.

In the critiques of home-school research (Cizek & Ray, 1995; Wright, 1988), and bibliographies of home school articles discussing the socialization of home-schooled children (Ray, 1988, 1999; Medlin, 2000), fewer than 20 studies with a socialization component are discussed. These studies, which will now be reviewed, can be grouped into five general categories: those dealing with self-concept, self-esteem, social networks, perceptions of socialization, and other outcomes.

Self-Concept Studies

Taylor’s (1986) self-concept study is generally recognized as the first home-school socialization study, and is cited frequently in home-school literature. Taylor viewed self-concept as a reflection of socialization. Taylor selected the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (PHCSCS) to measure self-concept, due to the scale’s reported validity and reliability and the frequent use in other self-concept studies.

The sample in Taylor’s study was obtained by randomly selecting 2000 names from two national home-school organization mailing lists and mailing the material to these families. Of the respondents who qualified to be included in the study, only 224 returned the PHCSCS after it had been administered to the child by one of the parents (Taylor, 1986a).

Taylor reported that home-schooled students scored higher than the PHCSCS norms in all six subscales and the global scale of the PHCSCS, and that the differences found were statistically significant. This has led to the oft-quoted conclusion, “Insofar as self-concept is a reflector of socialization, it would appear that few home-schooling children are socially deprived” (Taylor, 1986, pp. 160-161).
The limitations of Taylor’s work has been noted in several of the socialization studies that followed (Hedin, 1991; Kelley, 1991; Shyers, 1992; Stough, 1992), and in Wright’s (1988) critique of home-schooling research. Wright pointed out that the PHCSCS was designed for publicly-schooled students and contained items which may not have been appropriate for home-schooled students, a fact recognized by several of the study’s respondents and acknowledged by Taylor (1986a).

Stough (1992) questioned Taylor’s use of a comparison design when he did not have a matched sample. Taylor (1986a) claimed, “No matching was considered necessary as both groups were randomly selected from larger populations” (p. 118). Wright (1988) and Kelley (1991) pointed out that the sample was not random but rather self-selected since the participants both, included their names on a mailing list, and secondly, responded to the request to participate in the study. In addition, the standardized norms of the PHCSCS were based on a single Pennsylvania school district, not on a national sample (Kelley; Stough; Taylor).

Kelley (1991) levied another criticism at Taylor's study, claiming that by having the PHCSCS administered by the parents, parental bias was introduced into the study. Kelley addressed the bias issue in his study, which followed five years later. In this investigation, he administered the PHCSCS to 67 home-schooled children living in suburban Los Angeles and reported that home-schooled children have higher self-concept scores in 5 of the 6 subsets and the global scale than the norms of the PHCSCS. This supported Taylor’s findings since Kelley, rather than a parent, administered the PHCSCS. Kelley’s design rectified the possible parental bias, but it did not address the matched sample problem. Kelley also failed to report how the 67 children in his sample were selected leaving a large question about the representativeness of his sample.

Stough (1992) attempted to replicate and expand on Taylor’s study, while correcting the unmatched sample flaw. The study’s home-schooled sample was drawn from the West
Virginia's Home School Association mailing list and a matched comparison sample was selected by the home-school participants. Each home-schooling family that agreed to participate was mailed two packets and asked to select a public-schooling family similar to theirs to give the second packet to. This sampling method resulted in 32 home-schooling families and a matched sample of 30 conventionally-schooled families participating in the study. In addition to administering the PHCSCS, parents were also asked to administer the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale (VABS). This added a social skills assessment not previously included. Stough reported that no statistically significant differences were found between the two samples on the global measure of the PHCSCS, or the socialization domain of the VABS.

Stough's (1992) study has not received the same notoriety as Taylor's (1986a), and has not been critiqued in the literature. Several of the limitations found in Taylor's study are also found in Stough's, namely the self-selection of the participants, and the parental bias introduced through having the parents administer the PHCSCS.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was used by Hedin (1991) as a measure of socialization of fourth- through sixth-grade children. The sample was drawn from the congregations of large Baptist churches found in a metropolitan area of Texas. Thirty-seven home-schooled children, 77 privately-schooled children, and 134 publicly-schooled children were administered the PHCSCS by their Sunday school teacher. The scores of the children were separated into children who were home schooled, privately schooled, and publicly schooled, and the mean scores of three groups of children were compared to each other rather than to the PHCSCS norms. No statistically significant differences were found.

Hedin (1991) attempted to address the limitations mentioned in Taylor's (1986a) study. The matched sample was addressed by drawing all of the samples from the same population and assuming that families attending the same church would be somewhat
similar in spiritual and educational values. Parental bias was avoided by having the Sunday school teacher, rather than a parent, administer the PHCSCS. The problem of having a self-selected sample could not be eliminated because participants chose to be part of the study, but using entire church congregations rather than home-school mailing lists broadened the sampling pool.

Home-schooled children only accounted for 13% of the sample population in Hedin’s (1991) study. Hedin also drew attention to the fact that this study included only children who were actively attending the Baptist church and that the results should be generalized only to Baptist children. The possibility of factors inherent in the religious upbringing that influence self-concepts might negate or overshadow the influence of educational settings was cited as a possible limitation of this study.

Joining previous home-school researchers, Shyers (1992) used the PHCSCS in his home-schooling socialization study as well. However, Shyers also included the Children’s Assertive Behavior Scale (CABS) to examine children’s responses to various social situations. The home-school sample was drawn from a list generated by the Florida Department of Education and local home-school support groups. A matched sample was created by selecting a traditionally schooled child that matched the home-schooled child’s race, gender, age, family size, number and frequency of out-of-school activities, and socioeconomic status. The study included 35 children in each of the four subcategories; male home schooled, female home schooled, male traditionally schooled and female traditionally schooled.

Shyers (1992) reported that both groups of children, the home schooled and traditionally schooled, received higher than average scores on the PHCSCS, but there was no significant difference between the two groups. He also reported that both groups of children received similar scores on the CABS, but did not report who administered the PHCSCS and CABS, leaving the bias question unanswered. Self-selection was also a
limitation, but the sampling pool was broader than the home-schooling mailing lists. The inclusion of support groups also brought in home schoolers not recognized by the school district, sometimes referred to as the underground home-school population (Ray, 1997).

Self-Esteem Studies

Some researchers have chosen to examine the socialization question by looking at self-esteem rather than self-concept. An individual's self-concept is his own perception of his abilities, attributes, and appearance. This is generally influenced by the feedback he gets from family members, peers and other social contacts. An individual's self-esteem is based on how he feels about himself, based on his self-concept and personal values. A review of studies using self-esteem rather than self-concept revealed that while the construct has been changed, the methodology is still very similar.

Kitchen (1991) chose to explore the socialization issue by using the Self Esteem Index (SEI) rather than the PHCSCS, although he mentions that the SEI is well correlated with the PHCSCS. The home-school sample in Kitchen's study was a convenience sample of 22 home-school contacts known to the researcher, and referrals from home-school organizations. The 25 children in the traditionally-schooled sample were drawn from mailing lists supplied by two private schools and one public school. The children in both groups were in grades 6, 7, or 8. The SEI was administered to the children by their parents and the results returned to the researcher.

Kitchen (1991) addressed the comparison design issue by comparing the SEI scores of home-schooled children to the SEI scores of traditionally schooled children, rather than to the standardized norm of the SEI. Kitchen reported, "In almost every measure, the home-schooled children scored higher on the Self-Esteem Index.... However, this limited sample size renders it unable to demonstrate statistical significance...." (p. 12).

Another study that chose to examine socialization by measuring children's self-esteem was conducted by Lee (1994). Lee investigated the relationship between the
students' educational setting (public or home schools), instructional time, and students' self-esteem, as measured by the Harter Self-perception Profile for Children (HSPC) and student's social behaviors as measured by the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children (ABIC).

The sample included 27 home-schooling families and 34 public-schooling families. Home-schooled families were recruited through home-school associations and networking and the children ranged in age from 9-11, while the publicly-schooled children came from fourth grades in the same geographic region. No explanation of the selection method of the publicly-schooled children was given. The HSPC and ABIC were administered by Lee to eliminate parental bias influences.

Lee (1994) reported that no statistically significant differences were found between the self-esteem scores of home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children. Significant differences in scores were found in two of the subscales of the Adaptive Behavior Inventory, with home-schooled children scoring higher on the family and community subscales. No differences in scores were reported for peer relations, nonacademic roles, earner/consumer, and self-maintenance. Using the average of the subscales, home-schooled children scored significantly higher in adaptive behaviors than publicly-schooled children.

The Self Esteem Index was used by Tillman (1995) along with a survey and interviews to explore the socialization of home-schooled children. The participants in this study were selected from a home-schooling mailing list and volunteers from a home-school convention. Two-hundred fifty-nine families responded to the survey, which asked about the attitudes towards and frequencies of socialization opportunities outside of the family. The SEI was administered by the researcher or research assistant to 59 students in their homes, and 5 families were interviewed regarding their views on socialization.
Tillman (1995) reported that “… home schooling parents tend to believe that socialization is best achieved in an age-integrated setting under the auspices of the family and taught within the context of their faith.” (p. 5) She also reports that home-schooled children had above average scores on the SEI when compared to the SEI’s standardized scores.

**Network Opportunity Studies**

In a study that focused on leadership development rather than socialization, Montgomery (1989) interviewed 55 parents and 87 home-schooled students to establish what variables operate in home-schooling families to build leadership skills. To establish a point of comparison, a random sample of students from a school in Washington were also interviewed about their extracurricular activities. Montgomery reported that home-schooled adolescents experience the same array of social opportunities as public-schooled adolescents. These social opportunities include church youth groups and activities, employment, sports, music lessons and recitals, performing groups, scouting and other youth clubs and summer camp. No significant differences in levels of involvement were reported between the two groups except in sports, summer camp, and performing groups. Publicly-schooled students had a higher percentage of student involvement in these three areas than did home-schooled students.

Montgomery (1989) suggested that the home-school sample is a stratified sample, but fails to report how the home-school sample was obtained. The publicly-schooled sample was reported to be random and the same age and sex as the home-school participants. The number of publicly-schooled children interviewed was not reported.

Chatham-Carpenter (1994) investigated the social networks of children by having 21 home-schooled children and 20 publicly-schooled children keep contact lists for a month. She also surveyed parents about the contacts that their children had with other individuals. She reported that the two populations do have differing social networks. Traditionally-
school children had more contacts generally and more contacts with same-aged peers than 
home-schooled children. Home-schooled children had social networks that consisted of 
individuals who were of varying ages, with more individuals being older than the child.

From information gained from the Washington Home-School Research Project, 
Wartes (as cited in Mullins, 1992) reported that over 50% of home-schooled children spent 
over 20 hours a month in community activities. Sixty-eight percent spent more than 20 
hours a month with children of various ages, and 40% spent more than 30 hours with 
children of the same age group.

