Home Schooling in View of John Calvin:

A Study in Education and Communion of Saints

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As ‘t knipt en nog ais knipt, joa, den gait ‘t om ’t begunsel.
[It is the principle that counts]

Keuning, 1917, p. 118

I have the impression that “community” is now used to mean, simply,
people with similar interests,
a considerable change from an older meaning:
A community is made up of people who may not have similar interests
but who must negotiate and resolve their differences
for the sake of social harmony.

Postman, 1999, p. 53

But God has so composed the body,
giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,
so that there may be no division in the body,
but that the members may have the same care for one another.
And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it;
if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Paul, c. 55, 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

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Abstract

This study explores the tension that has emerged around the rise of home schooling in a faith-community strongly committed to establishing and maintaining day schools in the tradition of John Calvin. It aims to identify and understand factors that contributed to this tension and to find ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate it. In line with Calvin, personal convictions, and the nature of the community, the study takes a Christian epistemological and axiological stance. Its premise is that the integrity of the community is more important than the manner in which its children are taught.

The study reviews relevant literature and several interviews. It considers both secular and Christian literature to understand communities, community breakdown, and community restoration. It also examines literature about the significance of home, school, and community relationships; the attraction of Reformed day schools; and the appeal of home schooling. Interviews were conducted with 4 home schooling couples and 2 focus groups. One focus group included local school representatives, and the other home schoolers and school representatives from an area with reputedly less tension on the issue. Interviews were designed for participants to give their perspectives on reasons for home schooling, the existing tension, and ways to resolve the issues.

The study identifies the rise of home schooling in this particular context as the initial issue and the community's deficiency to properly deal with it as the chief cause for the rising tensions. However, I argue that, within the norms the community firmly believes in, home schooling need not jeopardize its integrity. I call for personal, social, and spiritual renewal to restore the covenant community in gratitude to God.

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My family was of great support throughout: Coby, by being considerate beyond measure; Tim, by couriering books; Harold, with technological issues; and Henry and Jennifer by being patient until I would have more time again for games or stories.

My parents taught me that it is the principle that counts, as Keuning (1917) put it in my Dutch dialect: *As 't knipt en nog ais knipt, joa, den gait 't om 't begunsel*. I hope that this thesis reflects that principle, as only then God would be honoured. I thank Him for giving me opportunity, strength, and perseverance to complete this exercise.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

This was a study of tension that developed around the rise of home schooling in a Reformed faith-community that traditionally valued and fully supported its own day school. In the context of aspects of communities and of home-school-community relationships in general, and of this community in particular, I sought to establish the appeal of the centuries-old tradition of Reformed day schools, and of the attraction of the more recent home schooling phenomenon. Furthermore, I set out to identify and understand factors that invoke community tension around the rise of home schooling. In addition, my aim was to identify ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate that tension.

This chapter presents the background and a statement of the problem situation, and identifies the purpose for, pertinent questions addressed in, and potential benefits of the study. It further presents my epistemology and axiology, and identifies the study's scope and limitations. The chapter also includes a glossary of terms, and concludes with an outline of the remainder of the document.

Background and Statement of the Problem Situation

The Niagara Peninsula Canadian Reformed (NPCR) community consists largely of post World War II Dutch immigrants and their descendants (DeVries, 2000). The community's commitment to day schools carries on a tradition starting with Martin Luther and John Calvin (Calvin et al., 1541, p. 41; Luther, 1524). Van Brummelen (1986) also describes this tradition and the development of Calvinistic Christian day schools in North America in general, but is brief on the particular schools considered here. Canadian Reformed communities began to establish their own schools in 1955, and now have 23 schools across Canada, including seven full or partial high school programs. They jointly support a small teacher training college in Hamilton, Ontario.

The community's history demonstrates its commitment to and spiritual rationale for its own day schools. In a four-page review, Schutten (2001) reports that shortly after the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville in 1952, a men's Bible study group discussed Christian education. In the public schools, they noted, "they pray and read the Bible still. But our covenant children need more than that. A Christian teacher puts more in teaching than only praying and reading the Bible" (p. 1). In February, 1953, a school society was established with a membership fee of "ten cents per week if possible. . . . We should practice to carry each other's burden" (p. 2). A year after John Calvin School (JCS) started in 1964, it enjoyed full parent participation and broad church community support (personal communication, H. Feenstra, September 21, 2003).

JCS, sometimes also called "John Calvin," first opened its doors for 111 students, and now enrols over 270. A daughter school in Attercliffe (established 1995) enrols over 140 students. The commitment to the school persisted as the Smithville congregation grew,

and new churches were instituted in Beamsville (1970), Attercliffe (1985), Rockway (1990), Grassie (2001), and Dunnville (2003). JCS relies on the physical, financial, moral, and spiritual contributions of church members, and occasional capital contributions from the Netherlands. Currently it is executing a $1.75 million expansion, and monthly tuition is between $500 and $600 per family. The school effort is portrayed as the community's spiritual response of thankfulness to God for the promises He gives to them and their children in the covenant (Our Statement of Purpose, n.d.). The school thus also functions as a symbol of spiritual unity: Accepting responsibility for each other in the covenant, the members of the community make a joint effort to build, maintain, and support schools like JCS, and gratefully accept the results as a gift from God.

Since 1990, however, families have increasingly chosen to teach their children at home. Currently, more than 10% of families do so, and this gave rise to tension in the community: Home schoolers and day schoolers are said to socialize in different corners of the church parking lot, sit on opposite sides of the church aisle, and experience emotional conflict. On occasion, home schooling is construed as not just a physical and financial withdrawal from JCS, but also as a symbolic, moral, and spiritual withdrawal from the community. The argument runs somewhat parallel to the one about maintaining one public system for Ontario (e.g., Civil Rights in Public Education, 2000) versus a diversity of systems, or about communal schools versus home schooling (e.g., Lubienski, 2000).

As suggested by various presentations given within the community (Agema, 2001; Appendices A, B, C; Van Dam, 1992/2000), the debate, and the ongoing rise of home schooling, the community has an interest in resolution of the tension. It appears, however, that it failed to avoid the false dilemma of *Christian school or Home school* Van Dam (2000, p. 35) identified: Despite home schoolers' claims, he deems it dubious to conclude that home schooling is more Biblical than day schooling.

Restoring communication and enhancing the understanding of community would not only reduce my cognitive dissonance about the matter, but also be an interest of the community and its leaders, and ultimately be necessary for God's glory. After all, this community sees itself as the Body of Christ, in which each part is needed and must do its work. Although it does not expect perfection in this dispensation, it seeks to overcome its many imperfections out of gratitude to God. Placing its hope for the future in God and in His Christ's salvation, He also must be central to a solution.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the tension that has mounted around the rise of home schooling in the NPCR community and to propose ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate that tension with a view to restoring community integrity and unity. I work from the premise that it is more important for each member of the Body of Christ to "show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside

all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity" (Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, 1995, p. 595), than for all members to follow the same model for educating their children.

This purpose has a strong personal element. As a teacher at and vice principal of JCS, I am not only interested in improving and advancing the education it offers, but also in maintaining and improving the school's ties with the supporting community. Beyond JCS, this translates in my ongoing publication of reflective columns on the practice and principles of Reformed education. It was, in part, the rumoured and experienced existence of community tension and an attempt to write a balanced column about home schooling that aroused my interest: When I interviewed a home schooling family for this purpose, it was very difficult to separate my role as an agent of the school from my genuine interest in gaining a balanced understanding of home schooling. I also sensed a parallel between the present strains, and tension around theological, cultural, and educational issues I had observed closely while serving as a school administrator and church deacon elsewhere. Finally, even though they will often run parallel, my faith commitment compels me to seek the well-being of the church, which is the Body of Christ, before that of the school, which is a secondary service institution intended only to help parents.

Questions to be Answered

To analyze the existing tension, I sought firsthand accounts of people at the centre of the controversy. I asked several home schooling couples about their motivation to start and to continue home schooling. Likewise, focusing on answers from the literature and from people in positions of school leadership, I sought to establish why others still support the school and resist the home schooling phenomenon. Furthermore, I sought to gain an understanding of how participants in my study saw the home schooling phenomenon intersect theologically, philosophically, and socially in the Reformed tradition of schooling, and what they perceived to be the causes of and possible solutions to the existing tension. The study of relevant literature helped to connect the particulars of this quest to what is generally known about similar or related issues.

Beneficiaries

This study has several potential beneficiaries, as it could help them gain a better understanding of the tension, and the identification of ways to resolve it. Catching the origins of the tension may lead to ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate it, and to help restore unity and harmony in the community. Beneficiaries of the study include: The participants, whose voices will be heard; the NPCR, as well as the broader Reformed community, whose commitment to and understanding of the communion of saints can be enhanced; Canadian Reformed schools in general, whose school evaluations can be more focused, who may gain a new conviction regarding the significant role of the family in education, and whose policies may be rethought as a result; the academic community,

which has a rather limited body of literature on Canadian home schooling; and myself, in the reduction of my own cognitive dissonance. The study may benefit all who are faced with similar community tensions. It is my prayer that the study will honour God and edify the Body of Christ.

Epistemology and Axiology

This study operates in the area of a perceived tension between secular and Christian studies. Even though my faith commitment does not compel me to, I accept as my own Calvin's epistemological perspective and axiological stance as described in the following pages, and as addressed more recently by Oosterhoff (2002). Other perspectives are given for illustration, context and contrast only. In line with John Calvin (1509-1564), in whose days theology was still regarded as "Madame la haute science" (Haskins, 1957, p. 19) and "the key to man's wholeness as the pursuit of the truth of God through Jesus Christ" (North, 1980, p. viii; see also Rushdoony, 1963, p. 6), this study recognizes the validity of both secular and Christian literature, but seeks to find a Biblical axiological answer. It assumes that one's relationship with God determines how to live in relationship with others, and also how and what one researches: Moral direction must come from God, and from principles beyond the observation of phenomena or social norms.

During the Renaissance, people began to believe that, aside from Scripture, truth could also be found through investigation of God's creation. Later, trust in Cartesian science led to secular modernism and positivism, but both it and faith are in doubt today. Case (1998) also observes an epistemological evolution (from empiricism to rationalism to a sociohistoric stance), and anticipates benefits from the current debate between classical and postmodern philosophers for educational research and practice.

Epistemology helps define reality. Like a pebble thrown into a pond generates concentric waves, each epistemological paradigm makes its own waves in a range of disciplines and applications. As waves bounce off the edges of the pond and new ones keep coming in, this results in an apparently chaotic conflation of ripples. Similarly, reality checks force disciplines and applications alike to continually review their practice in an increasingly complex whole until the waves subside or become too complex to define; the paradigm has had its day and lies dormant in the sediments of history. Thus, Case's (1998, p. 94) classical stances are three pebbles generating overlapping waves, and postmodernism is a handful of incongruent, divergent, and subjective paradigms resulting in an epistemological cacophony. Likewise, Kuhn (1962) observed that

> scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense . . . that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. (p. 1)

Manley-Casimir (1990) also explains how, after 1957, educational administrative theories were based on value-free social scientific inquiry, and ignored that educational administration, education, decision-making, and discretion all deal with (subjective)

values. Waves of empirical inquiry bounced off the edge and were found wanting; a new pebble generates educational administrative inquiry in a mode “that is interpretive *and* subjective, one that focuses on administrators’ . . . very administrative personality–their sincerity, integrity, capability, and sense of justice” (p. 13). Similarly, Hansgen (1991) shows that the sciences, lauded by Dewey, did not help people understand their subjective world, and argues that “the sum of communal subjectivity must be included in the whole view of education and cannot be ignored in any objective analysis of it” (p. 690).

As a researcher at Bethany Baptist Academy, Peshkin (1988) found himself confronted with his own, rather than communal, subjectivity. He struggled to fully comprehend and positively describe Bethany: “We are worlds apart, Bethany and I. I say this neither sadly nor defiantly. It’s just the way things are. If they are right–and I do not think they are–then I am forever doomed” (1986, pp. ix-x). Polanyi (cited in Oosterhoff, 2001) correctly understands this: “Only a Christian who stands in the service of his faith can understand Christian theology and only he can enter into the religious meaning of the Bible” (p. 310). Peshkin’s spirituality, or relationship with God, stood in his way, more so than his general subjectivity or his Jewish ethnicity (Archer, 1999; Cotner, 2000).

A relationship with God assumes that He exists, cares, and can be known. Calvin (1559/1960) sets out the human condition before God the creator: By deliberate choice, people rejected God and plunged themselves and their posterity into sin and damnation (II:i; see also Lloyd-Jones, 1945). However, God shows His care, in that He maintains His creation and that people can be rescued through faith. Faith requires knowledge of God, which can be had from a study of His creation, but Calvin asserts that Scripture is absolutely essential to rightly know and worship God. The pebble-in-the-pond metaphor has a humbling, fearsome, and moral dimension: Without God’s creation, sustenance, and rule, there are no ponds, pebbles, or people; unless God provides rescue, the human condition leaves people eternally hopeless; and, while people seem to make waves at will, they must face God’s judgment (1 Corinthians 3:10-23).

Calvin (1559/1960, II:ii:12-21) found that gifted people, such as the classical philosophers, are able to investigate and interpret *earthly things*, and counseled to use their help. However, he found that human reason does not approach, strive toward, or take straight aim for the truth about knowledge of God, about his fatherly love and people’s salvation, and how they ought to frame their life. Axiology is a spiritual matter which requires renewal of the mind through illumination by the Spirit of God: It is *madness and blindness* to attribute such insights to the human mind.

Secular authors seek another basis of morality. Tönnies (1887/1963) describes it for a *Gemeinschaft* as beginning with shame, and becoming more rational when a person emerges as an individual; or, for a *Gesellschaft*, as hinging on appearing good and moral, and keeping oneself esteemed. Durkheim (1977) speaks of a *collective conscience* based on shared judicial and economic principles and expectations. Elsewhere (1912/1995), he

explains that “A society is to its members what a god is to its faithful. . . . We defer to society’s orders . . . first and foremost, because it is the object of genuine respect” (pp. 208-210). Etzioni (1998, p. x) also acknowledges norms and moral values whose strength lies in their acceptance by the community: His *new golden rule* (1997, p. 1) seeks a balance between individual rights and the common good, but differs from Jesus’ golden rule in Matthew 7:12, which seeks to treat the neighbour as one would like to be treated.

In short, secular sources help unravel complex phenomena and provide a better understanding of a subject, but cannot constitute firm moral norms. However, it warrants recognition that Christians acknowledge a discrepancy between what they believe and how they behave. Their behaviour is not the norm, either, and when critical decisions must be made, they should dig deeply and prayerfully for the Scriptural principles that must govern understanding and behaviour. The spiritual regeneration Keuning’s (1917) stories illustrate lies in loving and grateful obedience to God, which translates truth into mercy (Werkman, 1975, p. 224). Likewise, Calvin searched for wisdom, and confessed with Proverbs 9:10: “*La crainte du Seigneur est le commencement de Science*” (Figure 1). This would also highlight that even the questions one asks are governed by faith.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The focus of this study is on the tension in a Reformed community around the growth of home schooling, whereas it had always been strongly committed to establishing and maintaining Reformed day schools. For the wider context, as well as for this faith-community proper, this study reviewed a sampling of relevant secular, Christian, scholarly, and more general literature from various disciplines. Reviewed literature addresses communities, personal and community conflict, restoration of community, home-school-community relationships, Reformed day schools, and home schooling.

In addition to the literature, this study drew on interviews with both home schoolers and school representatives from the faith-community. No attempt was made to listen to all community members, but by carefully selecting participants, rich and varied data were obtained to identify most relevant aspects to the focal question. These data complement those of other researchers, but not exhaustively so.

Figure 1. John Calvin at fifty. From Veldman (1990, p. 49).

Although the study focuses on tension in a particular area and on a particular topic, the outcomes of the study have validity beyond that area and topic: Despite several unique aspects each conflict has, there are also similarities. The size of the sample and the particular character of this community may not warrant general application, but they may be applied elsewhere to the extent that other communities and other situations are similar to this particular one.

Definitions

Some brief definitions and explanations of terminology used in this thesis are presented here in alphabetical order, and include those that are used throughout the study.

The *Bible* is sometimes referred to as the Word of God, or the Word, or as Scripture. Direct quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Christian as an adjective is used in this study to denote the broad range of Christian perspectives one may encounter. It denotes people or schools that claim to be Christian, as opposed to Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, or Muslim, for instance. In Ontario, Christian schools are a category of independent schools (aside from the Roman Catholic separate system). Some Reformed schools call themselves more generically Christian.

Church refers in this study to the church which meets the description of Articles 27-29 of the *Belgic Confession* (de Brès,1561/1995). In general, it refers to a Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC). Sometimes, the church is referred to as the communion of saints, congregation, covenant community, or the Body of Christ.

Communion of saints denotes aspects of church community membership. The *Westminster Confession* offers an elaborate description of the “communion of the saints” in chapter XXVI (cf. Clark, 1965, p. 226), but in the concise words of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, it is understood to be (*Book of Praise*, 1995, p. 495):

> First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts. Second, that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members.

Covenant denotes the bond God established with His people. This is a faith-based understanding, which accepts what Scripture teaches about that relationship. It differs from the common meaning of the word, in that it is not an agreement between people, even if there are such aspects. Stam (1999, p. 30) defines it as

> The covenant is a living relationship of love between God and his people, in which the LORD declares that He is our God who will care for us, and we declare that we are his people who will joyfully serve him according to his word.

Reformed is a term used to denote Christians and schools who follow the tradition of John Calvin. It contrasts with Christian, which is used in a broader and more general

sense, and could also encompass Baptist or Mennonite schools. Some schools that call themselves Christian could in fact be Reformed.

Three Forms of Unity. In the Reformed churches, the Three Forms of Unity are the confessional documents adopted in the days of the Reformation and confirmed at the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619. These documents include the *Belgic Confession* of 1561 by Guido de Brès, the *Heidelberg Catechism* of 1563 by Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, and the *Canons of Dort* or the *Five Articles against the Remonstrants* of 1619 by the Synod of Dordrecht (*Book of Praise*, 1995, pp. 441-580). They are called the Three Forms of Unity, because they constitute the foundational creeds on which the Reformed churches agree with each other.

Outline of Remainder of the Document

This thesis contains seven chapters. After chapter 1, chapters 2 and 3 draw on literature from a variety of disciplines. Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to community, breakdown of community, and restoration of community. Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to home, school, and community relationships; reformed day schools; and home schooling.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology used in this study. It identifies the types of participants, group-size, time, and setting of the interviews, and provides a rationale for the choices made for these interviews. In addition, it explains the procedures followed, and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the first part of the findings of the research. It exhibits the participants' perspectives on the reasons why they (or others) chose to home school, why they (or others) continue to do so, and how they (or others) justify it.

Chapter 6 presents the second part of the findings of the research. It exhibits the participants' perspectives on what generates tension about this topic in this community, and what they think may be done to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate that tension.

Chapter 7 summarizes and discusses the findings, identifies areas for further study, and draws some conclusions. It includes distinct answers to the questions asked at the outset, and identifies implications flowing from this study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ABOUT COMMUNITY

In this chapter, I review both secular and Christian literature about community, conflict in community, and restoration of community. Throughout, I relate the literature to the NPCR community.

Community

In this section, I briefly introduce the Canadian Reformed community, and then present what secular authors contributed to my understanding of community in general. Next, I relate how it is internally understood as a covenant community in a theological sense. The section ends with a summary.

Canadian Reformed Community

DeVries (2000, pp. 33-39) limits his discussion of the Ontario Dutch Protestant community to the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), United Reformed Churches (URC), and Free Reformed Churches (FRC). Each of these immigrant churches denote their roots in the sixteenth century Calvinistic Reformation in the Netherlands. In this tradition, the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) stands out, among others, for ratifying the Three Forms of Unity as the Reformed confessional standards, settling the Arminian controversy, the adoption of a presbyterial church order, and drafting a "Constitution of Christian Education" (see also Kuiper, 1904, p. 15). The CanRC congregations of Grassie, Lincoln, Rockway, and Smithville are the community at the core of this study and have a total membership of 1,478 (De Jong, 2003). While integrated in society, it is bonded by "formal and informal networks between its members" (DeVries, pp. vii-ix).

Handlin (1979, p. 4) describes the pre-1950 immigration experience, but notes that aspects of separation and alienation were familiar to later arrivals as well. For instance, few expected to return to the country of origin, and housing, transportation, and income were often poor. In such settings, people often feel strongly about their beliefs, values, and traditions, seek leadership to interpret their convictions in the new locale, and find comfort in the church (p. 93). Schutten *en vrouw et al.* (1950-1951), also quoted by Faber (1987, p. 169), cite the Dutch immigrants' deep concern for the upbuilding of the church, even while crossing the ocean. These immigrants also called ministers from the *Old Country* to lead them to the truth, comfort, and principles of Scripture (cf. Van Oene, 1975). Beyond common purpose, ethnicity, and experience, this community was thus bonded by faith. This cohesion is maintained and expressed, among others, through many institutions and services built with free-will contributions (DeVries, 2000, pp. 67-76, 102-140). As in the Netherlands (Van Leeuwen, 1999, p. 65), these institutions have become centres where people experience unity. Over 85% of the Ontario CanRCs are also located within an hour's drive of Hamilton.

Tönnies

Tönnies (1887/1963, pp. 33-102, 160) presents a dichotomy of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft communities. Gemeinschaft relates to *organic* relationships and associations of genuine living-together in a community, such as in a rural community, a faith-community, or a marriage. In spite all separating factors, people in such communities remain essentially united, and often have a bond of physical relation, expressing itself in deeds and words. Conversely, Gesellschäfte are more recent aggregates of people that are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors. Gesellschaft relates to imaginary and *mechanical* structures, in which people may coexist quite independent of one another, such as in urban contexts, and relations are based on comparison of possible and offered services, while giving preference to visible and material matters.

There is a continuum and a transition from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft (Bellah, 1998, p. 16; Furman, 1997). For instance, many of Handlin's (1979, p. 95) immigrants left a Gemeinschaft to land in a Gesellschaft (see also Putnam, 2000, p. 371). The 1950s CanRC community had characteristics of a Gemeinschaft, while its members, through integration in broader society, increasingly had Gesellschaft alliances. However, they never met, nor sought to meet, Lockridge's (1985, pp. 16-17) definition of a *Christian Utopian Closed Corporate Community*, of which Handlin (1979) observes:

> The only settlements that held together over long periods were those of pietistic communist sects, mostly German, in which religious authority furnished the sanctions for rigid control over the private property, the sex life, and the family structure of the members. (p. 76)

Typical Amish, Amana, and Bruderhof communities may still replicate a Gemeinschaft (Hostetler, 1989; Moershel, 1988; Zablocki, 1980), but Plymouth (Demos, 1970, pp. 180-190) and Dedham (Lockridge, 1985, pp. 167-180) lost the characteristics of Gemeinschaft.

Tönnies (1887/1963) saw Gemeinschaft become Gesellschaft with the emphasis on facts and efficiency during the Industrial Revolution, but other causes for the transition have been identified as well. In Amana, people adopted a new communal design (Shoup, 1988, pp. 10, 32); Lockridge links the shift in Plymouth to the arrival of other-minded people; Macionis et al. (1994, pp. 648-649) relate the transition to mobility; and Peshkin (2000) notes the impact of divided loyalties between competing groups in a community. In the initially agricultural NPCR community, farming has decreased; construction and other service-related jobs have burgeoned; and mobility, formal education, affluence, independence, and interaction with other Canadians have increased. All of these may be associated with this transition. By conjecture, church people may be torn between a Gemeinschaft- and a Gesellschaft-type of morality, or between loyalty to the school- and the home schooling-community, for instance. While some help a Christian charitable institution on the basis of their faith-commitment, others view their charity as payment for a service. A spiritual shift may be yet another factor, or perhaps even come first.

Durkheim

Durkheim (1977) viewed organizations and communities as bodies requiring solidarity to function. Parallel to Tönnies' (1887/1963) Gemeinschaft, he spoke of *mechanical solidarity*; while his *organic solidarity* mirrored Tönnies' Gesellschaft. In Durkheim's view, the transition from the one to the other results from an increase in division of labour and a decrease of kinship and locality as basis for community. This transition promotes interdependence, social integration, and development of a collective consciousness (Durkheim, 1912/1995, pp. 444-445), to which people should yield (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985, p. 9). Indeed, to Durkheim (1977, pp. 72-81), people should also submit to state-directed education, which develops them into more social, less egotistical people. Their uniquely human traits not only allow them to develop moral, ethical, and physical qualities in line with their society's culture to the extent that it has developed them, but also to challenge tradition and stability.

Durkheim appears in Etzioni's (1998, p. ix) list of communitarian thinkers, who stress individual responsibility towards society. Macionis et al. (1994, p. 77) summarize other work which confirms that social control boosts conformity to cultural norms. Polanyi (cited in Oosterhoff, 2001) challenges society "to become realistic about what can be obtained with a personal pledge of responsibility" (p. 298); Sergiovanni (1996) wants to build community in schools, which are "collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a shared set of ideas and ideals" (p. 48); and Lubienski (2000) criticizes home schooling because it neglects society. The question arises by what process responsibility is defined and social norms are established.

Butz and Eyles, Cresswell, and Charon

To Butz and Eyles (1997) community is primarily a set of (subjective) social and cultural relations, consisting of interactions grounded in shared meanings, values, and interests. Validity-claims of truth, appropriateness, and authenticity also are evaluated, take shape, and converge through social interaction. They are never purely individual or purely collective, and give a sense of a spatially bound community: a place. A place also allows for bonding and social activities; the community's symbolic values are represented in its ideological structure; and the relationship between the sense of place and everyday life determines its ecological structure. Furthermore, Ingold's (cited in Butz & Eyles, 1997, pp. 6-11) understanding of the relationship of culture and sense of place may help explain both the occurrence of new phenomena and the resulting tension. Ingold notes that *environmental affordances* furnish what people need for their behaviour if and when they see it; and that people's *effectivities*, or action capability, allows them to work with the affordances.

Applying this to the NPCR community, Canadian Reformed people construct a sense of place with institutional buildings, which represent the community as well as the principles, values, sacrifices, emotions, and beliefs associated with creating them. The school is seen as a gift of God, even though it may be more correctly defined as people's

faith-response with and to the gifts of God, that is, the covenant and its obligations and the means to build and maintain the school. Participation symbolizes and provides bonding, while (partial) withdrawal appears as transgression of, or escape from the community's beliefs and a blurring of its boundaries (see also Cresswell, 1996). There may be confusion of the pebble and the waves, or between the paradigm and its applications. Furthermore, today's cultural environment provides affordances to home school, and people discover their effectivity to do it. This becomes a moral issue when the increase in home schooling and its associated or perceived withdrawal from JCS (or even the communion of saints) leads to tension: The place feels besieged, and the community must redefine the practical implications of its norms and values. The community's integrity may be at stake if there is no agreement on meanings, values and interests, as pointed out by Charon (1995). Janson & Cecez-Kecmanovic (1999, pp. 1-4) further suggest that this applies if validity-claims of truth, appropriateness, and authenticity cannot be settled.

Etzioni

In addition to *a relatively high level of responsiveness* (Etzioni, 1996), there are normative and emotional bonds that keep a community together and contain conflict in Etzioni's (2000) definition of a utopian community:

> Community is a combination of two elements: A) A web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships). B) A measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings, and a shared history and identity–in short, to a particular culture. (p. 188)

Bonds are good, Etzioni finds, if they allow for some conflict within the consensus, without immediately requiring exclusion.

Realizing that rational decision-making models often minimize normative-affective factors, Etzioni's model (1998, p. 91) envisions a continuum between logical-empirical and normative-affective arguments. In making decisions and selecting relevant rational aspects, norms and emotions play similar and related, as well as positive and useful roles. Our needs and values are often incompatible with each other, but norms and moral values entail traditional concepts embraced by a considerable number of people.

Etzioni (2000) resists relativism as "the curse of a good society," and looks for "external and substantive criteria to evaluate values and traditional moral standings" (p. 194), and further suggests to include criteria like symmetry, a cross-section of values shared by all societies, a calculus of harm, and self-evidence. His moral guidance, then, depends on what people accept as a good balance between individual rights and duties for the common good, between social forces and the individual, and between community and autonomy. This is also a core focus for the new communitarians (Etzioni, 1998): "Social order and liberty are mutually sustaining and reinforcing, but if either is enhanced beyond that point, they become antagonistic and adversarial" (pp. x, xxv-xxxix).

Stressing either community responsibility or individual freedom over the other has arguably contributed to the tension addressed in this study, and there is disagreement on how the norms should be applied. Leaders must wisely consider the opinions and explain the applicable norms on this issue. As they want to base their norms on Scripture, a look at the role of religion is warranted.

Van Baal

Van Baal (1981, pp. 3-6, 256, 283) believes that people are willing to curtail their freedom by religion in a quest for authoritative and metaphysical sense and significance of their existence. He argues that socially constructed values and norms amount to untenable relativism, and that ethics and religion are irrational, and culturally defined. He sees religion as part of an *inner conflict* in all people, and notes that an ethical and affective void is created if it is rejected as not reasonable, not useful, and incompatible with modern science. Trust in reason to acquire knowledge, guidance, wealth, and happiness culminated in Enlightenment philosophy, but produced alienation from Gemeinschaft and no substitute for religion; and the "emphasis on the individual's right has turned the pursuit of happiness almost by necessity into a licence to indulge in joy-riding" (p.304). Also, memberships in voluntary Gesellschäfte fail to give sense and significance to one's existence (p. 306; see also Furman, 1997). To Van Baal (p. 314), the final choice for a religious substitute remains necessary and a matter of faith. It is also by faith that the Canadian Reformed community adopts Paul's answer for societal and moral guidance from outside this world (1 Corinthians 8:5-6):

> For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

Covenant Community

In line with Ursinus and Olevianus (1563/1995, 7:21; 25:65) and de Brès (1561/1995, 27-29), the Canadian Reformed community must be defined as a faith-community, in which its understanding of what it means *to be church* is the *ideal culture* (Arnold, 1985; see also Macionis et al., 1994, p. 78). As an understanding of the church is central to the issue investigated in this study, a brief introduction must be included.

To Calvin (1559/1960), the church is God's provision for people's "ignorance, sloth, and fickleness," in which the ministry of the gospel and the sacraments nourish believers (IV:i:1). It is here that believers are "gathered into the society of Christ on the principle that whatever benefits God confers upon them, they should in turn share with one another;" and their conviction "that God is the common Father of all and Christ the common head" also unites them in brotherly love (IV:i:3). To withdraw from the church is to withdraw from the Father's favour and the witness of spiritual life (IV:i:4). Separations over trivial matters, or even "scandals, quarrels, divisions, jealousies,

disputes, altercations, approval of certain evil deeds, defamation, mockery, and lack of decency and good order" are invalid, as long as "the ministry of the Word and sacraments remains unrepudiated" (IV:i:12-16). The church is the covenant setting within which all members build each other up and bear with one another, trying to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (IV:xii:13). Elsewhere, Calvin (1550/1978) addresses various scandals that plague and disrupt the church.

This community is covenantal because God brings people together in communion with Him. Gathered as a flock by God, they also meet under His rule. The covenant community may display certain Durkheimian features, but its essence is, as Faber (1999) summarizes it, that "I will be your God, and you will be My people" (p. 75; see also Schilder, 1977, p. 87; Stam, 1999, p. 30).

This community exists and is recognized in the church, where God's Word is proclaimed, the sacraments of the covenant (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) are kept, and discipline is maintained (de Brès, 1561/1995, article 29). Children of believers also belong to this covenant and receive God's care and promises. They are therefore also baptized, and should be trained accordingly (Stam, 1999, p. 67; Ursinus & Olevianus, 1563/1995, 27:74). Only those who accept the covenant in faith receive access to the Lord's Supper. Doing so, they recognize their accursed condition before God, confess their faith in and reliance on Jesus Christ for restoring peace with God, and commit themselves anew to live (Book of Praise, 1995)

> in true thankfulness to God with (their) entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with (their) neighbour in true love and unity. (p. 595)

Reformed people are not united in perfection, for they do not meet God's standard of perfection and holiness (Kamphuis, 2001; Schilder, 1977, p. 91); nor, as Luther pointed out, in tradition or practice, because it errs (cited in Hillerbrand, 1979, p. 91); but in the Spirit of God, Who gathers them, and in Whom they seek ongoing renewal of their lives.

To maintain or seek unity in and among Reformed churches, Van der Leest (1983, p. 14, 56-57) suggests minimal limits: Complete submission to the Bible as the Word of God, and a secondary binding to the Three Forms of Unity as a faithful interpretation of Scripture and the Church Order of Dordrecht. He seeks unity of faith, and cautions not to rashly declare something as evidently Scriptural, or to require unity of thought. The latter leads to sectarianism and expresses mistrust, and goes beyond the authority Christ gave the church (see also Calvin, 1559/1960, IV:i:12). The question begs to be answered whether or not Scripture compels one to have either reformed day schools or home schools, or whether both can be an option.

Summary

The Canadian Reformed faith-community is shifting from Gemeinschaft-like qualities towards Gesellschaft-like characteristics. In such transitions, questions typically arise

about the validity of accepted norms. Tönnies, Durkheim, and Etzioni suggest that society determines what is true and what norms are valid. An application of Cresswell (1996) would explain that, when people withdraw children or support from JCS, they may be perceived to transgress and create tension, as it implies the values it embodies. Ingold's (cited in Butz and Eyles, 1997) environmental affordances and effectivities help understand trends like home schooling. If the community cannot agree on meanings, values, and interests that determine a normative standard, its integrity may be at stake, and leaders must give moral guidance, as suggested by Etzioni (2000). Van Baal (1981) suggests to seek moral guidance in religion.

Scripture is the moral norm for a Reformed Christian who believes that the world is open toward heaven. God made a covenant with His people, which sets high standards to expect everything from God, to use one's gifts for the well-being and benefit of the other members of the body, and to maintain harmony and unity in submission to God's Word. Teaching the next generation is understood as part of that. To have validity in this community, the question whether Scripture requires home schools or day schools, or allows for either, must be answered within those parameters

Conflict in Community

In this section, I present literature about conflict in and decline of community. I first identify what I believe is the source of all conflict, and continue with what Cresswell, Charon, and Putnam contributed to the topic. To understand what is going on in the NPCR community, I address a spiritual shift. The section ends with a summary.

Controversies

Personal and social controversy, cognitive dissonance, and disequilibrium about many issues persist. Without labeling all change as evil, I believe that the fall into sin resulted in human expulsion from Eden, misery, death, conflict, and controversy (Genesis 3, 4; Romans 5, 6), and the Reformed churches' tradition of explaining and applying the Ten Commandments in the context of Catechism preaching lays bare many facets of sin's damage to harmony, perfection, and righteousness. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the way back to Paradise, but, like others, and as Sande (1997, p. 25) points out, they may get overly focused on change, or on particular applications of relevant principles. For instance, Snyder (1991) crystallizes eight distinct views of finding the Kingdom of God.