Perception Approaches

Some studies have tried to examine the socialization of home-schooled children by 
exploring the families’ or individuals’ perceptions of socialization. Delahooke (1986) 
included the Roberts Apperception Test for Children (RATC) in her study of home-
schooled children. The RATC is designed to measure children’s perceptions of common 
interpersonal situations. Sixty students, 28 home-schooled students and 32 students of a 
private school, were administered the RATC in their homes. Delahooke examined the 
scores of both home-schooled students and students from private schools and reported that 
"... both groups scored in the well-adjusted range of emotional functioning on the RATC" 
and "... both groups also exhibited a low frequency of scores in the atypical and 
maladaptive categories of the RATC, thus providing another indication of adaptive 
social/emotional functioning on the RATC" (p. 82).

Perhaps a more frequently cited result of Delahooke’s study are the differences she 
found in the area of peer and non-family influences (Tillman, 1995). Delahooke (1986) 
reported that children who attended private schools were more influenced by or concerned 
with peers than the home-schooled children. This has led some individuals to claim that 
home-schooled children are less peer-oriented (Chatham-Carpenter, 1992; Mullins, 1992; 
Tillman).
Johnson (1991) used qualitative methods to explore home schooling and socialization. She interviewed 10 home-schooling families known to her, or referred to her by other home-schooling families. Johnson's interview was structured so as to touch upon seven areas of socialization. These areas included personal identity, personal destiny, values, autonomy, relationships, sexuality, and social skills. Johnson's study was exploratory in nature and she reported that those parents interviewed were keenly aware of the socialization needs of their children. They were actively structuring the home environment, and encouraging participation in groups outside the family to meet those needs.

Mullins (1992) followed up on Johnson's (1991) study by interviewing 10 children from nine of the families in Johnson's study. The purpose was to analyze the homeschooled students' perception of their socialization. Mullins reported that the majority of students viewed their socialization in a positive manner. When asked to choose which type of schooling experience they felt was best for socialization purposes, five pointedly chose home-schooling. The other five saw benefits in both types of schooling. Mullins also reported that those students who felt that they had a voice in their parent's decision to home school expressed more positive feelings about home schooling, whereas those students who felt they had no influence in the decision to home school expressed more negative feelings about home schooling. Virtually all of the students saw their parents' involvement in orchestrating the environment as important to their attitudes about socialization. Students whose parents allowed for choices and varied experiences had more positive feelings about home schooling.

Other Approaches

Smedley (1992) used the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale and focused on the communication section as well as the socialization section of the instrument. Most of the 33 parents in his study filled out the VABS while attending a social gathering sponsored by
either the local Home Educators Association or by the Baptist church. Twenty of the parents home-schooled their children and 13 of the parents sent their children to public schools. Smedley reported a significant difference in the adaptive behavior composite scores of home-schooled and publicly-schooled children, with the home-schooled children scoring in the 84th percentile and the publicly-schooled children scoring in the 23rd percentile. While a clear difference is seen in the scores, the results of the study are called into question because of the small number of participants and the administration of the VABS. Having parents fill out the VABS while at a social function retains the parental bias question as well as introduces the possibility of error due to distraction.

**Limitations**

Sampling bias is a recognized problem in home-school research. Wright (1988) stated, “A major limitation of home school survey research is the use of self-selection or sampling bias” (p. 98). While the results of these studies give us insight into the home-school population, because the samples used are nonprobability samples, the results cannot be generalized to the home-school population.

Moore (1979) wrote, “An accepted way of measuring social skills is through the use of a self-concept instrument, normally a self-report instrument, based on the belief that children with positive self-concepts are well-adjusted and inclined to be socially competent” (p. 58). This approach was followed in one third of the socialization studies reviewed. Another third of the studies used similar standardized instruments that measured other affective domains such as self-esteem, and communication skills. A perceived need to use a standardized measurement instrument could have been the reason for this focus on other affective domains, but these standardized instruments address affective domains associated with socialization rather than either of the two tenets of socialization listed earlier. These tenets are, acquiring knowledge about and accepting as one’s own, social norms and values, and developing skills that allow individuals to function effectively in their society.
The standardized instruments used were also limiting because they were designed for children who attend public schools and might, therefore, contain questions that are inappropriate for home-schooled children (Taylor, 1986a; Wright, 1988). No attempt to eliminate words such as classroom, teacher, homework or classmates were mentioned, yet Taylor reported that some parents viewed some questions as inappropriate for their children’s situation.

A third problem associated with the instruments used is parental bias. These instruments were not designed to be completed by the parent of the child, yet this was the method used in half of the studies that used a standardized instrument. When the parents filled out the measurement instrument rather than the researcher or an assistant, the potential for parental bias was introduced (Johnson, 1991; Kelley, 1991; Wright, 1988).

**Synthesis of Literature**

Families, schools, and peers are recognized as a primary socializing agents. They are also interconnected with the effects of family practices influencing peer relations and school performance and vice versa. While schools are seen as important socializing agents, little has been done to separate and understand the influence of schools from the influence of peers and families. Few, if any, studies have investigated the actual influence of school attendance on children’s socialization.

Research in the area of home schooling has progressed through various stages (Cizek & Ray, 1995). The majority of studies have been exploratory in nature (Wright, 1988) with the earlier studies focusing on who chose to home school their children, and why they chose to home school. Later comparative studies examined the effects of home schooling on children’s academic performance and socialization.

While the descriptive studies have given us a clearer picture of the home-school population, their attitudes and motivations, the comparative studies are not conclusive. Several studies with larger, more representative samples (Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999) support
the findings of studies with weaker sampling methods (Delahouke, 1986; Ray, 1988; Wartes, 1988), that home-schooled children perform as well or better than public-schooled children on standardized achievement tests.

The results of studies dealing with the socialization of home-schooled children are equivocal, perhaps because the concept of socialization is not as clear. Most studies have sought to investigate socialization by measuring an attribute considered to be associated with socialization, such as self-concept and self-esteem. Studies using this approach report results similar to those focused on academics. Home-schooled children score as well or better than conventionally-schooled children on standardized adaptive skill measures. Other researchers have investigated socializing agents such as participation in group activities and memberships in non-family groups and found no significant difference between home-schooled children and conventionally-schooled children.

The results of these studies are limited, however, by the issue of self-selection sampling bias and the introduction of parental bias when parents fill out surveys about their children. The standardized instruments used also limit the validity of the results since they reflect more of the publicly-schooled child’s world rather than the home-schooled child’s world.

In summary, research dealing with home-schooled children has provided information about who home schools, why they home school and the academic outcomes of home-schooled children who agree to participate in research studies. We also know a little about the affective domains of self-concept and self-esteem and the social networks of home-schooled children. These are believed to be associated with socialization, but are not actual measures of either the child’s acceptance of social norms and values, or social skills, the two tenets found in most definitions of socialization. Studies have not demonstrated that home-schooled children differ from publicly-schooled children in their social skills, and
little has been done to discover the perceptions of socialization and what values are held by
home-schooled parents and their children.

Because social skills are an important, but understudied component of the
socialization of home-schooled children, the present study is designed to examine social
skills, rather than affective domains believed to be associated with socialization. The Social
Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990), which has not been previously used in
home-schooling studies, is designed to measure social skills of children by having children
and their parents report on social behaviors of the child. Social Skills Rating System scores
were used to examine the differences in social skills of home-schooled children and
publicly-schooled children, and also compare the mother’s perception of her child’s social
skills with the child’s perception of his or her social skills.

Understanding home-schooling families’ perceptions of socialization and use of
socializing agents is another important aspect needed to increases our understanding of the
socialization of home-schooled children. This study explored home-schooling families
perceptions and usage of socializing agents by using qualitative techniques of interviews
and content analysis.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study consisted of 46 home-schooling mother-child dyads living within the Iron County School District boundaries and 39 children who attended Iron County public schools. Iron County has a population of about 32,000 residents with nearly 20,000 living in Cedar City. Other communities in Iron County have populations ranging from 50 to 2000 and are scattered throughout Iron County’s 3300 square miles. Participants came from almost every community in Iron County, with the majority coming from Cedar City.

Participating families came from a large range of socio-economic backgrounds. Table 1 shows the educational levels of the parents whose children participated in the study and Table 2 shows family income.

Table 1

**Educational Levels of Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Home-schooling parents</th>
<th>Publicly-schooling parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fathers ($N = 45$)</td>
<td>Mothers ($N = 45$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Family Income Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home-school families</th>
<th>Public-school families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $29,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $39,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $49,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $59,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $69,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000 - $79,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above $80,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Mann-Whitney $U$ analysis reported no statistically significant differences between the home-schooling families and publicly-schooling families in fathers’ educational levels (.753), mothers’ educational level (.160) or family income (.172). A Pearson chi-square analysis showed no statistically significant difference between home-schooling and publicly-schooling mother’s employment $X(1, N = 85) = .950$. Sixty-one percent of the home-schooling mothers and 59% of the publicly-schooling mothers were not employed. Seventeen percent of the home-schooling mothers and 28% of the publicly-schooling mothers were employed outside of the home at least part-time, and 28% of the home-schooling mothers and 23% of the publicly-schooling mothers brought income into the family by working from their home. Every set of parents, both home-schooling and publicly-schooling, were married.

Home-schooling participants consisted of 23 mother-son dyads and 23 mother-daughter dyads. Only one child from each family participated. The children ranged in age
from 8 to 12. This age range was selected because over 70% of home-schooled children are between the ages of 9 and 12 (Ray, 1988) and the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) is designed for children in the 3rd through 6th grades or ages 8 through 12. The mean age of home-schooled boys was 9.9 years and the mean age of home-schooled girls was 10.3 years. Of the 39 children who attended public school, 23 were girls and 16 were boys. The mean age of the publicly-schooled boys was 9.6 years and the mean age of the publicly-schooled girls was 9.8 years. The mean ages of home-schooled children were compared to the mean ages of the publicly-schooled children using an independent t test. The results showed that the mean ages of home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children were not statistically significantly different, $t(83) = -.672, p = .503$.

Ten mother-child dyads from the home-schooled subsample also were interviewed. To create a cross section of age and a balance of gender, a boy and girl of each age 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 were randomly selected. Random selection was used to avoid bias in the selection process, since some of the participating home-schooling families were acquainted with the researcher. Every family that was invited to participate in this phase of the study agreed to be interviewed. Twelve home-schooling families were asked to complete the questionnaires again so that test-retest reliability could be assessed after the original data collection process was completed. Only nine families returned the questionnaires. All participation was voluntary and all children were mailed a five dollar WAL-MART gift certificate upon the return of the completed SSRS forms.

Procedures

Obtaining a representative sample from the home-school population for research studies is usually problematic due to the resistant nature of home-schooling families (Lines, 2000; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray, & Marlow, 1995). Lines has said,

There is no definitive list of all home schoolers in any locality, so the researcher usually must rely on a limited number of questions in a federally sponsored survey
or on limited samples. If the latter, the sampled lists represent self-selected groups: members of a homeschooling association; those who file papers with the state in those states that require it; and subscribers to homeschooling magazines and newsletters. In addition, some homeschoolers refuse to respond to particular surveys: For example, a paranoid homeschooler may refuse to participate in a government survey while answering one from a homeschooling organization. Or a secular family that homeschools their children may not respond to a survey connected to, say, Bob Jones University. To make matters even more difficult, a substantial and influential number of homeschoolers are philosophically opposed to cooperating with researchers. (pp. 77-78)

Wright (1988) argued that researchers need to access a broader range of homeschooling families, not just those who are members of organized support groups or newsletter mailing list members. Unique circumstances in Iron County assisted in the creation of a more diverse and complete list of home-schooling families than is typically used in home-school research. In the fall of 1999, the Iron County School District changed the requirements that families must meet in order to obtain official permission to home school their children. Because of the uncertainty and animosity generated by this policy change, a general meeting of Iron County homeschoolers was held. Several religious leaders and high profile network homeschoolers supported and advertised the meeting. One of the results of this meeting was the creation of a list of 79 home-schooling families which included several families previously not associated with any group, network or known to the local school district. This list, when added to a list of home-schooling families who notified the school district of their intention to home school their children made a list of 161 home-schooling families. Adding home-schooling families who belonged to a local homeschooling group and families who were brought to the researcher’s attention through the first round of data collection, resulted in a list of 202 home-schooling families. While there may be “no definitive list of all homeschoolers in any locality” (Lines, 2000, p. 77), the researcher believes this list to be the most comprehensive list of home-schooling families in a geographic area due to the inclusion of some home-schooling families who previously were not associated with any groups.
Thirty-nine families who had notified the school district of their intent to home school their children were removed from the list because they were not home schooling children between the ages of 8 and 12. One family was removed from the list because they lived outside the geographic region. The researcher’s and research assistant’s families were removed from the list to avoid bias. A letter of introduction was sent to the remaining 160 families.

Mayberry et al. (1995) asserted that their involvement in the home-school community, by acting as consultants and advisors to home-schooling groups, helped reduce resistance to their research project. The researcher has been a home-schooling parent and has acted as a consultant to the home-school community and Iron County School District as a result of the Iron County School’s policy changes. In the introductory letter, families were made aware of the researcher’s involvement in home-school issues and practices as well as the purpose and design of the study. The researcher believed that these factors reduced resistance and increased home-school participation rates in this study.

The letter of introduction sent to the 160 families notified them that a packet containing information about the study and questionnaires would be mailed to their home the next week. Families were asked to contact the researcher if they did not wish to participate or if they were ineligible to participate because of the age of their children.

Packets containing a letter of explanation, consent forms, a demographic questionnaire, as well as a mother’s SSRS questionnaire and a child’s SSRS questionnaire were then mailed out to families the following week. (See Appendix B). Mothers were instructed to complete the mother’s SSRS questionnaire and have a home-schooled child between the ages of 8 and 12 complete the child’s SSRS questionnaire. Either the father or mother was to complete the demographic questionnaire and mail all of the completed questionnaires back to the researcher in the stamped envelope provided.
Phone calls were made to families who had not returned the packets within 2 weeks. Through returned mail and personal communiqué it was discovered that 28 of the families had moved or lived outside of the school district boundaries, 27 families were no longer home schooling their children, and 17 families were ineligible because of the age of their children. Fifty-five percent of the 160 families who were sent a letter of introduction were eligible to participate in the study. Of the remaining 88 families, 46 (52%), or 29% of the original families who were sent letters, completed and returned the packet, 9 (10%) declined to participate, 6 (7%) agreed to participate but failed to return the packet, and 27 (30%) could not be contacted.

Thirty-six families indicated on the questionnaire that they would be willing to be interviewed as part of this study. These families were separated into groups according to the sex and age of their home-schooled child. One family from each of the 10 groups was randomly selected to be interviewed. A university student, who was also a home-schooling mother, was trained to assist in the interview process. The research assistant interviewed the mother while the researcher interviewed the child. It was hoped that by introducing home-schooling parents as interviewers that the participants might feel more comfortable in expressing their thoughts. The mother and child interviews were conducted simultaneously in the families’ homes.

The interview consisted of main questions and additional queries to clarify answers and facilitate more meaningful dialogue on the topics. (See Appendix C for the interview format). Each interview was recorded with permission of the participant and later transcribed. Interviews lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. The children were given a second five dollar gift certificate at the end of the interview.

Since the majority of home-schooling families have stay-at-home mothers (Rudner, 1999), and the majority of families with publicly-schooled children have mothers employed outside of the home (Berns, 2001), a random sample of these families is unlikely to result in
families with similar characteristics. To create a matching sample of publicly-schooled children, the participating home-schooling families were asked to identify two families who did not home school their children but were similar to their family in family type (for instance, mother employment and any other factors that they felt made their families similar to each other). Only 22 participating families identified families whose children attended public school whom they thought were similar. Families who had not given a referral were contacted and asked to identify any families whose children attended public school and whose mother was not employed outside of the home. Since over 75% of home-schooling mothers do not work outside of the home (Rudner), it was felt that mother’s employment would be an important variable to consider when choosing non-home-schooling families for the study. This was because maternal employment could possibly affect the mother’s availability and interaction with her children.

Only 12 families with publicly-schooled children were added to the list. To increase the number of referred families, mothers who were interviewed were asked again to identify all the families they could whose children attended public school and whose mother was not employed outside of the home. This process resulted in a list of 59 families who were thought to have mothers who were not employed outside of the home and had a child between the age of 8 and 12 who attended public school. Two families were removed from this list since they had been contacted as home-schooling families, but were now sending their children to public school.

A total of 57 non-home-schooling families were sent a packet containing an introductory letter, informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire and a child’s SSRS questionnaire. Calls were made to families who had not returned the packet within 2 weeks. Thirty-nine (68%) completed packets were returned. Three families did not have children of eligible age. Two families declined to participate, and seven families agreed to
participate but did not return the packet. One family had moved and five could not be contacted.

Instrument

The Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) was used to measure participating children's social skills and home-schooling mothers' perceptions of their child's social skills. The SSRS is considered to be one of the most comprehensive social skills assessment systems (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995) and has the distinct strength of being an integrated system of multiple instruments (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998). The SSRS has separate rating scales for parents and children. The parents rate their child in cooperation, assertion, responsibility and self-control. The children rate themselves on cooperation, assertion, empathy and self-control. These scales are designed to be completed by the parent and the child, thus reducing or eliminating bias that occurs when parents fill out instruments not designed for completion by a parent. The different forms also allow for comparisons between the parent's perception and the child's perception of his or her social skills.

The SSRS forms contain a variety of statements that describe social behaviors (e.g., “I tell others when I am upset with them” and “Uses free time at home in an acceptable way”). Raters are asked to respond to these statements by circling either never, sometimes or very often to indicate the frequency of that behavior. The responses to statements are converted into numerical values of 0, 1, and 2 respectively and then summed and grouped to form 4 subscales that collectively make up the total social skills scale. Because each subscale has 10 questions, the maximum score is 20, with 80 being the highest possible for the total score.

The psychometric properties of the SSRS range from adequate to excellent (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998). When reporting
reliability using internal consistency, Gresham and Elliott reported alpha coefficients for the sub-scales of the parent’s form to be .77 for cooperation; .74 for assertion; .65 for responsibility; and .80 for self-control. The alpha coefficient for the total social skills score was .87. Alpha coefficients for the child’s form were .68 for cooperation; .51 for assertion; .74 for empathy; .63 for self-control; and .83 for the total social skills score.

When examining reliability using test-retest methods, Gresham and Elliott (1990) reported social skills subscale reliability coefficients for the parents form of .81 for cooperation; .77 for assertion; .84 for responsibility; .77 for self-control; .87 for the total social skills score; .54 for cooperation; .52 for assertion and self-control; .66 for empathy; and .68 for the total social skills score for child’s forms.

Criterion-related and construct validity were established by comparing the SSRS to several other social skills assessment instruments and reporting significant correlations between them (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1995; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; Merrell & Gimpel, 1998). Gresham and Elliott established criterion-related validity by comparing the parent’s SSRS form with the Child Behavior Checklist-Parent form (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) and reported a .58 correlation in the areas that assessed social skills. The child’s SSRS form was compared to the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale, using 79 students from the national standardization sample. While these two assessments are not attempting to measure the same construct, it was reported that self-concept is a significant component of effective social skills and that correlations between the 2 instruments subscales were typically in the .30s or .40s.

The child’s SSRS form was standardized using 2400 children who attended schools in 24 states representing each geographic region of the United States. Tables in the Social Skills Rating Manual show mean scores for boys and girls at each grade level. These tables show that girls have higher scores at every grade level than boys in all of the subscales and on the total social skills score. Although other evaluation instruments report better
psychometric properties than the SSRS, the ability to compare the mother’s and child’s perception of the child’s social skills, and deal with bias issues made the SSRS a useful instrument for this study. Unfortunately, no social skills instrument has been designed for use with home-schooled children. Further, most behavioral rating scales are designed for children who attend public schools so they contain some questions that might not be appropriate for home-schooled children (Wright, 1988). The SSRS is no exception.

Eleven questions out of the 34 in the child’s form of the SSRS, contain verbage that home schoolers might interpret as invalidating the question, such as “I ignore my classmates who clown around in class.” Because home-schooled children don’t have a class they may feel that this question does not apply. To avoid the exclusion of these questions due to lack of response, and to maintain as much consistency between the groups as possible, some changes in wording were made on the child’s form. For example; “I use a nice tone of voice in classroom discussions” was changed to “I use a nice tone of voice during learning discussions” and “I follow the teacher’s directions” was changed to “I follow adults’ directions.”

Independent $t$ tests were used to compare the mean scores of home-schooled boys and publicly-schooled boys and home-schooled girls and publicly-schooled girls. Paired $t$ tests were used to compare the mean scores of the mothers with the mean scores of their children.

Interview Procedure

A structured interview script was developed by creating a sequence of questions directed at exploring the perception of home-schooling mothers and their children on the topic of socialization. The script was then submitted to an experienced qualitative researcher for review. Revisions to the questions and procedure were made as a result of her feedback. While the researcher observed, the research assistant interviewed a nonparticipating home-
schooling mother to become familiar with the interview procedures. As a result of this practice interview, more revisions to the procedure and questions were made. Additional revisions were made, particularly on the child’s interview format, throughout the interviewing process, as the interviewers identified questions that yielded little meaningful response and discovered topics or approaches that solicited more meaningful responses. Meaningful, in this sense, refers to responses that included details and description rather than general or vague terms. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Data Analyses Procedures

Diane Gamer (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Gamer, & Steinmetz, 1991) discussed several methods used by researchers to conduct qualitative data analyses. Combining components of each, she describes a multi-step method for analyzing qualitative data. She explains the process of applying thinking units, establishing categories, developing themes and telling the story. The researcher followed this multi-step method in conducting the qualitative data analyses. Before reading the interviews, several thinking units were identified that corresponded to the research questions. These thinking units were: what is socialization, social skills, and agents/activities. Gamer explains that categories are to emerge from the data and are to make sense of the data. It became clear while reading the first interview that the thinking units could serve as categories and that they needed to be expanded. Six more categories were created as the researcher read and coded the interviews. These categories were: motive for home schooling, what is socialization, social skills, activities, how are social skills developed, differences between public and home schools, perspectives of others, concerns, and families.