Cresswell and Charon: Transgression and Conflict

Macionis et al. (1994, p. 214) summarize four major social functions of deviance: 1) it affirms cultural values and norms; 2) the response to deviance clarifies moral boundaries, and 3) promotes social unity; and 4) deviance encourages social change. Cresswell (1996) elaborates on these functions with the concept of transgression, which *consciously*

seeks to change existing boundaries.

I understand this to mean that home schoolers in the NPCR community are deviant by departing from the established standard of sending their children to JCS; and that they would progress towards transgression if they were to actively recruit or broadcast the validity and viability of their approach. Also, if they develop effectivities and affordances in an electronic home school loop, or through home school organizations like Ontario Christian Home Educators Connection (OCHEC) as the opportunity arises, they may be perceived to generate or participate in a deviant subculture. On the other hand, for the people who remain committed to JCS, Travis Hirschi's control theory, as summarized in Macionis et al. (1994, pp. 216-217) helps explain how attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief contribute to conformity to cultural norms. It is inevitable that deviant positions generate tension in the community, especially when they are defended on the basis of supposedly shared authoritative truth, norms, and principles.

To Cresswell (1996, p. 149), a place's established authority and truth are relative and cannot be defined without their fringes. Transgression and struggle occur at the fringes. They render the fringes symbolically central, and also challenge the integrity of the place's underlying ideologies, leading to their revision, adaptation, or denunciation. In this analysis, place classifies, because it tells what is in and what is out of bounds, and the verbalized limit becomes orthodoxy that protects against heresy. Place also differentiates, because it tells who is within, who is without, who is central, and who is marginal: Transgressors make themselves socially marginal, and may shortly become alienated (see also Charon, 1995, p. 174). Place also associates beliefs with behaviour: A community builds a Christian school because it trusts that this is right. If the behaviour comes to be seen as normal or natural, people may lose sight of the original social, historical, or religious roots or underlying principles.

To apply this, sending children to JCS may be seen as natural by some, while others may argue that it is not: It is but one possible solution to an educational question and an application of a principle. If sending children to JCS is natural, home schooling is deviance or transgression: It disturbs expectations, and challenges the original principles to be verbalized and clarified. Agema (2001) did so in a speech, and Rockway Council challenged the Board of JCS (Appendices A, B). The challenge to redefine place and ideology generates tension in the community.

Charon (1995, p. 174) explains that a cooperative order built on trust and agreement may avoid destructive social conflict as long as its values, principles, institutions, and processes remain intact. The order breaks down when constructive criticism (about inequality, socialization, or alienation) is ignored or not resolved, or when people hesitate to address the conflict publicly for fear of escalation and confrontation, or when it seems irreconcilable. Charon also notes that repressed conflict "grows more intense and emotional, and goals get replaced by hostility" (p. 184).

The implication seems to be that this community itself may have contributed to the

conflict situation. If people home school for financial reasons, there could be a case of inequality; if people do so because of a bullying problem, there could be a socialization issue; if people do so because they are on the fringes of the church, there could be an alienation situation. Each case questions the level of care within the congregation: Does the communion of saints serve as it should, have past issues been properly resolved and dealt with, and has the leadership done an adequate job of explaining the meaning of the norms and principles? On the other hand, it is also difficult to be responsible as a community for people who no longer actively participate in core activities.

The church but partially fits Charon's (1995) description, however: As God's work, it is more than a cooperative, even if it does have similar social dynamics. Ursinus (1616/1852) points out that believers are saints, among others, "by the beginning of conformity to (God's) law which is commenced in them" (p. 305). His subsequent exposition of this law establishes how small that beginning really is, and how not keeping it injures the neighbour (see also Douma, 1996). The church and the school do well to consider and address the challenge.

Putnam

Putnam (2000) focuses on the markers of social capital to understand community decline. In social capital theory, social networks upheld by norms of general reciprocity and trustworthiness help support civic virtue, and positively affect the productivity of individuals and of groups. It may sometimes be portrayed as sectarianism, ethnocentrism, and corruption, but social capital can bridge between different social groups, working as a "sociological WD-40," and bond, "like a kind of sociological superglue" (p. 25) among members of homogeneous groups with exclusive identities. He also speaks of oscillations in social capital, and a current *civic disengagement*, but remains optimistic that "it is within our power to reverse the decline of the last several decades" (p. 25).

Putnam (2000, pp. 252, 257) finds that civic disengagement is concentrated on the cohorts of people less than 60 years old, such as baby boomers, who had unprecedented educational opportunity, affluence, and community vitality in their youth. Older people did learn civic obligation: They grew up during the Depression and World War II, and their sense of community stems from a general community focus. They understand Kennedy's maxim, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" (p. 272). The younger lot, on the other hand, is less embedded in civic life than the older one (p. 274; see also Stevens, 2001, p. 180), and their sense of community stems from more immediate personal contacts.

It is risky to project these generalizations on a specific community. Yet, Putnam's *civic generation* is exactly the cohort that established institutions like JCS. Their focus was more on the church than the country, but the effect compares to the civic engagement of Putnam's older generation. It is certain people from the boomer generation and their children who disengage from the school effort, and arguably, reduce social capital. Not contributing to the communal (school) network in some ways, and spending their (social)

capital elsewhere, identifiably increases the social and financial burden on others who do contribute. As the new generation also has not endured the immigrant experience, and enjoys much greater affluence, this would support Putnam's thesis. Yet, Putnam seems to have little consideration for the strength and motivating power of faith, which would help explain why many continue to support the institution. For instance, during a three-month drive in the fall of 2003 for the school expansion, over $1.4 million was raised. Putnam also does not make a strong link to faith's decline over a period of several hundred years.

Spiritual Shift

In the Netherlands, Smit (1994) successfully challenged the propriety of restricting membership in Reformed organizations and institutions established in the 1950s to members of the Reformed churches. In addition to a Reformed foundation, people now also consider proximity, quality of education, perception, and gut-feeling in choosing a school for their children (Baas, 2002; Dijkstra, 2001, 2002). Some authors detect a postmodern spiritual shift here (e.g., Bruinius, 2002); but others, especially in the younger cohort do not see the change as a transgression. Schaafsma (1994, p. 204) suggests that arguments must be developed to resolve the disequilibrium, and pleads for a new emphasis on solidarity and a sense of community in an era of individualism.

In the controversy studied here, the debate has focused on individual freedom versus communal responsibility in the church (Appendices A, B). Agema (2001) turned to theological motifs, stressing that Christ presents His church as a whole to His Father. He perceives a decreased awareness that educating the children of the church is a matter of the communion of saints, and a sense of elitism and exclusivism when home schoolers withdraw their children and contributions from the communal effort. The Board of Directors of JCS (Appendix A) questions the legitimacy of home schooling in the presence of a communal school, posing that communion with God must show in practical unity of Christ's Body and that

> home schooling highlights a lack of emphasis on the central importance of serving one another within the Body of Christ and an erroneous elevation of certain ideals over working together and serving one another. (p. 4)

In its response, Rockway Council (Appendix B) seeks to counter the polarization by stressing the need for good education, parental responsibility, and the school's assisting (though very expensive) role. After discrediting the argument in the Board's document ("the board uses church arguments for the school"), it calls for bearing with one another in love on matters not explicitly spelled out in Scripture, and to not intrude on Christian freedom and responsibility. It claims this freedom to educate children in the way parents see fit, and urges members not to judge others. It points up the viability of home schooling, and the drawbacks of the school for family life and finances. It notes that the transfer of parental accountability and lack of support for teachers endangers a Christian atmosphere in the school. The document calls people to support the school morally and

prayerfully, and to define the Christian religion not by appearances, but by loving obedience to the Lord. Finally, it endorses the Board's motives and intent to promote the school, but denounces its paper as “detrimental to the unity of faith we share in Christ”: Rather, it should have visited each family to build bridges.

For a while, the community was in significant disequilibrium about this exchange. The Board received several letters, and responded with an open letter (Appendix C). In a sermon given in the Rockway congregation on May 11, 2003, Rev. Agema correctly emphasized the intricate connection between the covenant and the congregation (Appendix D), but failed to recognize that a Reformed school is a culturally determined application of Scriptural principles. This sermon stirred up new unrest.

Corinth

The tension in this community brings to mind the situation in the Greek city of Corinth of 2000 years ago. Morris (1979) notes that a Corinthian “recognized no superior and no law but his own desires” (p. 17; see also Lane, 1985, p. 94). The church at Corinth was rife with pride, egotism, arrogance, licentiousness, and division. However, living in a pagan environment was no excuse to live immorally, and Paul admonishes the Christians to do away with divisions and quarrels generated by their ungodly attitude and lifestyle, and to let their lives be characterized as set apart by God to be holy, to be saints. They must be of one heart and mind in the service of God, and no longer be arrogant, thinking that one is better than another. Unless they change for the sake of Christ, they will continue to stir up strife, division, and lawsuits, instead of humbly submitting themselves to Christ and to one another. Each one has received specific gifts from the Lord to serve each other with, and must learn the language and behaviour that befits salvation in Christ. This also applies to a Reformed community that finds itself in disequilibrium.

Summary

Christians believe that controversy, conflict, and disequilibrium started with sin, and that both will remain until God completes his plan of restoring Paradise. Cresswell (1996) values transgression, which occurs at the fringes of a place and helps define it. As JCS is a place whose definition can be viewed as challenged by home schooling, he helps explain some of the tensions in the community: In people’s minds, the place and the principles it represents blur, and withdrawal from the one may be seen as withdrawal from the other. It is the leaders’ central task to define the fringes and reduce conflict. Charon implies that the community itself may trigger a conflict, and that, if not addressed, it may erupt into potentially destructive developments.

Social capital theory also applies to the situation, as people from the younger cohort disengage from the communal school, and do not appear to be as committed to civic engagement as their parents were. All may need to rethink their principles and their understanding of tradition in view of what Scripture actually commands. Just like Paul had to address divisions in Corinth, and members of the Canadian Reformed community

accept Scripture as the highest norm, it is necessary that its principles are explained and applied to provide leadership in this controversy.

Restoring Community

The literature suggests ways to address social and personal tensions and cognitive dissonance. For instance, Butz and Eyles (1997) submit that one may make adjustments in the validity-claims about the sense of place; or substitute "conventional notions of senses of place as definitive of the relationship between groups of people and their places (with notions that are) necessarily tentative and contingent, particularistic and at least potentially contradictory" (p. 23); or accept transgression as good or justifiable. However, Breukelman (Appendix E) is concerned that such approaches might be a departure from God's will for the communion of saints, and resists the implied confusion about the nature of community. The issues then become what defines community, unity, and harmony among Canadian Reformed people; whether membership in the CanRC should imply support for JCS; or whether social norms do or may curtail one's freedom beyond Scripture. Could norms be left intact, and other ways be found to resolve disequilibrium?

Social Capital

Putnam (2000, pp. 299-305) views rebuilding social capital as key to restoration and revival of community. The restoration of public education, for instance, would need informal social capital in everyday relationships, as it predicts student achievement much better than institutionalized formal social capital. Furthermore, the success of smaller schools may hinge on like-mindedness between parents and staff, but more so on the presence of social capital in the community. Conway (1994) notes that (smaller and more effective) private schools typically exhibit high social capital characteristics of a Gemeinschaft (see also Bauch, 2001; Bisson, 1998; Irmsher, 1997; and Raywid, 1996).

Putnam (2000, pp. 383; 394; 399) recommends developing affordances for greater civic engagement and community restoration. Although society is less uniform now, and community building also worsens exclusion and division by generating bonding rather than bridging social capital, and a more diverse mix of nested communities, Putnam hopes to "spark civic imaginations to discover and invent new ways of connecting socially" (p. 403; see also Goss, 2000; Spelman, 2000). However, Sander and Putnam (2002) note that even 9/11did not generate permanent civic renewal.

Etzioni (2001) agrees that building social capital is key to restoration, but is pessimistic about people's effectivities to form moral cultures, which bond a community together. He argues that Putnam's bowling leagues may at best develop social bridging capital, rather than form new moral values. Goss (2000) underlines the need and potential for a moral foundation. Religion represents nearly half of America's stock of social capital, provides a moral foundation for civic regeneration, gives meaning to community service, and its spiritual orientation helps build bridges where secular programs fail (see also Glynn,

1998). Goss hopes to mobilize the potential of faith for spiritual healing and community renewal, and wants to combine pragmatism (i.e., secular funding) with principles to promote values as part of developing social capital.

Etzioni (2001) recognizes that our values and needs are not "fully compatible with one another, and hence force us to make tough choices" (p. 224; see also Shirley, 2001). The appeal of the communitarian perspective lies in its search for a norm which balances individual rights with the common good. In the end, Etzioni's (1997) vision of a new golden rule remains one for this earth. Jesus, in Matthew 7:12, linked the golden rule to the law of God: "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Unlike Etzioni, Jesus does not ask for a balance but directs people to treat others well because that is what God did to them first.

Conflict Resolution

To manage change, adaptation, or conflict, communitarians do not rely on force, but rather on persuasion and a democratic process of involvement, considering the bonds that unite the community. Similarly, Heifetz (1994) builds on the theory of cognitive dissonance, and frames leadership in terms of mobilizing people to adaptive work in situations of disequilibrium. Aronson (1984, pp. 116, 166) explains that cognitive dissonance occurs when people are rendered psychologically uncomfortable by changes or incompatible cognitions, especially when self-concept or other essentials are involved. People act to reduce cognitive dissonance in some way, but human nature, as it is, may resort to self-justification, prejudice, or aggression to resolve the dissonance.

In the context of this study, one cognition could be that, since the family is primarily responsible for educating the child, home schooling is best, while another is that the community treats that choice as a deviant transgression. One cognition could be that the central role of the family is recognized in a parental or covenantal school, and that the community as a whole decided and ought to help maintain it, while another is that some people disengage from this effort. One cognition could be that all church members, as members of Christ's Body, should live in love and harmony with each other, while the other shows division, or tension about different choices people make.

To Heifetz (1994, p. 22), leaders must clarify the issues and relevant principles when a community's integrity is at stake, in order to reestablish a common understanding of what is right, on the accepted normative basis. Leaders must provide rational, emotional, or moral direction and justification in conflict:

> Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict–internal contradictions–within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways. (pp. 35-36)

Etzioni's (1991) theory of societal guidance presupposes "a creative conflict between

the forces of design and those of inertia and opposition" (p. 25) and sees social systems as in part governed by an overlay of guiding agencies and an "underlay composed of collective bodies, of societal bonds, values, institutions, and powers that resist guidance" (p. 40). The overlay is not fully knowledgeable about what is or works, and only partly successful at what it designs to achieve. The guided units (viz., citizens) resist imposed change. A society's malleability depends on attributes of the overlay and the underlay, and on the relation between the two. Their creative conflict attempts to define what people accept as a good balance between individual rights and the common good, between social forces and the individual, between community and autonomy, and between individual rights and duties. This leads to commonly accepted normative and emotional bonds that contain conflict and keep Etzioni's utopian community together.

Etzioni (2000) finds the bonds in Japanese culture too restrictive, but De Bono (1987) points up an inherently related positive aspect. Confrontational left-brained Western approaches to solving conflicts, as depicted by terms like fighting, negotiating, winning or losing, differences, principles, mistrust, logic, anger, hostility, entrenchment, opposition, escalation, and unhappiness, were designed to refute medieval heretics, De Bono claims. Our style of classification, discrimination, and logic may even defy reality: We put incoming signals into a prepared (and potentially inaccurate) right-brain box, and then apply left-brain logic to handle cognitive dissonance. This wires Western culture for conflict and conflict escalation. The Japanese may actually find the bonds liberating in their *exploration idiom* for conflict resolution, as it builds on Eastern civilizations' right-brained openness towards understanding the other, and aims to explore or design mutually attractive solutions. A design approach thinks laterally, that is, outside the box: It cuts across conventional patterns of logic; it generates new concepts and ideas; it redefines the conflict from two- to three-dimensional, from *you versus me*, to *you and me and together*. The approach may use a facilitator.

Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) speak of negotiating, but also involve problem solving and lateral thinking in their conflict resolution process. Resolution of a conflict should be wise (i.e., meeting legitimate interests, resolving conflicting interests fairly, lastingly, and with consideration of community interests) and efficient, and leave the relationship between the parties unaffected or improved. Through *principled negotiation*, the *game* must shift from focusing on substance and procedure to merits. Negotiation principles include: (1) separation of people from the problem; (2) focusing on interests, not on positions; (3) generating possibilities for mutual gain before deciding what to do; and (4) insisting on a mutually agreed-upon objective standard. While using some lateral thinking, the approach retains the conflict idiom De Bono (1987) rejects, however. Fisher et al. also expect that people will often be able to help themselves.

Folger and Bush (1996) seek to empower disputing parties and to enhance mutual recognition. Empowered parties are better able to analyze issues and to make effective decisions, while mutual recognition facilitates seeing and considering the others' perspectives. Their transformative mediation approach not only hopes to help settle

disputes, but also to establish lasting change in clients. The difference with other approaches may only lie in the particular steps facilitators take to enhance resolution (see also Conflict Research Consortium, 1997; Lederach, 1997).

Glynn (1998) discusses motivation in resolutions of racial conflict, and explains that an incentive for repentance implies guilt and is therefore accepted as purer than political motivation. Laws cannot change hearts or overcome prejudice, and failure to look at sin limits the effectiveness of other alternatives. The incentive for repentance gives Evangelical Christians and Promise Keepers unique conflict resolution equipment: 1) explicitly religious or spiritual motivation; 2) a sense of sin; and 3) a belief in the efficacy of ritual and in the reality of divine intervention. Going beyond fairness and justice, it reaches to love, brotherhood, and mercy. Wrongdoing is more easily acknowledged by people who are part of a community which understands that confession is a prelude to divine pardon; accepting blame diffuses conflict; and trust in God's ability to provide healing is a "strong psychological impetus for positive group interaction and sanction for the release of powerful emotions" (see also e.g., *The Forgiveness Web*, 2003; Van Biema, 1999).

Sande (1997; Figure 2) explains a Christian conciliation approach to conflict resolution. It is based on four Scriptural principles (pp. 10-11): 1) Glorify God; 2) Get the log out of your eye; 3) Go and show your brother his fault; and 4) Go and be reconciled. Sande classifies conflict resolution as three basic approaches: 1) Escape responses; 2) Conciliation responses; and 3) Attack responses. He rejects the validity of escape- (suicide, flight, and denial) and attack responses (litigation, assault, and murder) because they do not solve the problem. Conciliation responses include overlooking an offense, discussion, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and church discipline. The strength of this approach is that it focuses on mutual responsibility and on God, limits loss, addresses the underlying causes, is committed to peacemaking, and seeks reconciliation (p. 16). Of the models presented here, Sande will speak the most to Reformed people, because he clearly speaks within the parameters Scripture gives, including church discipline and the way of Matthew 18:15-20.

Aside from Zumeta's (2000-2002) continuum of conflict mediation styles (from facilitative, to evaluative, to transformative), most models show an escalation of conflict, in which each subsequent level calls for more involvement of an outside facilitator (e.g., Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, 1999; Mendelson, 2001; Rhode, 1996; Sande, 1997). Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan (DRC-WM) identifies a continuum of interventions from low level Avoidance, to Talking, to Negotiating (or problem solving), to Mediation, to Arbitration and litigation, and finally to "Self-help." Mendelson presents a five-step continuum of increasingly difficult conflicts, from a Problem to solve, to Disagreement, to Contest, to Fight or flight, to Intractable, each with an appropriate or typical intervention. Wahrhaftig (2000) and Brubaker (2000) suggest the presence of a "Third Voice" before a dispute gets out of hand, and together with Sande (1997), Glynn (1998), and Mendelson (1999; 2001) they suggest prayer and

seeking spiritual guidance at all levels. Table 1 presents Mendelson's (2001) continuum and interventions in the left two columns, matches them with the DRC-WM approaches in the third column, and suggests applicable literature in the fourth column.

Being Church

Members of Reformed churches believe themselves to belong to Jesus Christ. He bought them with His blood, and covenants them to Himself by His Spirit and Word. The church is a gathering of people who know they ought to be forever thankful to God that

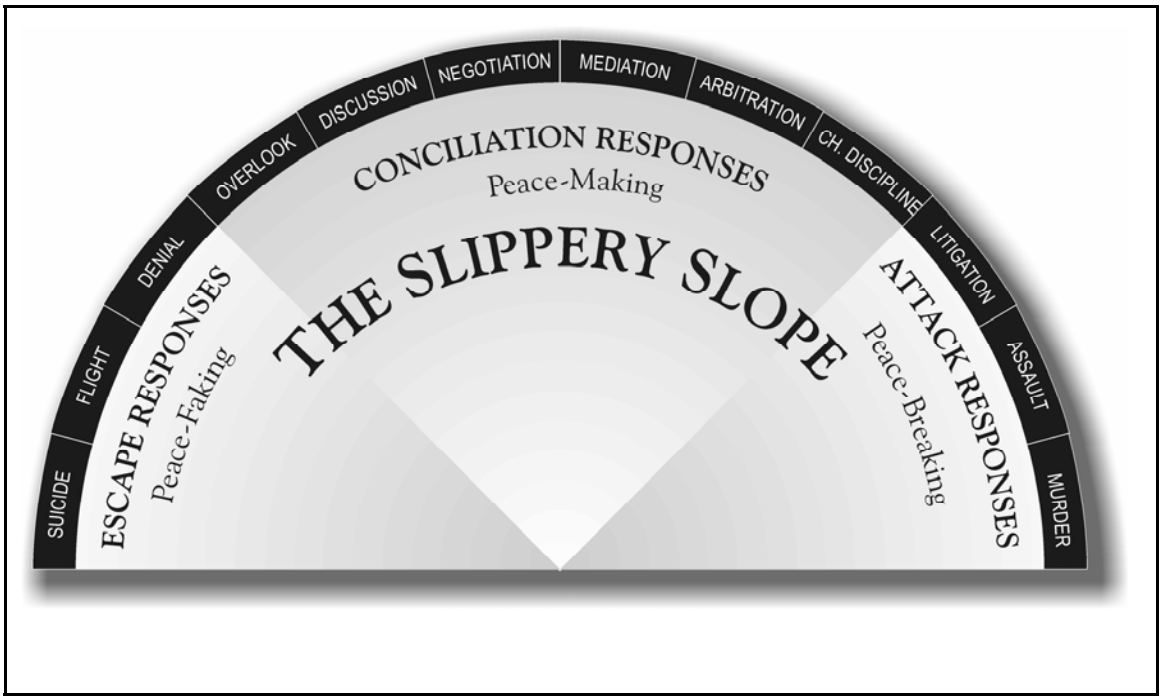

Figure 2. Sande's model of the slippery slope and Christian conciliation (based on Sande, 1997, p. 17).

He saved them, and they cannot but show their gratitude for it by cheerfully using their gifts for the benefit and well-being of the others. This should also be their standard for tackling divisions or disputes.

As noted, Paul's epistle to the Corinthians is an extensive call to abandon anything that can divide the church. He passionately pleads with them to live as a true communion of saints, sanctified in Christ. They must do whatever it takes to build one another up, even at personal sacrifice. They must learn to speak the language of Christ: If He is at the centre of their lives, the reasons for divisions (and other problems) can be seen and addressed in the light of the Gospel.

In De Bono's (1987) model, church people may interpret the world in the same way, and have similar values and expectations. With Fisher et al.'s (1991) principles, and certainly with Sande, they may be disposed to look beyond the immediate problem and look out for God's interests rather than their own. With ministers and elders to lead the congregation, they always have help at hand if they become stuck on an issue. As Glynn (1998) and Sande (1997) show, they have an awareness of their own sin and guilt, and have a disposition to forgive. However, it must be recognized again that they don't always have this straight. There remains the issue of Christian liberty and neighbour love.

Christian Freedom, Neighbour Love

Kloosterman (1991) notes that it is often claimed that the "strong" in the church have a higher degree of liberty to do as they please than the "weak," as their conscience gives them more room. However, when the weak eat meat against their conscience (1 Corinthians 8), because the strong do so, the latter are guilty of causing "moral

Table 1
Dispute Levels and Interventions

Description/Level	Intervention	DRC-WM	Help available?
1. Problem to solve: often disagreement regarding goals, values, needs	Good listening and information sharing	Avoid Talk	Fisher, Ury, Patton; Lederach; Glynn; Sande; Prayer
2. Disagreement: personalities mixing with issues; root problem not easily defined	Better analytical and mediation skills	Talk Negotiate Mediate	De Bono; Fisher, Ury, Patton; Bush & Folger; Lederach; Glynn; Sande; Prayer
3. Contest: win/lose strategies marked by personal attacks and distortions	Psychology and group facilitation	Mediate Arbitrate	De Bono; Bush & Folger; Lederach; Glynn; Sande; Prayer
4. Fight/Flight: change is impossible and strategy calls for sending people away	Experienced consultant to help preserve stability	Litigation Self-help	Perhaps De Bono; Bush & Folger; Lederach; Glynn; Sande; Prayer
5. Intractable: unmanageable conflict; no short-term solution	Long-term rebuilding	Self-Help	Glynn; Sande; Prayer

Note: **After Mendelson (2001); adapted.**

dissonance" and perhaps even moral injury (pp. 101-103). This raises the question whether the weakness of the weak does not curtail the freedom of the strong, and whether the principle of Christian liberty should be reigned in by constricts of love. This is the question of balancing individual rights and communal responsibility of communitarians.

Unlike human autonomy, however, Kloosterman (1991, pp. 106-111) points out, Christian liberty does not lead to individualism and isolation. As a treasure recovered by Christ, Christian liberty makes it possible to again be what people were created to be, for fellowship, within the framework of the covenant of love. Neighbour love seeks the neighbour and what is best for him or her. Hence, Christian liberty and neighbour love are correlative and in communion with each other, rather than in competition. Both are framed in the communion of saints, which stresses communion with Christ, and results in the fruit of fellowship with and good works toward the neighbour. Those fruits are divine moral gifts which go in tandem with the liberty to apply them.

Paul tells the Galatians that their Christian liberty does not give licence to sin or to autonomously do one's own thing, but seeks to serve others (in fellowship with Christ!) through the instrument of love. Only in fellowship with God and man are people really human: Only then, as Kloosterman (1991) points out, they are image-bearers of God with personal responsibility "for the growth, well-being and continuation of the community" (p. 112). The purpose of Christian love and liberty is the edification of the church and its individual members through socially characterized moral conduct, in order that in Christ

> the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16)

Rockway Council (Appendix B) unfortunately did not apply Christian liberty in this sense. The call to apply Christian freedom in joint activity for mutual growth is too strong to be ignored in the realm of educating the youth. That does not have to mean that all children should now go to JCS, or that nobody is now allowed to home school, but it does mean that the focus of the question shifts from us-versus-them to how they can be of mutual assistance in the communion of saints, as in Vanvliet and Terpstra (Appendix F).

A proper grasp of Christian liberty in the context of the communion of saints helps to understand how Christians should approach conflict among themselves: It places Christ above all else. It ought not to be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or some lofty and glorious goal for which texts in Scripture could even be found. Such positions breed conflict and controversy, and make hobby horses into gods which do not edify to salvation. Trigland (1615/1983) fought for maintaining the doctrine of the truth in the Arminian controversy, and would not budge. He recognized that there are things that people can decide for themselves, but also acknowledged that for the sake of peace "we may, or even must at times let go of some of our preferences–but in God's matters this tolerating and letting go may not take place" (p. 9). Rather, as Paul writes,

> If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit

> is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 5:18, 22-6:2)

When Christians want to know God's will, they first listen to all of Scripture, learning from each other and from others before them. If the Bible doesn't give a clear answer, they take their time, seek God's wisdom in prayer and make a decision in faith that loves the neighbour and honours God:

> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (James 1:5-6)

Unless Scripture demands otherwise, it is more important for Christians to live together in love, harmony, unity, and peace, and to sit together with joy at the Table of the Lord, than to elevate either the one or the other form of educating children to orthodoxy. Agreeing on that, there is a unity of faith from which the issue can be addressed. For the honour of God, believers set aside their personal preferences, and consider what is best for the communion of saints.

Summary

Putnam's (2000) practical approach to restoring social capital builds bridging capital but fails to provide shared morals and joint values. Etzioni (1998, 2000, 2001) and others somewhat fill that gap by offering suggestions in which people must agree on goals, norms, and values, but recognize that this has inherent problems and will imply making tough decisions. Others, including Goss (2000), Glynn (1998), and Sande (1997), seek the power of religion to restore community, acceptance, and reconciliation.

Most conflict resolution approaches begin to falter after the "contest" stage, but those that acknowledge sin, guilt, and the need for forgiveness promise continued effectiveness. In the Christian context, that is possible and is embedded in Christ who redeems people from sin and restores them to the liberty they had before sin came into the world. Christian liberty is a moral empowerment, which must be understood as a readiness to again love others and to use all of one's gifts for the neighbour's benefit. A Christian faith-community under threat of fragmentation over central parts of being community needs to remember that God calls them to peace; and freedom that loves the neighbour like oneself, and God above all, makes for peace. Idealizing personal preferences or hobby horses makes for dissension and disunity, however, and when Christians make decisions regarding education, they must consider what is edifying to the

communion of saints, rather than just what suits them best.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ABOUT SCHOOLING

In this chapter, I present literature which, in turn, addresses aspects of the relationship between home, school, and community; and the appeal or attraction of Reformed day schools and home schooling, respectively.

Home, School, and Community

In this section, I first provide a survey of the development of schools in Europe and North America. Next, I present some literature about the current relationship between home, school, and community, and how this is seen in a Reformed Christian perspective.

Sixteenth Century

As early as the sixteenth century, church and government were called on to help parents with their teaching tasks. Luther (1524/1955-1975) observed the grim state of German schools and the apathetic attitude and ability of parents regarding education: "For what purpose do we older folks exist, other than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young? . . . Parents lack the goodness and decency to do it . . . they are wholly unfitted for this task" (p. 353) as they don't have resources or opportunity (see also Bavinck, 1932, p. 29; Watt, 2002, p. 445). Luther admonished princes to send parents to their tasks:

> Therefore, dear sirs, take this task to heart which God so earnestly requires of you, which your office imposes on you, which is so necessary for our youth, and with which neither church [*geyst*] nor world can dispense. (pp. 368-372)

Erasmus (1509/1989) mocked grammar teachers: "What they teach their students is utter gibberish," and found it "much easier to specify the qualities of the ideal schoolmaster than to find one" (p. 51). To Erasmus (1529/1974-2002), education was a parental task, but church or government help was essential to find qualified teachers, to tutor the youth, or to teach them in public schools:

> [Education] ought to be a public responsibility entrusted to the secular magistrates and the ecclesiastical authorities. . . . But if they are neglectful . . . the rich ought to be generous and come to the aid of gifted children who, because of their family's poverty, are unable to develop their natural talents. (pp. 297, 322, 333)

In Geneva, Calvin (Calvin et al., 1541, p. 41) envisioned the establishment of schools by the church with support of city council. Ursinus (1616/1852, p. 570), one of Calvin's students, explained the maintenance of schools for liberal arts and sciences as one of the ways in which the church community shows gratitude to God, and Rutgers (1889/1980) shows that Synod Dordrecht, 1578, of the Reformed Dutch churches adopted Calvin's gist: "People shall labour to establish schools everywhere" (p. 246).

Seventeenth Century and Beyond

Carper (2000) reports that children in colonial Plymouth, Massachusetts, were trained at home, or left with another family as an apprentice or to learn the Three Rs. In 1671, a teacher was hired, but the church, the community, and especially the family retained important roles in education as teaching remained "unsystematic, unregulated, and discontinuous" (p. 10; see also Demos, 1970). By 1776, the family began to lose its position as American society's most important economic and social unit; the web of connections between home, church, and community was "irrevocably broken, and schools were increasingly called upon to fill part of the resultant social void" (Demos, pp. 144).

Despite this trend, Cochrane (1984) characterizes Ontario's one-room school houses as community affairs. He quotes school trustee Harold Chowder:

> The one room school was a close and integral part of the home and community in those early days. Schooling was a part of daily discussion. Everyone considered he/she had a part in all aspects, which included construction, maintenance, and operation. (p. 22)

It was not perfect. In 1916, the Home and School Movement sensed a need to advocate better home-school cooperation and understanding (Burgoyne, 1934). Appel and Appel (1982) illustrate the sometimes capricious treatment of new immigrants in schools.

Rural communities resisted consolidation in the 1960s, as "the beginning of the end of local autonomy and local control" (Cochrane, 1984, p. 28). Cibulka (1979) explains that, following Dewey's ideal of a Great Community of "shared taste, specific needs, or common interests" (p. 80), consolidated school boards had to create a new national character; and schools, as new centres of community building, must take on traditional family roles. Communication, standard when the community controlled the teacher, had to be artificially recreated, and Cibulka (p. 89) urges principals to get to know their communities through several forms of community involvement, which all highlight the principal's dual accountability of leading the community along the paths set by the administration, and appearing to be responsive to the educational needs of the community. Home involvement in the school still is an issue today (Karges, 2000).

Home, school, and community

The family has changed significantly since school consolidation (e.g., Fuller & Olsen, 1998; Lewy, 1996; Quayle, 1996). Fuller and Marxen (1998) note that, in 1990, only 4% of American families were white, with mom at home with the children, and dad working out: The mold cited by Fairchild and Wynn (1961) as typically American. Among others, the new diversity is a result of new immigration, birth, marriage, divorce, and remarriage patterns, and functional and dysfunctional family characteristics. The new diversity also raises the challenge of meeting everyone's needs through the school. Nevertheless, Berger (2000, pp. 91-98, 147-155) maintains that the family is the most stable component of society: It may have changed its form, but not its functions. Among others, she argues

for improved relationships between community and school.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) list five types of parental involvement in the schools. They found that the cause for insufficient involvement often lies in the school's programs, and that similarities of beliefs and shared goals between parents, teachers, and principals impact positively on communication, involvement, and interaction, and hence on student achievement. Furthermore, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) note that a group is more effective if its members agree about each individual's role and behaviour, and report that the parents' perception of the school's invitational climate impacts on their decision to seek or avoid involvement. They report that the literature suggests

> that even well-designed school programs inviting involvement will meet with only limited success if they do not address issues of parental role construction and parental sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school. (p. 3)

Problems around home, school, and community relationships have long played a role in reform literature (Postman & Weingartner, 1973). Smaller schools seem to be closer to the community (Raywid, 1996) and, in view of changing family roles, Sergiovanni (1996) wishes to create community around schools. The school-community movement envisions the school as a community's nerve centre. Melaville (1998), for instance, sees much success in building social capital and meeting local needs, especially when built on prior school-community partnerships that incorporate community efforts, or when facing external pressures. In such situations, student achievement and attendance improve, and drop-out rates and suspensions decline (see also Mott, 2000).