The interviews were read a second time to check for consistency in the coding. As a result, the nine categories were refined and condensed into five categories. These categories were: socialization definition, multi-aged issues, activities, differences between public and
home schools, and family. Coded responses were then copied out of the text of the interview and grouped together in theme files with the same names as the five previously identified categories. These theme files were reviewed by an experienced qualitative researcher to check a second time for consistency in coding. The outside researcher also consulted with the primary researcher and identified several common points and emerging themes within the theme files.

The refined themes (acceptance of others, communication, different perceptions of socialization, schools as socializing agents, control, and families) guided the researcher through another reading of the interview responses. Each response in the theme files was read and examined to see if and how it related to the refined themes, and research questions.

Some of the responses answered direct research questions and were identified as common points rather than themes. When asked if they thought their children were developing adequate social skills, each mother responded affirmatively. This was identified as a common point, rather than a theme, because reasons they gave, like supporting their beliefs, were already included in existing theme files. Another question that did not emerge as a theme, but was relevant to the study, was whether the perceived social needs and experiences of boys and girls differed. The themes, common points, and the answers to whether home schooling individuals perceive different social needs and experiences for boys and girls, are discussed in the following chapters as they relate to the research questions.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This chapter includes the reliability analyses, results of the statistical analyses of the SSRS child and mother questionnaires, and the qualitative data analyses of the 20 interviews conducted with home-schooling mothers and children. Independent and paired t tests with a p level of .05 were used to examine differences between home-schooled children and their publicly-schooled peers, and home-schooled children and their mother’s responses on the SSRS questionnaire.

Reliability Analyses

Because the SSRS was not designed for home-schooled children and their parents and some questions on the child’s SSRS questionnaire had wording changes, the reliability of the questionnaires used in this study was examined by calculating and examining test-retest correlation coefficients. Worthen, Borg, and White (1993) described administering the same test twice and then calculating a Pearson correlation coefficient as an accurate way to examine an instrument’s test-retest reliability. Nine home-schooling children and their mothers completed the SSRS questionnaire twice. There was not a standard amount of time between the first and second completion of the questionnaires. Time between completion of the questionnaires ranged from 1 to 6 months, with 5 months being the average. Worthen and colleagues state that, for more stable traits, longer periods between testing is not unreasonable and reduces the memory effect. Correlation coefficients for mothers in this study were higher than their children’s (see Table 3) but lower than the mothers’ correlation coefficients reported by Gresham and Elliot (1990). The home-schooled children’s correlation coefficients were lower than the children’s correlation coefficients reported
Table 3

Test-Retest Reliability Coefficients for Subscales and Total Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published(^a)</td>
<td>Reworded((N = 45))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Grisham and Elliot (1990)

by Gresham and Elliot. Participants in Gresham and Elliot’s research took the SSRS 4 weeks apart.

In addition to the test-retest analysis, coefficient alphas for the participating groups scores were calculated and compared to the alphas reported by Gresham and Elliott (1990). The results are shown in Table 4. The alphas indicate that the internal consistency of the children’s responses to the reworded questions and the parents’ responses to their questionnaires approximates the internal consistency reported by Gresham and Elliott. The combined alphas for the home-schooling participants also indicated that the internal consistency of the reworded questionnaires was acceptable. Gresham and Elliot did not calculate or report a combined alpha so a comparison of combined alphas could not be made.
Research Question 1: Are There Differences in the Social Skills of Home-schooled Children and Publicly-schooled Children?

The first research question was addressed by examining the mean scores of the SSRS subscales and the SSRS total social skills score. The mean scores of home-schooled boys and girls were compared to the scores of publicly-schooled boys and girls using independent t tests. The type of school setting was the independent variable and the SSRS score was the dependent variable. As shown in Table 5, mean scores for publicly-schooled children were slightly higher than the mean scores of home-schooled children on each of the subscales. However, only on the assertion subscale, \( t(82) = 2.41, p = .018 \), and the total social skills score, \( t(82) = 2.09, p = .040 \), were publicly-schooled children statistically significantly higher than home-schooled children.

Table 4
Cronbach’s Alphas for Subscales, Combined, and Total Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published</td>
<td>Reworded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined score</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grisham and Elliot (1990)
Table 5

Mean Scores for Children’s SSRS Subscales and Total Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Publicly-schooled children (N = 39)</th>
<th>Home-schooled children (N = 46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>16.18</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>17.97</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>13.37</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>63.58</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children’s scores were next separated into subgroups by sex. Independent t tests comparing home-schooled boys’ and publicly-schooled boys’ scores on the SSRS showed no statistically significant differences for any of the subscales or the total score (see Table 6).

A comparison of SSRS scores of home-schooled girls and publicly-schooled girls using independent t tests showed that publicly-schooled girls had statistically significantly higher scores for assertion, \( t(44) = 2.72, \ p = .009 \); empathy, \( t(44) = 2.53, \ p = .015 \); self-control, \( t(44) = -2.06, \ p = .045 \); and total social skills, \( t(44) = 2.76, \ p = .008 \). No statistically significant difference between home-schooled girls and publicly-schooled girls were found for the cooperation subscale (see Table 7). The mean scores of publicly-schooled girls and boys and home-schooled girls and boys on the SSRS subscales and total score is shown in Figure 1. This figure combines information from Tables 6 and 7.
Table 6  
*Mean Scores for Publicly-Schooled Boys’ and Home-Schooled Boys’ SSRS Subscales and Total Score (N=39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Publicly-schooled boys ((N = 23))</th>
<th>Home-schooled boys ((N = 15))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>15.31</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>59.38</td>
<td>7.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7  
*Mean Scores for Publicly-Schooled Girls’ and Home-Schooled Girls’ SSRS Subscales and Total Score (N=46)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Publicly-schooled girls ((N = 23))</th>
<th>Home-schooled girls ((N = 23))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Control</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>66.48</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2: Are There Differences in the Social Skills of Home-schooled Boys and Home-schooled Girls?

Analyses of girls' and boys' raw mean scores for social skills subscales and total social skills score in the Social Skill Rating System Manual (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) showed that girls had higher scores than boys on all subscales and the total social skills score at every grade level. To see if this pattern was followed by the home-schooled children in this study, the social skills scores of home-schooled boys and girls were examined using independent t tests. Results show that no statistically significant differences emerged between home-schooled girls and boys for any subscale or the total social skills: cooperation, $t(44) = -1.38, p = .172$; assertion, $t(44) = -.56, p = .581$; empathy, $t(44) = .51, p = .611$; self-control, $t(44) = .41, p = .687$; total social skills score, $t(44) = -.37, p = .711$. 

Figure 1. Mean scores for children's SSRS subscales and total score.
To determine whether the scores of publicly-schooled children in this study resembled those of the sample in the *Social Skills Rating Manual* (Gresham & Elliott, 1990), independent *t* tests were run to determine whether differences existed between the social skills of publicly-schooled girls and boys. The results showed that girls scored statistically significantly higher on cooperation, *t*(37) = -3.32, *p* = .002; assertion, *t*(37) = -2.67, *p* = .011; empathy, *t*(37) = -3.02, *p* = .005; and the total social skills score, *t*(37) = -3.33, *p* = .002. No statistically significant difference emerged for the self-control, (*t*(37) = -1.73, *p* = .090) subscale. Results are shown in Table 8. These findings indicate that the differences between publicly-schooled boys’ and girls’ scores in this study were similar to the differences reported in Gresham and Elliott’s sample.

**Research Question 3: Are There Differences in Home-schooling Mothers’ Perception and Their Children’s Perception of the Child’s Social Skills?**

The third research question was concerned with comparing home-schooled children’s perceptions of their social skills with their mothers’ perceptions of their social skills. The SSRS questionnaire allowed children to report the frequency that they believed they performed certain tasks related to the social skills of cooperation, assertion, self-control and empathy. Mothers reported on the frequency that they felt their child displayed behaviors related to the social skills cooperation, assertion, self-control and responsibility. Since the total score of the children’s SSRS include the empathy subscale, and the total score of the mothers’ SSRS included the responsibility subscale, a comparison of total scores could not be performed. A combined score that included the subscales of cooperation, assertion and self-control was created and used in place of the total social skills score.
Table 8

Comparison of Mean Scores for Publicly-Schooled Boys’ and Girls’ SSRS Subscales and Total Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and total score</th>
<th>Publicly-schooled girls (N = 23)</th>
<th>Publicly-schooled boys (N = 16)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>-3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>15.13</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>-2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>18.57</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>-3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>-1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>66.48</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>59.38</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>-3.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paired t tests were used to compare mean scores for the subscales (cooperation, assertion and self-control) and to compare the combined score of these subscales. Family position, mother or child, was the independent variable and the SSRS scores were the dependent variable. Results showed that mothers scored significantly higher than their children on the assertion, \( t(45) = -6.82, p = .000 \); self-control, \( t(45) = -4.54, p = .000 \); and the combined score, \( t(45) = -3.88, p = .000 \). Children had significantly higher scores on the cooperation subscale, \( t(45) = -4.54, p = .000 \). Results are shown in Table 9. To explore further, children’s scores were separated into boys’ and girls’ scores and compared to their mothers’ scores using paired t tests. Statistically significant differences between mothers and daughters emerged on all subscales and the combined score (see Table 10). Girls had statistically significantly higher scores on the cooperation, \( t(22) = 2.16, p = .042 \) subscale, while their mothers had higher scores on assertion, \( t(22) = -4.83, p = .000 \); self-control, \( t(22) = 7.00, p = .000 \); and the combined score \( t(22) = -4.93, p = .000 \).
Table 9

*Mean Scores for Mother-Child Dyads SSRS Subscales and Combined Score* (N=46)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and combined score</th>
<th>Home-schooled children</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>14.87</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>12.48</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined score</td>
<td>42.54</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boys also had statistically significantly higher scores on the cooperation subscale, $t(22) = 3.36, \ p = .003$, while their mothers had statistically significantly higher scores on the assertion subscale, $t(22) = -5.06, \ p = .000$. No statistically significant differences between mothers and their sons emerged for the self-control subscale or the combined score (see

Table 10

*Mean Scores for Mother-Daughter Dyads SSRS Subscales and Combined Score* (N=23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and combined score</th>
<th>Home-schooled girls</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>15.78</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>15.09</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>12.13</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined score</td>
<td>43.17</td>
<td>7.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boys also had statistically significantly higher scores on the cooperation subscale, $t(22) = 3.36, \ p = .003$, while their mothers had statistically significantly higher scores on the assertion subscale, $t(22) = -5.06, \ p = .000$. No statistically significant differences between mothers and their sons emerged for the self-control subscale or the combined score (see
Table 11). Mother’s and children’s scores on the SSRS subscales and total score are shown in Figure 2. This figure combines information from Tables 10 and 11.