Addressing policy issues, Lockhart (1991) argues that the public school experiences an ongoing ideological conflict about its often clashing roles as conveyor of knowledge and agent of social change, and is "likely to suffer an escalating crisis of confidence" (p. 107). In view of this, school councils were established in Ontario in the 1990s, but they face major hurdles (e.g., Yaffe, 1994). Friesen (1993) underlines the data that suggest that "the family influences school achievement by fostering the child's cognitive development, communications skills, reading competence, and motivation" (pp. 132-133). Finally, Barbara Kay (cited in Basham, 2001) sees "home schooling as the bellwether for a mushrooming disaffection with the public education system" (p. 8). Many reformers seek to recapture a close relationship between home and school and to enhance the parents' role. The role of the community often seems limited to the parent-community and ignores the neighbourhood or relegates it to secondary involvement.

Alternatively, Martin (1995) envisions a utopian Schoolhome after Montessori's *casa* model. She finds that, while education begins in the family, changes in its roles, contexts, and formations often render it ineffective in its core tasks (p. 12), and quotes Pestalozzi that the school "should do for children what their parents fail to do for them" (p. 17). She envisions that the Schoolhome will equip students with the Three Cs of care, concern, and connection, and instill a renewed acceptance of and responsibility for the value of "domestic tranquility" (p. 161). However, Quayle and Medved (1996; see also Lewy,

1996, p. 44) pessimistically view utopias of a sustainable alternative to the family:

> No one ever will; no "sustainable alternative" to the family exists. Whether you place your trust in Scripture, history, science, reason, or common sense–all evidence suggests that strong families are the only earthly hope for the future of this or any other civilization. (p. 282)

Community-based Canadian Reformed schools have a close relationship between home and school. A significant number of parents are involved in the school board and its committees or in volunteer roles; parent-teacher interviews average an attendance rate of over 90%; and school society meetings are well attended. The bond between the school and the church community is arguably no longer as strong as it once was, however: In some Canadian Reformed jurisdictions, only half the community supports the school financially (Eikelboom, 2003a). While families retain the model in Fairchild and Wynn (1961), more mothers have jobs, at least in part to accommodate rising tuition.

Christian Literature

The challenges of changing culture, families, and family roles do not bypass Christian communities. Pride, a young feminist turned Seventh Day Adventist, rose as an influential advocate for the Christian family, the role of the mother, the family's function in the community, and home schooling. Pride's (1985) call for mothers is to stay home and not to seek freedom (in the feminist sense) or a career outside, after Titus 2:3-5:

> Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behaviour, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonoured.

Woman's real freedom, Pride (1985, pp. 165; 185; 197) argues, is to make her family self-sufficient and to reach out to serve others. She acknowledges that Christ works with and through the church to accomplish His goals, but does not capture the church community as a whole as the Body of Christ: Disappointed with the church, she offers the family as an alternative "Church at your Home," from which all church functions are filled, and where women "homework" (p. 203). The family becomes a service institution for the church community, with minimal reciprocity.

Maintaining a strong bond between home, church, and school, and in line with Ursinus (1616/1852, p. 286) and Calvin (1559/1960, IV:1), Van Middelkoop (1983, p. 20) acknowledges the core position of the church as the place where Christ gathers His people, where His Word is preached and maintained, and where the sacraments are administered. Believers set up Reformed schools for the children of the church to keep their baptismal vows, but these schools do not relieve parents of their charge or absolve the church of its teaching tasks. Rather, in their own place, they seek to assist the parents

(see also Engelsma, 2000, pp. 17-20; Huizinga, 1999, pp. 31-59; Kisjes, 1983; Slomp, 2003, p. 20; Van Dam, 2000, pp. 29-40). In a triad of cooperation (Ecclesiastes 4:12), they work at the same goals, on the basis of the same norms, and for the same purpose, as formulated by Waterink (1954/1980):

> The forming of man into an independent personality serving God according to his Word, able and willing to employ all his God-given talents to the honor of God and for the well-being of his fellow-creatures, in every area of life in which man is placed by God. (p. 41)

In a broader context of congregational development, Te Velde (1992, p. 14) illustrates the structure of the church community with a series of concentric bands (Figure 3). The church is at the centre, where, in the worship service, the Word and sacraments are administered. Members' joint involvement in other activities is depicted in a second band: catechism class, church committees, Bible study, diaconal help, and others. The outer band shows church members crossing over into and involved in the community at large, in various non-church-related activities. Some church-member organizations have a task for the community at large, and are drawn on the dotted line between the second and the third band: This includes the school, the family, and a mission project.

Summary

Sixteenth century leaders agreed that education was a parental task, but called on church or state to provide community support. In a Gemeinschaft-like Puritan setting such as in Plymouth, North American education long remained an informal but effectively integrated family and community affair, until connections between home, community, and school began to disintegrate in the late 1700s. In rural Ontario, the little red school house retained Gemeinschaft characteristics until consolidation in the 1960s.

Home-school communication now became an issue and the spectrum moves between the extremes of Martin's (1995) utopian Schoolhome and Pride's (1985) home

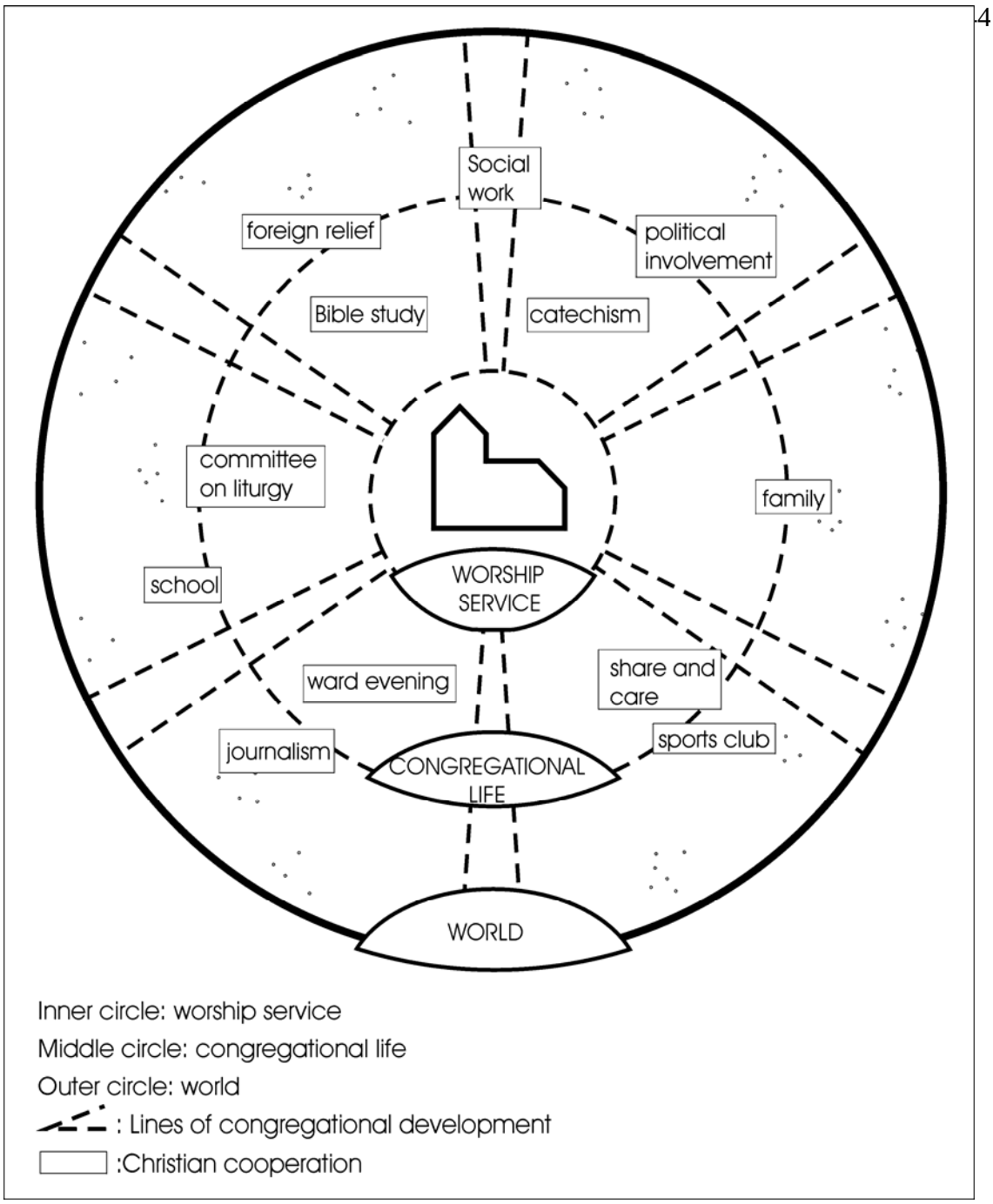

Figure 3: Model of congregational development. After Te Velde (1992, p. 15).

school. Communication, involvement, and achievement are enhanced if parents and schools share goals, values, and beliefs, and if there is mutual trust between the two. Parental role construction and sense of efficacy impacts on how involved they will get. The changed family-composition strains parental involvement in the school. To recapture The former home-school relationship, school-based programs that involve the parents and the community may be successful, but community-based programs appear more promising, especially in the presence of prior social capital and when facing external threats. School councils, created in the 1990s as one form of parent involvement, are not always effective. The community's role in the schools often appears limited to the parent-community.

In Canadian Reformed communities, the church is the framework within which home and school relate to each other, build each other up, bear with one another, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They retain a traditional family and a close bond between home and school, but face a diminishing bond between the community and education. Reformed schools, like JCS, seek to maintain a close bond between home, church community, and school, by being united in the pursuit of the same goals, on the same basis, and for the same purpose, but also through involvement of the parents in school activities. Parents pray for the teachers, teachers pray for the parents, and in church, prayers are offered for all.

Reformed Day Schools

To fully appreciate the basis for Reformed day schools, it is necessary to go back to Scripture and to review briefly the philosophical underpinnings developed by and after John Calvin. In this section, I first review what task Scripture assigns to whom regarding education, and then present key elements of Calvin's views on schooling. A review of the development of Reformed education in the Netherlands is given next, including a defense of the establishment of specifically Canadian Reformed schools. Finally, I give a brief explanation why secular public schools are not an option for this community, and a section summary.

Scripture

Scripture tells parents to teach their children. God decides that Abraham must command his children (Genesis 18:19) and fathers must diligently teach their children, always (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Psalm 78 has fathers committed to pass on what they have learned. In Proverbs, the "son" is told repeatedly to listen to his "father's" (and mother's) instruction; and Ephesians 6:4 again gives an educational task to the fathers. Davis (1994) explains that fathers in the Old Testament taught their sons the basics of the law, and that mothers taught their daughters the skills to be a good wife and mother, including application of the laws, household skills, and music. After the Babylonian Exile (586-537 B.C.), more teaching tasks shifted to the synagogue, but the home retained its primary place. JCS recognizes the primary parental responsibility for educating their children.

De Vaux (1965, pp. 48, 353) presents that in Bible times, teaching materialized by word of mouth but also in the modeling by parents, teachers, and the community. The task of the community is also suggested in Deuteronomy, for instance, which was given to the whole of God's covenant people (e.g., 6:1,4; 8:1; 9:1; 10:12; see also 31:11): As a community they had to respond to its blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 28) and take responsibility to purge the evil from among them (e.g., Deuteronomy 13:12). God's law had to be posted on the gates (Deuteronomy 6:9), suggesting its public nature: Children must grow up in a community that was serious about keeping and modeling the law. In the New Testament, the responsibility of members for each other is evident from passages like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 1:22. It is too narrow an interpretation to say that JCS is the community's answer to its responsibility for the nurture and education of the youth: The community retains a responsibility after 3:00 PM, on the weekends, and during holidays.

As for teachers, the Bible frequently uses the terms *father* or *son* in a teacher-student relationship (e.g., Acts 23:6 and Psalm 34:1). This suggests a close relationship between a sage and his student, and underlines the unity of education between home and school settings. There is general agreement (Van Dam, 1992/2000, p. 31) that, in Proverbs, *fathers* often imply *wise men* as having a task in teaching for life, but Slomp (2003) has some doubts about this. Levites were appointed as teachers (Deuteronomy 31:10-13; 33:10; Leviticus 10:11), while priests and prophets also taught the people (e.g., 1 Samuel 2:21, 26; 2 Kings 12:3). Furthermore, Van Dam (1992/2000) indicates that in "New Testament times, most children attended elementary school (to age 15)" (p.31). It is too narrow an interpretation to say that parents are to be the only teachers, as the Bible is quite open to some concept of school.

Calvin

The sixteenth century Reformation profoundly affected education. Noll (1980) concludes that the early reformers "teach us that formalized curiosity about life in all its aspects (which is just another way of saying 'education') can become another way of glorifying God and enjoying him forever" (p. 129). He notes that the early reformers

- were not despisers of education . . . ;
- would caution us that in using the educational resources of our age we do not fall captive to the spirit of the age . . . ;
- placed great emphasis on the family's role in education . . . ;
- can teach us, in this regard, how important God's written word is for education in the home . . . ;

- (and) can show us the spiritual value which lies in all legitimate spheres of human activity. (pp. 130-131)

Watt (2002) notes that Calvin valued the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Grammar courses on Geneva's 1536 literacy curriculum, but found that the school was "far too independent of the Company of Pastors, who, he argued, ought to have the exclusive right to choose the teachers" (p. 449). Moore (1984) notes that Calvin further envisioned a school for girls, a university prep school for boys, and a college for studying theology, science, math, medicine, and law, "with a view to preparing them both for the ministry and for the civil government" (p. 147). Brouwer (1965) further observes that Calvin accepted the Genevan view that parents had an important task in the religious education (viz., prayers and creeds) of their children, which "prepares the child for the larger covenant family of God, the church" (p. 28). Calvin also reserved a teaching role for the clergy and, before accepting his second call to Geneva, he stipulated that weekly catechism classes should be provided if mandated by the consistory (De Jong, 1967, p. 164; Watt, p. 445).

Moore (1984) establishes Calvin's view on the purpose and nature of education in general. He finds that, to Calvin, people were meant to learn about God, not only from Scripture (to know Him as Redeemer), but also from dealing with and living in His creation, to "acquiesce in His sovereignty for the whole of our lives" (p. 148). Since man, by nature, rejects God, "true learning is consummately a work of the Holy Spirit" (p. 149). Calvin saw himself as holding the "office of teacher in the church"[1] (Calvin, 1559/1960, p. 3; see also Runner, n.d., p. 55), and, as Moore shows, he held that all education was a responsibility of the church and a means "to the glorification of God and the edification of the church" (p. 143). In short, Calvin's teaching implies that all

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1 Calvin based his concept of the office of teacher on Ephesians 4:11-12. The (Dutch) Reformed churches questioned his exegesis, however, and at the Synod of The Hague, 1586 (articles 2, 47) they limited it to the teaching of theology (Rutgers, 1889/1980, pp. 487, 498; cf. VanOene, 1990, pp. 10-11). Bouwman (2000, pp. 67-68) explains *pastors and teachers* as *elders*.

education must direct people, and must itself also be directed, to God's honour; that the church has an important role, and that the government has an interest in education; and that schools must prepare students for both theological studies and for government office.

History

In the 16th Century, the Dutch Reformed synods sought to emulate Calvin's model for their Christian schools (Kuiper, 1904, p. 11). They advocated government funding and adjured consistories to maintain or establish the schools' Reformed character. The Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) regulated Dutch education for the next 2 centuries in what Kuiper calls the *Constitution of Christian Education*. It made government support and ecclesiastical supervision hallmarks of Dutch schools:

> In order that, from their tender years on, Christian youth may be instructed in the fundamentals of true religion and filled with godliness, three forms of catechizing ought to be observed: in the homes of the parents, in the schools of the teachers, and in the churches of the preachers, elders, readers, or visitors to the sick. The Christian Magistrates will be requested to promote this holy and necessary work by their authority; also, all who are charged with the supervision of churches and schools shall be admonished to especially concern themselves with this task. (pp. 15-16)

Subsequently, however, the Dutch Reformed Church adopted elements in worship, government, and education that were more akin to Enlightenment philosophy than to Calvin's Institutes or the intent of the Synod of Dordrecht. Kuiper (1904, pp. 44-49) shows that this was enshrined in the Education Act of 1806. By 1810, the Bible no longer appeared on the government's list of approved school books, and in 1835, visiting French and Bavarian officials were baffled that Dutch schools could be called Christian, without a Christian foundation (Kuiper, 1904, pp. 67-68).

After 1834

In 1834, members who wanted to maintain Scriptural fidelity in worship, doctrine, church government, and education, were no longer tolerated in the Dutch Reformed Church and seceded. Kuiper (1904, pp. 47-70) reports that, in 1835, Hoksbergen, one of their elders, characterized the status of the public schools: "The schools are as rotten as the churches; and should we then stay out of the churches, but send our children to the schools?" (p. 70). Ridiculed by many, but inspired by their leaders, Seceders established schools of their own and fought for government recognition until the obtained it in 1917. In that year, a new Dutch Constitution pledged full funding and freedom of ideological affiliation, establishment, and program design to all schools (Bikker, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 1999, pp. 47, 82). Starting in 1846, Van Raalte led many to religious and educational freedom in Michigan (Jacobsen, Bruins, & Wagenaar, 1996, p. 68).

Van Brummelen (1986) finds the Seceders' educational efforts too narrowly focused on the Three Rs and true doctrine. He deplores that Van Raalte's colonies did not radiate "the broader Calvinist emphasis that Christian faith should make an impact on all of culture," as their faith "stressed personal salvation and obedience to God" (p. 44; see also

Bouma, 1959, p. 43). Van Brummelen (pp. 26-27) prefers interdenominational Christian schools controlled by parental associations, as curriculum and instruction are not affected by small doctrinal differences, and parent involvement will benefit children's attitude and achievement. He does not specify which doctrinal differences are small, but believes that a church operating a school might reduce religious education to the indoctrination of written dogmas.

Yet, doctrinal differences were central in the institution of Canadian Reformed schools. In 1944, when the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands forced people to adopt theories of Abraham Kuyper about Baptism, covenant, and election, many members liberated themselves from those decisions and believed that the Christian *School with the Bible* could no longer be counted on for teaching children about their condition before God (see also Appendix G). In Canada, Christian schools were stamped by Kuyperian thought as well, and Canadian Reformed people thus established their own schools not just, as Van Brummelen (1986) suggests, to "preserve the purity of the group" (pp 260, 276). Brouwer, (1965, pp. 21) observes that the covenant, as signed and sealed in Baptism, is the central element in the motivation for Reformed education: Calvin held that it makes education both possible (as it gives hope) and necessary (it demands growth).[2] Van der Steeg (2000, pp. 71, 73) observes that the Form for Baptism of Infants (*Book of Praise*, 1995, p. 584) has been called the most important pedagogical document in the Netherlands. To maintain and develop the associated covenantal identity, he suggests, all

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2 Conversely, a CRC Synod Report (CRCNA Education Report, 2003), suggested *three* foundational blocks for Reformed Christian day schools: the covenant, the kingdom of God, and mission. Synod rejected the report (CRCNA, 2003a; CRCNA, 2003b).

stakeholders in the home, church, and school triad must be convinced that they have something worth passing on to the children.

Reaching back to its Reformation roots (Jansen, 1923, p. 88), the CanRC-Church Order maintains the consistories' task regarding education (*Book of Praise*, 1995):

> to ensure that parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions. (p. 671)

Synod Leeuwarden, 1920, defined these schools as parental with community support (Jansen, p. 91). Berkhof (1990) reflects this when he points out that education is primarily the task of the parents, and if they "should feel constrained to call in the help of others, these others should feel that they stand in loco parentis" (p. 29). There is no Scriptural injunction to have a school, but it clearly implies the option of having one. It becomes a matter of choosing what is best for all, and he concludes:

> If we allow ourselves to be controlled by the will of our God and by thoroughly Reformed principles in providing for the education of our children, we shall seek, wherever this is possible, to establish and maintain schools which will consider it a sacred duty to educate our children in the spirit in which we solemnly promised to have them educated. . . . We will pray for them, work for them, and be ready to sacrifice for them. (p. 39)

Public Education in Ontario

When post WW II Dutch immigrants came to Canada, North American public schools had a Christian flavour (Schutten, 2001), but they have become fully secularized since (Brehaut, 1984). Rushdoony (1963) argued that American public schools were never really Christian, as Mann's "basic reference in religion is not to God but to society. . . . What he envisioned was a new religion, with the state as its true church, and education as its Messiah" (pp. 31-32). Ontario's *Hope Report* (1950) still heralded Christian virtues and the law still required religious (viz., Christian) instruction for 2 half-hour periods a week. Much like American Protestants (Fairchild & Wynn, 1961, pp. 34-35), Christians generally viewed public education as acceptable at the time (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 271). The *Hall-Dennis Report* (1968) had more secular aims, and the Mackay Committee (1969) set out to make the tone of Ontario public education distinctly secular (Brehaut, 1984; Winchester, 1984; Zondag, 1990, pp. 33-36). Sussel (1995) also observes that "provincial ministries of education gradually moved toward an increasingly secular public school curriculum during the 1970s and through to the early 1980s" (pp. 137-138).

In the end, the courts removed Christian content from public education. Prayer was banned as the outcome of *Zylberberg v. Sudbury Board of Education* (Sussel, 1995, p. 141) and the Supreme Court of Ontario granted in January, 1990, that the Elgin County Board of Education's religious education curriculum (taught by the Elgin County Bible Club) constituted unconstitutional indoctrination (Guldemond, 1990, pp. 57-71). Vriend (1990) argues that the public schools can no longer be expected to teach christianity

because 1) it would undercut equality and educational freedom and 2) claiming minority rights could be discriminatory to others who do not obtain that advantage.[3] Other than in special circumstances, sending their children to the public school is no longer an option for Canadian Reformed parents.

Pride (1985) is as militant about the public schools as Rushdoony (1963):

> The battle now raging will decide who owns our children. Christian schools and home schools are challenging the compulsory attendance laws and the very concept of government control of education. . . . Will we surrender our children to them, docilely dumping them in day-care euphemized as "early education" and trotting off submissively to a job? Or will we hold the home fort? . . . Who owns our kids? God owns our kids. And He has given us parents the responsibility of making sure they turn out to be His kids. (p. 99)

Summary

Scripture gives a clear educational task to the parents but leaves room for schools to be established. The Dutch emulated Calvin's model, as laid down in the Constitution of Christian Education of the Synod of Dordrecht. Dutch churches and schools changed under Enlightenment philosophies, leading to a Secession from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834, and labours to start Reformed schools of their own. Baptism underlines

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3 Eden High School in St. Catharines is arguably an exception. However, as Klassen (2001) explains, only its non-religious components are funded, and "direct religious instruction and devotional activities take place outside of regular school hours" (pp. 16-17).

the educational task of the parents, which has to be executed with the help of the communion of saints and in line with the preaching of God's Word. The community involvement is a Scriptural given that goes beyond the task of the school. As covenantal schools, they operate in a church context and their task comprises only a segment of the parental charge. Doctrinal differences with Van Brummelen's (1986) schools justify the establishment of Canadian Reformed schools, as what children learn in school may not jeopardize what they learn in church and at home.

Ontario public schools of the 1950s were modeled after the concept of Ryerson, but subsequently moved from a nominal Christian to a distinctly secular character. Canadian Reformed schools were established beginning in 1955 and the public schools' secularization further underlined their justification. The inadequacy of the public system is recognized by home school advocates such as Pride (1985).

Home Schooling

In this section, I first survey the rise of home schooling, and indicate the debated number of people involved. Next, I review literature that discusses reasons people have to choose home schooling, and present some of its achievements and benefits. I also present the question of socialization, and relate literature that speaks of collaboration with schools. The section ends with a summary.

The Rise of Home Schooling

A January 26, 2002, Torstar Corp. newspapers Special Report (Puxley; Rushowy; Tracey; Volmers) revealed widespread dissatisfaction with Ontario's public education. Previously, Solnicki (1992) and Dryden (1996) expressed concern about students left behind and a study of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; see also PISA, 2000) found that private school students performed better than their public school counterparts in all subject areas (see also Hepburn & Robson, 2002).

Some critics, such as North (1983), Sutton (1986), and Thoburn (1986), would return the responsibility for education to the parents. North acknowledges that not all parents had the time or skills to home school, "but the fundamental principle of education is the tutor or the apprentice director. Parents hire specialists to teach their children along lines established by parents" (p. 95). Furthermore, Pride (1985) strongly focuses on the family, and, as noted above, Quayle and Medved (1996) believe that the family is central to life. They quote Michael Novak:

> One unforgettable law has been learned painfully through all the oppressions, disasters, and injustices of the last thousand years: If things go well with the family, life is worth living; when the family falters, life falls apart. (pp. 282-283)

Conversely, Van Baal (1981, pp. 287-290) is alarmed by trends to *retract* to the nuclear family and to expect little from the community; and Lubienski (2000), with clear

reservation and little charity, criticizes the movement toward home schooling:

> We can safely surmise that, in practice, the willingness to make such a sacrifice (of time, energy, and income) or investment arises from the decision to focus one's attention on one's own child. This is part of a general trend with active and affluent parents to pursue the best possible advantages for their own children–even if it means hurting other children's chances. (p. 209)

Christians see the value of the family, however, without ignoring the community. Fairchild and Wynn (1961, p. 104) relate Calvin's tenacity on the home's educational importance. Le Cornu (2001, p. 47) presents ample evidence of the primary task of the parents for educating their children, but recognizes that they must do it in cooperation with the communion of saints. Carper (2000) illustrates this for colonial America, when the family was seen very much as embedded in the community. Finally, Oosterhoff (2001, pp. 316-317) agrees with Polanyi that we would act like *imbeciles* to ignore the community for cultural conditioning.

Illich and Holt are often credited with starting home schooling (Growing Without Schooling, 2001). Postman and Weingartner (1973) tell of Illich's model of education, which some parents decided to adopt long before educational reform could take effect (see also Illich, 1970). He held, in their words, that the school, as

> our latter-day medieval church, through which all must pass who wish to achieve status in our society, is beyond hope of repair or reform and should simply be eliminated and replaced with an informal, noncompulsory network of educational resources. . . . (He) promises something close to paradise if his ideas were seriously and carefully implemented. (pp. 12, 224)

Reviewing home schooling's progress, Van Oostrum (2001) refers to advocates like Moore and Moore (1981) and the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) (see also Klicka, 1995), and the effect of the exclusion of Christian content from American schools. Crowson (2000, p. 294) further identifies compulsory schooling and legal restrictions as elements that made the movement succeed: People chose the more responsible of two evils. MacMullen (1985) concludes that "an increasing number of North American families have turned in desperation to home schooling in an attempt to rescue their children from (public school) cynicism, disillusionment, and delinquency" (p. 88). Finally, as Brown (1998) recognizes, many believe that, in addition to other advantages, the home can do as good a job as the school can.

Universal, compulsory, and comprehensive aspects of schooling are a relatively new invention (Lines, 2000b), and Norval (1992) asserts that home schooling is "not a radical new approach to education" (p. 25). However, home schoolers, at first, were met with suspicion (Carper, 2000; Hill, 2000), and Scoates (1987) was clearly appalled:

> By some method, the reply to "leave us alone to do things in our own way," has to be overcome. Why should parents in this day and age settle the life style of the

> children of the future? . . . In many homes days go by without the basic school skills being taught. Parents are not doing justice to their children if testing at some stage is not made mandatory. Home schooling as it is conducted in most homes today is a twelve month holiday for the children in the family. (pp. 66-67)

Conversely, addressing the success of literacy programs, Brown (1998) recognizes the appeal of the family context as the best way to ensure the learning parents desire:

> Today, in spite of the vast public and private educational systems, some parents are choosing to teach their children at home, confident in their belief that teaching in the context of family is the best way to ensure the learning they desire. (p. 1)

There is a shift in the way home schooling is regarded: From mad or just irresponsible outlaws, home schoolers are now treated with a measure of respect. De Jong (2001) states, "The battle for acceptance has been won. But the battle about quality will go on and on. Just because a school is small is no guarantee that it is good" (p. 123). He describes a principal's objections to a pastor's "defiant . . . unconscionable . . . school authority-rejecting . . . chaos-inviting . . . tuition-avoiding . . . too-proud-to ask-the-deacons" (p.124) decision to home school, and advised him to sit on the sidelines and watch for the outcome.

Numbers and the Ministry's Response

Estimated numbers of home schooled students vary. Lines's (1999; see also Cloud & Morse, 2001) estimates for totals in the United States are invariably lower than Ray's (1994, 1997, 1999, 2000). A District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) assistant (personal communication, spring 2002) acknowledged that the school board knew of only 200 home schooled children, and that the DSBN had no reporting enforcement policy nor money to trace *lost children*. For Ontario, Diamond (2001) observes that

> For the year 1999-2000, the Ministry of Education *School September Reports* figured there were close to 3,000 home schooled children in Ontario, but the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents' (OFTP) website has a figure close to 20,000. (p. 70)

Despite the lack of research in home schooling, but encouraged by its growing popularity, Verbruggen-Adams (1991) was curious about the Ministry's response:

> It will be interesting to see how the Ministry of Education deals with home schoolers in the future, as their numbers continue to grow, and should they ever begin to pose a real threat to the existing educational structure. (p. 85)

The Johnson Memorandum (Johnson, 1981) was still valid at that time, and defined the requirement of *satisfactory instruction* as meant in section 20(2) (a) of the *Education Act*, 1974, and *attendance* as meant in Section 23(2). Also, the burden of proof that instruction was not satisfactory rested on the authorities, and many boards were loath to get involved in legal wrangling over the matter. For instance, Davy (2002) reports that

the Halton Board of Education let parents stop being monitored when they felt it was too intrusive.

More recently, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued Policy/Program Memorandum 131 (*PPM 131*, 2002) in which the HSLDA, the Ontario Home Educators' Connection (OCHEC), and the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents (OFTP) had input. Miller (2002) lauds its gains over the Johnson Memorandum: It assumes that satisfactory instruction does take place at home; it recognizes home schooling's unique methodology, curriculum, and assessment techniques, as well as its support groups; it provides access to CCAC support services, to courses through the independent learning centre, and to resources and testing; and it gives proper jurisdiction of the legislated inquiry process. However, he dislikes the language about "the responsibility of school boards to excuse children from school" and of investigations if the board is "concerned that the instruction provided in the home may not be satisfactory" (p. 13).

More controversially, HSLDA and OCHEC interpret the *Education Act*, s. 21 to mean that the parent (as responsible for the child) should determine whether instruction is satisfactory.[4] Furthermore, if a child is home schooled and the requirements of s. 21 are met, they advise that s. 24 means that there is usually no need or obligation for parents to report that they home school, despite *PPM 131*'s explicit point that refusal of a parent to notify the board in writing of the intent to provide home schooling is one reason that may trigger an investigation.[5] Some also worry that PPM 131 is a step closer to law than

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(2) A child is excused from attendance at school if, (a) the child is receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere.

5

(2) the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor shall direct that an inquiry be made as to the

Johnson (1981; see also LifeSite, 2002; Miller, 2002; Zwart, 2002b). The actual number of home schooled children in Ontario remains obscure and the movement remains controversial, begging the question what the research (see also Appendix H) says about reasons people have to home school.

Motivation

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validity of the reason or excuse for non-attendance and the other relevant circumstances . . . and may, by order in writing signed by him or her, direct that the child, (a) be excused from attendance at school; or (b) attend school.

In view of the general dissatisfaction with public education, one might expect a negative tone among the reasons to home school. For instance, the school spends as much as 45% of its time on enculturative[6] functions (Everhart, 1983, p. 237), and some home schoolers claim to *cover the material* in half the time of a regular school day (Opperman, 2001; Ray, 1999). Ontario Homeschool (ontariohomeschool.org) recognizes four classes of reasons: A desire for a quality of family life; an educational philosophy different from that which is provided in an institutional setting; the child is not progressing in public school; and the strength of character that emerges from the family and community-based educational setting. Furthermore, Norval (1992, p. 64) concludes that parents are apparently withdrawing their children from school because of finances, dissatisfaction with the school's educational program, mistrust of school authorities, disdain for inflexible curriculum and arbitrary school age requirements, dissatisfaction with the socialization process offered by the schools, and others.

The reasons are not always stated in negative terms, however. Basham (2001, p. 8; see also Cloud & Morse, 2001) lists 16 major reasons cited by American parents, based on a 1999 US Department of Education Report. Participants could give more than one reason, and included: Better education at home (48.9%); religious reasons (38.4%); poor learning environment at school (25.6%); family reasons (16.8%); develop character or morality (15.1%); object to what school teaches (12.1%); school does not challenge child (11.6%); other problems with available schools (11.5%); student behaviour problems at school

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6 Anthropologists define socialization is as "the general process by which one generation sets the pattern for the behaviour of the next," and enculturation as "the specific manner in which this behaviour is transmitted" (Communications Research Machines, Inc., 1971, p. 362).

(9.0%); special needs of the child (8.2%); transportation or convenience (2.7%); child not old enough to enter school (1.8%); cannot afford private school (1.7%); parent's career (1.5%); and could not get into desired school (1.5%). In addition, 22.5% of parents cited reasons unique to their particular families.

Arai (2000) adds specifically Canadian reasons to home school. He observes a weaker philosophical, ideological, religious, or pedagogical commitment, in addition to its legal availability. Canadian home schoolers see the public school as ideologically and pedagogically detrimental to the children, due to overcrowding and lack of individual attention. He observes a gradual growth towards the concept, and a shift in motivation once the decision to home school has been made, especially because of its unexpected strengthening effect on the family unit and the freedom to have an alternative lifestyle.

Arai (2000) finds that the *ideologue-pedagogue dichotomy* of Van Galen and Mayberry and Knowles (1989) does not "capture very well the different reasons people gave for starting home schooling" (p. 215) in Canada. Van Galen (1988, cited in Romanowski, 2001) defines ideologues as people who "object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools and they seek to strengthen their relationship with their children;" and pedagogues as people who "share a respect for their children's intellect and creativity and a belief that children learn best when pedagogy taps into the child's innate desire to learn"(p. 79). Ideologues, like Stevens's (2001) believers, have an essentially religiously-based argument and a deep concern for the moral, ethical, and spiritual development of the children. Pedagogues, like Stevens's inclusives, feel they can do better than the public schools in the emotional and academic sense, in accordance with each child's unique learning style. Despite Van Galen's own reservations (see also Ray, 1999, p. 5), Romanowski maintains the dichotomy.

With some imagination, one may hazard a match between the various reasons, considering that the reports imply generalization, and that subjects' answers reflect their own interpretation of the questions. It becomes more ambitious when one researcher (viz., Romanowski) presents as valid a classic dichotomy another (viz., Arai) rejects. By way of summary and its potential use as a prompting tool, however, an attempt is given in Table 2. In this table, Stevens's broad classification of "believers" and "inclusives" is given at the top, realizing that "inclusives" may also include some "believers." Van Galen and Romanowski are represented in row VR, with the broad classification of "ideologues" and "pedagogues." The match with Stevens is not perfect, as categories overlap. Norval (where the real guesswork starts) is depicted in row N, with reasons that might be of an "ideologue" or a "pedagogue" type placed in the centre column. Basham is represented in row B, again with the centre column to capture either/or reasons; in addition, reasons cited more often are near the top. Arai is described in row A. Ontariohomeschool.org is provided in row HS.