Research Question 4: How Do Home-schooling Families Perceive Socialization?

Several themes and common points that emerged from the data analyses give insight to how home-schooling families perceive socialization. As part of the interview process, participants were asked what socialization means to them or how they might define it. Three particular themes (acceptance of others, communication, and different perceptions of socialization) that emerged from the qualitative data analysis are discussed here.

Acceptance of others. When asked what they thought socialization was, the children’s initial responses focused around general social skills that they felt were important such as “be nice to them and help them out,” or “be polite.” “Don’t hit or kick,” and “don’t act all weird” along with other behaviors that they felt should be avoided were also mentioned.

As the interviews progressed and actual experiences were shared by the children, an underlying theme of acceptance of others, regardless of age and other differences emerged. This was particularly evident in the boy’s responses. Excerpts from these children’s interviews illustrate this point.

“We don’t criticize other people, and we just....you know, we just do our own thing, or what ever” Boy age 10.

“A lot of the kids that go to school, they’re sporty type, think they’re better than others because they can maybe do better things, but....the other ones that are home schooled, sometimes they want everybody to fit in, so they’re like, hey, you’re good at this, and I’m really good at that” Boy age 9.
Table II

Mean Scores for Mother–Son Dyads SSRS Subscales and Combined Score (N=23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale and combined score</th>
<th>Home-schooled boys</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion</td>
<td>14.65</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>12.65</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined score</td>
<td>41.91</td>
<td>7.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Mean scores for mother-child dyads SSRS subscales and total score.
"Include everybody, no matter what they do or what they look like. You should always include other people." Boy age 11.

That this principle was reinforced and appreciated by the children’s mothers was evident in the responses that the mothers gave. The mother of a 10-year-old girl explained that when publicly-schooled children came over to their home, "We have to …. teach them the rule we have that they can’t exclude others, because they’re so used to just associating with one or two people, or with someone their age." The mother of a 9-year-old boy said of home-schooled children, "I really think these kids are really good at accepting you for who you are, and they’re very supportive."

*Communication.* Along with the acceptance of individuals regardless of differences, mothers stressed communication skills as a key component of socialization. The ability to communicate with individuals who were not the same age as the child seemed to be of particular importance to these mothers.

"Socialization, to me, is that you’re active in a large group of people, that you can communicate with anybody on any level" Mother of a 12-year-old girl.

"I want kids that can speak to an adult or speak to kids their own age. I mean, I think it’s just being comfortable in all kinds of social situations, and not necessarily with everybody you always just like, but anybody" Mother of a 9-year-old boy.

Several children have assimilated this concept into their own notion of socialization. When discussing what he thought were important social skills, a 10-year-old boy stated, "Don’t be afraid of them [adults], um, because a lot of kids, they just kind of run off, and don’t like to talk to adults." An 11-year-old girl mentioned, "I think it’s good to be around adults a lot, so you can learn more." "I enjoy hanging out with adults. A lot of my friends don’t."

In addition to acceptance of others and communication, mothers who were interviewed also listed a variety of other social skills. These social skills ranged from
sharing to developing moral characteristics. While each mother mentioned different social skills they almost all mentioned the importance of "getting along." Getting along was not developed into a theme during the qualitative data analysis because the mothers never defined, or gave specific examples to illustrate, what they meant.

*Different perceptions of socialization.* Socialization of home-schooled children was an issue of which home-schooling mothers were highly aware. Every mother acknowledged that this issue had been brought to her attention since she had begun home schooling her children. Several mothers stated that questions about the socialization of their children were the first questions asked by individuals when they talked about home schooling. The qualitative data analyses revealed, however, that home-schooling mothers felt that their perception of socialization differed from the general public's. The mother of a 9-year-old boy illustrated this when she said, "My definition of it [socialization] has changed since I've home schooled, 'cause before, I think it was just, like being with your peers and be able to play and have fun, and I think it's broadened to the point of being able to talk to other people of varying ages." The mother of a 9-year-old girl said, "I think what the world wants to hear is that they're around other children...." Finally, the mother of an 8-year-old boy declared, "I don't believe that socialization means putting your child with 20 other children that are that age, and expecting them to mature and learn responsibility, and learn to associate well with one another."

In summary, home-schooling families' believed that socialization was more than the ability to get along with same-aged peers. These families felt that socialization was the ability to get along with, and communicate effectively with, individuals of all ages. The acceptance of differences was also seen to be a skill that home-schooling families valued.
Research Question 5: What Socializing Agents Are Recognized and Encouraged by Home-schooling Families?

The qualitative data analyses showed that schools and the family were recognized by home-schooling families as socializing agents and that mothers of home-schooled children believed that their children were developing adequate social skills. Home-schooling mothers also felt that controlling socializing agents and the activities their children participated in was important.

Schools as socializing agents. The home-schooling families who participated in the interview process indicated that the socialization of their children was an important issue to them. They recognized public schools as socializing agents, but expressed a belief that the socialization of children in the schools was more negative than what happens away from school. The importance of socialization, and the perceived negative influences connected with the public schools, served as reasons many families chose to home school. These excerpts from interviews illustrate this point.

"I think there’s positive and negative socialization, and that’s the thing that we wanted to pull the kids away from, is the negative socialization, and have a little more control over the socialization." Mother of a 10-year-old boy.

"I feel like a lot of the socialization at school is so negative, you know? Kids are henpecked and they’re ridiculed and they’re labeled. I just don’t feel like the socialization at school is that positive, and its certainly not the only way that a child can socialize. Some of the best ways are with the families.” Mother of an 8-year-old girl.

Controlling behaviors. The two previous excerpts also illustrate home-schooling families’ beliefs that the family is a primary socializing agent and the need to control socializing agents and activities. Home-schooling mothers reported being very active in designing and controlling the socializing activities that their children participated in: from selecting the children with whom they associate, to organizing activities for groups of children to attend. This was primarily done by forming or joining home-schooling groups.
Home-schooling groups were used by several of these families to further their children’s socialization. These groups consisted of 4 or more home-schooling families who would meet weekly for both academic activities and to provide a time and place for their children to interact.

The following excerpts represent a sample of the comments mothers regarding the groups that they belonged to and the children that their children interacted with.

“Well, they’re getting hand-picked kids. They’re getting kids that are really….have moms that are real attentive and very much aware.” Mother of a 9-year-old boy.

“I’ve been the one that has organized many of these activities, and there was a very conscious choice over which children would be involved and which ones would not” Mother of an 11-year-old girl.

“We have five families that meet together once a week, and we’re closely intertwined. They’ll eat dinner at their places, at their houses, and they’ll go on errands with both moms. I mean, they’re almost like extended family.” Mother of a 9-year-old boy.

*Family as the most important socialization agent.* Home-schooling families viewed the family as the most important socializing agent for their children. Mothers indicated that they felt that it was their responsibility to see that their children develop the social skills valued by the family. Two major functions of the family as a socializing agent were to provide role models for children and to provide socializing opportunities. Mothers reported that they felt it was important for their children to see them as social individuals. Hosting friends emerged as the most frequently mentioned activity that families engaged in to help in the socialization development of their children.

“We enjoy friends, and we like hosting. We like to have people over, and I think those are some of the best things, because that is real life” Mother of an 8-year-old girl.

“Part of our socialization plan is to have people into our home that are from all different backgrounds of life, and have them learn to sit around the table and have
conversation, and to learn from them and from their experiences...” Mother of 9-year-old girl.

“Every single day, there’s a variety of people that come into our home and through our home, and we like our children to have that kind of open friendliness about them, so it’s important” Mother of a 10-year-old girl.

In addition to hosting friends, home-schooling families listed other activities in which they engaged. Traveling together, being involved in church and community activities and sporting events were all mentioned as socializing activities that home-schooling families participated in. The qualitative data analyses showed that home-schooling families recognized and used several socializing agents available to them, but felt strongly that the family should serve as the primary and controlling socializing agent in their children’s lives.

Both home-schooling mothers and children recognized differences between boys and girls in their socialization needs and experiences. The idea that boys need to and participate in more physical activities while girls need to spend more time in communication related activities was suggested by mothers and children. A quote from the mother of a 9-year-old boy illustrates this: “Girls seem to need somebody to talk to...and share experiences and things and boys need someone to go shoot hoops with....”

A majority of the mothers specifically mentioned that girls need more time with other girls than perhaps boys need with their friends. When asked whether the social experiences of their children differed from publicly-schooled children, most mothers said that they did and that the activities their children engaged in met their needs.
The socialization of home-schooled children is a topic of interest to parents, educators, and legislators. This study examined the social skills of home-schooled children by comparing Social Skills Rating System scores of home-schooled children with the scores of their mothers and a comparison sample of publicly-schooled children. This study also explored home-schooling families' perceptions of socialization by interviewing 10 mother-child dyads. The design of this study allowed the researcher to address both children’s reported behaviors and home-schooling families’ perceptions of socialization. The results of this unique combination of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data gathered from mothers and children, challenge the findings of previous studies that used standardized measures, but supports those studies that used qualitative methods.

Discussion of the Social Skills Rating System Results

Research Question 1: Are There Differences in the Social Skills of Home-schooled Children and Publicly-schooled Children?

Previous research (Hedin, 1991; Shyers, 1992; Stough, 1992; Taylor, 1986a) examining the socialization of home-schooled children using the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale reported no statistically significant differences between home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children. Research utilizing measures of self-esteem (Kitchen, 1991; Lee, 1994; Tillman, 1995) reported that home-schooled children scored as well as or better than publicly-schooled children. In contrast, this study used an instrument that measured social skills, rather than an affective domain related to socialization, and found that publicly-schooled children, as compared to home-schooled children, had statistically significantly higher scores in the area of assertion and in the total social skills score as measured by the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). These results not only countered the
findings of self-concept and self-esteem studies, but also the findings of studies that included a measure of social skills. Shyers and Stough found no statistically significant difference between home-schooled children and publicly-schooled children's scores on the Children's Assertive Behavior Scale or the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale. Lee reported that home-schooled children actually scored statistically significantly higher in adaptive behaviors, as measured by the Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children.

A clearer picture is revealed when the results are examined by sex. No statistically significant differences were found between the home-schooled boys and publicly-schooled boys in any of the areas measured by the SSRS. Publicly-schooled boys had slightly higher mean scores on cooperation and assertion, while home-schooled boys had slightly higher mean scores on empathy and self-control. However, their mean total social skills scores were almost identical. The assertion that boys' and girls' experiences and behaviors are different from each other, and that these experiences influence the socialization outcomes of boys and girls is well documented (Berns, 2001; Lewis & Phillipsen, 1998; Thorne, 1993). Boy's play is generally characterized by larger groups, more public play and more physical contact than girl's play (Thorne). The active physical nature of boys' interactions is not greatly influenced by the number, age or even sex of the children engaged in the activities (Lewis & Phillipsen). Therefore, having less same-aged peer contact than publicly-schooled children (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994) may not affect the development of social skills of home-schooled boys.

A different pattern emerged when considering the girls' scores. Publicly-schooled girls had statistically significantly higher scores in assertion, empathy, self-control and on the total social skills score. They also had a slightly higher, but not statistically significantly higher, scores on the cooperation subscale. Girls' interactions are generally characterized by small, intimate groups, a strong convention of turn-taking, and mutuality in conversation (Thorne, 1993). The more intimate nature of girls activities might require more frequent
and/or longer contact with same-aged girls than home-schooled girls experience. Contact and communication with individuals who are younger and older may be valued by home-school mothers and children alike, but may not result in the same development of social skills for girls as does spending more time with girls of the same age.

Chatham-Carpenter (1994) reported that publicly-schooled children had more contact with other people and especially with same-aged peers than did home-schooled children. Whether or not home-schooled girls actually spent as much time with their friends as publicly-schooled girls was not revealed in this study. Less contact with same-aged peers was not seen as a liability by home-schooling mothers. They implied that fewer same-age interactions could also result in avoiding the negative aspects of these interactions.

This is not to say that home-schooling mothers did not recognize the importance of same-aged friends. The mother of a 9-year-old boy pointed this out when she said, “I will not home school unless I have a co-op, ’cause it’s important. They need to be around other kids their own age....” Home-schooling mothers were active in organizing social setting where their children would have opportunities to interact with same-aged peers but associating with individuals of varying ages was emphasized more by home-schooling mothers than being around same-aged peers.

Both home-schooled and publicly-schooled children reported more frequent empathy related behaviors than any behaviors in other social skill areas as measured by the SSRS. The emphasis placed by home-schooling families on accepting and interacting with people of different ages and backgrounds might encourage the development of empathy among home-schooled children, but it did not result in their children reporting more empathy related behaviors than publicly-schooled children on the SSRS.

The statistically significantly higher scores of publicly-schooled children over home-schooled children, and home-schooling mothers over their children on the assertion subscale is also of particular interest. Questions on the SSRS designed to measure
assertion are related more to school experiences than experiences that might happen outside of school, thus a review of the wording changes made to SSRS questions revealed that 6 of the 10 questions that related to assertion were changed. This was over half of the number of changes made to SSRS. The subscale with the next highest number of changes in its questions was cooperation, but only three questions were changed (half that of the assertion subscale). This raises the question of whether the SSRS, as it was administered to the children in this study, accurately measured assertive behaviors, or whether publicly-schooled children indeed develop more assertive behaviors than home-schooled children.

While no wording changes were made to questions measuring empathy and only 1 question measuring self-control was changed, home-schooled children had lower reliability coefficients on assertion, self-control, empathy and the total social skills score than publicly-schooled children. Mothers also had lower reliability coefficients on assertion, self-control, and responsibility.

**Research Question 2: Are There Differences in the Social Skills of Home-schooled Boys and Home-schooled Girls**

Finding statistically significant differences between publicly-schooled and home-schooled girls SSRS scores heightens the interest in whether there might also be a difference between home-schooled girls and boys SSRS scores. Tables found in *The Social Skills Rating System Manual* (Gresham & Elliott, 1990) show that girls have higher mean scores than boys on every subscale and on the total social skills score at every grade. The analyses of publicly-schooled children’s scores in this study revealed that publicly-schooled girls had statistically significantly higher scores than did the publicly-schooled boys. If the development of social skills among home-schooled children is similar to the development of social skills among publicly-schooled children, we would expect to find a similar difference between home-schooled girls’ and boys’ scores. The analyses of homeschooled children’s scores, however, showed that there were no statistically significant
differences on any of the subscales or the total social skills score between home-schooled girls and boys.

Because no differences in social skills were found between home-schooled boys and girls, it is tempting to say that sex is not a factor in the development of social skills in the home-schooled environment. Differences found between publicly-schooled boys and girls in Gresham’s and Elliott’s (1990) sample and in this study suggest that the scores of the sample of publicly-schooled children in this study resembles the scores of the national sample in this aspect. The fact that no differences between home-schooled boys and girls scores were found implies that the home-schooled children in this study differ from both the national sample and publicly-schooled children in this study in the area of differences between boys and girls social skills.

It has already been shown that the home-schooled boys in this study did not differ substantially from the publicly-schooled boys but, home-schooled girls reported statistically significantly lower scores on assertion, empathy, self-control and the total social skills score than did the publicly-schooled girls. Why the home-schooled girls in this study had lower social skills scores than the publicly-schooled girls and did not have higher social skill scores than the home-schooled boys remains unclear. The incongruous findings for home-schooled girls might be a result of the type of activities and social networks to which they have access to, as mentioned in the discussion of the first research question.

Research Question 3: Are There Differences in Home-schooling Mothers’ Perception and Their Children’s Perception of the Children’s Social Skills

To avoid the parental bias issue created when parents administer an instrument designed to be administered by a trained researcher or school psychologist, this study utilized the Social Skills Rating System. The SSRS was designed to be completed by parents and their children. When children complete the Social Skills Rating System it acts
as a self-evaluation instrument. When a parent completes the SSRS it provides another perspective on the child’s perceived social skills. This additional perspective allowed the researcher to explore whether mothers perceive the social skills of their children differently than do their children.

The results suggest that the mother’s perception of her child’s social skills were different than that of her child. Mother’s had statistically significantly higher scores on the assertion subscale than both boys and girls, on the self-control subscale than girls, and on the combined score than girls. Both boys and girls had statistically significantly higher scores on the cooperation subscale than did their mothers. This pattern is consistent with scores reported in the *Social Skills Rating System Manual* (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Mothers recorded higher scores on assertion and self-control while children reported higher scores on cooperation. Gresham and Elliott do not report whether the differences were statistically significant.

These results indicate that home-schooling mothers’ perceptions of their children’s social skills differ from their children’s perceptions. Mothers viewed their children’s behaviors as more assertive than did their children while the children saw their behaviors as more cooperative than did their mothers. It is interesting to note that home-schooling mothers showed the same pattern as the parents in Gresham’s and Elliott’s (1990) sample, even though they had the children at home during school hours, and likely had more contact with their children throughout the day.

Another interesting pattern is revealed when examining Figures 1 and 2. The bar graphs in Figure 1 showed that children’s scores on self-control were lower than any other social skill subscale. The bar graphs in Figure 2 showed that mothers perceived their children as having more self-control than the children perceived themselves as having, as measured by the SSRS. The fact that children’s scores on self-control were lower than any
other social skill measured by the SSRS and, lower than their mother’s score as well, deserves further investigation.

The assumption that mothers may have a different perspective on their children’s social skills is important to keep in mind when interpreting results from studies that use mothers or children’s reports on cooperation, assertion, self-control and possibly other social skills. Because statistically significant differences were found on every social skill when comparing mothers and daughters, and on half of the social skills when comparing mothers and sons, caution should be used when interpreting results of research that examined other social skills reported by either mother or child instead of by both. The studies (Kitchen, 1991; Stough, 1992; Taylor, 1986a) that focused on children’s self-concept, or self-esteem, but had measures that were administered by a parent, could have been influenced by these differing views.

Discussion of Home-schooling Families’ Perceptions of Socialization

Research Question 4: How Do Home-schooling Families Perceive Socialization?

Interviewing both mothers and their children provided an opportunity to explore whether or not differences noted in the statistical analyses would be consistent with the qualitative analyses. The social skills of cooperation, assertion, empathy, responsibility, and self-control were not specifically mentioned by mothers or children in the interviews. What did emerge from the qualitative data analyses revealed that mothers and children were very similar in their perceptions of socialization.

One area in which mothers and children showed substantial agreement was the importance of accepting others. Mothers spoke of the importance of including individuals of varying ages in their children’s activities. Mothers and children related examples of inclusion and acceptance in their home-schooling experiences that illustrated how the principle of acceptance was taught and put into action.
The ability to communicate with individuals of diverse backgrounds and different ages was another important social skill identified by home-schooling mothers and their children. The results of this study showed that this value held by mothers was successfully transmitted to home-schooled children. Children, as well as mothers, expressed the belief that the ability to communicate with people of different ages was an important social skill.

While home-schooling mothers and their children agreed on important aspects of socialization, the home-schooling mothers felt that their perceptions of socialization differed from those of individuals who did not home-school their children. They believed that non-home schoolers focused more on same-aged peer interactions rather than interacting with people of different ages. Why home-schooling mothers believe that non-home-schoolers focus more on same-aged peer interactions, remains unclear. However, this belief was repeatedly expressed by home-schooling mothers in this study, and is supported in Chatham-Carpenter’s (1994) study of home-schooled children’s social networks. In her study, she reported that the social networks of home-schooled children included more individuals who were older than the child. She also reported that publicly-schooled children had more contact with same-aged peers. Montgomery (1989), on the other hand, reported that home-schooled adolescents and publicly-schooled adolescents experienced the same opportunities for social interactions outside of the school setting. He said that these opportunities included employment, participation in church groups, scouts, and performing activities where both groups have opportunities to interact with individuals of many different ages.

Tillman (1995) concluded from her study that “Home schooling parents have a unique view of self-esteem and socialization” (p. 5). Whether this perspective of socialization is truly unique to home-schooling families is not known. The belief that their perception of socialization is different from non-home-schoolers may influence what socializing agents home-schooling families choose to utilize.
Research Question 5: What Socializing Agents Are Recognized and Encouraged by Home-schooling Families?

The home-schooling families in this study were aware and concerned about the socialization of their children. They recognized many socializing agents and events in their children’s lives and attempted to impact the effects of these socializing agents by controlling what aspects they could, and centering socializing activities in the home. The mother of a 10-year-old boy put this into words when she said,

“I think there’s positive and negative socialization, and that’s the thing that we want to pull the kids away from, is the negative socialization, and have a little more control over the socialization....it’s [socialization] more controlled and more family oriented.”

This supports what previous research using qualitative methods have found. Both Johnson (1991) and Tillman (1995) reported that home-schooling parents were aware of the socialization needs of their children and strove to meet those needs by actively structuring the home environment.

The most obvious example of controlling socializing agents and centering social activities in the home is the act of home schooling. Schools are readily recognized as socializing agents, and home-schooling families have decided to limit this influence by removing their children from the public schools and educating them at home. They expressed concern that the public school environment was negative and destructive. The mother of an 8-year-old girl gave an example of this when she said, “the socialization at school is so negative, you know? Kids are henpecked and they’re ridiculed and they’re labeled....” The home was seen as a more protective environment and a place where parents could closely monitor the activities and interactions of their children.