Achievements and Benefits of Home Schooling

The available (and somewhat contested) research suggests that home schooled students achieve well. Basham (2001) reports that Canadian home schooling students score, on average, at the 80th percentile in total reading, at the 84th in total listening, at the 76th in total language, at the 79th in total mathematics, at the 82nd in science, at the 81st in social studies, at the 79th in the basic battery of reading, language and math, and at the 82nd percentile in the complete Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) battery. They also

Table 2

A Synthesis of Reasons for Home Schooling[7]

	Stevens' Believers	Stevens' Inclusives	
VR[8]	Ideologues object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools, and seek to strengthen their relationship with their children	Pedagogues share a respect for their children's intellect and creativity and a belief that children learn best when pedagogy taps into the child's innate desire to learn.	
N[9]	mistrust of school authorities	finances school curriculum school educational program	school socialization process age requirements
B[10]	religious reasons develop character/morality object to what school teaches	better education at home family reasons other problems with available schools student behaviour problems at school	poor learning environment at school school does not challenge child child not old enough to enter school parent's career

[7] Rows in this table represent authors' classifications, as compared to Stevens' (2001). Positions in the central column might fit in either the "believers" or "inclusives" classification.

[8] Van Galen (1988) and Romanowski (2001)

[9] Norval (1992)

[10] Basham (2001)

		special needs of the child transportation or convenience cannot afford private school could not get into desired school	
A[11]	weaker philosophical, ideological, religious, or pedagogical commitment than Americans easily and legally available process of growth towards the idea freedom to have an alternate life style school is ideologically detrimental OR school is pedagogically detrimental SHIFT after starting because of unexpected bonding effect on the family unit		
HS[12]	desire for a quality of family life	educational philosophy different from that which is offered in an institutional setting strength of character that emerges from the family and community-based educational setting	the child is not progressing in public school

[11] Arai (2000)

[12] ontariohomeschool.org

score well on ACT and SAT college-entrance tests: “From 1998 to 2000, home schoolers averaged 22.7 on the ACT, compared to a national average of 21” (on a scale of 1-36; p. 11), and on the SAT they averaged 1,083 compared to a national figure of 1,016. There is evidence that the longer one is home schooled, the better the achievement: “SAT scores improve from the 59th percentile for those home schooled for only one year to the 92nd percentile for seven years” (p. 12). Not without political bias, and despite Ray’s (1994) warning that statistical analysis shows that the person who administers the test makes no significant difference for the scores (Ray, 1994), Willard (2001) criticizes the validity of the results. He questions whether home schooled children will learn to “adapt to different life situations which require teamwork, understanding and cooperation” (p. 1).

One of the most significant American studies (Rudner, 1999) involved 20,760 K-12 home school students in 11,930 families in 1998. Based on their current grade, they were administered the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) or the Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP). Rudner concluded that, “This study simply shows that those parents choosing to make a commitment to home schooling are able to provide a very successful academic environment” (p. 29). On the relation between family income and achievement, Ray (1997, p. 6; 1999, p. 11) finds conflicting data or only a weak correlation at best, and concludes differently than Rudner (Appendix I). Yes, Rudner’s study encourages home schoolers, as Dr. Jay Wile (lecture note, May 4, 2002) at an OCHEC Conference did:

> He is a guy from the other side, he doesn’t like home schooling. . . . Look what he comes up with: He cannot ignore that it is really good. . . . Even if you do poorly as a parent teacher, here is some comfort: You’ll still do much better than the public schools!

A tremendous shift has also occurred in the effectivities and affordances of home schoolers, making them better equipped than ever before. Publishers prepare materials and self-help resources fit for a wide variety of philosophies and approaches. Perhaps the most dramatic change in this regard comes from the Internet (see also, e.g., NHERI, n.d.; Zeise, 2002). Home schooling families also help each other as a community, building on each others’ strengths, and jointly developing social, physical, or artistic skills, and organize home school outings. Meanwhile, the changes may well leave a measure of uncertainty among the public, as illustrated in Appendix J.

Socialization

Socialization of home schoolers is a popular target for inquiry. Ray (1999, pp. 13-15) acknowledges that home schooled children are not part of the social network at school, in which most people expect kids to learn to get along with others (see also Everhart, 1983, p. 237). Yet, Ray rejects that those social skills and the associated psychological development are best learned in school. Home schooled children have a significantly higher self-concept than their schooled counterparts, and 98% of home schooled children are involved in two or more activities requiring interfacing with various ages and settings, leading to above-average self-esteem. Home schooled students take more cues

from their parents, who also help them find social contacts, and are less influenced by peers than their counterparts in private schools. In one study, both public school and home schooled students received positive self-concept scores, but the former showed more problem behaviour: They were more aggressive, louder, and more competitive. Ray finds that home schooled students develop well in a social, emotional, and psychological sense. Yet, Moore (2001) doubts the validity of Ray's small sample.

Arai (1999; see also Hill, 2000) addresses the allegation that the literature has neglected issues of citizenship. Home schooled children are often seen as a likely liability to society for their lack of life skills, or for lacking the skills and social norms necessary to successfully compete in the job market. Some worry that home schooled children are too narrowly focused on and biased by what their parents can teach or indoctrinate them with, or dwell on the limited exposure to cooperating effectively and respectfully with people of different cultures and views. Others portray home schooling as elitist, as parents seem to maintain privilege by withdrawing their children from school and abandoning their duties and contributions to it, while leaving less able minorities stuck with a declining institution. They also make access to higher education harder for their own children.

For instance, Lubienski (2000) laments that home schooling gives individual parental choice prevalence over the public good. It leaves, he asserts, more

> poorly educated students and less social cohesion and tolerance; . . . (it) undermines the common good by withdrawing children as well as social capital from the public schools (and) the ability of public education to improve and become more responsive as a democratic institution. . . . In elevating individual choice and widening the scope of decisions we make as individual private citizens, we increasingly neglect community considerations of how our actions affect others and deny their rights to voice their concerns. (pp. 207, 212)

Arai (1999) shows that the concerns are part of the conflict between parental choice and state rights in education. He disagrees with Eaman Callan *(Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy*, 1997) that "common schooling as the great sphere" best guarantees a liberal democratic state with a "citizenship built around virtues of a critical tolerance of diversity, the power of rational thought and argument, and commitment to a defensible moral code" (p. 5 of 18). Callan lets the security of a liberal democracy prevail over parental choice in education: It must be fostered by schools and other social institutions through a *multidimensional citizenship* concept.

Arai argues that home schoolers construct a citizenship in which community participation, character-building, and family-bonding are basic, rather than add-ons. Strong family relationships give confidence and independence to explore the world, and so foster participation in larger society, resistance to consumerism and materialism, and a lifestyle based on their own choices, rather like what Callan expects from the school. Arai finds that home schoolers see themselves as ardent supporters of democracy and

participation, and that alternative formulations of citizenship ought to be recognized as potentially valuable. Home schoolers resist being portrayed as elitist, as they come from all income brackets, and many do not have extraordinary educational backgrounds. They also made significant progress to gain entry to higher education (see also Cox, 2002).

For the community being considered in this study, the argument about a balance between parental responsibilities and community expectations is relevant. The difficulty Arai, Callan, and Lubienski have is that they must first establish a philosophical basis from which to argue for their perspective. The Canadian Reformed community has a common basis on which to find agreement, but *its* problem is to agree on what that common basis means. The preceding discussion may have shown the viability of home schooling for the child and for the family, but its viability for the community, and how it is affected by home schooling, remains obscure, and a matter of debate and further study.

Collaboration

The literature suggests that school and home school could cooperate, but there remain tensions to be bridged. Lines (2000a) envisions collaborative partnerships to be a way for the future, in which home schoolers can draw on school expertise and resources as needed. Farber (2001) describes a spectrum of collaborative practices that public systems get involved in for the funding and for a sense of obligation to all students: as children are home schooled on average for only 2 years, there are connection problems when they reenter the school. As for programs, schools may offer courses through an Internet connection, dual enrolment, or enrichment classes and special needs programs.

There are sensitivities about collaboration, however. One result of collaborative efforts is that the distinctive characteristics of home schooling begin to blur (Farber, 2001). Some home schoolers do not like to get entangled, while others like the free material. The HSLDA worries that, in the end, it may lead to a requirement that all home schooled children are enroled in a public school. Lines (2000a) further identifies funding sensitivities (to pay teachers), and people issues (home schooling parents, teachers, and superintendents must be willing to run the programs). Schools also need to learn to understand the home schooling philosophy, to share responsibilities with parents and the community, and to “stop treating their other partners like humble assistants or dangerous rivals” (p. 186). Elsewhere, Lines (2001) reports legal tension about requests for part-time access to public school programs and curricula.

In Christian schools, collaboration is both considered and resisted, and sometimes leads to friction. Carper (2000) mildly speaks of “occasional friction between independent Christian school advocates and evangelical home schoolers” (p. 16). Barnes (2001) cites a URC minister who observes judgmental controversies about meeting covenant obligations to the community, and being faithful to providing Christian education for their children. But the rhetoric must tone down, and both must deliver Christian education, he believes:

> Folks need to remember to enter into debates about schooling . . . with much love and charity. Absent that, the results could be tragic, causing strife in the churches or even splitting otherwise faithful and vibrant churches. (p. 2)

Barnes also finds that collaboration may involve a scheduling problem. He cites an Ontario board chairman who underlines the controversy, but favours some cooperation:

> At least part of the community would strongly object . . . We certainly have those who believe that . . . you should send your children to the covenantal school. . . . It's flying in the face of the covenant community for them. . . . Even though some home school, they're still part of our covenantal community. (p. 2)

Some home schoolers' joint activities develop school-like characteristics, or even alternative schools. Hill (2000) mentions home school charter schools, which generate more time for the parents, public funds to run the school, and access to other services–and perhaps sacrifice some of the home schooling benefits. Similarly, in Blue Bell, PA, a Reformed joint home schooling effort developed into an effective small school (Bratcher, 1989; RCS, 2000). Schlissel (2003) advocated and practiced home schooling for 20 years, but now cites its dreadful inefficiency and other drawbacks. To Schlissel, "Excellent covenant (high) schools do more than encourage Christian communities: They require them" (p. 3). Lancaster (2004), also a 20 year home schooling veteran, agrees with Schlissel that community and cooperation need more attention, but objects to Schlissel's school advocacy. He urges that home schoolers "stick with (their) wildly unregulated, dreadfully inefficient, hopelessly homey system, simply because it works better than any other system in terms of achieving the goals God sets before Christian parents" (p. 9).

Looking beyond the tension and the present, Hill (2000) presents three conclusions about the future of home schooling:

- Home schooling is part of a broad movement in which private groups and individuals are learning how to provide services that were once left to public bureaucracies;
- As home-schooling families learn to rely on one another, many are likely to create new institutions that look something like schools;
- Although many home-schooling families are willing to accept help from public school systems, the families and the schools they create are far more likely to join the charter and voucher movements than to assimilate

> back into the conventional public system. (p. 2)

Summary

The search for alternatives to public education has contributed significantly to the rise of home schooling. Among others, people choose to home school because of its benefits for the family, high academic achievements, and (a disputed) social advantage as they develop a valid civility of their own. Several schools started collaborative programs with home schoolers, and some home schoolers have effectively built alternative schools. It is not clear how the home school trend will affect society in the long run.

The question remains how well literature that explains home schooling as a response to the public system retains its value for home schooling in view of John Calvin. In general, Christian home schoolers (ideologues, believers, HSLDA members) stress the family bond, the negative environment at the public school, and positive family experiences with home schooling, as well as character and morality building as chief motivators. It appears that the argument for home schooling in view of John Calvin must be either presented on practical grounds, and be defined as a preference, or face a fundamental discussion about the relation of the freedom of the individual or the family, and their obligations to the community. Home schooling may be viable and best for the child and for the family; but what is best for the covenant community?

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes how I gathered the views and perceptions of people close to the sources of tension that occurs around the rise of home schooling in the NPCR community. It presents the research approach, the participant selection procedure, the data generation design and recording procedures, and the data processing and analysis strategy. It further outlines the methodological assumptions and limitations, addresses issues of credibility, and reviews ethical considerations.

Research Approach

In designing the research, I considered that open, face-to-face communication can enhance mutual understanding, as it incorporates body language, timing, tone and pitch. It also may reveal underlying emotions, and helps set the context. Technology can help overcome issues of distance and time, but may be limited in the full scope afforded by direct face to face exchange. Face to face communication is also central to the second and third principles of Christian conciliation that Sande (1997) proposes: “Go and show your brother his fault,” and “Go and be reconciled” (pp. 11, 238). It allows for, but does not guarantee, speaking with, rather than to the other, and enhances immediate clarification. To understand the tensions and to fully capture the sentiments of various stakeholders, I felt from the outset that I needed to speak with and listen to them.

Furthermore, as an insider-participant, I considered Cotner (2000) who argues that each research episode with human participants “requires its own relationship-building tools from gaining access, to participant observation, to disengagement” (p. 2). She explains that *insiderness* actually hinders research if one leans on it too much; that the researcher’s level of acceptance as an insider hinges on several factors and is not automatic; that relationship building is a matter of perception on the part of researcher as well as subject; and that reflection on one’s insiderness is an effective tool to forge one’s way through the observation stage. Peshkin (1988) advises that researchers should “systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (p. 17) to avoid misconstruing their findings. There is, he says, “ample room for an affection that serves to remind one of obligations to his respondents, and for a dispassion that, as horseradish does in the nasal passages, clears his vision” (p. 20). Obtaining information from more than one source would ascertain that the study would consider and present the variety of perspectives that exists among the stakeholders.

The literature suggests much diversity among home schoolers, as well as a reluctance to participate in academic studies (e.g., Archer, 1999; Knowles, 1998). The particular research situation was also characterized by the tension which it aims to help resolve. Because of this prior tension, but also because I could be perceived as an agent of “them,” namely, the school, I anticipated that home schooler participants might experience the greatest level of stress, and I wanted to distance myself from association with being an agent of the school in order to gain access to home schoolers. In only one case did this

turn out to be a significant obstacle.

Participant Selection

Three categories of stakeholder participants were selected. The first involved individual home schooling couples from the NPCR community, who could give their inside perspective on the issues and on home schooling. The second was a focus group of school representatives from the same community. This focus group would formalize the school's input and provide considered responses in view of the tensions. A second focus group consisted of school representatives and home schoolers in a Canadian Reformed community with reputedly less tension on the issue, to draw out perspectives on principle and practical solutions. A more detailed rationale for each group is provided below.

First, considering the literature and prior experience, I wanted to interview home schooling participants in an environment that was most comfortable to them, and most likely to reduce stress–one-on-one and in their own home. Furthermore, I provided an advance indication of the interview questions and the limited scope of the research: The purpose was not to argue, but to obtain maximal clarity of understanding of participants' perspectives. This approach was designed to draw out the richest possible individual data for generating grounded theory, and allow for finding applicable ethnographic particulars and narratives. To symbolize my genuine interest in the subject, I published a book review about home schooling prior to my search for participants (Sikkema, 2002).

This cohort of participants was selected from among home schooling families within the NPCR community and the catchment area of JCS, and chosen for variety of family-size, congregational membership, estimated duration of involvement, the bread-winner's occupation, and home-to-school distance. All couples approached agreed to participate, but by the time the last consented, I had sufficient data and did not proceed further. One husband gave his responses later, in writing. In this category, participants included Stan, Jerry, Dean, Oscar, Rebekah, Karen, Emily, and Paula. All participant names in this as well as in other categories were changed to protect their identities. Participants were individually informed of their assigned name, and no one objected.

Second, some literature suggested that leaders and policy makers might have a different perspective than home schoolers or users of the day school (e.g., Barnes, 2001). They would look for ways to resolve tension, to foster domestic tranquility (cf. Martin, 1995), and to mobilize people for adaptive work (Heifetz, 1994). They would have a well informed perception of the home schooling phenomenon. Also, while many home schoolers often stress the importance of the family (e.g., Pride, 1985), leaders and policy-makers are more focused on the community as a whole (e.g., Etzioni, 1998) and are usually comfortable with having discussions and making decisions in group settings. Thus, little stress was expected with the school representatives focus group.

All these participants served or had served as chairman of JCS since home schooling was first introduced in the community in 1990. In addition, they had children in the

school at the time of their tenure, and thus could be viewed as also representing the parents. It was anticipated that they would bring a pro-school perspective to any request for bridging and bonding to restore social capital and sense of community (Putnam, 2000). I anticipated no difficulties in getting their consent to participate, and the problem of finding a time suitable for all could be resolved. Only one potential participant was omitted because home schooling became an issue after his tenure as school chair. Participants included: Charley, Felix, Marco, Nate, Barry, Tony, and Lorenzo.

Third, scholarly literature suggests that the tension addressed in this study might be resolved through collaboration between opposing parties (e.g., Lines, 2000a; Tyler & Carper, 2000). In communities where collaboration has been established there may be remaining issues, but a social equilibrium has been found in which people can see eye to eye (e.g., Barnes, 2001) and have fruitful and charitable discussions about the issues (e.g., Eikelboom, 2003b). Thus I chose a second focus group consisting of some adult home schoolers and some school-representatives from a community with reduced tension about the matter. *This Other Community* is further identified as *Toc, ON.* A near-eagerness to be involved on the part of potential participants, as well as flexibility with their schedules and the required time, alleviated my concern to get this group together.

Friends from Toc, ON, identified *suitable candidates*, whom I described as people able to provide valuable insights in resolving tension between the day school and the home schoolers. Their inclusion helped me identify a distinctly Canadian Reformed voice on how things could be done in an equilibrium between the schools and home, and supplemented data from other research and reports. From the list of potential candidates I received, I chose two school representatives, who consented to participate, and several home schooling couples. Two of the first three couples I approached agreed to participate. Both had been home schooling for several years. Participants in this focus group included Arthur, Harvey, Ivan, Grace, and Valerie. Valerie's husband had other commitments on the night of the interview.

I phoned potential participants in all categories with a brief explanation of the study and a request to participate. This was followed up with an e-mail that contained the essence of the conversation and request (Appendix K). After a few weeks, interested parties received a more detailed information letter and consent form (Appendix L), and we agreed on an interview date and place. Before the formal start of the interview, all participants signed the consent form for immediate participation. As agreed, participants were updated every 3 or 4 months about the progress of the study (Appendix M), and will be invited to the thesis defense.

Data Generation and Recording

Having chosen my participants with care, the data would be as rich as they could be for the purpose of the study. Richness in data, combined with the advantages of face-to-face communication were essential reasons to choose a semistructured interview rather than a

survey. A survey provides previously conceived answers, limits clarification, and eliminates on-site observation and inclusion of subjective elements in the responses. All participants agreed to being taped and by transcribing the tapes myself I reduced data loss. Participants also gave consent for further review or use of the primary data within 3 years after completion of this study. After, the data will be destroyed, and a request for later use would have to be made before that.

The interview questions reflected my informed expectations of sources of tension and outcomes, and allowed for expansion into unforeseen domains. They sought to draw out: 1) why people would begin to home school; 2) why they would continue to do it; 3) their perspectives on relevant religious aspects of the topic; 4) their perspectives on relevant philosophical aspects of the topic; 5) their perspectives on relevant social aspects of the topic; 6) their perspectives on other aspects they deemed to be relevant; 7) their perceptions of the sources of tension; 8) their suggestions for restoring harmony and unity in the community; and 9) suggestions for my further consideration. The question topics were the same for all participants, but phrased slightly differently for home schoolers than for school representatives. A detailed sample list of questions is included in Appendix N. All participants gave prior consideration to the topics addressed, but some would have preferred to receive more detailed questions beforehand.

Data were gathered during semistructured interviews in October and November of 2002. The interviews with home schoolers were conducted in their living rooms, and with the others in school meeting rooms. Responses and reactions to the questions were recorded on audiocassette. Several participants helped with getting the equipment to actually work. Several interviews went over the agreed-to 1- to 2-hour limit, but the participants all agreed to continue. I opened focus group interviews with reading from 1 Corinthians. 12, and opened and closed with prayer. It helped set the tone and framework for the interviews, and on reflection, I should have done it in the other interviews, as well.

I had envisioned prompting participants for details and personal contributions. Prompting would be based on literature presented in chapters 2 and 3 and my own perceptions of the local controversy, and could suggest specific reasons others had given to start home schooling or to continue with it. For theological issues, I planned to refer to specific and often-quoted Bible passages, the creeds and confessions of the Reformed churches, or the doctrines of the sacraments. For philosophical issues, I was prepared to refer to leaders in the Reformed tradition of schools. For social issues, I intended to focus on the perceived impact of home schooling on the sense of church-community. Regarding existing tension and building bridges, I could prompt participants based on communitarian research, examples of cooperation in other systems, or references to common faith commitments.

As participants were eager and prepared to share their insights, the need for prompting was negligible. Several participants actually assisted me with literature or insights I had

not previously seen or considered. Invariably, the candid but civil and friendly responses suggested that I was receiving rich, relevant, and valid data from the participants. Throughout, edgy or uneasy moments were less frequent or intense than anticipated. These were the moments where the interview tended towards a discussion of arguments.

Data Processing and Preliminary Analysis

Peshkin (2000) describes how interpretation starts at the beginning of a research process and even molds it as “an act of imagination and logic” (p. 9), and of ongoing conceptualizing, situating, instantiating, focusing, and composing the study. Aside from the formal analysis, which follows this section, the processing of the data constitutes a preliminary analysis. I had intended to take notes regarding participants’ body language and other physical cues that might not be captured on audiotape, as well as my own subjective responses. I ended up recording the more salient points participants made. This became especially helpful when the recording was faint: Participants seemed to speak more softly when saying more profound things. Shortly after each interview I recorded my first impressions and reactions, and prepared the transcript within 2 weeks. This process helped me to vividly remember the details, setting, and subjective facets, and to get the transcripts back to the participants for their responses as soon as feasible. One couple asked for and received a copy of the tape, to help them with the editing of the transcript. While transcribing, I made mental and written notes about recurring patterns and topics. Patterns began to emerge more readily after two or three interviews, but each participant contributed a uniquely rich personal perspective.

I coded the transcripts with the editorial comments and my summaries to remove them from the participants and to protect their identity. Transcript headings, as shown in Figure 4, present information relevant to identification of the interview, consent, and distance from JCS. The interview code represents the congregation (A), the family’s 9-1-1 code (0123), and the last name initial (Z). Some commentators suggested that distance might be a factor in making the decision to home school, and in two cases, home schooling participants indicated that it actually was. P1 and P2 are participants, with W indicating the wife and H the husband. A checkmark indicates consent.

I coded the numbered location on the tape and inserted questions or comments before e-mailing the transcripts to participants for editing and clarification. In all but one interview, I summarized the text after receiving the participants’ feedback. In the case of the exception, I sent the summary along with the request for feedback. The participants only had an issue with the summary *if the transcript proper needed editing*. All subjects provided useful feedback, ranging from “Fine, no comment,” to valuable clarifications or additions. Several participants expressed discomfort with their incoherent speech and one wondered whether the transcript had any value at all (see also Tilley, in press; Tilley & Powick, 2003). I reassured them that informal speech often contains incomplete thoughts and mid-sentence course corrections, and that intonation and body language helps the listener to understand the message. I honoured the requests of some participants to ignore

or delete specific sections of text. Some participants' observations also helped in the further analysis of the interviews.

Analysis

Once the data were collected, transcribed, edited, and annotated, I spent the winter of 2003 analyzing them. My subjective first impressions and transcript annotations helped trigger imaginative and logical analyses. After receiving editorial feedback from the participants, I highlighted recurring motifs and unique perspectives as well as editorial corrections that might have a bearing on further analysis. Initially, I looked for and reflected on key words and phrases, common strands, themes, categories, plausibility, and underlying connections and meanings that would generate further thought. During the analysis, the "hook, line, sinker, and catch" analogy came to mind that became a key organizer for chapters 5 and 6. The literature review in chapters 2 and 3 also was helpful, as it alerted me to previously identified and described patterns of community and interpersonal dynamics (see also Peshkin, 2000, p. 6).

I used a multiple column format for recording the transcripts, as shown in Figure 4. The left column gives the audio player's counter number (0-715) and side (A or B). If one 90-minute tape could not hold the interview, the second tape started with side C. The second column was intended to flag unusual insights, but the summary column with highlighting turned out to be sufficient for this purpose. The actual transcript was entered in the centre column, coding the words of participants as assigned in the transcript heading. Editorial changes were highlighted with yellow. The fourth column held the summary of the transcript, with complete codes for easy reference to the full transcribed text, such as DP1A700 and FP6B124. In this code, D and F identify the particular interview, P1 and P6 relate to the participant, and A700 and B124 identify the location on the tape. In the final column, R stands for the researcher, and exemplifies a question relating to the participant's response. The examples stem from different interviews, but both address the school board's expectations from the community. In the summary, I immediately highlighted text that was directly relevant to my purpose and questions.

In subsequent passes through the summarized transcripts, I first identified broad emergent umbrella-themes of content, belief, or perspective, copying all text-summaries in a separate file for each umbrella-theme. The structure of the interviews facilitated identifying these themes somewhat. For instance, emergent themes from Questions 1 and 2 were clearly elaborated on in the next four. Also, while classifying the material for Questions 1-6 under these umbrella-themes, I maintained one "Other" file in which I collected text alluding to aspects that did not seem to fit under a particular umbrella-theme, or that belonged more naturally with the focus of Questions 7 or 8. Some material addressed more than one umbrella-theme, and were copied it in more than one file, if needed, with some editorial context comments. After sorting all the material for Questions 1-6, the "Other" file helped identify themes under Questions 7 and 8. Likewise, material from these two questions sometimes referred back to themes identified earlier

on, and was added to those files. This method of classifying the material allowed me to stay close to the original text and helped alert me to apparent discrepancies in the responses, which invariably helped me to better understand what participants actually intended to say.

The classification under umbrella-themes narrowed the focus to more specific subthemes later, but the process was more complex and required more cross-referencing

Interview Transcript: Q
Interview: A/0123/Z
Time: Month, day, 2002; 8:00 - 10:00 PM
Place: Participant Home **Distance from JCS**: # km.
Consent obtained: P1 W ✓ P2 H ✓

QUESTION # 6:
What are your thoughts on the tension that exists around this topic: is it related to these (previously discussed) aspects only, to these and others, or should I consider other aspects only?

Coun-ter	Flag	Transcript text	Summary	Questions, Suggestions
A 700		W I completely do. We should not judge each other on financial contributions that we give to certain associations... You know what, I give my $150 to Anchor, or you know what, I give it to the church.. How do you know I am? So, we should not judge based on financial... we should talk to each other, we should ask each other, and we should be open and honest enough with each other to say, to ask, 'Can you afford to pay an extra amount a month?' I really felt dishonored I suppose by the letter that came out from the board... (tape ends) (you explained that there was an element of moral guilt or obligation in the way you were approached, and would have liked it much better if the board had explained its predicament leaving you free to donate something to help meet a need.)	DP1A700 Should not judge e/o on where we contribute $$; JCS can *ask* if we could pay extra amount each month, w/o placing moral guilt and being dishonored for failing to meet obligations –that would be so different!	R: Were you referring to the board's paper here, or another letter? Cf. Board of Directors of JCS. (2002, March). *Building up the Body of Christ in Christian Unity*. Smithville, ON: JCS. Author.
B 124		P6 So, that is what the community, the church community looks after: the children are born in that community, and the community is then also responsible to school these children. And that is what the school board wrote in the position paper, and I agree 100%. In the (Rockway) responses that paper of the school board was basically knocked down in one area, and not supported in other areas. In Lincoln it was ignored. So, we have a bit of a problem here. When I say it isn't a principle, it is a preference, we see it as a preference, at least I see it as a preference. Some people *prefer* home schools. If it was a principle, then I think that we all who sit around this table are sinning.	FP6B124 Chch com'ty responsible to look after the kids born in it, as position ppr said; I agree; R knocked it down, L ignored it; If HS principle, it is not a preference and we are all sinning	

Figure 4. **Sample heading and transcript.**

than originally envisioned. However, since the themes ran across the questions, they also allowed for an orderly presentation. The classified material allowed for elimination of redundancies and the structuring of subthemes into draft paragraphs. This process also allowed for a better understanding of each participant's intent, as there were many instances where participants connected to comments they had made earlier in the interview. In addition, it facilitated combining comments of one participant with those of others, presenting an image supported by more than one person, and providing a sense of the strength of support for the image.

Methodological Assumptions and Limitations

This section presents the assumptions I made before setting out to collect the data, and includes what I actually found for each. It also identifies limitations of this study as first envisioned, and how it is currently perceived.

I assumed that a sufficient number of participants would be willing to meet me at their home or at another location. I had found them to be generally friendly and helpful, for instance, in identifying a suitable home school conference to attend. In fact, as noted above, it was not difficult to find enough participants.

I assumed that the time span for the procedure allowed ample room to transcribe each interview within a reasonable period of time and to send it back to the subjects for editing and clarification. This was a challenge, because the interviews sometimes ran longer than anticipated, and the tape often lacked clarity. Participants received and edited the transcripts in time for completion by Christmas, 2002.

I assumed that 1 to 2 hours would be sufficient for each interview. It would require me to be focused on the task and to move on when a topic had been dealt with. I came to realize that making the interviews longer than planned also meant more work in transcribing them and later analysis. The associated difficulties were overcome by the generosity of participants and hard work.

I assumed that we could keep the arrangements made. All participants but one did and provided data. This one participant had to work and sent written responses later, which had a less personal flavour than the others. In one case, the invitation failed to convey that both spouses were invited, and only one came. One participant was very busy at work but yet "enjoyed the interview very much" even when it went over time.

I assumed that I would gather sufficiently rich data to answer my question. Mindful of Cotner (2000), I sought to establish trust early in order to make sharing information as uninhibited as possible. It was not necessary to seek out other participants to obtain more data and I did not further consult one couple who indicated willingness to participate later. The transcripts comprised some 400 pages.

I assumed that the tape recorder would work, so I could use my notepad for other observations. Participants helped out when the tape recorder developed a mike problem.

I assumed that the participants were committed to telling me their whole story and their honest perception of reality. Some outcomes were at variance with common views, especially with regard to the reasons why people choose to home school. At times, I also disagreed with the participants, and other people may question parts of what they said as well. I took their *Yes* to be *yes*, and their *No* to be *no* (see also 2 Corinthians 1:17; 1 James 5:12; Matthew 5:37).

I assumed that the outcomes of this study would be meaningful for the academic community, the NPCR community, the participants in the study and their fellows, and myself. Many people have expressed interest in the outcomes.

I assumed that this study was not likely to be the last word on conflict and tension between home schoolers and Reformed schools: Personal repentance takes a change of heart. This is confirmed by participants, and will be discussed further in chapter 7.

I had also envisioned and accepted several limitations of this study.

My sample was relatively small and restricted to a particular community. As a result, I wanted to be cautious with broad validity or applicability claims. As the study progressed, however, I met many people citing similar problems in other communities and, thus, the study will likely speak to more people than originally anticipated.

I understood that I only asked certain questions. Even though my wife probably would have asked others, I believe that mine provide sufficient data for my purpose.

I understood that I was a novice researcher and might do things I shouldn't. I caught myself asking leading questions a few times, getting into an argument, or sharing things not immediately pertinent to the interview. However, such exchanges provided part of the setting or atmosphere in which the interview could continue.

I understood that I preferred not to take more time than planned, even if the next 5 minutes might reveal the most enlightening data ever. During the interviews, I did not press for time, although I did occasionally suggest to go to the next question. Usually, the last two or three questions yielded the most elaborate answers.

I knew that I was not perfect. I pray that this study will end up edifying the intended audiences and giving glory to God.

Credibility of Results

Credibility of this study is attained in several ways. First, the results are based on a total of six interviews, all with the same questions, and with a total of 20 male and female participants of different backgrounds. Due to the manner in which school representatives were chosen (as past or present board members), there were 8 more male than female participants. Although there was a good level of general agreement, participants did not always agree with each other, and some expressed themselves much more forcefully than others. On occasion, comments made by home schoolers were confirmed by school representatives in a different interview.

The willingness of the participants to share their insights, beliefs, and perceptions supports the credibility of the study. This was evidenced in their readiness to participate and in the extensive explanation of their points, but also in the feedback they provided on the original transcript. Participants appeared as interested in having their voice heard as I was in recording it accurately, and thus provided thick data.

Credibility is enhanced by the prolonged contact with the participants. Although it peaked at the time of the interview, there was preparation contact to help participants think about the areas it would address. In addition, there was post-interview contact when they were asked to edit the transcript. Furthermore, participants have been kept up to date about the study's progress and will be invited to the thesis defence.

Finally, credibility is provided by the choice of participants. All of them had a vested interest in the resolution of the tension and were the most likely to provide data that reflected the actual situation. Bias would be corrected by listening to both sides.

Ethical Considerations

The university Research Ethics Board approved this study in file # 01-259, Sikkema (Appendix O). In this section I first describe benefits the study might have for various parties, and then the risks associated with participation in the study. With the risks I identify the ways in which I proposed to protect the participants.

Benefits

Home schooler participants can benefit from this study. Articulating their experiences and perspectives for a willing ear gave them a sense that their voice could be heard and taken seriously despite a level of hostility or mistrust in the community. As an agent of JCS (as vice-principal), to which the community believes they should send their children, I envisioned that this willing ear would be very important. This would be jeopardized if people (mistakenly) perceived my intentions to advertise the school to them. As the results of the study are disseminated, there is an implied validation of participants' voices. As members of the faith-community, they also would benefit from suggestions for a renewed common commitment to things that matter most in the life of a Reformed believer, that is, to live in love and harmony with each other, and especially the communal responsibility to help train the youth in the way they should go.

The faith-community itself benefits, as it may become more and better aware of aspects of the home schooling phenomenon, grow towards a better acceptance of families who do it, and possibly join in thinking about ways to incorporate everyone in bringing up the next generation. Dissemination may enhance and renew a commitment to things that matter most, that is, a restored resolve to live in love and harmony with each other in general, but also with regards to education. The community benefits from the desired resolution of the tension, as energies can be spent on more important things. To the extent that the situation described in this study applies to or parallels other communities,

it helps them as well: It has become increasingly clear that the tension described here is not unique to the NPCR community.

The study has implications for leadership in the community. Dissemination of the study may challenge school boards and consistories to consider new ways to build both bridging and bonding social capital in the community and to reconsider the traditions that were built on good principles and values, but that are open to multiple applications. The study offers compelling reasons to redevelop the community's grasp of the communion of saints. This study also has implications for the direction of leadership and vision development, especially regarding community conflict.

The schools stand to benefit from the study, as it may lead to specific suggestions for performing school evaluations. They should pay attention to the prevalence of home schooling in a community, and consider reasons why people choose to home school as one element of gauging where the school could improve. The current focus on the school and its participants excludes certain people in the community. A fresh definition of community, which recognizes and reemphasizes the joint responsibility of all members with regards to the education of the next generation, may also allow for the development of a new partnership between the school, home schoolers, and other community members. The study challenges schools to better meet the needs of all people in its constituency.