Interactions with peers was another socializing experience that home-schooling parents attempted to influence. While no home-schooling mother mentioned that restrictions were placed on whom their children could associate with, they were selective in whom they involved in the their home-schooling activities. One way this was accomplished
was to form a home-school group or co-op and that served as the primary social group for their children. These groups or co-ops were frequently mentioned as socializing agents in the home-schooled children’s lives.

Many mothers in the study saw the flow of people in and out of the home as a primary socializing agent. They regularly entertained guests and encouraged their children to invite friends over to the house. While home-schooling families are not exclusive in their view of social interaction in the home as socializing agents, home-schooling mothers saw this as more important than socializing in a school classroom, a difference they believe sets them apart from non-home-schooling individuals.

Limitations

The design of this study was exploratory rather than predictive in nature and the results should not be generalized to the home-school population, but rather should serve to direct further research in the area of home-school socialization. While this study attempted to avoid the limitations of previous home-schooling research, several weaknesses were discovered and will be discussed here.

Gaining a representative sample from the home-school population is extremely difficult due to the defensive and suspicious nature of many home-schooling families (Lines, 2000). While this study reported a return rate of 52% for the home-schooled participants, the number of participants was a major limitation of this study. Although efforts were made to reduce the effects of self-selection bias by contacting every eligible home-schooling family brought to the attention of the researcher by means of unique circumstances (as discussed in Chapter III), rather than only those families known to the school district or on a mailing list, a self-selection bias does exist. Several home-schooling parents opted not to participate in the study, some because of a concern that school or judicial authorities might learn of their home-schooling practices. Without the participation
of these and other families who did not participate, the findings of this study cannot be generalized, but should be considered limited to those home-schooling families who chose to participate in home-schooling research.

Since one of the basic tenets of socialization is developing social skills, this study used an instrument that measured social skills rather than an affective domain related to socialization. The reliability of the SSRS questionnaire used in this study was called into question because of the low correlation coefficients reported on the test-retest analyses. The correlation coefficients for the nine children who completed the SSRS questionnaire twice were lower than those reported by Gresham and Elliott (1990). This may be a result of the wording changes made on 11 of the 34 questions, the small sample (n = 9) and/or the time between completion of the questionnaires. A small sample size has a larger standard error and a larger difference between the means which in turn influences correlation. In addition, the time that elapsed between completion of the questionnaires varied for every participant. The lack of a standard amount of time between completion of questionnaires raises concern about the reliability of the results.

Because of the numerous independent and paired t tests that were used to examine the research questions, the risk of alpha inflation exists. Setting the p level at .001 to compensate for alpha inflation risk increases the risk of a Type II error being made. The researcher decided to set the p level at .05 and acknowledge that alpha inflation could be a problem rather than risk not identifying differences that exist.

Home-schooling families in this and Tillman's (1995) study believed that their perceptions of socialization differed from individuals who did not home school their children. Whether or not this is an accurate perception could not be ascertained without interviewing families whose children attend public school. Without information about non-home-schoolers' perceptions of socialization, the findings of this study are limited to a
description of home-schooling mothers’ perceptions of possible differences in what socialization means.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research on the effects of home schooling on children’s social development is needed to better understand what differences might exist and what factors affect those developing skills. Obtaining a representative sample of home-schoolers will remain challenging, but efforts should be made to find ways to include even the more private home-schoolers, rather than relying on home-schoolers who are part of organizations or who subscribe to mailing lists.

This study improved upon previous studies by utilizing an instrument that measures social skills rather than just affective domains associated with social skills and by utilizing an instrument that was designed to be completed by both the child and a parent, thus reducing parental bias as a factor in the study. Because no instrument has yet been designed to specifically assess the social skills of home-schooled children, a careful consideration of measurement instruments is needed. Methods to evaluate an instrument’s reliability when used by home schoolers should also be included in future research.

To discern whether differences truly exist between home-schooled and non-home-schooled individuals, comparison samples should be included in the research design. Expanding the qualitative investigation of perceptions of socialization to non-home-schoolers could prove very helpful. The use of qualitative methods may prove useful in discovering what factors influence the development of social skills in the home-schooling environment, and whether these differ from the factors that are influencing the social development of publicly-schooled children.

Longitudinal studies could also prove helpful in understanding if and how the socialization needs of home-schooled children change over time. Whether the differences
found in this study remain or evaporate in adolescence could be explored by using a longitudinal design. Studies of adults who were home-schooled could also provide information about their integration in and contributions to society.

Conclusions

Whereas Hedin (1991), Kitchen (1991), Shyers (1992), Stough (1992), and Taylor (1986a) reported no statistically significant differences between home-schooled and publicly-schooled children, this study comes to a different conclusion. Publicly-schooled girls reported engaging in more positive social behaviors than did home-schooled girls.

Home-schooled children’s perceptions of their social skills also differed from their mothers’ perception. Children saw themselves as more cooperative, while their mothers viewed their children’s behavior as more assertive. This is not unique to home-schooling mothers and children. When studying the topic of socialization it should be recognized that perceptions differ. This concept was clear when home-schooling mothers expressed the belief that they thought their perception of socialization differed from that of non-home-schoolers. How non-home-schoolers perceive socialization is the next step to discovering if differences between home-schooling families and families who send their children to public school really do exist.

Families who choose to home school may want to carefully consider the socialization objectives they feel are important and evaluate whether or not the activities and opportunities their children are afforded are aligned with achieving these objectives. In light of the results of this study, parents should pay particular attention to the social needs and opportunities of their daughters.
REFERENCES


*Doctoral dissertation*, Bob Jones University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 301 925)


*Communication Education, 48*, 91-108.


*Education and Urban Society, 21*(1), 96-113.

APPENDICES
Appendix A. Permissions Letters
February 11, 2002

American Guidance Service Inc.
Publishers’ Building
Circle Pines, MN 55014-1796

Dear Ms. Velde,

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the home-school movement. Studies have focused on the reasons why parents choose to home school their children and the academic achievements of home-schooled children. In an attempt to understand how home schooling might affect the socialization of children some studies have looked at home-schooled children’s self-concept, self-esteem and social net-works, but none have yet measured their social skills.

I am constructing a study which would look at the social skills of home-schooled children and compare them to the social skills of traditionally-schooled children. Your Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) is the instrument I would like to use in this study. The difficulty comes with the wording of eleven questions in the students SSRS form. Because the educational setting is different for home-schooled children some questions do not seem to apply and may be either misinterpreted or ignored by the child.

I would like permission to change the wording of eleven questions to avoid having these questions left unanswered. A SSRS student form would be ordered for each participating student and would be used to score their responses. All of the 34 questions would be typed, with the proposed changes made to eleven of the questions and given to the student on a separate piece of paper. I would also like permission to expand the frequency scale from three to five choices.

The home-school population is small but growing. Currently no instrument has been designed for measuring the social skills of this population. I hope that I can gain your cooperation and permission to use the SSRS with the suggested changes to further our understanding of the effects of home schooling on a child’s social skills. Please contact me with your response or questions.

Most Respectfully Yours,

Neil Mecham
Assistant Professor
Southern Utah University
351 W. Center
Cedar City, Utah, 84720
(435) 865-8171
# AGS

## PERMISSION REQUEST

A separate form must be submitted for each publication title.

### REQUEST FROM:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Neil Mecham</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Assistant Professor</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Business:</td>
<td>Southern Utah University</td>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>351 W Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City:</td>
<td>Cedar City</td>
<td>State:</td>
<td>Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number:</td>
<td>435-865-8171</td>
<td>Fax Number:</td>
<td>435-865-8257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mail:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mecham@suc.edu">mecham@suc.edu</a></td>
<td>Other:</td>
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### PERMISSION REQUESTED FOR THE FOLLOWING COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL:

**Publication Title:** Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)  
Component Title(s): Social Skills Questionnaire, Student Form - Elementary Level (Gr 3-6)  
Author(s): Frank Gresham and Stephen Elliott  
Copyright Year requested: 1990  
Materials to be Used/Reproduced: Request permission to use adapted SSRS form (as referenced above) in a research project for home-school students. Need to reword eleven of the questions to make the questionnaire appropriate for the home-school setting.

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**Details/Restrictions:** The following credit line needs to appear with the questions so the user clearly knows the source of the material. Also, the SSRS items (questions) cannot be republished or made available to the general public in any research summary report. Parent may not be allowed to retain a copy of your research questionnaire that includes an SSRS item. In any research summary, you may direct readers to the SSRS questionnaire and note how you have adapted it for this particular use.

**Credit line required:**  
Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) by Frank Gresham and Stephen Elliott © 1990 American Guidance Service, Inc., 4201 Woodland Road, Circle Pines, MN 55014-1796. Adapted and reproduced with permission of publisher for research purposes only. All rights reserved. www.agsnet.com

### APPROVAL:

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<td>Date:</td>
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LaAnh Velda  
Permissions Manager  
American Guidance Service, Inc.  
4201 Woodland Road  
Circle Pines, MN 55014-1796  
Phone: 651-287-7242  
Fax: 651-287-7227  
E-Mail: le Nguyen@agsnet.com
Appendix B. Packet Information
Informed Consent
The Socialization of Home-schooled Children in Rural Utah

Introduction

Dear Mr. and Mrs.,

The number of families who take on the challenge of educating their children at home is growing every year. Recent articles in Newsweek and Time magazine have portrayed home schooling in a rather positive light. But there are still many misgivings about home schooling caused, in part, by the lack of information. Neil Mecham is conducting a study that will help to answer the frequently asked questions about the socialization of home-schooled children. This research project will also help him complete his doctorate degree at Utah State University. This Informed Consent letter is intended to explain the study and protect your rights. Please read this carefully and explain it to your child.

Procedures

Included in this packet are two social skills questionnaire which will provide information about some of the social skills your child uses, a demographic questionnaire which will provide some information about your family or the environment that your child lives in, and a self-addressed envelope for you to return the questionnaires in. The child’s questionnaire should be completed by a child in your family who is home schooled and between the ages of 8 and 12. If you have more than one child eligible to participate, please select the child closest to age 10. The parent’s questionnaire should be completed by the mother. The demographic questionnaire can be completed by either the father or mother.

When the questionnaires have been completed, please return them, along with a signed consent form (keep the other one for your records), in the enclosed envelope. If you indicate on the demographic questionnaire that you are willing to be interviewed, you will be called and an appointment made to interview the mother and child who completed the questionnaires.

Risks & Benefits

All information gathered through this study will be kept strictly confidential. No names will be used in any written documents and there is minimal risk to any participants.

The information gained from this study will benefit home-schooling families and others who are interested in the home-schooling movement. A better understanding of the socialization of home-schooled children will help us address future concerns and misgivings.

Cost & Payment

There is absolutely no cost to you or your family to participate in this study. When the questionnaires are returned, a letter of participation, which could be included in your child’s learning portfolio, and a Wal-mart gift certificate for five dollars will be mailed to your child.
Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

Your willingness to assist in this study is greatly appreciated. Please remember that your child's participation, as well as your own, is entirely voluntary. You, or your child, may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Confidentiality

Only Neil Mecham will have access to the personal information gathered in this study. All records and communication will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Information may be kept for up to ten years, to allow additional follow up studies to be done. All interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed. The tapes will be erased immediately after they have been transcribed.

Findings and Questions

You will be informed of the results of this study when they are finalized. You will also be informed if any changes are made in the procedures. If you have any concerns about what is asked, or if you have any questions about this study, you may contact Neil Mecham by e-mail at mecham@usu.edu or by phone at 865-8171.

IRB Approval

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this research project. I have included two copies of this letter and would ask you to please sign and return one copy with your questionnaires. The second copy you should keep in your own files.

By signing below I agree to participate and have my child participate.

______________________________  __________________________

Date  Date

My mother or father has explained this study to me and I agree to participate by completing the questions on the questionnaire.

______________________________  __________________________

Date  Date

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Neil A. Mecham  Shelley L. Knudsen Lindauer, Ph.D.
Informed Consent
The Socialization of Children in Rural Utah

Introduction
Dear Mr. And Mrs.

The social skills of children are important for their success. Understanding what influences social skills may help us better prepare children with the social skills that they will need to succeed. Neil Meckham is conducting a study that will help improve the understanding of factors that may influence children’s social skills. This research project will also help him complete his doctorate degree at Utah State University.

This Informed Consent letter is intended to explain the study and protect your rights. Please read this carefully and explain it to your child.

Procedures

Included in this packet is one social skills questionnaire which will provide information about some of the social skills your child uses, a demographic questionnaire which will provide some information about your family or the environment that your child lives in, and a self addressed envelope for you to return the questionnaires in. The child’s questionnaire should be given to a child in your family, who is between the ages of 8 and 12, to complete. If you have more than one child eligible to participate please select the child closest to age 10. The demographic questionnaire can be completed by either the father or mother.

When the questionnaires have been completed, please return them, along with a signed consent form (keep the other one for your records), in the enclosed envelope.

Risks & Benefits

All information gathered through this study will be kept strictly confidential. No names will be used in any written documents and there is minimal risk to any participants.

The information gained from this study will benefit families and others who are interested in the social skills of children. A better understanding of the social skills of children will help us address children’s needs and the factors that influence them.

Cost & Payment

There is absolutely no cost to you or your family to participate in this study. When the questionnaires are returned, a letter of participation, which could be included in your child’s learning portfolio, and a Wal-mart gift certificate for five dollars will be mailed to your child.

Voluntary participation and right to withdraw

Your willingness to assist in this study is greatly appreciated. Please remember that your child’s participation, as well as your own, is entirely voluntary. You, or your child, may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.
Confidentiality

Only Neil Mecham will have access to the personal information gathered in this study. All records and communication will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Information may be kept for up to ten years, to allow additional follow up studies to be done.

Findings and Questions

You will be informed of the results of this study when they are finalized. You will also be informed if any changes are made in the procedures. If you have any concerns about what is asked, or if you have any questions about this study, you may contact Neil Mecham by e-mail at mecham@usu.edu or by phone at 865-8171. If you have any questions or concerns about the approval of this research, you may contact the IRB office at (435) 797-1821.

IRB Approval

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this research project. I have included two copies of this letter and would ask you to please sign and return one copy with your questionnaires. The second copy you should keep in your own files.

By signing below I agree to participate and have my child participate.

_________________________________________  
Date

My mother or father has explained this study to me and I agree to participate by completing the questions on the questionnaire.

_________________________________________  
Date

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Neill A. Mecham  
Neil A. Mecham

Shelley L. Knudsen Lindauer, Ph.D.
Dear Mr. And Mrs. Mecham,

The number of families who take on the challenge of educating their children at home is growing every year. Recent articles in Newsweek and Time magazine have portrayed home schooling in a rather positive light. But there are still may misgivings about home schooling caused, in part, by a lack of information. I believe that this study will help to answer the frequently asked questions about the socialization of home-schooled children.

I hope that you will be willing to participate in this study on the social skills of home-schooled children. I would like to remind you that all of the information that you give will be held strictly confidential. If you have any concerns about what is asked, or if you have any questions about this study, you may contact me by e-mail at mecham@suu.edu or by phone at 865-8171.

Included in this packet are two social skills questionnaires which will provide information about some of the social skills your child uses, a demographic questionnaire which will provide some information about your family or the environment that your child lives in, and a self addressed envelope for you to return the questionnaires in. The child’s questionnaire should be given to a child in your family, who is between the ages of 8 and 12, to complete. If you have more than one child eligible to participate please select the child closest to age 10. The parent’s questionnaire should be completed by the mother of the child. The demographic questionnaire can be completed by either the father or mother.

When the questionnaires are returned, a letter of participation, which could be included in your child’s learning portfolio, and a gift certificate for five dollars will be sent to your child. I will also inform you of the results of this study when they are finalized. If you know of a home-schooling family with a child eligible to participate in this study, would you please encourage them fill out the questionnaires. If they didn’t receive a packet, please contact me and I will send them one. Thank you again for your time and willingness to participate.

Sincerely,
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about home-schooling families. All answers are voluntary and will be held in strict confidence.

What is your marital status? Married Divorced Single, never married

What are their ages of the children in the home?

What are the ages of the children who are being home schooled?

How many years have you been home schooling?

Are you affiliated with any home-school organization? Yes No

If yes, please identify the organization.

Was the father home schooled? Yes No

Was the mother home schooled? Yes No

What is the education level of the mother?

High School Diploma Associate Degree Bachelor's Degree

Master’s Degree Doctoral Degree Other

What is the education level of the father?

High School Diploma Associate Degree Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree Other

What is the approximate annual income in the home? Please circle one.

Under $20,000 $20,000-$29,999 $30,000-$39,999 $40,000-$49,999 $50,000-$59,999 $60,000-$69,999 $70,000-$79,999 Above $80,000

Does the mother work outside of the home? Yes No

Does the mother work (bring in income) at home? Yes No

Does the father work outside of the home? Yes No

Does the father work (bring in income) at home? Yes No

As part of this study, I will be interviewing some participants (mothers and children) to explore how they feel about the socialization aspect of home schooling. Would you be willing to be interviewed? Yes No

OVER >>>
To complete this study I need to have several children who attend public school complete the same questionnaire. Would you please refer two families you feel are similar to your own, i.e., number of children, family income, mother's employment etc. but who send their children to public school. I will mail similar materials to one or both of these families inviting them to participate in this study. You and your child will not be identified as participants in this study nor as references. You may still participate in the study without providing two referrals. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Neil Mecham at 865-8171 or 867-0247.

Family Name  
Address  
City  
Family Name  
Address  
City
Appendix C. Interview Format
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and allowing us to interview you and (child’s name). With your permission, I would like to tape the interviews. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time and you may choose not to answer any question if you so wish. In the interest of time, and to avoid having the two of you influence each other’s answers, I would like to interview child’s name in another room while Jane interviews you here. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

Mothers questions

“Since you began home-schooling your children, have you been asked about their socialization?”
Queries “By whom?” “How often?” and “How do you feel when this happens?”

“How do you respond to people’s questions about your children’s socialization?”
Queries “Do you feel this satisfies them?” “Do you feel satisfied with the answer?”

“What does socialization mean to you, what would be your definition?”

“Do you feel that your children are developing adequate social skills?”
Queries “What kind of things lead you to believe this?”

What have you done to help your children develop socially?
Queries “Where these conscious decisions?” “Has this been additional work for you?”

“How do you think that your children feel as if they ‘fit in’?”
Queries “What happens to make you think this?” “Is this an issue you spend time on?”
"Are the socializing experiences of your children different from the experiences of children who attend school?"

Queries "What are some differences?" "How do you feel about this?"

"Do you feel that boys and girls have different social needs?"

Queries "Why do you believe this?"

"Do your sons and daughters have different social experiences?"

Queries "How do they feel about this?"
Child's questions

"Since you began home-schooling, have you been asked about having or getting along with friends?"
Queries "By whom?" "How often?" and "How do you feel when this happens?"

"How do you answer people's questions about your friends?"
Queries "Do you feel this satisfies them?" "Do you feel satisfied with the answer?"

"Do you feel like you 'fit in'?"
Queries "What sort of things lead you to believe this?"

Do you do different things than children who attend school?"
Queries "What are some differences?" "How do you feel about this?"

"Do you feel that boys and girls have different social needs?"
Queries "Why do you believe this?"
VITA

Neil A. Mecham

3420 E 100 N
Rigby, Idaho 83442

Home (208) 754-4057
Office (208) 496-2977
Email: mechamn@byui.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Family, Consumer and Human Development, Expected: May 2004
M.A. Elementary Education, Arizona State University, December 1991
B.S. Elementary Education, Utah State University, December 1985

POSITIONS HELD

Professor of Child and Family Studies, 2003-present
Brigham Young University – Idaho
  • Teach Child Development and Introduction to Preschool Programs
  • Supervise students in preschool laboratory

Assistant Professor of Family and Consumer Science, 1994-2003
Southern Utah University
  • Taught Human Development, Parenting, Family Relations and Introduction to Child Care and Guidance.
  • Supervised students in preschool laboratory

Teacher, Edith Bowen Laboratory School, 1991-1994
Utah State University
  • Taught children ages 6-9 in multi-aged classroom using a unified studies approach.
  • Supervised Level III university students in teaching and problem solving in the classroom.

RECENT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

28th Annual Early Childhood Conference, Weber State University, March 2003
  • Principles of Discipline

27th Annual Early Childhood Conference, Weber State University, March 2002
  • The Path to Positive Self-Esteem

26th Annual Early Childhood Conference, SL Community College, March 2001
  • Home-Schooling: Facts and Fairy Tales
PUBLICATION

- Pornography and Families: A New Perspective. Submitted to *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*. Fall 2003

GRANTS

- Distance Learning Course Enhancement Program: $3000
  Awarded to modify Human Development course so that it could be delivered over Ed-net services.
- SUU Faculty Development Grant Committee: $1,341

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROGRAMS

- Assisted in planning, petitioning for and organizing the SUU Child-Care Center
- Proposed a Home-School Cooperation pilot program for Iron County School District which was adopted by the district and funded by the State Office of Education. Served as principle researcher and investigator associated with this project.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Consulted with Women’s Crisis Center and Discovery Park Planning committee on playground issues.
- Served on Iron County/Home School Task Force
- Served as a Sterling Scholar judge
- Guest Lecturer at Cedar High School and Enoch Head Start
- Presented workshop at Community Family Day
- Assisted USU in assessing Head Start Teaching Center in Washington, UT.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of National Council of Family Relations and State Affiliate
- Member of National Association for Education of Young Children and State Affiliate.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES

- Currently hold a Professional Educator License

INTERESTS/ACTIVITIES

- Coached youth soccer for AYSO for 6 years. Have also coached teams for Utah Summer Games and 3v3 tournaments. Enjoy playing in adult leagues.