My own benefit will consist of reducing my cognitive and spiritual dissonance about conflict in the church, but it also will allow me to gain a deeper understanding of the principles on which Reformed schools were built. I also will gain an understanding of and appreciation for home schooling, which enables me to envision a model in which both the day school and the home school can legitimately collaborate. God is honoured when the members live in true love and harmony with each other.

The scientific community stands to benefit from this study as well. For instance, Arai (2000) has researched why Canadians in Ontario and British Columbia home school, and found that the reasons are different from those in the US. His study does not address how Christian home schoolers are perceived by the surrounding community, especially if they appear to challenge an existing Christian school, or how potential friction may be resolved. This study also provides later researchers with a Reformed perspective on schooling, helps them appreciate why friction occurs on the topic in this community, and presents a principled solution to resolving community conflict.

Risks

This study also carries potential risks. Anonymity of the participants may be hard to maintain in the relatively small researched community. This is important, because, if taken out of the context in which they said things, their comments could be potentially damaging to their reputation in a volatile environment. To reduce the risk, all participants received code names, and the key to the code is hidden. Only people who know them

really well may deduct which name identifies a participant. The tapes used to record the interviews will be destroyed 3 years after completion of this study.

Anonymity of participants or confidentiality of data could not be guaranteed if the participants themselves decided to break it, or if legal obligations required me to disclose some of this material. None of the latter occurred, but some participants have since spoken publicly about their part in the study. Some asked me to give their regards to my wife, which, to protect the participants' confidentiality, I didn't.

The study could pose a risk to the school (and my position) if outcomes were to suggest a radical departure from the established principles and traditions. If I were to conclude without qualifications that home schooling is the only right way to proceed, I might no longer qualify as a suitable teacher in this school, or even want to be one. Going into the study, my premise was that home schooling is not necessarily wrong, and that there are many good things that can be said about it. The study could potentially enhance or change this position. To contain this risk, I maintained contact with the Education Committee of JCS, and shared with them where the study was going. Their response gave me sufficient confidence to publish Sikkema (2003).

Home schooling is more prevalent in two of the NPCR congregations than in the others, and several participants in this study came from those two congregations. To avoid unwittingly going against policies established by their respective church councils on this sensitive issue, considering Reformed church polity, and also as a matter of courtesy, I informed the ministers of these congregations of my activities among "their flocks." One responded, "As long as you do not say home schooling is wrong," and the other actually helped my studies with articles or references of interest.

An additional risk turned up during the analysis of the transcripts. Things were said and commented on in the interviews that portray that this community is not perfect. A malicious person could choose to lift such things out of context and misconstrue them to discredit the community or an individual. Anyone who wants to criticize someone for things presented in this study, does well to do so to the party concerned, and so help it to overcome the error.

Finally, as the findings represent the things that were said in one evening for each of the participants, sometime in October or November of 2002, it might be hazardous to assume their full validity on all points more than a year after they said it. For that reason, they are presented in the past tense.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to analyze the tension that occurs around the rise of home schooling in a community that traditionally supported a Christian day school. It seeks to suggest ways to diffuse, reduce, or eliminate that tension and to restore integrity and unity in the community. It does so on the premise that, for the honour of God, it is more

important for a member of the Body of Christ to “show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity” (Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper, 1995, p. 595) than for all members to choose the same format for educating their children (cf. Van Dam, 2000). Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of the interaction with the participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE HOOK, THE LINE, AND THE SINKER

This chapter first presents general observations about the interviews and the level of agreement among participants. This is followed by three analytical sections: the hook, the line, and the sinker, representing, respectively, what moved people to begin home schooling, what now justifies their choice, and the controversy it raises in the community. Perspectives of home schoolers and school representatives are separated to allow for a more lucid presentation. Throughout, each paragraph first states a response theme, and then provides clarifying examples. The findings for each section are summed up in a table, which helps bring out distinctions that may easily be lost in the main presentation.

For the sake of brevity and legibility, repetitive comments were avoided in this chapter, but summary codes were maintained to allow reference to the full transcripts. If summarized from a consecutive series of comments, only the code for the first quote is given in full, followed by a hyphen and the counter-number for the last comment (e.g., EP4B331-348). In case quotes or summaries were combined from different parts of the interview, the counter codes have been separated by a comma, and include the letter for the side of the tape as needed. Also, series of codes from different participants have been placed in alphabetical order (e.g., BP1A064, B183; DP1A519, 565). If two participants commented in the same section of text, the participant codes were combined with a forward slash (e.g., BP1/2A000). Names of participants were only included for direct quotes. For the sake of legibility, and for the further protection of the participants' anonymity, all codes are given towards the end of the paragraphs.

General Observations

In the interviews, the participants' faith commitment and loyalty is clearly evident. It provides fundamental meaning and direction to their lives, and affects how home schoolers handle stressors and the justification for their choice, and how school representatives defend the school and resist home schooling. Hence, its significance for education is central to an appreciation of the tensions in the NPCR community.

Within each interview, participants had a significant level of agreement. Spouses frequently complemented each other. Participants in Toc, ON, often uttered accord, or hedged criticisms in phrases like "nothing at this table" (EP1B122). Harvey, a home schooler, agreed "100% with the four categories" of reasons to home school proposed by Ivan, a school representative (EP3A173; EP5A111). Yet, after the interview, he qualified this as not "objectively representative" of Toc: "I wouldn't go so far as to say that there is open hostility; there is however a degree of resentment just below the surface."

In the Niagara focus group, participants also frequently expressed agreement, and spontaneously continued to discuss the matter. Marco dissented with the information letter's comment, however, that "home schoolers may not be excluded from the communion of saints." To him, this was suggestive of people taking offense, and he would rather state that they "should not exclude *themselves* from the communion of

saints" (FP3C057). It could not always be determined how many participants actually shared a particular viewpoint, as agreement was not always expressed.

The Hook

All home schooling couples in this study indicated one or more stressors that triggered their consideration of alternative ways to teach their children. Although the stressors and the subsequent decision were always shrouded in other considerations, somehow, each one identified a failure of some sort. Despite the variety of stressors, they all *hooked* onto the home school choice. School representatives identified key considerations, without however clearly distinguishing between reasons for starting and for continuing.

Home Schoolers' Reasons for Starting

Several parents cited their children's physical and emotional problems that made them consider home schooling. This included the school-related health and burn-out problems of one boy: His mother felt that the long bus ride contributed to this, and marked home schooling as a providential solution (BP1/2A000-046). Likewise, Emily explained the stress of long school days on her family (CP1A047):

> So, I would go to work, my other children would go to a baby sitter's. My husband would go to work, and Junior would be off for a big long day, on the school bus. "Bye bye, Junior!" at a quarter after seven in the morning. "Hello Junior!" at four thirty. Run, have supper! He . . . has to go to bed by about seven. (The next morning) we have to start all over. We have no family life left. I don't think that the Lord would approve of that kind of a Christian family lifestyle.

Furthermore, when prompted about the long bus rides, Dean explained (CP2A066),

> It was the extra amount of time from here to the bus stop. We had another twenty minutes just for that drive alone. . . . Again, it took away from the amount of time that we could be teaching all of our children.

Home schoolers also often cited social and behavioural stressors and esteem issues. Emily believed that taunting caused her oldest to become closed and defensive, to no longer feel "comfortable in his own skin," and to have lasting damage to his self-confidence (see also BP2A029; CP1A000, 093, 147-159, B034-037; EP2A145). Valerie found that the school could not meet her child's social needs, and believed that loving security is essential for social upbringing and better left with the parents. As a former teacher, she used to make a point of praying especially to love the children that "got picked on" (EP4A099, B331-348). Jerry (BP1B041) considered social pains as the nature of schools, linking them to the folly of children and the depraved nature of people: "They often tend to go in a downward spiral . . . I think that is a negative thing about our schools." Rebekah's prolonged victimization by bullies made her "shudder to think of sending my children to school" (AP2A043-076). Paula knew others who chose home

schooling for social reasons: “To think of what socialization is, maybe we need to think of home schooling . . . I know of a lot of people who are still in pain because of poor socialization, of things that happened in school” (DP1A519, 565).

Some home schoolers implied disapproval of things done or allowed by teachers. One father found his son’s artistic abilities stifled, and he himself felt demeaned during parent-teacher interviews. Valerie linked one person’s self-image problem to the “teacher who had really encouraged them . . . to work out a lot” (CP2A026, 166; EP4B570). Some concluded that a school must accept certain (behavioural) extremes, that teachers cannot be representative of all parents, that parents do not always understand their tasks correctly, and that kids gravitate towards a lowest common denominator (BP1A162; DP2WR15-18). For instance, Oscar spoke of worldly clothing and images, and unlawful activities on class trips. He was annoyed that his “brother comes home singing songs that the teacher allows kids to play in class during lunch hour. Let’s just say it wasn’t Christian, it wasn’t neutral, and it was in no way up-building” (DP2WR14).

Some home schoolers detailed disagreement with the school’s program or its delivery. One mom felt wronged that she had not learned at school why she was Canadian Reformed (DP1A070), and Rebekah resented that her high school put girls “on a career track” rather than the “important and fulfilling role of motherhood” (AP2B425, 490):

> I was woefully encouraged to follow through my rights, I suppose. . . . So, for years, I felt guilty that I didn’t actually do that. . . . Of course, one attends . . . to get an education–that’s the point of a school–but, seeing that it’s a Reformed Christian institution, girls should not be discouraged from seeing themselves first in the role that God has created them for, that is, helpmeets for their husbands.

Home schoolers tended to minimize or reject financial points as triggers. Rebekah doubted that “people would have a problem with home schooling if we pay the full membership fee,” and Jerry claimed that “finances was not a consideration at all for us” (see also AP2C469; BP1A064-074, B183; DP2WR2). Toc participants called money the “most negative reason,” rejected its validity, or maintained membership in school (EP2/3A016-034, 294; EP4B028). Karen questioned “the quality that children get” when moms need to work outside the home; and a father cited missing family devotions together because both parents must work to pay the school (AP1A302; BP2A571). Emily did depend on the income of an outside full-time job, and regretted the associated effect that family members “became as ships passing in the night” (CP1A047-081).

Some home schoolers linked their initial choice to home school to their faith and conviction. Although Rebekah conceded that the presence of JCS made her initially reject home schooling, Bratcher (1989) helped her see how it can be a “covenantally responsible way to educate” (AP2A017). Paula struggled to choose how to educate her children, but her “burden was lifted” when she sought the Lord’s direction in Scripture and prayer. To her, home schooling was more a matter of a faith response than of dogma, and the charge to teach her own children is something that (DP1A003-54, 223)

> the Lord has placed on our path . . . I feel that my responsibility as a parent is to teach them to the best of my ability, and I have the duty to do that . . . If I cannot do that . . . and cannot honestly before the Lord say, "No, this is not the best way to do it, I had better send them to school," then I should.

School Representatives on Reasons for Starting

School representatives agreed on several reasons they think contribute to the decision to home school. Ivan listed four categories: it is cheaper, it is a reaction to school policy, it is better for the child, and it is better for the family (EP5A111). Niagara participants specified the long bus rides, allergies or other health concerns, and special gifts or talents. With unmistakable gestures, Marco dismissed the suggestion that some do it to save the school space (FP1A026; FP2A050; FP4A128-136; FP5A149, C142).

All school representatives from Toc, ON, as well as Niagara saw money as a reason to home school, but did not accept it as a valid reason. Nate observed the trend that "people who home school immediately remove their monetary support for the school, even of the basic membership," and others added the reduced need to work hard, or for lifestyle changes if they were to pay the school again. Felix stressed the illegitimacy of financial reasons: "We have the (deacons') office in place to address such matters" (EP1A001, C017; EP5A111; FP2A256; FP3A284; FP4B055; FP6A386). Marco thought meeting the financial aspect would render home schooling a non-issue (FP3C442):

> That will eliminate three quarters of the home schooling community. . . . People have financial objectives for their lives, and it is easier not to have to spend that money for education, so they can spend it on something else.

School representatives from both focus groups acknowledged issues people may have had with school policy or staff behaviour. They knew of people who withdrew their children because of a policy decision. One participant allowed that he might have done the same, if he had chosen to dwell on past incidents. However, as many home schoolers never had children in school at all, he wondered whether their negative feelings could stem from festering rumours about unaddressed past incidents. Another agreed that tensions are generated if matters are not dealt with properly: Home schoolers are sometimes treated as second-class Reformed citizens, for instance when they are excluded from church office (EP5A111; FP1A006, FP1B616-81; FP2A050; FP4C094).

Some Niagara school representatives believed that achievement and success are a reason to home school. They noted the home schoolers' potential for scholarly success, and the academic rewards it holds for the parents, in part because of the one-on-one relationship. Barry further cited the "momentum of the movement," but disputed the possibility of continued success (FP1A219; FP2A271, 452; FP4A111; FP5A149, 359).

Most school representatives granted behaviour and socialization advantages of home schooling, noting that children would be shielded from peer pressure. Nate conceded that

"insufficient credence is often given" to positive social outcomes of home schooling, and quoted a home schooler as saying that if "the parents are not disciplining their children well at home, this carries on into the school." One participant suggested that home schoolers should stop if a child suffers academically, or when reasons beyond the parents' control force them to (EP1A266; EP5A111; FP1A006; FP2A050; FP3A085; FP4A136, 331-351; FP5A149; FP6A168; FP7A200).

Table 3 summarizes the reasons for people to home school. As are subsequent tables, this one is designed to bring out the differences between input from Niagara and Toc participants, and topics have been arranged somewhat differently than in the presentation above for flow and emphasis. In the table, if no checkmark is given, it only means that participants in a certain category did not express agreement, or did not imply by synonymous phrases or terminology that they would. Implied agreement or support is based on the whole interview, and may not necessarily find support in the preceding text, which emphasizes the stressors.

The Line

In addition to the stressors, all couples in this study added *lines* of justification to their choice. Throwing in a fishing line is like throwing pebbles in a pond. The summary table at the end of the section shows stronger as well as weaker lines, just like some waves are bigger than others. Home schoolers and school representatives both weighed religious principles, as well as a variety of benefits of home schooling.

Home Schoolers on Principles of Education

Home schoolers wanted to do what they believed the Bible instructs them to. As

Table 3
Reasons to Start Home Schooling[13]

HSs' views		Reasons to start home schooling: The Hook	SRs' views	
N	**T**	**Better for the child**	**N**	**T**
✓✓	✓	Long school days/bus rides, burn-out, and health problems	✓✓	✓
✓✓✓	✓✓	School social and behavioural issues (bullying, peer pressure, socialization)	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Esteem and self-confidence problems	✓	
✓✓		Parent's own bad school experience	✓	
		Better for the family		
✓✓✓	✓	Generally better for the family	✓✓	✓✓
		Rewards of achievement and scholarly success	✓✓	
		Objection to school policy		
✓✓✓	✓	School must accept lower social standard or effect of poor parenting by some families, and student folly	✓✓	✓
✓✓	✓	Objections to teacher behaviour or poor standards	✓	
✓✓		Disappointment with school policy, program, or delivery	✓✓	✓✓
		Festering rumours about past incidents	✓	
		It is cheaper		
✓✓	✓	Financial savings	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Reject or minimize financial considerations	✓✓	✓

[13] ✓ indicates singularly stated or implied support; ✓✓ indicates repeated support; and ✓✓✓ indicates strong support. For Toc, ✓✓ indicates significant support. N = Niagara; T = Toc; HS = Home schoolers; SR = School Representatives.

		Other considerations		
✓✓	✓✓	Home schooling as a matter of faith or conviction		
		Save the school space	✓✓	
✓	✓	If the child suffers, should stop home schooling	✓	✓

Stan put it, home schooling is to take to heart "Scriptural references in the Old Testament about teaching your children," and this "a really good way of doing it." Rebekah (AP1/2A273, 330) agreed that it helps raising a family in line with Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

> Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Many home schoolers believed that the covenant and parents' baptismal vows justify home schooling. One Toc couple explicitly linked this to their decision to home school. Jerry also saw home schooling as a Reformed and covenantal way to educate children, in a way pleasing to God: "It is our way of holding the covenantal promises and obligations." He noted that the church (rather than the school) is *the* covenant community, and that it is not responsible for the education of its children: The parents make the baptismal vow, and the congregation only holds them accountable. Jerry characterized his business as covenantal, "because I'm in the covenant. I am living to the honour and glory of God in my work" (BP1A038, 250-284, 335, 657, B000; EP2/3A471-501).

Home schoolers felt strongly that, in spite of tradition, the school should not claim sole rights to teaching the children of the community. Oscar regretted that, "based on the fact that we have all invested in and believed in our current schools, we discount any other options." Emily further noted that "it doesn't say in the Bible we have to (support the school); we have to raise our children up in the Lord," and Dean explained (CP1A462; CP2A512-553; DP2WR7):

> What I've read has not convinced me, as it was an . . . interpretation of whatever was drawn out of the Bible . . . that you should send your kids to John Calvin School. In my view, this doesn't prove beyond a shadow of doubt that that is what it's saying, other than, just tradition.

Knowing that the tradition of schools is enshrined in church documents like the Church Order, Paula sought appreciation that (DP1A253-266, 311),

> our time is different, (and the) things available to us. . . . It is a Dutch way of thinking that two things can't be right: It has to be one or the other. . . . We're both educating our children, to the glory of God.

Seeing education as a parental task, home schoolers recognized a limited role for the government and the school. They frequently noted that, while Reformed people speak of the triad or triangle of home, church, and school, the Bible speaks of the institutions of family, church, and government. Harvey noted that the government and the public school

cannot “maintain those standards, these doctrinal guidelines with our children that the Lord requires.” Valerie summed up (AP1A436; EP3A526; EP4A636, 691):

> Neither the government nor the Christian schools should dictate to the parents. Nor should schools allow parents to abdicate their responsibilities in raising their children. So, that is why, for me, school is an option, while the family is a permanent law.

School Representatives on Principles of Education

School representatives agreed that education is a divinely ordained parental trust that cannot be delegated, but in which schools can help. Several participants endorsed observations that, unlike the church, the school does not have a direct divine mandate, and that the public school is not undergirded by the fear of the Lord, not part of the triad of home, school, and church, and can therefore not help the parents in this task. Arthur voiced the common sentiment (EP1A412; EP5B044-065; FP2A689-050; FP3B013-048; FP6A168, B135; FP7A200):

> The parental responsibility is first and foremost, and is not in any way absolved when parents send their children to our school. (As parents) we take an active role in the education of our child . . . fundamentally, we see it as our responsibility as parents to educate our children. The school assists, as part of the triangle of home, school, and church. The communion of saints as a whole, not the church, not the elders, but the communion of all the believers does have a responsibility in educating the children.

School representatives dismissed the suggestion that baptismal vows would imply a parental *obligation* to home school, and emphasized the relevance of the community. They maintained that Reformed schools are based on the parents’ baptismal vows. They supported the notion that people want to teach their own children about God’s creation, but emphasized the communal effort and responsibility, and regretted that home schoolers ignore the school. A Niagara participant also pointed out that Article 58 of the Church Order accepts church supervision over the parents’ way of educating their children. Felix summed up the function of the community in which God places people and families, and urged (EP1A412-456; FP2B000-242; FP3B013; FP5B077):

> We must go back to Scripture that we began with (1 Corinthians 12): let us share our schools, let us share our gifts, let us share our talents, let us share our teachers . . . The Lord has not placed us on an island, as a family. . . . Even if we (sinfully) think that we don’t need to help each other, God shows us differently than “to do our own thing.”

School representatives linked home schooling to individualism. Charley saw this individualism make everything personal, centered on “me and Jesus,” and lets the church become secondary. Felix added that the focus on “what am I going to do to make this work,” neglects the Scriptural direction of “how I can do it in service to others?” Tony

observed that, parallel to the “me-generation in the world” and a sentiment that “I want to do it my way,” never mind what the fathers did, there is a “home schooling camp” in the church that can have things others can’t. He deplored that, while “the Lord put each one of us first in the family, then in the church, and then in the world, home schooling skips the church circle.” He wondered how well home schooled children will participate in church, and was baffled that they could participate in school-organized soccer “without doing their part. Aren’t they learning a lack of obedience to the second table of the law?” (FP1A603; FP2C000-038; FP6B431, C199).

Home Schoolers on Benefits

Home schoolers stressed social and other benefits for their families. Karen and Jerry saw intensive interaction generate strong bonding between family members, and so promote teamwork, harmony, and mutual respect. As this is guided by Scripture, they felt that it also protects them from a “downward spiral of folly.” Karen rejoices when she sees her children of all ages play together: “It is not perfect, it really isn’t perfect, but in many ways it is really beautiful.” Another couple cherished that home schooling allows parents and the family to do the social training and be the main influence on the child. Some called it a comfortable and enjoyable lifestyle; and others cherished the opportunity to balance work, play, and school for all family members (AP2A162; BP1/2A223, B041-100; CP1A047-081, 329; EP4A049-99).

Home schoolers felt that the home can set standards and deal with socialization issues much better than the school. They can immediately address or correct bullying issues, disputes, or wrongs, and also provide the academic challenges their children need. Grace believed that the immediacy of interventions “helps them to stand up for their faith in the light of Scripture;” and another mother suggested that the school should not even have to deal with social aspects of raising children (AP1/2A202-218; BP2A125, 184, B062-100; CP1A000-020, 093; DP1A414-430, 546, 607; EP4A080-099, B278-315, 601). However, Paula and Grace agreed with Valerie that “socialization can go both ways”: at home as well as at school, children pick up bad points. Oscar would yet maintain that the school is bad for socialization (DP1A466; DP2WR11; EP2B172-221; EP4B364).

Home schoolers agreed that children need peers to interact and have friendships with. For instance, Paula objected to withdrawing children from the communion of saints before a certain age: “We are all supposed to work together.” Some saw Teen Bible Study as one way to get them to meet peers. Jerry and Karen mentioned their children’s “mostly home schooled Sunday-lunch-hour friends.” They think it is beautiful to see their friends and “school cousins” after they didn’t meet all week. Fewer contacts also lead to less petty squabbling, Jerry believed. Stan and Rebekah, on the other hand, likened children to “greenhouse plants that need to be nurtured before they are put outside.” They let their children play with neighbourhood kids, but not participate in Teen Bible Study before they are 15 or so, “even if this is sometimes read as a retreat from the communion of saints” (AP2A697-B000-035, 093; BP1/2B009-055; DP1A466; EP3A294; EP4B621).

Like Stan and Rebekah, home schoolers found home schooling “more than viable, and more than just education; . . . a great way of life in which to really get to know one’s kids well.” One couple felt blessed beyond expectation: Their children excel academically, and their enthusiasm increases. Home schooling is a good thing, they believed, for the family, for the church, and for society. Dean appreciated being able to cater to each child’s “learning style, pace, and modality,” and Emily was elated that “It’s working for us!” They were assured that home schooled children learn social skills from a wider range of ages and interactions than just their peers. Guides on field trips also find them well behaved. Emily saw the blessings as a confirmation that they were doing the right thing, and Dean added that despite bad days, “there’s never any doubt to continue.” Some stressed the blessing in working together, as part of the spiritual growth of the family and learning the fruits of the Spirit. Rebekah believed that to get “crabby children out of the house,” the school is not the solution. Valerie found that home schooling is a “more family-oriented and perhaps more God-centered” way of teaching and learning than school, as the parents themselves can shield their children and be responsible for their education and interactions (AP1/2A109, 192-202, 358-373; BP1/2A109-184, B331; CP1/2A130-198, 512-553, B037; DP2WR2-11; EP4B331-348, 553-570, 601-621).

While some mothers rejected the advantages as incentives, home schoolers found that it gives themselves and their family a sense of control, purpose, responsibility, joy, and blessing beyond what the school may provide. Paula liked the control she has over what the children are confronted with, and carries on enthusiastically, calling it “huge, frustrating, and joyful.” Others spoke of the momentum and stimulation it gives, and saw fruits and rewards for the whole family. Rebekah further noted that home schooled children are not “stigmatized for needing remedial.” Seeking a balance, and pondering the challenges of home schooling, Valerie granted that “you are facing a lot of *different* difficulties when you send them to school,” but maintained that home schooling avoids the tension that may exist between parents and teachers through lack of communication (AP2A103, 137; BP2A046-125; CP1A218; DP1A125, 173, 607; EP2/3A016-34, 281-292; EP4A064, 352).

School Representatives on Benefits

School representatives valued the intended or arising opportunities the school offers in socialization. They defined this as teaching and learning respect and love for and consideration of others, and believed that school is a better place for it than a home school. While Marco and Barry saw the school’s social aspects as a “big part of teaching the children at school,” exposing them to different ideas, Felix saw them as a “beautiful secondary by-product,” which would take a special effort of home schools. Ivan rejected that the school should be criticized for undesired social interaction among the kids: “They get that all over the place,” and delighted in the school’s opportunities to explore issues together in the light of Scripture, that helps children “to open their minds to what others have to say.” He feared home schooling might make loners of some children. Others noted that the school setting forces children to learn from a much wider range of

(in)abilities and talents than the family can replicate, and underlined the school's "social effect" in preventing individualism and cliquishness. Tony doubted home schooling can prepare children as well for future church roles as the school. Some cautioned that the school must channel its many social interactions in close cooperation with the parents (EP1B122-063; EP5B065-465-527; FP1B211; FP2B242; FP3B277-306; FP4B525; FP5B395-402; FP6B431). Marco and Tony figured that some home schoolers' reference to the "foolishness in man's heart" (cf. Proverbs 12:23) to portray the inadequacy of the school for good socialization, actually suggests a lack of understanding that learning to deal with conflict situations starts at a young age (FP3B277, 306):

> They must face differences and learn . . . how to come to reconciliation according to Matthew 18. . . . They must learn what it means to love one another, and so it has very much to do with what you understand by the communion of saints. . . . To relate to others, . . . how to have consideration for others, . . . is something children begin to learn in the school setting. . . . It is not learned like that in home schooling.

School representatives acknowledged but critically questioned benefits that motivate home schoolers. Some granted that home schooling parents have more time with and influence on their children; Tony cited the "nostalgia of the Little House on the Prairie Syndrome;" and Ivan observed that families often see it as "the best way for them," to enjoy educating their children (FP3A085; FP4A111; FP6A168; EP5A111). Others noted that home schoolers are quite successful at raising their children, but also pointed out that not all parents have the gifts or talents to do it. Instead of strong bonding, what would happen if parents and children do not click? Besides the delight for those who can home school, some sensed an interest that could shift to a dangerous and elitist parental pride in the academic accomplishments of their children (FP2A243, 271; FP3A284; FP5A359; FP6A386). Finally, underlining their success, Felix notes that home schoolers are not typical of the school spectrum (FP2A452):

> There is a far greater one-on-one relationship; you have a more motivated group of people; . . . you have a group that is very able to do home schooling; you have kids that are, let's say, higher than average.

Charley figured that some people may continue because (FP1A219),

> They become more and more afraid . . . to go to school, because they become somewhat alienated about it, and from their peers as well. . . . They do not want to be seen as failing: . . . they've dug in their heels, and continue.

Table 4 summarizes the justifications given for home schooling in view of the school. Many points that home schoolers brought in as justification were acknowledged by school representatives, although their understanding diverged on certain points. The table is designed to bring out the differences between input from Niagara and Toc participants, and topics are arranged to enhance flow and emphasis.

Table 4
Justifications for Home Schooling[14]

HSs' views		Justifications to home school: The Line	SRs' views	
N	**T**	**Principle justifications**	**N**	**T**
✓✓✓	✓	Biblical principles should be taken to heart	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓	The covenant and parents' baptismal vows justify home schooling		
✓	✓	Baptismal vows do not imply an obligation to home school	✓✓	✓
✓✓	✓	Parents may not abdicate their responsibilities	✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓	The government / public school cannot meet Reformed standards	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓	The school may not claim sole rights to educating the children		
✓✓✓	✓✓	The school has no direct divine mandate, but an assisting role	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	The whole communion of saints has an educational responsibility	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓	✓	Gifts and talents should be shared; families are not an island	✓✓	✓
		Practical justifications		
✓✓		It is good for the church, or saves the school money		
✓✓	✓✓	It is good for the family	✓✓	✓
✓✓✓	✓✓	It has social and spiritual benefits	✓	
✓✓✓	✓✓	It has pedagogical and emotional benefits	✓✓	
✓✓	✓	It fosters learning; avoids academic stigmatization	✓	
✓✓✓	✓✓	It is enjoyable, stimulating, and balanced lifestyle	✓	✓
✓✓	✓✓	It gives momentum, joy, purpose, and blessing		
		Other considerations		
✓	✓		✓	✓

[14] ✓ indicates singularly stated or implied support; ✓✓ indicates repeated support; and ✓✓✓ indicates strong support. For Toc, ✓✓ indicates significant support. N = Niagara; T = Toc; HS = Home schoolers; SR = School Representatives.

		Both at home and at school children can pick up bad things		
✓✓	✓✓	Children need peers for social interaction and friendships	✓✓	✓✓
✓	✓	Home schooling places individual and family before church	✓✓✓	✓
		The school is a better place to learn socialization / reconciliation	✓✓✓	✓✓
		Home schoolers' pride / alienation prevents return to school	✓✓	

The Sinker

This section describes the four broad areas of tension that emerged from the controversy: philosophical issues; school and church; financial issues; and offenses and stigmatization. The summary table at the end of the section depicts that Toc experiences little tension. It also reveals the intensity of the tension in the NPCR community. Indeed, it appears that home schoolers and school representatives were each throwing their own pebbles in the pond, making their own waves, getting nowhere, and *sinking*.

Home Schoolers on Philosophical Issues

Home schoolers saw thoughtless adherence to tradition or ungrounded opposition to home schooling as building tension. "We should just send our kids to school, that's their solution," Stan found, and Oscar held that "it is presumptuous and even dangerously arrogant" to think that schools are always the best: "Parents have a duty to investigate alternatives in Christian education and decide what they should do." Several participants granted that it took much sacrifice to establish the school, and that they appear to threaten the work of the older generation, but Dean and Emily challenged the implication: "We are only guilty of breaking a tradition?" One mother observed that reverting to tradition is easier than handling change: It requires less thinking, studying, and finding the whys of things. Karen also found that people hide behind others "who have a big problem with home schooling," and Stan elaborated (AP1B370-575, 634; BP2B313; CP1/2A282-317, 443, B245; DP1A641-663 DP2WR19):

> So, you get a group that are really opposed to it, there's maybe four or five families in that group, but they kind of lead the others along with them. If you talk to . . . the ones that are not totally opposed to it, one-on-one, you usually can have quite a good conversation with them. If you talk to the ones who are totally opposed to it, they won't let you get in a word edgewise.

Some home schoolers sensed a fear of the rise of home schooling. One mother felt that a social or ideological norm that children ought to go to school plays a role, or an ungrounded fear that the home schooling trickle could become a mass exodus. However, she would be "scared" if that was due to her encouragement. Paula felt discussing home

schooling would expose people's ignorance and so generate fear, and exclaimed (DP1B068, 214, 267; EP4C140-185, C332):

> But if we strongly believe that we are here to help each other . . . then we should be able to meet . . . and say, "Why are you doing this, it is quite offensive to me, it really hurts me, can we talk this out?" It doesn't happen. Something, something is creating that fear. . . . Is it that they're afraid that there might be something in it? We don't have to be defensive about what we're doing, do we?

School Representatives on Philosophical Issues

School representatives recognized personal as well as communal tensions around the school, and blamed the tensions on different understandings of the parental task, disagreement with the school, or attributing negative thoughts about the school to home schoolers. One participant noted that some people, with too limited a recognition of the primacy of the parental role, would bar all home schooling. Marco grieved that home schoolers withdraw from the hard labour for and God's blessings in JCS, and "create tension themselves." Lorenzo implied that division is generated when home schooling is preached as an "acceptable and viable alternative." Charley saw home schooling as a "temporary solution" for "extenuating circumstances" like health or special needs only, while the standard call is to work together in education" (EP1C000-017; FP1A584, 624; FP3B013-048, C057, 082; FP7B162-175):

> We should strive to constantly work together as a communion of saints to provide an education for the youth of the covenant. . . . Home schooling deprives parents of one of the beauties of the communion of saints, and that is to teach their children how it works in a school setting. The fact is that they can use their talents for the mutual benefit of each other, that they don't use them for their own selfish reasons. As the body of Christ . . . the individual members cannot say to each other, "I have no need of you."

Home Schoolers on School and Church

Several home schoolers expressed concern that the school is made to be too much like the church, or, with Paula, as "just a little bit under the church." She linked this to undue emphasis on "the triangle of home, church, and school . . . to support the school, even though the Bible gives the responsibility (to raise the children) squarely to the parents." While recognizing that the school does promote a sense of community, Jerry also asserted that the church is *the* covenant community: Church and school must be separate, even if 99 or 100% of school members are from the church. He felt that the schools have become too much extensions of the church, and that not sending children to the school is not the same as dividing the church, or "withdrawal of positive influence" (BP1A250-296, 358, 657, B000-236; DP1A366, B104; EP2C053):

> The biggest mistake (the board) made, (was) identifying the church with the school. I think that is what the tension was all about. . . . We are indeed responsible, probably

> for each other's children, but for each other as well. It doesn't start with baptism, it doesn't start with education. . . . All of life is covenantal: Education doesn't, or ought not to, have the edge here.

Another father wondered whether or not teaching is an ecclesiastical office: If the school is on par with the church, teaching might be an office, and, as a withdrawal from divinely ordained authority, this would exclude home schooling as an option (AP1A389-463).

Some home schoolers blamed the PTA and the school board for the tension. Jerry grieved that the spring of 2002 brought back the initial tensions, along with the emotions, the jealousy, and the misconceptions about finances and being too good for JCS. He felt that "the problem is that it is all related to that JCS paper" (Appendix A). He defended Rockway Council's response (Appendix B) to the Board's paper as "an instruction to the congregation, as the Board had overstepped its limits by identifying church and school too much." Earlier, Karen and Jerry had chosen not to attend a PTA meeting about home schooling, because they felt that the PTA had "intentionally chosen this speaker" (viz., Agema, 2001). Oscar remembered that the title, timing, person, topic, and "blatant misinformation" of that speech had made him angry, and Paula fretted that "ministers' speeches are taken for gospel truth, even if they do not present a complete picture." Jerry believed that the school board hoped that people would reject home schooling (BP1/2B116, 183, 203-267, 323, 370; DP1/2B290, WR15-18) :

> I think that is one of the things that the school probably hoped for. . . . That's when we started to hear a lot of tension going around here again, and we hadn't sensed that for quite a few years actually. But after that speech, it became more of an issue. . . . I think that a lot of good has been undone, and the tension grew, . . . and then the school board tried to clarify, I suppose, what their position was on home schooling.

School Representatives on School and Church

In line with Charley, school representatives believed that the home schoolers' choice causes both the church and the school to miss out on their talents, and some people to get overburdened. Deploring the loss of their enthusiasm and school membership, they felt that Christian sacrificing for each other also subsided, and appealed to able home schoolers to share gifts, talents, schools, input, and teachers again within the communion of saints, also on the Board and education committee. Arthur was convinced, and others would agree, that home schoolers who teach well ("at any grade level") could benefit the whole community and the quality of the school. In the given situation, school representatives believed that the Scriptural call to each person in the body implies a call to support the school as a gift of God, in which the community role in education is manifested concretely. Lorenzo believed that many home schoolers would actually still be involved in the education of their children. He also noted overload among the few that are left to do the work in the church and the school (EP1C036; EP5C343-368; FP2A689-B000, C019; FP4B055; FP5A359; FP6B124-135; FP7A417, C258):

> Some of the churches will not permit home schoolers to become office bearers, which creates more and more burden on the school supporters with too many duties. So you have a very small group in the church community who are on the school board, or on the promotion committee, or an elder, and they must perform all the volunteer work associated in operating the church and the schools.

Some school representatives grieved that certain church leaders seem to avoid the controversy. One noted the dwindled public support for Reformed education and was troubled by the leaders' avoidance of strife and struggle. Ministers and consistories give but "generic support for the schools," Tony found. He believed that home schooling is but a preference of certain people, not a principle: "If it was a principle, then I think that we all who sit around this table are sinning." Lorenzo agreed that the right or wrong of home schooling needs to be addressed, and felt that it should be discouraged "in congregations where it does not exist" (FP2A652; FP6B103-35, C199-233; FP7B162-175).

School representatives noted a weakening of the church community as a result of home schooling. Marco viewed the "the organization of home schoolers as a para-church organization, a communion of saints in itself," and believed that the individualistic and selfish home school movement "avoids the need for reconciliation" by doing things for their own benefit only. Others agreed that home schoolers avoid conflict, and felt that their search for support from and belonging in multidenominational associations may lead away from confessional unity in the church. In that vein, Lorenzo spoke of home schooling as generating a "satanic division in the church" (FP2A689; FP3A480-541; FP4A513-B562; FP7A417).

Home Schoolers and Financial Issues

Some home schoolers stressed that home schooling does not imply withdrawal from the communion of saints. They would still support the school financially, join in worship, and be an office bearer in the church. Implications of transgressing the community's educational bounds troubled Paula (DP1A223-B068-082; EP3A557):

> It is almost cultic in a way. . . . It's like a vacuum, it is difficult to pull out of, and you feel the tension because it pulls you. What do we confess about the communion of saints? That it is the church, end of story. You *are* the communion of saints, you have no choice. . . . I don't want to withdraw myself and go into my own little community!

To home schoolers, supporting the school did not have to imply sending one's children. Jerry, who had "supported Reformed education almost all of my adult life," bemoaned that not sending his children to the school apparently implies withdrawal of financial support, while other ways of support are overlooked. Oscar explained, "The way our society thinks is that if you don't send your kids, you don't support it." Several parents spurned the soundness of sending one's children to school "just to make it more financially viable," especially if home schooling is "more socially and academically viable," or sensed jealousy when home schoolers have more money to spend. Paula

"totally understood the tensions," and a father noticed that emotions get heated when people focus on finances. Oscar summed it up: "The general consensus is that it is 'unfair.' 'We pay so much for so long, how come you don't?' This is where the resentment comes in as well" (AP1/2A652, B261-280; BP1/2A296-358, 657-B000, 175; CP2A329; DP1/2A687, WR2, 13; EP4B028).

Home schoolers recognized and responded to this resentment. One father knew that tensions would arise because people resent that "the school can't be better because of them." Others had been told that their choice forced others to work extra, but countered that home schooling saves the school a teacher, a bus, and money for new facilities. Paula gladly helped the school with fund-raisers, prayer, and in person: "the school has to run, and to be a good school it needs financial help," but added that home schooling also costs money. She agreed that people's focus is off when they will miss a church payment before a school fee, and, warning against idolizing the school, stressed that "the bottom line is how our emotional and financial decisions are in relation to what God asks of us." Suggesting that giving may be a burden, one father wondered what the standard fee would be for being a Reformed person, including payments for the schools, the church, and so on. Another mother pointed out that the school depends on the blessing of the Lord: If He decides to bless it, it will be blessed (AP1/2A568-633, B211-245; BP1/2A296, 434, 475-530, 595, B183; CP1A347; DP1A044-193,700-B017-100; EP3C076-082).

Home schoolers defended their support for other good causes. One couple rejected being suspect as a Christian for not supporting the school, as though it is an absolute must. While the church is purely tithe, they observed, the school offers a *service* for a fee, which only a user should feel obliged to pay. Dean and Emily believed in mutual support, also for JCS, but would feel no guilt if they could not help the school: you "can't milk a dry cow; so long as we stand before the Lord in this." Paula also believed that supporting the school should be a conscious choice of duty before the Lord, without coercion. Oscar summarized his personal sentiments much more forcefully than others (BP1/2A074, 496-530, 620; CP1/2A364-462, 512; DP1/2A342, B000-017, WR13):

> There are many things to which we may donate money . . . Anchor, Mission, various schools, etc. that are REALLY stuck for cash, and are not putting up a gym on the one hand and begging for money on the other; . . . . Then there are all the local and distant charities, which in many cases have a far greater legitimacy and urgency than our school will ever have. . . . God has also made it abundantly clear that gifts must be given from the heart.

School Representatives on Financial Issues

School representatives recognized the tension around finances. Toc participants agreed that people leave the school for financial reasons, which contributes to the tension. Ivan related his class's debate about Proverbs 3:9, and how difficult it is to "convert one's

wallet." Tony knew that it is "very expensive to support the school . . . and home schoolers don't have that expense." Nate shared that home schoolers responded to the position paper (Appendix A) that they *do* fervently support the school with prayer and at Winterfest, but qualified that as the easy way to do it. Marco noted that people who "work their butts off" to pay tuition, are offended when home schoolers claim that their choice does not affect the communion of saints: They could still be members or donors to avoid becoming stumbling blocks. In the end, they, too, must answer to God (EP1C017, EP5B480, C343; FP3C442; FP4C094-110-032; FP6C191-199).

Home Schoolers on Offenses and Stigmatization

Home schoolers noted the unintended offense their choice gives. Despite attempts not to antagonize people, Karen and Jerry's decision to home school was interpreted as a confrontation and people gave them "a cold shoulder." Stan and Rebekah could have a "rational, frank, and tolerant dialogue" about home schooling with some people; but others were offended by their rejection of the parents' sacrifice, or when she said that "most mothers can home school when it is done prayerfully." Even keeping their children from Teen Bible Study had offended, and she concluded, "There are times when you are going to offend simply because of how you have chosen to raise your kids." She grieved that, while they agree on most things, "Saviour . . . church . . . and doctrine," disparity about education led to a charge of "not participating in church life. What they actually mean is that we are not participating in school life, because we definitely participate in church life." Some people had been surprised that "snobby home school kids" do get along with others, or quite naturally establish friendships. Stan would like to see Scriptural proof that this is wrong. Rebekah figured that some parents perhaps regret that home schooled children do not socialize with theirs (AP1/2B021-068, 211, 261-280, 308-412, 634-695; BP1/2A315, 408-448, B116, 284, 422, 463).

Indeed, home schoolers felt frequently stigmatized with assumed implications of their choice. People had labeled them as isolationists or claiming superiority, as holding that everyone should do it, or that the school is not good enough. Dean and Emily noticed that other children shun theirs sometimes, when they say, "No use to go with him, he's home schooled." Karen and Jerry granted that they inadvertently may have suggested "having the edge," but added that "the dynamics of this impression gives people a guilt complex." They knew one person who was opposed to home schooling "because it made her jealous." Dean affirmed that they "certainly do not home school because it is, or makes anyone better." To the accusation that the school is not good enough for them, Emily blurted out, without completing her sentence (AP2B400-412; BP2B132-154; CP1/2A282-317, B008-102; DP1A242, 301-355):

> But what a misconception! How can a home schooler call himself a Christian if that is why they home school! I mean, that's ridiculous! How could they get that in their. . . .

Table 5 summarizes the issues that generate tension in the community. The table

illustrates the differences between Niagara and Toc participants. Topics have been arranged differently than in the presentation above for flow and emphasis.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the tension around home schooling by giving voice to both home schoolers and school representatives. Although school representatives recognized most of the reasons home schoolers had for their choice, they often failed to differentiate between reasons for starting and for continuing. While home schoolers often cited social, psychological, pedagogical, policy, program, personal, and personnel stressors as triggers, school representatives tended to think more of *benefits* as triggers. Especially in Niagara, school representatives would seek to re-incorporate home schoolers.

People agreed that the public schools do not meet the standard required for covenantal education, which views God's Word, the covenant, the family, and the parents' baptismal vows as principle elements. However, they diverged on the application of these principles, and the respective roles of the family and the community. Home schoolers cherished the benefits of their choice for their children, themselves, and their families. They stressed the family before the church and the school, and the community

Table 5
Issues that Generate Tension[15]

HSs' views		Issues that generate tension: The Sinker	SRs' views	
N	**T**	**Emotions and Offenses**	**N**	**T**
✓✓✓	✓	Thoughtless opposition and adherence to tradition		
✓✓✓	✓	People hide behind others, too afraid to broach the topic		
✓✓✓	✓	Home schooling seen as a serious threat to, or as negative about school	✓✓	
✓✓✓	✓	Unfairness in financial advantage evokes emotions and resentment	✓	✓
✓✓✓	✓	The school claims home schoolers' money and support		
		The school is expensive, and home schoolers offend by being aloof to the effect of non-support for the communion of saints	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓		People are offended by defences or justifications of home schooling and home schoolers' parenting choices		
✓✓✓	✓	Home schoolers unfairly treated as isolationist, elitist, generating guilt		
		Unmet or overstated expectations		
✓✓✓		Church, not school is covenant community		
✓		Withdrawal from the blessings and the calling to share talents in JCS	✓✓✓	
✓✓✓	✓✓	Perceived implications of (not) sending children and support		
		Home schooler support in prayer and Winterfest Bazaar is easy	✓	
✓✓		School may be too large, or stress finances too much	✓	
		Actions (or lack thereof)		
✓✓✓		PTA and Board tried to persuade people to reject home schooling		
		Home schoolers' joining of para-church-like organization and avoidance of reconciliation about differences divisive, weakens unity	✓✓✓	

[15] ✓ indicates singularly stated or implied support; ✓✓ indicates repeated support; and ✓✓✓ indicates strong support. For Toc, ✓✓ indicates significant support. N = Niagara; T = Toc; HS = Home schoolers; SR = School Representatives.

	Exclusion of home schoolers from church office leaves others stressed	✓	✓
	Church leadership avoids dealing with controversy or calls home schooling an acceptable and viable alternative	✓✓	
✓✓✓	Home schoolers conscientiously support causes others can't		

before the school: it is strong families that build strong churches and strong schools.

School representatives kept the Reformed tradition, and stressed the importance of the community as covenant context: God's people should help each other, and the schools were established for that purpose. They saw a trend of individualism in home schooling, and a withdrawal from communal responsibility. They wished that the church leadership would more strongly address this. They also held that necessary social skills are best learned in a school setting, and relativized some of the benefits home schoolers claim.

In addition to a different interpretation of the principles and the relative position of home, church, and school, emotions and expectation colour the context. Participants spoke of jealousy, resentment, frustration, anger, offense, grief, irritation, fear, and disappointment. They tended to speak about, rather than with each other, stigmatize, jump to conclusions, make assumptions and attributions, offend, and be offended. While home schoolers resented the demands the school sometimes makes on their money, they were more willing to help than school representatives noticed. They felt that tradition and fear of change also contributes to the tension, or blamed the Board and the PTA.

School representatives were concerned that the school and church are weakened by home schooling, as not all talents are used for building up the church, and some people get overburdened. While both sides presented moderate and conciliatory voices, tension and mistrust prevailed. Chapter 6 presents the suggestions they nonetheless had to offer for a solution.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CATCH

This chapter presents both sides' views on how the tensions might be resolved. Despite having much in common, there remained resistance and a *catch* to resolution. The chapter is subdivided under four themes: perceived principles of orthodoxy and conduct, application of these principles through educative action, consideration for time, and remaining resistance. As in chapter 5, home schoolers' ideas will be presented first.

Principles of Orthodoxy and Conduct

Home schoolers and school representatives agreed that it is necessary to go back to Scripture as the basis for orthodoxy, and to regain unity and harmony. Somewhat reminiscent of Sande (1997), four key principles emerged: Go back to Scripture; Show him his fault; A man must examine himself; and Care for one another.

Go Back to Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Home schoolers believed that a good understanding of God's Word should be the key to defining orthodoxy. Paula urged people to abandon tunnel vision, and to listen to God, like Paul did: "We must do what is right before the Lord . . . . If the unity in the church is to be in Christ, . . . we must come back to what God wants. Go back to the Old Testament!" Others agreed that the light of "God's Word, our guide" lets people see what is good: Orthodoxy is not defined by membership in JCS, but by one's relation to Christ and upholding the confessions. Stan accepted the confession as orthodox, and refuted the common argument that "the schools must be maintained" with the (debatable: Ursinus, 1616/1852, p. 570) claim that the *Heidelberg Catechism* refers to theological schools in the French [*sic*] original. Emily maintained that, "We can't say, JCS is sacred: God's Word is sacred" (AP1/2C397-441; CP1B122, 245; DP1B290, 367-409, 447, 493).

Some home schoolers submitted that reason, or arguments based on Scripture, are better than emotional and traditional ones. Rebekah asserted, "We are supposed to base our arguments on reason, and realize that emotions may not be legitimate." She believed that, unless the legitimacy of an argument is "controlled by the mind, from above" and not based on emotion, the tension will not go away. Emily agreed that an intellectual approach would help to resolve things (AP2C105-156; CP1A304-317, 443):

> I think if you let your emotions take the back burner for a while . . . that you are able to see things more clearly . . . and respond more intellectually . . . because it also says in the Bible that you're not allowed to let your anger rule you.[16]

School representatives also cited Scripture as the source and basis of orthodoxy, and as normative for all of life, including Reformed education. Felix and others agreed that it is necessary "to study (the issue) with the Word of God," on which Reformed schools and

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[16] See also Genesis 4:6, Proverbs 15:1, 29:11; 30:33; Ephesians 4:26; James 1:20.

their education are based. Nate emphasized that this instruction should focus on “building the walls of Zion, which is that whole congregation,” and concluded:

> What we hear from the pulpit, what is taught from Scripture and confessions, that is what molds our lives, where we are taught and instructed and strengthened, and then to be sent out to do our daily tasks.

Arthur, from Toc, ON, also accepted the Bible as the norm and standard for deciding right and wrong, but would seek reconciliation and “cannot see (forbidding home schooling) Biblically justified; therefore it is a legitimate choice for parents to make” (EP1C386; FP2C413; FP4C688; FP6D063, 076).

Show Him His Fault (Matthew 18:15)

Home schoolers acknowledged that they should seek out their adversaries, rather than aggravate them. They knew they should be living and considerate church members, and avoid being arrogant, divisive, or provocative. Against accusations of their self-exclusion in church, Stan and Rebekah asserted that they are not at all “trying to separate ourselves from the other side.” Rebekah knew she should listen to others to understand them, and not ignore the tension, or treat it as illegitimate: “There are times when we are aware of this sort of things, like things said behind our back, we just pretend it’s not there, and then we should confront this” (AP1/2C042-200; BP1/2B248-297).

Several home schoolers wanted to consciously address the issues with the other side. Aware of the negative impact of appearing cliquish and socializing with like-minded people at the exclusion of others, Grace, from Toc, ON, reflected:

> I take it to heart, and I’ve also then been . . . mixing with people to the exclusion of the home schoolers. . . . I don’t artificially avoid home schoolers, but I make more of an effort to speak to others than I might have (otherwise).

Similarly, Rebekah occasionally made a point of stepping out of her “comfort circle” to connect with the others at church. Paula invited discussing home schooling as well, as she grieved that people never talked with her about it (AP2C239; DP1B200; EP2C053-068):

> Nobody, nobody has asked me the questions you have asked; nobody has asked why we home school; nobody has come to my door, and said, Paula, what you are doing seems to be against the schools. . . . If it’s such a negative thing, come to my door and talk to me!

School representatives repeated the call to address conflict and tension with the parties involved. Arthur believed that talking with the home schoolers is important, and indicated the hazard of avoidance of issues: It could also teach children to avoid conflict, and be “a dangerous precedent for the church.” Felix stressed that church and school leadership must work together with home schoolers to get everybody to work together: “We need everyone within the church. . . . We need everyone’s support, and home

schoolers . . . *nobody* should be shunned." Another added that all church members must admonish each other in line with Matthew 18: It is not just a matter for the leadership. Tony agreed (FP1C305-334, 351; FP2C413; FP6D063; FP7D132):

> I think as brothers and sisters who have the opportunity. . . (and we don't always talk with them, or may even avoid it. . . . I recognize my shortcomings in that. . .) but I say that we *should* sit down with an open Bible and discuss it with them.

A Man Must Examine Himself (1 Corinthians 11:28)

Home schoolers acknowledged that Scripture calls for self-examination. Harvey spoke of "examining the motives of our own hearts, and whether our relationship is right before the Lord." Rebekah stressed that self-examination is important when emotions are associated with a personal offense: They may not be legitimate and must be "beaten back in the light of Scripture." Oscar and Paula linked self-examination to one's priorities and mutual and reciprocal obligations in the communion of saints (AP2C095-105, 200; DP1/2B032-133, WR19; EP3C475):

> Why do we send our children to JCS? Perhaps we should question our feelings, emotions, blessings. How is what we want related to what God asks of us? . . . People need to make choices again about why they do things: What does the Lord want? We should do this together. . . . I'd love my child to be in the JCS Christmas Concert. . . . We're not against each other. . . . I could help playing my instrument. We should use our talents where we have them.

School representatives implied the need for self-examination. They recognized the call for excellence in the school, and the ongoing need to improve. Tony voiced the requirement for and benefit of dealing with problems (FP6D047-063):

> If we don't, we give home schoolers ammunition about the lack in our efforts. So, for this school, and this education, it is based on Scripture. . . . Let's improve on that, and some of the critique will break down.

Care For One Another (1 Corinthians 12:25)

Home schoolers maintained the relevance of the school. Valerie held that "it would be a problem if there was no school," and Harvey called "structured schools hugely important." Stan believed that "most home schoolers have no issue with parents sending their children to the school" (AP1B141; EP3A580; EP4A659).

Some home schoolers recognized the call for cooperation in and responsibility for educating the community's next generation. Rebekah observed (AP1/2C397-441):

> We should help each other give our kids an education, but that doesn't have to be exclusively Christian day schools. . . . So when you're talking about the community aspect, we all have a responsibility to help each other as parents, but that doesn't mean that I have to teach your child, or that you have to teach mine.

Home schoolers longed for unity, freedom of educational diversity, and respect in the community. They believed that the communion of saints means to be involved in the church, not just in the school, and suggested that people, including children, need and must work together and support each other. Appreciating the call for cooperation and respect, one father yet preferred to keep his personal freedom to make educational choices. Rebekah held that

> It would be nice if we could all get along, and support each other in our educational endeavours, by supporting the parents in their educational endeavours, and not necessarily only the schools.

Karen exclaimed that "it would be a wonderful thing, diversity in educational approaches," which would see the school actually support home schoolers, and make its facilities and programs available to them (AP2C441; BP1/2B400, 463-578, 627, 674; CP1A243; EP2B172-221; EP4A375, B364-381, 448, C122-131, 276).

Home schoolers from Toc, ON, suggested that being right before the Lord, and sensitive, inclusive, mutually respectful, and helpful actions would help resolve tension. They advised people to pray for the teachers, the principal, the students, and the board, and believed that invitations to school programs and an effort from both sides to talk to each other would help to break down barriers and eliminate problems. In line with 1 Corinthians 12, Harvey would urge all to "roll up their sleeves together," as it sends the message that "they are supporting the school." People should make an effort to speak with each other to break down barriers, and he found that (EP2/3C102-119, 475-526),

> when our relationship is right before the Lord, everything else falls into place. . . . I think that anything that we can do to move away from that (*us vs. them*) scenario is a positive move.

Valerie agreed: "You have to make sure that you don't leave anybody out." She believed that there must be a willingness to understand each other, before invitations to cooperate will take effect, and that the community must stand behind the school on this. To her, respect for each other, a positive attitude, love, open communication, and informal involvement in the community would help tensions to disappear over time: "I know that a lot of people disagree with home schooling, but I think it doesn't have to dampen our friendships and the communion of saints" (EP4C192-281, 533, 570).

Some home schoolers suggested what to do (and what not to do) to promote the school and reconciliation. Grace suggested that home schoolers should "avoid being cliquish," and not speak negatively about the school. Valerie advised strongly against recruiting people to home school, and even discouraged particular people from starting if they had the "wrong motivation or status in the community." A positive attitude from people who disagree with home schooling also prevented a lot of trouble in Toc. Paula suggested that the school's new gym be paid for by all: It would generate acceptance, and show that home schoolers are not against the school. She saw her role in the communion of saints as emotionally, financially, and spiritually reciprocal, and the unity as one that should be

primarily spiritual in nature. She liked the freedom to choose the charitable organizations she will support, but would also love to help in the school (DP1A700-B017, 104, 150-200, 316-333, 396; EP2C053; EP4C122-131, 260-268, 319-332):

> I can offer my time, my energy, and things I like to do. . . . (I long for the day) that we can work together, not against each other, on a parallel level, to remember the goal that our children are obedient to the Lord and glorify Him.

Some home schoolers suggested specific ways to help the school or families with finances. Stan and Rebekah suggested initial relief for struggling families from relatives and deacons, and pictured the creation of a Christian Education Fund supported by collections, fund-raisers, and donations. This would better help alleviate the strain on them than giving it straight to the school, and allow the deacons to focus on other things. Stan figured that virtually the whole community should and would contribute. He hoped that "there are some people who are going to say, 'Good job, just keep it up, thank you very much, . . . you're doing what you're supposed to do.'" Another has paid business bills with Canadian Tire vouchers, which also help the school. Furthermore, Harvey suggested that (AP1/2C276-306, 469; EP3C500; EP4C287-302):

> You don't have to have a full membership to be a supporter of the school. You can be a donor. That donation can be as little as. . . $50 a month? $20 a month? But in doing so, you are saying through the finance board, which eventually trickles down to the Board: These people are supporting the school.

Home schoolers also thought of other ways to help the school or the communion of saints in general, and to make it flourish. They suggested to build mutual respect by resisting criticizing or condemning the school, to assist with school cleaning, to help in "an academic capacity," to remember it in prayer, to participate in school activities, or to become a teacher when finished home schooling. One mom envisioned that help could be given through the church, in personal, practical, and financial ways. Valerie learned that home schoolers' involvement in the community helped allay fears and rejection, and if the school invites them to participate in assemblies and programs, the tensions would disappear as well. However, she stressed that there must first be a tone of acceptance in the community, without controversy (AP1/2A633, B460; BP1B183; CP2A652; DP1A193, 488-519, B044, 133; EP2/3C437-500; EP4B008-015, C287-302, 553-581):

> I have known home schoolers since they started in your area, and they were rejected. They tried to stay involved . . . and basically were told that they were not wanted here, whether it was by the principal, or by the teacher of the class that they found themselves involved with.

School representatives from Toc agreed that the school and the community can be and should be of mutual assistance. Their suggestions included that the school itself could offer material for home schoolers to use, or work together with them on certain projects; home schoolers could pray for the school, volunteer for it, speak positively about it, and lend financial support; furthermore, the church should actively support both in prayer. In

addition, they like to invite home schoolers to school Christmas programs, and find more ways to "be a hand and a foot to each other," including perhaps soliciting their input at the board or education committee levels (EP1C386-395; EP5C343-368).

Niagara school representatives would like to see all communal gifts used for the common purpose in a spirit of unity. Some expressed that God wants people to have a mindset of love, patience, instructing, and building each other up. Marco believed that it is necessary to promote excellence in the school society, and that, if all church members would support the school, it would not be beyond anyone's means. Families who might need help could also be visited pro-actively. Lorenzo found that the personal and financial withdrawal of home schoolers, and the lack of interaction between the parties, contradicts how people must act in the communion of saints. There should be no lines of separation drawn on the basis of how people teach their children: All members must be a hand and a foot to each other and admonish one another when there are disagreements (FP3B048, C465-500, D035,189; FP5D012; FP7D111-151).

Niagara school representatives explained how diaconal support is available for families who need it. One participant noted that some people may try to maintain dignity in an expensive life style, and choose to home school because it is cheaper. He rejected this motivation, and pointed out that there is no shame in receiving diaconal help if it is given with Biblical direction. Felix agreed that people who can afford "everything except the school" do not need support (nor get it, in his congregation). He explained that people sometimes need help with budgeting, and that the sense of community is lost if they refuse help (FP1D160-180; FP2D257; FP6D221).

Educative Action

Both home schoolers and school representatives believed they need to educate to help overcome tension. This section presents salient elements of that education.

Home schoolers had learned that it makes a difference who educates about home schooling, and how it is done. Some had seen the benefits of using literature, such as Schaeffer MacAulay (1984), to illustrate how home schooling is *a way*, and not *the only way* to teach, or that it is not an absurd approach. Jerry and Karen noted that Agema's (2001) speech for the PTA was mostly pretty good, but knew that some regretted that "people took what he said too far": one mother even concluded that "home schooling was terribly wrong." They felt that a speaker should be chosen with care, as ministers' words are easily taken for "gospel truth." Stan agreed that speakers might show home schooling to be viable, but should be careful

> not to stir up more trouble by their tone and by saying things that hurt. . . . It would be better if it came from an outsider, a person with clout and a way with words, saying, "Listen, these people are not that crazy, you know."

While some defended Rockway's response (Appendix B) to the Board's paper (Appendix

A) as a good way to instruct the congregation, others found it too harsh on mothers who work to pay for Christian education (AP1/2B586, C011-028; BP1/2B370, 422, 647).

Home schoolers also considered the setting for a dialogue. They frequently cited an emotional and (to some) uncomfortable discussion after a Women's Bible Study. Some would have preferred a more controlled private setting, but Rebekah appreciated that it did confront the controversy: "So, maybe, yes, maybe we should have one of those meetings." Dean and Emily favoured an open dialogue to show that "neither one should or is tending to be a threat to the other." Dean suggested that home schoolers could make a conscious effort to invite day schoolers over on Sunday: "say, one family per month," and to increase casual conversations during the week: "You have to have some place to start; start with ourselves." Over coffee and through her involvement, another mother also liked to convince people that her decision to home school did not at all mean she was abandoning the church (AP2C180-200; CP1/2B185-25; EP4C206, 253-281).

School representatives believed that the church is the proper context for resolving the issue. They stressed the church community's responsibility to look after the children born in it, or figured that solid preaching in the church, internal harmony, and (the members') closeness to the school are conditions that help prevent tension around the issue. One Toc participant would like the church to recognize the legitimacy of home schooling. As the church is central among all charitable causes, a few acknowledged that home schoolers are sometimes treated as second-class Reformed citizens; and one understood why they ask, "Why is there actually no statement saying home schooling is wrong, and that these brothers are excluded from becoming office bearers?" Even though he recognized failings and disagreements, Barry referred to the discipline, education, and instruction in the church community: "God wants us to love each other, and it comes down to that we all have to have patience with each other, and show each other our weaknesses" (EP1C395; FP2C396; FP4D000; FP5D012-035; FP6B124; FP7D139).

Niagara school representatives agreed that the church should give clear leadership on the issue. Some explicitly agreed that the preaching must address what people do and don't do, and not avoid challenges like, "You have your opinion, I have mine": Elders should address how parents educate and discipline their children, and to give help to the school. Another added the need for prayer in support of the brothers and sisters to help the school and to alleviate the tension. Others found that the preaching had been lacking in promoting and supporting Reformed education, and suggested that uncoordinated congregational approaches to the issue contribute to the tensions. Finally, Felix suggested that church leaders must address the issue in cooperation with the school leaders, and without shunning the home schoolers, as "we need everyone within the church" (FP2C029, 367-413; FP4C110, 658-688; FP5C159; FP6B135, D076-091).

School representatives acknowledged the need for cooperation and open communication as elements of resolving the tension. They would value an open, spiritual, compassionate, nonconfrontational, and patient discussion with home schoolers about

sharing each other's talents, concerns, and special needs. There was some willingness to listen to each other, and to gain a mutual understanding of "why they do what they do, and why we do what we do." In that setting, some felt, issues of cost, quality, and socialization could be addressed in "unity in Christ," and home schoolers could learn again why the schools were established, maintained, and have changed. Nate would also address possible grievances, together with factors of relativism, postmodernism, and disrespect for tradition, as he thought that home schooling is a symptom of underlying motives and thoughts: "Out of the overflow of the heart your mouth speaks; and you carry that on with your actions" (FP1B657-C334; FP2C367; FP3C500; FP4C556-586).

School representatives called for a review of ways to promote the school. They suggested that people go out of their way to show that the school offers things home schoolers don't have; that it needs communal support; and that positive enthusiasm for the school, excellence, good work, and good relationships are the best way to address the issue in obedience to Scripture. They hoped that home schoolers would help reveal (and address) the school's failures and bad habits. Nate noted that home schooling is encouraged if a social issue such as bullying and "not enough Christian attitude on the playground" is not satisfactorily addressed. Another participant wondered whether school-promotion has perhaps been too focused on finances, and would consider the size of the school's organizational structure (implying that smaller may be better). He saw solid preaching supporting stability as a better solution than drastic measures in a divided context (FP1B712, C351; FP2C000-038; FP4A136, 331-351; FP5C159; FP6D047-063).

Time

Both home schoolers and school representatives acknowledged that, over time, as a new generation comes in, and things change or the issues get dealt with, the tension and emotions will wear off. School representatives made occasional references to how things had already improved in the school. Valerie believed that, as new individuals take over, time helps to ease tensions, and exclaimed, "Believe me, fifteen years ago, I could not have had this discussion!" With the passing of the older generation, and more people involved home schooling, others also believed time would help increase acceptance of home schooling. In Emily's experience (AP2B575-613; CP1B245; EP4C533-581),

> When something new comes along, there is always going to be tension, but as long as it is dealt with in a proper way, it will eventually alleviate itself.

Resistance to Resolution

Home schoolers experienced that it is not easy to abide by Scriptural principles, such as in Matthew 18. Oscar identified a credibility issue when "those that are to exhort the parents (i.e., elders), are likely having issues with their *own* kids. . . . Then (discipline) doesn't get done, (and) the Body suffers." Rebekah admitted that "There are times when we . . . just pretend (the gossip) is not there;" and Stan found that others should change

when they fail to recognize that (AP1/2C042; DWR014)

> We live our lives according to the Lord's will. . . . A lot of times you can go up to somebody, and probably make the problem even bigger. Do they have a problem with you, or with the fact that you are home schooling?

Home schoolers found social, emotional, philosophical, and personal obstacles to addressing conflict and tension and to restoring harmony. Stan scorned the idea of "*having* to talk to someone else than people you have something in common with." He found it silly, unfair, and ludicrous that day schoolers seem to look for this, while they may also segregate themselves. Rebekah warned that one should not make education a community endeavour, "because I think that's a human philosophy. . . . it is not a community endeavour to raise individual children." Stan knew how hard it would be to change that view, however: "There is one thing that they have against us, and that's the home schooling. They can't get across that." Karen stressed the importance of the family: Strong families help build the school as well as the church, and she would even "encourage people to (home school) if it was for the greater good of all" (AP1C042, 230-263, 350; BP2A571, B175).

Some home schoolers explicitly voiced mistrust that respect and unity could be restored. Jerry and Karen questioned whether there is a genuine desire for unity, and (for the Board) to prevent being a stumbling block: The initial mutual respect is gone, which they experienced when they first embarked on home schooling. Jerry feared that working under the school's umbrella would limit their freedom, and resisted the straightjacket of being perceived as "breaking the covenant" if he did not register with the school (BP1/2B400, 463-578):

> We're a little bit leery. We feel that . . . we're not going against Scripture or confession. . . . But then you get that institutionalizing again with the school. Even if a child would be home schooled for a year or two, . . . the school may be putting him back a year if he has not covered exactly what the school did.

School representatives were less explicit in giving voice to obstacles. However, within the interview as well as thereafter, some suggested repeatedly that I should not expect this study to solve the problem. Furthermore, Tony implied that the solution must lie in working together for the school (FP6B135):

> We are not out of the woods yet: There is a lot of difference. . . . How do we really put a stop to this, or maybe not a stop but at least come to a solution, what on the principle items, I'd say as in Biblically or democratically? I don't think we're going to get that.

Table 6 summarizes this chapter's catch for home schoolers and school representatives in Niagara (N) and Toc (T).

Conclusion

The catch presents the desire to restore harmony and unity, but also identifies remaining differences, mistrust, and resistance to resolution of the problem. Chapter 7 lets the literature speak to the remaining problem, compares expectations with outcomes, identifies areas for further consideration, and concludes this study.

Table 6
Ways to Address Tension[17]

HSs' views		Ways to address tension (The Catch)	SRs's views	
N	**T**	**Principles**	**N**	**T**
✓✓✓	✓	Base what is right on God's Word and the confessions	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓	Reason / Scriptural arguments supersede emotion / tradition	✓✓	✓
✓✓	✓✓	Examine one's motives whether they are right before God	✓	✓
✓✓	✓	Education or instruction should strengthen the church	✓✓	✓
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Church should allow for and respect educational diversity	✓	✓✓
✓	✓	The church is context and leader for resolution	✓✓✓	✓
✓✓	✓✓	There is a communal responsibility, also for education	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Use all gifts for common purpose in spirit of unity	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Provide (diaconal) help for the families who do need it	✓✓✓	✓
✓	✓	Acknowledge failure, correct it, and repent	✓✓	✓
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Seek out adversaries to address and resolve issues	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Avoid gossip, slander, recruiting, or being cliquish, elitist	✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓✓	Be sensitive, respectful, inclusive, and supportive to others	✓	✓✓
		Practical ways		
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Recognize the relevance of the school	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
✓	✓✓	Promote excellence in the school with everyone's support	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓✓	Help mutually, with materials, being inviting and caring	✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Help in school and church with finances, prayer, skills	✓	✓✓
✓✓	✓✓	Allow time, and expect remaining obstacles	✓	

[17] ✓ indicates singularly stated or implied support; ✓✓ indicates repeated support; and ✓✓✓ indicates strong support. For Toc, ✓✓ indicates significant support. N = Niagara; T = Toc; HS = Home schoolers; SR = School Representatives.

				✓
	✓	Develop community understanding before cooperative efforts	✓	
✓✓✓	✓✓	Educate each other, have dialogue, develop understanding	✓✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	Do not aggravate, recruit, or shun adversaries	✓	✓

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I first summarize and discuss the findings of the preceding ones, and then identify the implications of the study. More than just academic findings, this chapter presents my position and understandings on the questions I set out to answer.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the tensions that developed around the rise of home schooling in the NPCR community. This community traditionally supported Reformed day schools. I also sought to identify ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate these tensions. My premise is that it is more important for each member of this community to "show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity," than for all to choose the same model for educating their children. Chapter 1 explained this further, and also addressed my epistemological and axiological position.

Chapter 2 reviewed relevant literature on communities, community breakdown, and community restoration. Chapter 3 extended the literature review to home, school, and community relationships; the underpinnings of Reformed day schools; and the appeal of home schooling. Although it does not fully explain the tension the NPCR community experiences, the literature does identify aspects of and general patterns in social conflict. It also underlines the significance of good home, school, and community relationships, and validates the appeal of and differences between both approaches to education. The content of these two chapters affirms the need to do specific research in this community.

Chapter 4 presented the methodology used in this study. It explained how and why interviews were conducted with four home schooling couples and two focus groups. One focus group consisted of school representatives only, and the other of both school representatives and home schoolers in another community. The research proposal was approved by the Research Ethics Board in file # 01-259, Sikkema (Appendix O).

The findings of the research were laid down in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 presents

participants' views on why people start and continue to home school, including their social, pedagogical, and theological considerations; and what, in their views, leads to tension. Despite commonalities between participants' understanding, discrepancies of knowledge, views, and interpretations occur on most of these counts. Chapter 6 presents the participants' suggested solutions to the tension. They desire a solution and suggest possible approaches, but display a continued level of resistance and mistrust.

Discussion

In this section, I first review my epistemology and axiology and its applicability to this community, then discuss the literature and the research findings, and address aspects of conflict resolution as relevant to this community.

Epistemology and Axiology

The epistemological and axiological choices made in Chapter 1 apply to this particular community. Without a doubt, participants accept Scripture as the authoritative and normative Word of God, from which they know Him and how He wants to be served within the covenant He made with them in this world and reality. Understanding reality is not based solely on a careful reading of Scripture, however: There is merit in an analysis of the issue proper. The conducted research could anticipate the identification of specific aspects of the problem and possible solutions.

While participants agreed that Scripture is normative for axiological decisions, the community does not keep the Biblical norms perfectly and adopts various social standards and traditions. The members of the community do not always distinguish clearly between social and moral norms: Tradition is frequently depicted as a central element in the effort to maintain Reformed day schools. This constitutes a significant element in the tension.

Furthermore, this community is integrated in society in general, and influenced by its developments and spirit of postmodernism and individualism. The community also shifted towards Gesellschaft, which arguably lowers the threshold of deviation. While there remains a high level of commitment to the school effort, the full participation of the mid-1960s has disappeared. This, too, constitutes a significant element in the tension.

Literature and Findings

Day schools. Research shows that a close bond of involvement and philosophy between home, school, and community is good for educational achievement. However, the basis for Reformed schools is that nurturing and educating children in the fear of the Lord is principally a divinely ordained parental task and responsibility, that the covenant community is the context in which it can and is to be done, and that parentally controlled schools are the best way to guarantee spiritual unity between home, church, and school.

Reformed schools must be good schools, but achievement was never a goal in itself.

Establishing and maintaining John Calvin School was always a sacrificial effort of the community, whether at the original $0.10 a week (Flokstra, 1973) or the current monthly $510.00 or so. If all help sustain the basis, purpose, scope and cost of the school, the individual's burden decreases. Furthermore, attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief contribute to conformity to cultural norms, and demonstrate respect for the preceding generations. Scripture also directs the members of the communion of saints to be responsible for and help each other in all respects at all times. Some home schoolers had reservations in this regard, and held that the school cannot claim their support.

The school was never meant as a substitute for parental responsibility and engagement in the education of their children in the sense of Martin (1995). From the beginning, parents were known to be the primary educators, and the school had a limited helping role in the (primarily) academic realm. Home schoolers were most acutely aware that parents may send their children to the school for the wrong reasons.

Home schools. The tradition of Reformed day schools does not convince home schoolers that they are wrong. The Bible does not require formal school attendance, and home schoolers find joy and encouragement in the blessings and benefits their choice has for the family, and in its academic rewards. Arai (1999) argues that they develop a worthy form of citizenship, but that position remains controversial especially in the long term.

For home schoolers, the justification of home schooling outweighs perceptions of deviance from and transgression against JCS, in which people may interpret withdrawing from JCS as a challenge against the school's historic commitments. They reject JCS as the only valid representation of norms of parental and covenantal education. They would object when Eikelboom (2003a) suggests that the future of the church depends on the school, but rejoice when he (2003b) seeks harmony with home schoolers. Community integrity weighs heavier than the choice of Reformed home school or day school.

In this study, home schoolers invariably indicated personal or social stressors that made them think about school alternatives. The community had, for good reasons, chosen to establish JCS, but neither the community, nor its members, nor the school, were perfect, and this left certain issues that were not or could not be resolved. Whether morally right or wrong, the stressors lowered the threshold to home school.

Lower threshold, raised strain. Unlike the days of Luther and Calvin, home schooling now is an affordance and effectivity for many. The Puritan idea that educating children was a joint affair of families with and within the community degenerated during the eighteenth century, which led to the separation of nurture and education, and the creation of public schools. In time, it became difficult to envision education without a school. Since the 1960s, however, the failure of public schools to remedy society's ills has made more people look to educational alternatives, such as independent schools. The home schooling option has been facilitated by changes in communication technologies, legal

and social contexts, and mobility. Affordances and effectivities lower the threshold to home schooling, but also strain relationships within this faith-community when some seem to withhold their talents and contributions from the communal effort.

The threshold of deviance from and transgression against tradition is also lowered by the community's partial transformation from a Gemeinschaft to a Gesellschaft. As Canadian Reformed people get integrated in the broader Canadian society, they make commitments in different communities. The standards held in each may begin to blur and personal priorities may shift from supporting the church and other communal institutions to family, individual, or other pursuits. The threshold to do one's own thing is lowered when there is no common principle or norm.

When groups bridge and bond around respective common interests, and lose sight of what bonds the faith-community, expectations are not met and relationships within the community become strained. A personal justification for deviant behaviour does not imply community acceptance or commitment. Thus, people disapprove when home schoolers join (in OCHEC) with "home schoolers from other churches;" and the electronic Canadian Reformed *home school loop* and local joint activity groups come to be seen as a rival school system. Inevitably, the dynamics of misunderstood behaviour and raised strain are associated with emotions and offenses, as illustrated in Table 5.

Principle or preference. The strained situation may be pictured as a punch-bowl: On Sunday people dip in the one bowl, but they go their separate ways on Monday, each in their own subculture, and the sense of community disintegrates. If home schoolers sit on one side of the aisle in church (in part because its longer pews allow large families to sit together), and other families on the other side; or if home schoolers socialize in one corner of the parking lot (perhaps because they have things in common), and others elsewhere; it may appear that they drink from separate sides of the bowl. Yet, at the Lord's Supper, they eat of the same Bread and drink from the same Cup. As education of covenant children is by no means a trivial issue, but rather central to God's instructions to His people, and also requires significant community resources, the strain affects the nature of being and remaining church. The question arises whether covenant principles would allow the community to have both a school culture and a home school culture.

To answer this question, the relevant principles must be identified. Etzioni (1997) would suggest that leaders must seek a balance between individual rights and community responsibility. Some literature (Cresswell, 1996) justifies deviation or transgression, as it leads to new ways of doing things; and Butz and Eyles (1997) argue that the sense of place and the relationship of people and places must necessarily be tentative and contingent, or even contradictory. Participants in this study object to social relativism in much of the literature, however, as resolution would hinge on a human and shifting standard. I agree with them that Scriptural principles must apply, rather than arguments based on tradition, circumstance, or emotion, and that (church) leaders must clarify their implications (see also Heifetz, 1994). The solution is obstructed when established

practices are taken *a priori* to be the only valid representation of the applicable principles.

Home schoolers in this study grant that their choice is an educational preference for which they seek room, but which may not be elevated to a principle all must follow. Few school representatives would allow them that room: They miss the contributions of the home schoolers. While collaboration exists elsewhere, in this community the tension prevents such efforts. Indeed, the normative and polarizing question arises invariably: "Are you for or against home schooling; is it right or wrong?" While it is by no means only the home schoolers' contributions that are missed, it appears that the preference of some implies a disregard for others, and that the integrity of the community is at stake.

The study reveals that the educational disagreement translates into community disintegration, and that the relatively minor distance established by deviant behaviour gets reinforced when parties entrench themselves and fail to communicate with each other. While Table 3 and Table 4 assume that home schooling is the issue, Table 5 illustrates that people differ significantly on what they believe generates the tension. Instead of maintaining a communication that fosters common understanding, appreciation, and ongoing reciprocal support, people reverted to gossip, slander, backbiting, and mis-attributions about others, and subsequent exclusion. Whether consciously or only in ignorance, whether perceived or for real, people arguably raised a standardized preference (in this case a particular application of a good principle) to a principle, or withheld from others what they should have shared. Some people's expectations were overstated or not met, some people were offended, and emotions were turned on. In an emotional state, people may have said or done things they might come to regret (whether admitted or not), and in the process it was no longer clear what happened to the glory of God.

Restoration of harmony and unity in this community must be based on its foundation of Scriptural principles regarding the education of the next generation, but even more on the meaning of the covenant for being community. Principles are checks on preferences.

Covenant principles. Kloosterman (1991) helps frame the controversy in terms of Christian liberty and neighbour love. People in the communion of saints are duty-bound to help each other with the talents God gave them: They cannot be who the Creator meant them to be by keeping their talents to themselves. To drink from the same bowl or from the same Cup, and to eat from the same Bread, has implications for the communion one has with the others. Principles of Christian liberty and neighbour love encourage one to avoid becoming a stumbling block for others, and to look for ways to help others in their life before the Lord.

It is also necessary to find the proper relationship between the tasks of the parents and the community in bringing up the children. Part of the controversy centered on Board statements that allegedly overstepped its jurisdiction by equating the school with the communion of saints, and the identification of a long-standing practice with principles

for which there is insufficient Scriptural evidence. The Board acknowledged its sin, apologized, and publicly asked for forgiveness (Appendix C), but the question remains what the community role is in educating the next generation.

In Scripture and in the Reformed confessions, the church is more central than the family (Te Velde, Figure 3). That is the nature of the covenant, in which God says, “I will be your God, and you will be My people” (Faber, 1999). It is true that God gathers His people through the generations, and through families, but in the New Testament the emphasis clearly shifts towards the church. In His Word, God addresses the church, and within that covenantal context, individuals or families. Christ gathers a church, not a family; and the church is His Body of which individuals and families are parts. The parts receive specific attention, but are also repeatedly reminded that they are not on their own, but part of the Body, and they need one another. It is as a covenant community that they receive from God all they need for the precise purpose of glorifying God, caring for each other, and building up the Body of Christ.

There is no reason to separate education or discipline from this realm of care. If one member of the church observes another doing something wrong, there is a covenantal obligation to correct that other member in love, regardless of his or her age, according to Matthew 18. The sense of obligation may have been eroded by a *mind your own business* mentality, but its relevance remains. If parents agree to send their children to a day school that is equipped as well as possible to help them in their parental task, the whole community, for the sake of its own well-being as the Body of Christ, and as a matter of covenantal responsibility, has a vested interest in maintaining this school. God is honoured if His people so care for one another, and that care is not to be abdicated if one does not personally need the school’s service. In colonial America, the primary task to bring up children, in nurture and education, fell to their parents; but the village played an integrated role. In ancient Israel, the covenant laws which parents had to teach their children were also posted on the (city) gates, indicating that they had to be taught at home and maintained in public. The ancient African saying applies that it takes a village to raise a child, not in Clinton’s (1996) sense in which the government assumes the parents’ role, but in that it takes a covenantal context for parents to raise a Christian child.

Participants in this study agreed that the school cannot replace the family: It was not designed and will always be ill equipped to do so. Participants recognized the primary educational role of the parents, as intended by God, and objected to attempts of parents to abdicate their task and responsibility to the school. Failure of some parents in this regard, or difficulties they experience, invariably ought to attract the care and attention of the covenant community. If it takes time to address and correct such cases even while new situations emerge, there is no reason to withdraw from the communal effort, but rather to more devotedly promote and improve it.

Social capital theory offers suggestions to restore community. Etzioni (2000, 2001) suggests it will take bonding, and more than Putnam’s (2000) bridging social capital, at

the level of strong moral values to make strong communities and to prevent nesting. He searches for a balance that, admittedly, does not make everyone happy, but keeps diversity within acceptable bounds. In the context of this community, the question is, then, whether principles of Christian freedom and neighbour love, or covenantal care for each other, allow for a diversity in which some people home school, and others use the day school.

Application. Considering that Scripture does not demand but allows for schools and that it gives a primary educational task to the parents in the context of, and with ongoing support from the covenant community, it would be sectarian to demand either that all children be home schooled or that all attend the day school. Such a demand would ignore the Scriptural room for diversity. Hence, the NPCR community rightly resisted making home schooling a matter of church discipline. Similarly, to automatically disqualify home schoolers for church office is problematic.

It is also problematic to claim that not using the school absolves one from any interest in or obligation towards it. Members of the communion of saints bear fruit, care for each other, and use their respective gifts for the benefit of the body. There are many good charities that need support, but to neglect the communion of saints and its needs is to not be a living part of that covenant community. It is possible to support the school, or Streetlight Ministries, as a member or donor, and at the same time to home school.

Meanwhile, the school cannot itself claim this support as a right or entitlement, even if it rejoices with gratitude if hearts are moved to love it and care for it. Rather, the founders of JCS stressed its covenantal and charitable nature, and enjoyed a high degree of support (M. VanderVelde, personal communication, November, 2003). The school may have inadvertently undermined this notion when it stressed that it was parental at the expense of its covenantal nature; or when it stressed its business aspects at the expense of its charitable character. An unfortunate linkage emerged that only people who send their children to the school support it, and that not sending the children implies not supporting it. Those who do not support the school (whether home schoolers or others), have lost the original understanding of the bond between the school and the community. There is a task for school leadership in underlining the covenantal and charitable character of the school, without neglecting its parental and business aspects, and for the church leadership to explain what the covenant and the communion of saints means in practice.

Furthermore, the task of educating children, whether at home or at school, is aimed at equipping them for a life of service to God and the neighbour with all the talents God gave them (Waterink, 1954/1980). It is problematic to shield children from the covenant community to which they belong: Learning to live as part of this community as well as in this imperfect world does not happen in isolation, but requires experience and community. Moreover, some children do not learn, thrive, or fit well in a school context, or it may, for some cause or reason, hamper their growth towards the intended purpose. Aside from modifications in programming or classroom settings, this raises the question

whether home schooling should be considered as an acceptable alternative. The caring covenant community should give serious thought to and support for an alternative setting.

In any event, whether initiated by the parents, or the school, or otherwise, the solution would be agreed upon amicably and after mutual consultation, with ownership and commitment of ongoing support from all stakeholders. This also means that, on occasion, the school may advise parents to home school one or more of their children, and offer its assistance in providing the support they will need to do it and to overcome associated obstacles. Much like the CanRC Church Order (1995), which stipulates that "on minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected" (Article 50; see also Van Oene, 1990), and that, "if the interest of the churches demand such, (the articles) may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished" (Article 76) with common accord, it would be good practice for those who wish to home school their children to not neglect the community which is committed to the school.

Conflict Resolution

Aside from this dream of how the covenant community could work together in a framework that recognizes the primary educational responsibility of parents, the need to have a school, and a joint responsibility and interest in the education of the youth, there is the tension that arose before these things were fully considered. Apart from the irony that Appendix A aimed to settle the matter, but backfired; or that Appendix B overshot its target with its claim about Christian freedom; or that VanDam's (1992/2000) conciliatory presentation, to which Appendix C refers, was held in the basement of JCS; and that Appendix D overlooked that JCS is but one application of Scriptural norms, it has become clear that issues were not dealt with at the time that it would have been easy. Those issues must be cleared up to help settle the question of the brand or colour of one's car, as in Appendix E, and stop the blaming of deviant behaviour for being deviant (which only increases tension, labeling, misunderstandings, and withholding of gifts and talents God intended for service to one another). Conflict resolution needs more in-depth attention.

There is hope in that regard, for the contributions in Appendices A-E were made with intentions of building up the unity of the Body of Christ. Also, in Table 6, even if not fully unanimous, the desire for and agreement on ways in which to address the tension is significant, and there is at least some understanding for the other side. However, concerns remain where mistrust prevails, where the relative importance of the family and the community play a role, and where there is a limited recognition for the necessity of acknowledging failure, rectification, and repentance.

Mendelson (2001) offers a five-level conflict typology: 1) Problem to solve; 2) Disagreement; 3) Contest; 4) Fight or flight; and 5) Intractable. Most conflict resolution models only satisfactorily help resolution to the third level, beyond which people tend to fight or flee (or, as per Sande, 1997, attack or escape). Only prayer, forgiveness, and confession of guilt helps resolution beyond that point. Aside from the variance in

understandings regarding the reasons for starting and the justifications for home schooling (Table 3 and Table 4), this discussion has shown that the issues that lead to community disintegration are represented in Table 5. It can be argued that Appendices A, B, and D are representative of level 3 and 4: Contest, fight, or attack. Some also escaped by moving to another congregation or talking on the other side of the parking lot. For a proper resolution, an appropriate strategy must be sought at that level.

Sande suggests four principles of conflict resolution: 1) Glorify God; 2) Get the log out of your eye; 3) Go and show your brother his fault; and 4) Go and be reconciled. Chapter 6 gives reason for optimism that people want to resolve the existing tension, and to restore unity and harmony in the community. It can be argued that Appendix C, by its public admission of guilt and request for forgiveness, set the tone for reconciliation; and that Appendix F represents a quest to prevent the matter from becoming an issue by first listening and seeking understanding. Its outcomes are included in the appendix.

Sande's recommendations imply that it is both necessary and difficult to admit wrongs, to confess guilt, and to ask for forgiveness. Ivan (EP5B480) noted that it is hard to convert one's wallet, but it may be even harder to acknowledge guilt and to repent. This also applies to the gossip, slander, backbiting, and mis-attributions cited above. It is easier to agree that something must be done (as shown in Table 6) than to do it, and it is not surprising that many conflict resolution models stop short of calling for repentance. The participants in this study will agree that repentance and sanctification are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. In line with Sande and the Reformed churches' regular preaching about the Ten Commandments, it will be necessary for all to examine themselves in view of Lord's Days 34-44 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*. All will have to consider their own transgressions implied in the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper (1995), when it speaks of having received God's mercy through faith:

> First, let everyone consider his sins and accursedness, so that he, detesting himself, may humble himself before God. For the wrath of God against sin is so great that He could not leave it unpunished, but has punished it in his beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.
>
> Second, let everyone search his heart whether he also believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven him only for the sake of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is freely given him as his own, as if he himself had fulfilled all righteousness.
>
> Third, let everyone examine his conscience whether it is his sincere desire to show true thankfulness to God with his entire life and, laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, to live with his neighbour in true love and unity.
>
> God will certainly receive in grace all who are thus minded and count them worthy to partake of the supper of the Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgment upon themselves. (p. 595)

In any conflict, people sin, and unless they confess and repent, individually, the way to reconciliation with each other and with God is blocked, as David cried out in Psalm 32. It is my prayer that in this study I have not transgressed in the sense of David, even if I did so in the sense of Cresswell by speaking out favourably about home schooling. It would be a concern if this study would make matters worse, if I have not pointed the right way to resolution, or became the stumbling block myself. My wish is that people will understand that it is more important to live together in true love, unity, and harmony, than that all choose the same way of educating their children. The communion of saints is bigger and higher than the format for education; and to maintain love, unity, and harmony, it will need to care for each member as well as possible, as each has need of.

Implications

In this section, I suggest implications of this study for the NPCR community, for the larger CanRC school community, for the CanRC churches, and for the scientific community.

For the NPCR Community

If the sense of community gets restored, and scars get healed, avenues may open up that help the community to flourish. To get to that point, several participants implied that an open dialogue should take place, to come to grips with what God requires. In church, the preaching would address the call for reconciliation and restoration. Also, a closed meeting could be arranged for NPCR council members, home schoolers, and the JCS Board, for which a draft agenda is given in Appendix P. Before undertaking this study, I considered it hazardous to propose this, and it deliberately was not part of the research design. However, with the outcomes of this study and a clear purpose of reconciliation in mind, the setting may be sufficiently controlled to have a fruitful meeting. After this meeting, a similar public one might be arranged for the whole faith-community. In addition to items specifically suggested in the draft agenda, the discussions could help bring out several other things.

The meetings may help bring out how people ought to treat and accept each other. They may help bring people together again, and reduce personal, social, or financial stress, and increase social capital grounded in Scriptural norms and their application. It may lead to an understanding of community and relationships focused in being communion of saints.

The meetings may bring out that stressors are ghosts that haunt the school and should rather be put on an appropriate agenda and dealt with, to remove further obstacles and stumbling blocks. Similarly, it may encourage people not to brush issues under the carpet, but to face them in the way Jesus identified in Matthew 18.

The meetings may lead the school to consider that certain children should perhaps best be home schooled, if only temporarily, to help address specific problems that need one on

one attention for which the school is not well equipped. The school could provide the support and resources needed to take that challenge. Similarly, the school could offer support, if parents, for good reason, seek to make such an arrangement.

The discussions also may lead to a renewed understanding of community responsibility and participation. For instance, with sincere participation and membership in the school, home schooling parents may also volunteer in the school, or serve on the board or education committee. Similarly, home schooled children may take part in school programs and events, as they are no longer excluded or seen as excluding themselves.

Whether this will happen is something the community should agree on, and, as one of the participants suggested, it should not be attempted without its agreement. Some of these suggestions would likely rekindle the existing unrest at this time. However, if the call for reconciliation is accepted, personal convictions may move people to set right what they did wrong, and rebuilding the sense of community can start.

For the Larger CanRC School Community

A discussion of curriculum issues could benefit both the schools and home schoolers. While home school participants suggested access to huge resources of curriculum materials, as presumably exemplified by the abundant corporate presence at OCHEC conferences (see also Stevens, 2001, p. 54), the schools have, for good reason invested in developing distinctly Reformed curriculum (CCMC Committee, 2003). Home schoolers could be helped if findings of this work are made accessible to them. Smaller schools, of less than 100 or 50 students, could consider multi-aging formats, and loosen the stringent connection between grade level and curriculum. Also, school evaluation committees could ask home schoolers for their input, to better understand how the school functions and how it could better meet their needs.

For the Churches

This study's findings may find general application in controversies among the communion of saints, in any of the places where I have been employed during the last 25 years. It would also suggest a reconsideration of the wording of Article 58 of the Church Order. As it portrays the school as the route of choice, and does not recognize that the responsibility of the parents and of the community goes well beyond the academic focus of the school, clarity and Scriptural correctness could be enhanced. At home visits, elders should do more than just press the *good school* button.

For the Scientific Community

This study demonstrated the validity and explanatory strengths of some specific constructs. It further confirmed and extended the findings of Arai (2000) that people continue to home school for different reasons than they started. It identified an area of tension that is prevalent in other communities which have a prior commitment to supporting a day school (Sikkema, 2003).

The design of the research did bring out the issues it intended to address, although more participants in Toc, ON, might have generated richer and more varied responses. A broader study might also have incorporated other details of the issues, but would have gone well beyond the limitations of the context for which this study was undertaken.

In addition to addressing the dispute about the citizenship of home schooled children, further research could consider parallels with the citizenship of Third Culture Kids (see also Arai, 1999; Danielson, 1984; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Useem & Coffrell, 2001). It is particularly through their broader exposure to people of different ages and cultures that one might expect similar impacts on their development.

Further research is also needed to work out how the communion of saints can or should be more actively involved in bringing up the next generation. This is not strictly a school question, but a challenge to church leadership, and involves what is commonly understood as *Christian education* in terms of the church's educational task. Ministers and elders could spend a conference on this topic, which should address questions about educational cooperation and coordination between home, church, and school.

A research focus could be how well generic recent research applies to the NPCR community. For instance, Ray (2003) addresses various issues my study also touched on, and is of interest to the Board of JCS because of the intention of home schooled young adults to home school their own children. A study of longer duration would need to confirm this. Furthermore, Van Pelt (2004), in a preview of her study, *Home education 2003: A report on the Pan-Canadian study on home education*, enhances or confirms several findings of Ray (1994) and Ray (2003), and calls for recognition of policy makers.

This study did not address all possible elements of the topic. It did not approach the wide variety of reasons and stressors many people have. It did not really explore people's perception of the lowered threshold to start home schooling, or its impact in this community. Also, my view and vision are dimmed by my own limitations, and what I see may stand correction by others. This thesis would also have benefited from consideration of social network theory. Neither my readings, nor strong or weak ties alerted me to its significance, which is indicated, for instance, by White's (2003) summary of other work:

> Other researchers have shown that at the margins of communities. . . are those whose ties do not cohere to a larger group, or who are systematically excluded by those with whom their ties are weak. Benefits of community and collective intelligence are strengthened by attention to integration at the margins. (pp. 3-4)

White also identifies other questions that could be applied to the NPCR community.

In general, it would appear that community conflict may be addressed by first independently analyzing the problem. This would entail getting input from all relevant perspectives, including literature, and identifying both obvious and underlying personal and social issues. Next, it would involve an identification of the relevant principles, as

they apply to being community and to the immediate issues. Third, these findings would have to be discussed and explored with the stakeholders, to come to a common agreement about resolution. Without the involvement of the stakeholders, no commitment to the agreement can be expected. Fourth, efforts would have to be made to identify and mend damaged relationships on a personal level. Finally, efforts could be made to rebuild the sense of community through further development of bridging and bonding social capital.

Conclusion

I set out to identify and understand factors that invoked social tension around home schooling in the NPCR community, and to find ways to bridge, diffuse, reduce, or eliminate that tension. It has helped to split the problem into two parts: 1) the question of how to view home schooling vis a vis the school in this context, and 2) how to address the community tension that has developed around the rise of home schooling. The study benefited from scholarly and critical secular and Christian literature, the input received from school representatives and home schoolers, and from my intimate acceptance of this community's moral standard. That standard makes it an issue for the whole community, myself included, and not just for the day schoolers and the home schoolers.

To the first question, my answer is relatively simple: Raising children is a parental task. Some secular literature supports the family's crucial role in this pursuit. As such, home schooling could be encouraged. However, raising children takes place within a community, and in the covenant community all must help each other in their tasks with the gifts received for that very purpose. Community-supported schools were designed to help parents with aspects of their task, and Reformed Christians established schools in which the educational efforts at home and in church would be supported and enhanced. The joy bringing principle is that all gifts God gave to the members of the church are used to help the others in accordance with 1 Corinthians 12. I do not reject home schooling, as long as the community is not neglected. I do not see this with Etzioni (1997), as a balance between individual freedom and community responsibility; but, with Kloosterman (1991), for believers to be image bearers of God, called to love Him above all, and their neighbour like themselves. This, I believe, is an integral part of being church.

The second question is harder, because it reveals how this community is a communion of imperfect saints. It failed to properly deal with the issues: First with the stressors, and later with certain responses. The covenant community's members are called to love one another as God loved them first, and so to be a true community. Its integrity was endangered by the failure of some to foster ongoing understanding and care for each other. Some even reverted to prejudice, (mis-)attribution, self-justification, or forms of aggression. I believe that community integrity is more important than the specific way in which people teach their children, however, even though it is very interested in, and even, in a sense, responsible for their education.

I believe that bridging, diffusing, reducing, and eliminating the tension can be accomplished by a renewed commitment to the norms of God's Word. The community, including myself, must depend on God's grace for its existence, and seek forgiveness and restoration. We may develop social standards, but should not forget that Christian freedom and brotherly love supersedes and checks their ramifications. To break away from accepted ways of doing things would require some consultation with the community, which, in turn, may also reveal other ways of dealing with stressors. Agreement on the basis of sins forgiven goes beyond agreement based on social standards and social capital, as it builds on capital that bonds with the Blood of Christ and the Spirit of God, for Paradise restored. It remembers Isaiah 44:21-22:

O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud

And your sins like a heavy mist.

Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.

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Appendix A

Board of Directors of John Calvin School. (Issued 2002, March). *Building up the Body of Christ in Christian unity*. Smithville, ON: John Calvin School. Author.[18]

Building up the Body of Christ In Christian unity

A position paper in response to the home schooling movement

For some time the issue of the legitimacy of home schooling as an optional means of education within our Reformed circles has been generating a considerable amount of discussion. The level of concern regarding the effect that this may be having upon unity within our community has also been growing. As a result there is a strong possibility of this issue becoming divisive within our community. We believe then that a frank, open, up-building discussion is necessary to consider what it is that is bringing about growth in the number of our brothers and sisters who are home schooling their children. It is our responsibility toward one another within the body of Christ.

Obviously the reader will understand that this paper comes from the Board of John Calvin School. As a result the angle taken here, as one would expect, is in support of maintaining our Christian school. However, our hope is to convince those who waver and those who currently home school to return to support of John Calvin School and work shoulder to shoulder, bearing each others burden, in the education of our younger brothers and sisters.

We are those who have been blessed with a rich history of strong Scriptural understanding on the Covenant that God established and maintains with His people. We are familiar with Scriptural terms describing the relationship we are to have with God and with His people. Among many others, terms such as love, body, and flesh reverberate with meaning given by God Himself in Scripture.

“Love the LORD your God with all you heart, soul and mind and your neighbour as yourself,” we are told each Lord’s day. Unity we have with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit is attested to in our baptism and in the Lord’s Supper. At the same time both sacraments witness to our unity with one another through Christ. We are his

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body and in this context are called to “nourish and cherish” the church as Christ Himself does. (Eph. 5:29)

We are also familiar with the phrase, “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). At its heart is the depth of unity that is found in covenant, not with God alone but also with His people. This phrase, which the Apostle Paul picks up in Ephesians 5:30, shows the height and the depth of the practical unity that the members of the Church must have. Like a marriage, the analogy used by Paul in Ephesians, service to one another must exist and continue even when we must suffer in order to serve others (I Cor. 12:26). We might say here with John Calvin that we must seek every occasion “which presents itself for proclaiming our obligation to Christ” (Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians V :31). It has also been said at various times that it is not possible to have communion with God without proper communion with his people.

Communion is then an important term to consider in the life of the Christian. Basic to this term is the word “community”. According to the *Webster New Dictionary* this term refers to “sharing”. The life of the Christian is tightly bound up in action before God primarily, but only in so far as the Christian lives and acts in manner that is consistent with building up the covenant people of God at the same time. It has at its very heart the idea of *living for one another*. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul stresses in I Corinthians 12. While this may seem very obvious to us, it begs a question as to whether we are at all times seeking to live and work out of this understanding in thankfulness to God for what He has given within the community? Having a constant view toward *sharing* our energy, abilities, resources, and knowledge for the good of our fellow believers is simply our calling in the Christian life.

At the same time we recognize that life is not to be compartmentalized as though we can act pious on Sunday and do whatever we would like every other day of the week. Consistency is a hallmark in the Christian life. We are to walk our talk everyday. At least that is what we are called to. The very same applies to working together than to help one another in the bringing up of our children.

The argument for coming together for forming and maintaining Reformed Schools takes the following form then. Recognizing that in this country government requires that our children be educated to a certain level of educational achievement we are duty bound to follow this as long as it does not militate again the requirements of our God. Since our children are also holy and set apart from the world their formative education must be of a nature that is consistent with Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confessions. The public forum with it rampant individualism, humanism and other sinful leanings is not suitable as a vehicle by which to educate our children. At the same time there is the reality of each member of the body of Christ having different levels of academic ability. So, recognizing that we collectively are more capable when working together, all of us having these different levels of ability, we have by the grace of God established Christian schools.

Consider also what happens during the baptism of our children. One aspect that is noted in the baptismal form is the covenant child is also grafted into the Church. This is important to note by way of our stressing the centrality of the Church in all of life (see also I Corinthians 12: 13). In Scripture we also see that when the tabernacle is built all of Israel come together to give of their wealth and their physical and mental ability. All of the people participate. Christ uses the figure of all of us being living stones being knit together and built upon Him as he chief cornerstone. In the New Covenant God builds His house from people. They are place together by Him that they may glorify Him in working to aid one another. The establishment of John Calvin School springs out of this understanding. It springs out of a desire to be thankful and show that in working together within the body of Christ we serve to the benefit of the *entire* body.

Does this then negate home schooling at a legitimate way of education our children? We believe that the tendency to home school within the context of having a community based, Reformed, Christian school highlights a lack of necessary emphasis on the central importance of serving one another within the body of Christ. We also believe that it is due to erroneous elevation of certain ideals over working together and serving one another, standards outlined in Scripture. These are of course very strong statements. But let us look at some of the reasons for home schooling that have been made public.

Lack of parental control and influence over their children's behaviour and activity has been offered as one reason why sending a child away to school is unwise. While it cannot be denied that the children are away from the home for around eight or more hours a day, it must also be pointed out that they are yet supervised by those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. If there is a lack of comfort with the way that children are dealt with or perhaps not dealt with by way of lack of control within the school, as with any issue that concerns us within the communion of saints, we have the ability and responsibility to point these things out to one another and thus aide each other. When we refuse our responsibility to watch out for each other and point out sins to each other the communion to which we are called breaks apart. We must remember that those involved in the daily operation of our school are not different from the people that we sit next to in worship each Lord's day. They come with the same propensity to sin as we ourselves do. At the same time, if we know of disorderly behaviour on the part of other's parent's children, regardless of incidents taking place within or outside of the school, do we not have a responsibility to speak to the parents that they may exercise discipline at home? Are we not showing a lack of love for one another when we in effect ignore the shortcomings of others without giving them the benefit of our help?

Displayed here is also a negative attitude and distrust of the communion of saints. The home school response is then a method of protection children from what is *perceived* as negative influence of others. The response of this nature is rarely shown as being effectively coupled with ardent effort to deal with the source of the perceived sinful influence. As a result we have not then dealt properly with others.

Another reason proffered for home schooling is that academically students do better in a home environment. Is this ultimately what we are to seek for our children? Academic ability is certainly to be nurtured and developed. The goal, though, is not academic excellence on its own by academics within the scope of life in the body of Christ. In part, the teaching of our children within a school environment is that they also learn to deal with others in the Church. To choose home schooling for this reason is to separate one's self from the communion of saints on an elitist basis. It is seeking education above communion.

The cost to send one's children to John Calvin School seems to be a growing deterrent that drives some to home school. Unabashedly we may say here that due to a wider spread in the lack of financial support and a growing loss of love for our own schools we are finding it more of a challenge to make ends meet. The membership base that actively supports our school on a financial level seems to be diminishing. Yet, sadly, if there are shortcomings these are not being brought to the attention of the board or membership. To have all communicant members share the financial burden would greatly reduce the burden, which is now shouldered by only a few. Therefore, to have a greater turn to home schooling will effectively increase the burden. Consider, in connection with the aforementioned, Acts 2:45.

What is it that we seek as Board of John Calvin School together with those who actively support the school? Simply to provide a rigorous academic training for our children that promotes a lifestyle that is actively centred on working within the communion of saints, in thankfulness to God. We desire that they should be built up as the wall that is adorned with jewels from Revelation chapter 21, which stands as a firm testament to the handiwork of God. We cannot do this on our own and recognize our complete dependency on our Covenant Father who equips the saints that we may work together in all aspects or live, with the education of our children being just one facet of that. We acknowledge that we struggle to do what is righteous and confirm that we even hurt and wound each other. Yet, we are also reminded to Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ." And so we may plead to all home schoolers, as well as our entire community, to help bear with us the burden of responsibility of educating out youth. Together then we may rejoice in our condition of mutual aid as the Lord gives us the ability to aid one another. We may rejoice together in bearing up one another in the fight against our sins.

At the same time we went to openly acknowledge that the effort and enthusiasm that is required by all those who take up the task of home schooling. The task is daunting. But, it is that same amount of energy and enthusiasm that we **need** within our schools. As such, we miss these qualities every time patents remove their children and thus their involvement from our school. As a Church we suffer when the gifts of some are removed even to a small degree, from the efforts that involve all of us working together.

Appendix B

Rockway Council. (2002, May). What is the unity of faith? In *Rockway Canadian Reformed Church, 5* (19-21). Author.[19]

What is the unity of faith?

Response to the John Calvin School position paper

Installment 1. Some time ago the Board of Directors of the John Calvin School saw fit to distribute 'a Position Paper in response to the Home Schooling Movement' to all the families of the Rockway church. Concerned about 'a growing loss of love for our own schools' (6) and a 'membership base that actively supports our school on a financial level (that) seems to be diminishing', (6) the Board felt constrained to address the question whether homeschooling is a legitimate way of educating our children. (4). Though the paper does not answer this question with a clear and resounding YES or NO, the reader is not left in the dark as to where the Board stands. By their own admission they used "very strong statements" (4) when they write that homeschooling "within the context of having a community based, Reformed, Christian school highlights a lack of necessary emphasis on the central importance of serving one another within the body of Christ" (4). They "also believe that it is due to erroneous elevation of certain ideals over working together and serving one another, standards outlined in Scripture"(4)

We commend the Board for its concern to promote Reformed education. Instructing our covenant boys and girls in the fear of the Lord is a matter that must lie close to the hearts of all church members. But we don't agree with the Paper's implied conclusions as if homeschooling parents are necessarily delinquent in their responsibility towards their brothers and sisters. It's a pity that the Board in order to strengthen its case comes with arguments which do not apply to the school but to the church! Statements like "In

[19] This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for some editorial issues, page margins and numbering.

Scripture we also see that when the tabernacle is built all of Israel come together to give of their wealth and their physical and mental ability" (4) and "In the New Covenant God builds his house from people. They are placed together by Him that they may glorify Him in working to aid one another", (4) clearly refer to the body of Christ, which is the church. (Eph 5:29,30; Coll 1:24b)

No matter how dear we hold the school it's not the same as the church. It's because of this intertwining of church and school that the paper draws conclusions and inferences that do not hold up in the light of God's Word. The Board seems to realize this intertwining danger, to some extent at least, when it writes "that the establishment of John Calvin School springs out of this understanding" (4). But 'springing out' is not the same as belonging to it! And how does it spring out? In what way must the obligations that come with belonging to the church be extended to other parts of life? Especially the obligation to 'Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ'? (6). That brings us to the title of this letter. What constitutes the unity of faith? What does it entail and what are its obligations?

The unity of faith which we share as members of Christ's body is found in Him and His Word. And in that alone! The moment we add to that, never mind how well we mean it, we assault the gospel of grace and introduce man-made teachings. It's by faith in Jesus Christ that we are united to Him and so to our brs and srs as well! And that faith is summarized in our creeds and confessions. Those creeds and confessions are not exhaustive! They do not cover everything the Bible contains. That means that we must bear with each other in love when we think differently about certain matters, which are not clearly spelled out in God's Word. It also means that we should not intrude on the Christian freedom and responsibility of each other to translate our common faith into action. (cf Roms 15:4; 1 Cor 10:29b,30)

The Position Paper of the Board of the John Calvin School seems to proceed from the premise that the unity of faith must result in unity of practice. With a reference to Eph 5:30 where Paul says that as believers we are members of his (Christ's) body, the Paper states that this 'shows the height and the depth of the <u>practical</u> (our underlining) unity that the members of the church must have'. (3) But is that what the Bible teaches? Sure, faith reveals itself in practice. Jesus said: "When you love me you will obey what I command". (John 14:15). And 1 John 3:24 tells us "Those who obey his commands live in him and he in them". But what does this obedience entail? What are these commands of Christ? Do they cover the practical matters as where to educate our children? Does Scripture give us case by case instructions how to do this and why not to do that?

Installment 2. We all know this is not the case. The greatest command of the Bible is to love God above all and the neighbor as ourselves. As a matter of fact, all God's commandments are dependent on it. (Matth 22:36-39). And that means, that when we love God and the neighbor, as summarized in the 10 commandments, the details are left to our own responsibility. Let us give you two examples. In the 4th commandment the

Lord calls us to sanctify the Sabbath Day. In Lord's Day 38 the church confesses what this entails. But does this now imply that every Christian, besides the non-negotiables of L.D 38, spends the Lord's Day in the same manner? We all know the answer. Some allow their children to swim in their pool after church while others don't. There used to be a time when some Christians wouldn't even use a bicycle or allow knitting on Sundays. Yet, as long as what they did or didn't do, proceeded from faith, they used their Christian freedom responsibly! The 10th commandment tells us that we may not covet! That's why some Christians don't want a T.V. or computer or patronize the video store, for instance. Afraid of being tempted to sin they voluntarily refrain from these matters while others claim that as long as you use them responsibly you do not come into conflict with the 10th commandment. Who is right? Who is wrong? May the first impose their 'views' on the others with the argument that we should help each other in the communion of saints and not have different practices? Does that belong to the 'unity of faith'? Does the one group let the other down and cause disunity within the body of Christ? Not necessarily! As long as both proceed from their love to the Lord and the neighbor and act in faith, the Bible tells us that we must not pass judgment on each other in matters like this but accept each other in Christ. (Roms 14). And that also applies when it comes to homeschooling. The Bible exhorts the parents to teach their children about God's commandments (Deut 6:7ff) and to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4).

And at the baptism of their children they promised to do that. This is a command that comes to all parents and knows of no exceptions. But does this mean that the way in which we do that must be the same way? Does it demand that all our children must attend John Calvin school, since if they don't, we do not care for the communion of saints?

Why were our schools established? Not to take over the responsibility of dad and mum but to help them. Our parents and grandparents saw the great importance of Reformed schools where the children were taught in line with what they heard in church, because dad and mum had to work long days to make a living. And in most cases they did not have the expertise either to teach them in the various subjects which children need to become responsible members of society.

But things have changed quite a bit since then. For one thing, homeschooling has become a legitimate means of education. And there is an ever growing support group that provides the necessary tools to help the parents instruct their children. That's why homeschooling has become a very attractive alternative. But there's more. The Board mentions some reasons for homeschooling "that have been made public". (4). We can not vouch for those reasons. But we can also think of other reasons. What about the prohibitive cost of Reformed education today? What about the fact that many mothers must work outside the home to help pay for it? And how many fathers do not try to get as much extra work as possible and as a result are often absent when it comes to family devotions at meal times? Does that promote a Christian family life? Is that what the Lord asks? Does this edify the communion of saints which always begins in the family? And besides, must we not also consider the danger that parents can 'transfer' their own

responsibility to the school? Leaving the nurture of their children to the teachers instead of making time and efforts to do that themselves, first of all? Times have changed, we said. And today we hear complaints that our teachers do not receive the necessary support of a growing number of parents who take issue with certain school rules that seek to implement a truly Christian atmosphere in our schools. Also our schoolsocieties do well to 'examine' themselves and to consider permanent expulsion when biblical demands are openly flouted or ignored.

Installment 3. We can't do without our Reformed schools. We ought to be very thankful for what the Lord has given us in them. Many parents do not have the time and ability to home school. That's why we have the God-given duty to see to it that Reformed day education can be received by all covenant children. But we must not draw the conclusion that the only way to support the school is by sending our children there and pay our dues. If, as a result of homeschooling the financial base is shrinking we should also note that smaller schools need less money. Our support must first of all be of a spiritual nature. To pray for our school remains a constant need. And if we decide to homeschool that prayer should not be lacking. Also homeschooling parents can be a hand and foot to their brothers and sisters by interacting with them and helping them to nurture their children in the fear of the Lord.

All men and women don't have to go to Men's and Women's Society to be a blessing for their neighbors. All our elderly members don't need to go to Ebenezer in order to practice the communion of saints. All our teachers are not compelled to work at our Canadian Reformed schools at the price of being unfaithful to their brothers and sisters. All Canadian Reformed persons don't have to vote for the CHP as if that's the only way to obey God in the political arena. We may not demand more than what the Bible demands. Adding to the Word of God is just as strongly denounced as taking away from it! (cf Deut 12:32; Rev 22:18,19). And there's no exemption clause when our motives are good. The unity of faith that binds us together as brothers and sisters is a spiritual unity, which is found in Christ and the gospel. When we go beyond that and demand unity of practice in matters where the Bible leaves us free, we introduce human regulations. And human regulations may promote uniformity but definitely not the unity of faith.

This is a danger for which we cannot warn enough. For it externalizes the Christian religion. Then our faithfulness to the Lord and his people is no longer measured by what we believe but by how we translate that belief into action. It may seem praiseworthy but it opens the door to a way of life where actions speak louder than motives, where our faith is determined by doing what the majority does instead of proceeding from a heartfelt and loving obedience to the Lord in Christian freedom. In our congregation at Rockway we have homeschooling families, which are very involved in the communion of saints. They use their gifts and talents in many ways for 'the benefit and well-being of the other members', (L.D.22; q/a 55). Granted, they do not send their children to John Calvin. But does that mean they don't care for the communion of saints and wash their hands of the education of the other children in the congregation? We do not believe so. If only

because they have never told us that or given us any reason to suspect it.

We understand that the Board of John Calvin wants to promote the school as much as they can. And we agree with that wholeheartedly. But this promotion is not served by their Position Paper. We believe that this Paper is detrimental to the unity of faith which we all share in Christ. It would have been much better if the Board had visited each family. Not only to find out why they homeschool but also to build bridges how to be a hand and foot to each other in the field of education within the communion of saints. That's the way to interact with each other. For that's the way where our unity in faith is utilized and called upon to be a blessing to each other in the Christian freedom which belongs to that unity. And which we ought to cherish instead of fear. It is our prayer that the Board will as yet follow this way. And that all of us will be and remain vitally interested in the Christian education of our covenant youth. Not necessarily by having the same practice but from the same motives. Scriptural motives which belong to the unity of faith!

Appendix C

Board of John Calvin School. (2003, May 4). Letter. *News & Views*. Smithville, ON: John Calvin School. Author.[20]

Open letter of the board of John Calvin School

Dear Brother and Sister,

Thank you for your letter in response to Building up the Body of Christ in Christian Unity. We appreciate the fact that you consider it important enough that you have responded with your thoughts.

As the manner in which the paper was issued was a source of considerable irritation allow us to address that in the first place. The fact that the paper ended up in the hands of all members of local congregations was not by design so much as using the very same method of dissemination as the News & Views. The intent here was first to send the paper out to our membership, the same people who are to receive the News & Views when it is issued. It was never the intention of the Board to usurp the God-given authority of the local consistories. The intention then was to promote "up-building discussion" within the membership first.

We recognize now that we have not followed a proper route especially from the point-of-view of speaking first to those who currently home school. We apologize to those who home school and ask for their forgiveness. We feel that we could have acted in a manner that took into account the deep sensitivities that surround this matter. At the same time we are willing to sit down with any individuals that would like to pursue further discussion of this issue with the Board. Further, allow us then to continue the discussion and table some further thoughts that represent our continued development in thinking and understanding.

Having studied this issue for some time we note the following writing by Rev. W.W.J.

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[20] This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for some editorial issues, page margins and numbering.

VanOene in *With Common Consent*. “It appears to us that making the parents’ obligation as we mention it in Art. 58 part of the promises made at baptism is putting something into these promises which is not there. It is what might be called “sound-dogmatics”, that is, going by the sound of the words and subsequently build up a theory without asking whether this is the meaning of the words indeed. The reasoning sounds convincing enough on first sight: a. Parents promise that they shall have their children instructed in the doctrine of God’s Word; b. Reformed schools give instruction on the basis of God’s Word and also teach the doctrine of Scripture; c. Ergo: parents promise that they shall send their children to a Reformed school. This syllogism sounds simple and logical, but the reasoning makes a few impermissible jumps from one category to a different category. We shall show this by asking what the parents promise at the baptism of their infants? In the first place that they shall teach their child in the doctrine of God’s Word, the doctrine of salvation. This refers to their own activity at home, where they teach their children to pray, and to show reverence when God’s Word is read; they also teach them God’s Word and gradually make clear to them what the Lord has promised us and asks of us.”

Further to this allow us to quote from *Clarion*, Volume 41, Nos. 13 & 14 where we find the following written by Dr. C. Van Dam, “no one could possibly object to the wish as such of parents who desire to raise their children at their homes as long as that is possible. Too often today children do not see enough of their parents and their upbringing is left solely to school teachers. No one will argue with the fact that parents do have the first responsibility for the education of their children. . . We must be careful not to create false dilemmas. For example, the dilemma Christian School or Home school is not a true dilemma. Both are Christian and both acknowledge the primary place and responsibility of parents for educating our children. Our Reformed schools are our home schools!”

Our intention with these two quotations is, in the first place, to make it very clear that we see in the paper an incorrect emphasis of the attendance of children in school as being an indication of where the parent’s heart necessarily lies. This is clearly a poor way to state our true concern.

When responding to our own question, “Does this then negate home schooling as a legitimate way of educating our children?” with “We believe that the tendency to home school within the context of having a community based, Reformed, Christian school highlights a lack of necessary emphasis on the central importance of serving one another within the body of Christ”, we misstated our true concerns. Our true concern is not one of physical bodies populating the school as it is with the support we show one another and how we show that support.

In the second place we would like to point out that we are not trying to raise the false dilemma as indicated by Dr. Van Dam. In this sense our further statement “We also believe that it is due to erroneous elevation...” is problematic in that it conjures up in one’s mind that there is a Biblical and confessional problem with home schooling. This is

going too far.

As well, we make note of the following statement of Dr. Van Dam, “We confess that we are obligated to use these gifts to the advantage of our brothers and sisters (*Heidelberg Catechism* Q & A 55). One of the things we use our financial gifts for is the maintenance of a parental Christian day school. We do this together. In an age of individualism, this fact needs to be stressed. We support and maintain our schools together, even if we have no children at school any more; for, we (correctly) understand education as a communal responsibility, a sacred covenantal obligation before God.”

In connection with this quotation, perhaps it was not well stated in the position paper, one of the concerns of the Board is “Why in many cases do those who go to home schooling promptly end their financial support and membership in John Calvin School?” Does this not immediately lead others to expect or suspect a.) that the brother and sister may be individualistic in their thinking, b.) may have a low regard of the deep need to work together for the benefit of others with their financial gifts, c.) may be in disagreement with various things being done in or around the operations of the school that perhaps they are not bringing to the attention of others?

A further concern is the pattern of growth of home schooling in evangelical circles as a response to the continuing decline of the secular schools. “Most of the popularity of present day home schooling is attributable to the moral bankruptcy of the public school system.” (Van Dam in *Clarion* Vol. 41, No.14) Is this the same reason why some of those in our Canadian Reformed circles are turning to home schooling? Do some of those who turn to home schooling see the school as no longer suitably supporting them in their task as parents? The action of removing membership and financial support, for the most part, leads us to believe that this may be the case.

Having said this we also realize that “It can also happen that a family decides to home school simply because they feel. . . that home schooling is a more appropriate way for them to raise their children... They have decided that they have the gifts and the time and the discipline to proceed with this and keep it up... it is simply that they believe the advantages of home schooling are such that for them it would be irresponsible not to proceed with it...we should accept that from such a family. We should not harass each other on matters of conscience if that is not necessary.” (Van Dam in *Clarion* Vol. 41, No. 14) Our desire is instead to work together sharing one another’s gifts that the school does not suffer, the community does not suffer and those who school at home will not suffer physically or spiritually.

We hope that these thoughts will clear up matters pertaining to the position paper. At the same time we look forward to meeting with those who request a meeting that together we may be a source of encouragement to one another.

With sincere Christian greetings,
The Board of John Calvin School

Appendix D

Summarized passage from sermon by Rev. Agema, May 11, 2003

In a sermon given on May 11, 2003, about Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Lord's Day 27 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Rev. Agema emphasized the intricate connection between the covenant and the congregation:

> Baptism is administered in the church, the covenant's promises and obligations are proclaimed in the church, and the church grows through the covenant. The children belong to both the covenant and the congregation; to the family, but also to the church; and therefore the education of the children is to be done within the communion of the congregation. That's why we established our schools: Not just parents, but all of us support this, because they belong to God's covenant *and* congregation. Breaking that relationship could harm the communion of the saints, and so we are called to be merciful: It is not my own little group, it is the congregation that sat around the Table this morning, and that is called to show that care for each other, that unity.

The sermon stimulated a new discussion on the topic of this study. After listening to an audio tape of the sermon, I indicated to Rev. Agema in a personal communication that Scripture does not *demand* schools: Schools are a solution to an educational question. He recognized that schools are the solution of our *culture*, and appeared to be prepared to give it further thought.

Appendix E

Breukelman, Emily. (n.d.). *Parable of a small town*.[21]

Parable of a small town

We will start with a small town.

In this town everyone drives the same kind of car, with the same colour. Let's say it's emerald green. The colour emerald green has been in the town's history for a very long time. It is very important to the people of this town. Some other cars do come and go. Some people see the beauty of green and change to this colour, but overall the town stays the same. The other feature of these cars is that they are all the same model. Let's say, for example, an Audi. It is somewhat expensive, but to most worth the extra cost. This model was fought for over every other brand of car, because it seemed to work best for this town.

This is not to say that this model car never caused any problems, but in this situation everyone in town was encouraged to change their car to implement the latest improvement. The community grew close for this reason. And yes, sometimes some didn't care enough, and sometimes they weren't concerned or saw the need for this improvement, but overall the cars ran smoothly. When a young person in this town received a license to drive, and he couldn't afford an Audi, the rest of the town would help him to purchase this same model car instead of going to a lower priced model car. This seemed to give this town an extra closeness.

Now one of the families of this quaint little town, without saying a whole lot to the others, scrapped the little car that was adopted by the town and came driving around with a K-car of exactly the same colour. It was said to have the same features as their other cars, but (according to them) it rides just a little better for them.

Now you're thinking what is wrong with that? The important part is that it's still emerald green. But the story isn't finished here. Over all, these residents look differently at the new style car, wondering if their Audi is now inferior. However, seeing it is emerald green, they don't know what to think or say, so they say nothing to the new owners. It is also known that the new owners start to promote their new auto as time passes, and the town doesn't seem any different. It is known by the town that the K-car is driven by others with emerald cars, but none are close enough by to really be an issue or

[21] This parable has been slightly edited from the original by kind permission of the author.

a comparison.

Before too long, another family of this quaint little town gets rid of their Audi and trades it in for the K car. Now the town gets a little concerned over what happens, because, let's face it, it's not always easy to accept change. However, instead of going to the residents who own the K-cars, people start to discuss this amongst themselves. Now I'm not saying this is correct on the town's part, but so be it, it's the way this story goes. Over time, four, five and then six residents are convinced this cheaper model is better for them and theirs.

This is not the only change happening in the town. The residents for whom the shape of the car is now no longer a priority (as they now own a cheaper, but not necessarily worse car) also no longer support as much as previously the other people, who do see it as a necessity to own the emerald Audi. As a result, the car dealer has more difficulty running his business. This, in turn, has the other townsfolk concerned that he may go out of business. Then, where will they get their emerald green cars? Also, some see this K-car not necessarily as the best car for the families who now own them and are concerned. It is hard to say this without hurting feelings. So, once again nothing is done. A restlessness invades the community. There is no town-law saying your car has to be an Audi. So how do they voice their concerns over this change?

Still another factor comes into play. Not only do these residents own K-cars, which leaves others feeling at odds with them, but they are now often seen associating with others who drive K-cars with a touch different shade of green. Now, this goes on for a while, and some of these people that are hanging around together change their coat of paint to emerald green. However, the K-car owners and their children are often seen with these others, and some people who are committed to the Audi are asking, why? What makes that other colour more attractive to associate with than us? It is a visible difference. Is the Audi the only one? No. Is it wrong to own a K-car? Maybe not. Did it change the whole social equilibrium in the town? Yes. Do we as the original car owners have reason to be concerned? That is the question.

Are we afraid that maybe the K-car-owners' children may grow up to marry or own cars not exactly emerald green, and that the style of car is important and not the exact shade of green? It has already been heard "it doesn't matter if you're emerald green just so long as you're green." Do we want to be Emerald Green, or is it good enough as long as you're considered green, and the rest doesn't matter? How much stress should be put on the emerald part? More and more it looks like the town, or a part of it anyway, is content to just be green.

This has me concerned that those strongly emerald green don't see the outside influence, not necessarily on themselves, but what of their children? Will they see the importance of being who we really are? Is it dangerous to rub these paints together? Is the painter mixing them together? Will the end result be a more vibrant colour or a watered down version of what we already have? When you start mixing, not only will

you not have the same colour that the small town has been striving to keep, but some paints won't mix, and we may have a whole other situation that I don't want to get into. I think it is our duty to strive for the true colour God intended. If people are attracted to us for our colour, they should use our paint, rather than mix the paints and expect the same colour!!

So, is home-schooling bad? Not in itself! Is non-Canadian Reformed bad? Not necessarily! But we are striving to stay true to God's Word. Let others join us! Why are we chasing them? Let us be a light to the world and in all things do it to His GLORY! The fight is hard and will get harder. So far on this story. The ending has yet to be written.

Unity is a distinguishing characteristic of God's people, which derives from their common relationship with God, and is expressed in commitment to one another, mutual concern, concerted action and harmony within the believing community. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

Appendix F

Vanvliet, Rev. J., and Terpstra, Gerald. (2003, February). *Letter from Lincoln consistory*. Beamsville, ON: Canadian Reformed Church.[22]

Letter from Lincoln consistory

Dear br. & sr.

We are writing to you concerning your choice to homeschool your children. From the start allow us to make clear some of the background which has prompted us to do this.

During the past few years numerous brothers and sisters (including those who homeschool) have repeatedly brought up this topic with their ward elders during home visits. It is obvious to us that the matter of homeschooling is on the minds and hearts of many in our congregation.

As consistory we realize that the responsibility for raising the LORD's covenant children lies, in the first place, with the parents. However, precisely because our children are first of all *the LORD's* adopted children (1 Jn 3:1), there are more people involved than just the parents. The Lord has graciously placed both parents and children with in His household, which is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). And within God's household we are all duty bound to help and assist each other, working together in all things for the benefit and edification of our fellow brothers and sisters (Rom. 12:4,5; Phil 2:4; BC Art. 28; LD 21). Within God's congregation, also the consistory has a responsibility with respect to the schooling of God's children. We all realize that church and school are not exactly the same thing, but they are certainly interrelated. It is for this reason that, as churches, we have also agreed that the elders have the following duty: "The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her Confessions" (Art. 58 Church Order.) Considering all of the above, we would like to ask you a number of questions.

1) What are your reasons for homeschooling your children? We realize that ward elders may have asked you this in the past, but what we have found is that with the regular changeover of elders, our understanding of your reasons may not be as clear as it

[22] This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for some editorial issues, page margins and numbering.

should be. Could you, then, provide us with a clear and complete explanation as to why you are presently homeschooling your children? Also, in this connection it has been noted that often those who homeschool do nevertheless send their children to the kindergarten which was started, and is maintained, by parents in our congregation(s). If you have made use of the kindergarten in educating your children, why then (*sic*) do you not continue by making use of the John Calvin Christian School and Guido de Brès Christian high School as well?

2) Practically speaking, what do you do to ensure that the content of your homeschool curriculum is "in harmony with the Word of God as summarized by the Church in her Confessions" (Art. 58 CO; compare also the second and third question in the Form for Baptism). There is, of course, a wide selection of Christian homeschooling material, however, certainly not all of it is distinctly Reformed, and some of it may, at certain points, contradict what we confess in the Three Forms of Unity. How do you as parents deal with this concern? Furthermore, what positive steps do you take to ensure that your children learn about what the Lord has given us in the history of His church, including the history of the Reformed churches? Are your children also learning to sing and memorize the Psalms as part of their education?

3) Could you explain to us what you are doing to help and assist your brothers and sisters in the congregation, specifically as it pertains to working together to raise God's covenant children? Also concerning the financial aspect of maintaining the schools, how do you help out your brothers and sisters? Do you support the schools? In some other congregations in Ontario (and possibly elsewhere), when parents have chosen to homeschool they have also voluntarily contributed full tuition (not membership) to the schools, or they contribute full tuition minus their expenses for homeschooling supplies. They do this because they want to shoulder the financial costs of covenant children just as much as any other family in the congregation. If you do not presently do this, would you be willing to do this? What are your thoughts about this?

We sincerely hope that you will receive these questions in the same spirit as they are asked, that is, with a genuine and brotherly desire to promote the upbuilding of the Lord's congregation here in Lincoln. Could you please provide consistory with a written response to these questions? You can give it to the clerk or to your ward elders. Once we have received your response, your ward elders would also like to meet with you in person to speak further about our letter and your response. Thank-you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours in Christ,
On behalf of the consistory,

Minister
Rev. J. Vanvliet

Corresponding Clerk
Gerald Terpstra

Vanvliet, Rev. J. (2003, December 16). *Letter from Lincoln consistory*. Beamsville, ON: Canadian Reformed Church.[23]

Educating the LORD's covenant children

A letter from the consistory to the congregation

Dear brothers and sisters,

Lately consistory has given attention to the matter of home schooling. You may well have gathered this from the press releases in the bulletin. In the first place, allow us to explain why we have been dealing with this matter. Over the past few years numerous brothers and sisters have brought up this topic during home visits. It is obvious to the consistory that this matter is on the hearts and minds of many, and that it does have an effect on the unity of the Lord's congregation in this place. On the one hand, we can be truly thankful that, in spite of differences in how we educate our children, the Lord has preserved us in the unity of the true faith (LD 21 Q&A 54). On the other hand, we must also be honest before the Lord and admit that when it comes to the education of His covenant children, we could be far more united than we presently are. And it is precisely at this point that we have a calling and a responsibility. For as apostles Paul and Timothy make clear: the Lord is glad when his people are "one in spirit and purpose" (Phil. 2:2).

Before we go any farther we should emphasize that the abovementioned calling and responsibility is the primary motivation and purpose behind this letter. The consistory always has a duty to fulfill with respect to the education of the children in the congregation (Art. 58 CO). However, especially when the unity of the flock is affected by this, then it is clearly something to which the shepherds should pay attention. We hope to do this by shedding the light of God's Word on a number of topics which are pertinent to the education of the children and youth in God's church.

The Identity of Covenant Children

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[23] This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for some editorial issues, page margins and numbering.

Children are a precious blessing from the LORD. And we love our children dearly! Hence this topic can stir our emotions. At the same time, whenever we think about *our* children, we must remember that they are, in the first place, *the LORD's* adopted, covenant children. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called *children of God*! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1) Also in the Old Testament, when the LORD rebukes His people for their detestable practice of child sacrifice, He says, "You slaughtered *my children* and sacrificed them to the idols" (Ezek. 16:16). Thus, by God's gracious work, our entire congregation is one, big family, "God's household" (1 Tim. 3:15). This also means that the blessings and the needs of our individual families should be shared with God's household, and vice versa. After all, that's what being a family (of God) is all about!

The Importance of Covenant Children

The children and youth of this congregation are vital to the future of God's church. The LORD works from generation to generation (Luke 1:50). This also means that how we instruct the youth of today will have a great impact on the church of tomorrow, especially when we consider that, the Lord willing, the youth of today will also become fathers and mothers in Israel who will be instructing the next generations. Knowing this should make all of us zealously careful about what decisions and actions we take concerning the instruction of our children. We are not just dealing with our own family or merely with present circumstances; we are dealing with the future of Christ's church.

Parental Responsibility and the Instruction of God's Children

It is clear from Scripture that the LORD instructs parents to instruct their children. Deuteronomy 6:6,7 is often cited in this connection. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Is this passage a divine mandate for parents to home school their children? No, for a close look at the context reveals that this is not the case. In Deut. 5 God has revealed the ten commandments. Then, following up on that, in Deut. 6 the LORD commands all parents to impress these ten commandments on their children. The ten commandments are not one and the same thing as the full range of subjects taught in school. We should be clear about this and not stretch God's Word into saying things that it does not say. In Deut 6 the LORD is not saying: "Parents, you *must* teach your children the full spectrum of educational subjects *at home*." Neither is the LORD saying: "Parents, you *must* teach your children the full spectrum of educational subjects *at a Reformed day school*." What the LORD is saying is this: "Parents, you *must* impress *the ten commandments* upon your children."

In order to be effective servants of the Lord in the church, and also in this world, the children of this congregation need to be instructed in that spectrum of subjects (Bible, History, English, Science, Math, French, etc.) This instruction ought to be fully in

accordance with Scripture, as we have also summarized this in our Reformed confessions. How shall we then – as parents, as congregation, as consistory – ensure that the youth of God's covenant receive a Reformed education? This leads us into our next topic.

Parental Responsibility and the Baptismal Vow

At the baptism of their child, parents make a promise before the LORD that they will instruct their child in the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, as summarized in the confessions, and that they will have their children instructed therein to the utmost of their power. In the first place, then, parents promise to exert themselves ("to the utmost of their power") in actively teaching their children about the doctrine of salvation as revealed in God's Word. All parents in our midst should regularly examine themselves, "Are we keeping this promise that we made?" However, parents also vow that they will not go it alone in this awesome task of instructing their child in this doctrine. Before the LORD they promise to involve others. This is the second part of the baptismal vow. Yet who are these "others"? This refers primarily to the catechism instruction which is given within the congregation. In catechism the minister, or other instructors, give comprehensive instruction in the doctrine of salvation, as summarized in the confessions, to the youth of God's covenant.

Since the second part of this vow pertains to catechism instruction, we would be going too far if we said that every parent also vows to have their children instructed at a parentally maintained Reformed day school, and that unless they do so, they are in violation of their vow. For then, what would we say about parents living in areas where the formation of such a school is not (yet) feasible (eg. Ottawa)?

By the same token, it is hardly surprising that *as a consequence* of their vow, parents and grandparents in our midst have been eager to establish Reformed schools because at those schools, in addition to the instruction given in the church, their children could also receive Scriptural and confessional instruction from school teachers who are gifted and trained in the ability to give such instruction. This flows out of the phrase "to the *utmost* of their power." That is to say, if it is good for our children to be "instructed therein" by the minister in church, then it is even better to also have this reinforced by other teachers in school.

The Education of Covenant Children and the Communion of Saints

The key question remains: what does the Lord say about how the full spectrum of educational subjects should be taught to covenant children? Does the Lord forbid parents from doing this in their own home? No, Scripture does not prohibit home schooling. However, within the communion of saints we must not only ask, "What does the Lord allow me to do?" but we must also and always ask, "What is most beneficial for the whole congregation?" The Lord teaches us this in 1 Cor. 10:23-24. *"Everything is permissible" – but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" – but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.* Granted, the context of that passage is not the education of

children. Yet the spirit of this Scriptural principle certainly also applies to the topic at hand. Indeed, in the previous chapter, the apostle Paul himself gave a good example of what it means to exert oneself for the good of many, even if that means foregoing certain "rights" or "freedoms" that the Lord gives us (1 Cor. 9).

The communion of saints is a beautiful gift from the Lord. The Lord gives such a vast and diverse collection of talents to the individual members of His church. Also the children and teenagers of this congregation have been blessed with many talents. All of these the Lord gives us in order that we might use them profitably "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7) of the entire congregation (cf. 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:1-8; LD 21 Q&A55; BC 28). Reformed schools like John Calvin and Guido de Bres do have their shortcomings and weakness. Nevertheless, the strikingly beautiful thing about such schools is that every week again a large cross-section of God's covenant children, along with their teachers, can use their diverse talents for the common good. This is not to say that those who home school do not see the importance of the communion of saints or using their God-given gifts for the common good.

However, brothers and sisters, as a congregation united by Christ, we must ask ourselves a few crucial questions:

Do we do the *most* beneficial thing for the communion of saints here in Lincoln by promoting two different ways of educating God's covenant children?

Do we do the *most* constructive thing that we can do within the communion of saints by having two parallel school associations, one for Reformed day schools and one for Reformed home schools? (Not all the home schooling families in our midst participate in the Reformed home schooling association, but such an association does exist.)

Do we do the *most* beneficial and constructive thing for the household of God when children within the same congregation are being taught different curricula?

Of course, when any curriculum is taught, the different talents and learning abilities of students need to be taken into consideration. Moreover, it is also true that sometimes the curriculum at our schools cannot meet the very special needs of a particular child. However, that is an exception. And as any parent knows, within a family consistency is very important. Children are not all alike, but parents must do their very best to be consistent in what they teach and how they teach it. That is also true for God's family, the congregation of Christ. Brothers and sisters, the way things are going now, we are losing consistency in what and how teach our children. The curriculum that is taught at John Calvin and Guido de Bres is not the same as the curriculum used in home schools, and one home school differs from another. If we keep going in this direction, these differences could quite possibly multiply as the years and generations go by. It would be a most beautiful thing if all the children of this congregation would be learning the same psalms and hymns and Scripture texts every week as they grow up. It would be a truly beneficial thing if all the children of this congregation would learn the same church history during the course of their schooling. Because within a household (of God),

consistency is something worth striving for.

In Scripture we hear the Lord exhorting us to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Phil 2:2). And if we really are united in spirit and purpose, then that unity will also show up in what we practice. Consistory is convinced that we could, and that we should, be far more united in how, and what, and where we teach the children whom the LORD has entrusted to us.

Educating God's Covenant Children and Finances

Sometimes it is said, "This whole thing comes down to nothing but money." And, yes, money is certainly part of the picture. However, before we go any farther about finances, two clarifications should be made. First of all, those who home school do not do it *only* for financial reasons. They do it for a variety of different reasons, although some have indicated that finances have been part of their considerations. In the second place, when parents who have their children instructed in the schools are concerned about constant shortfalls in school budgets, then that concern is not "just about money"; but it is about the quality of education. For the fact of the matter is that, over the long term, since the schools are regularly short on money, this does affect the *quality of the education* in a negative way. It becomes more difficult to attract and hire sufficient teachers, to buy new textbooks, to properly maintain the school buildings, to possibly purchase an extra bus to reduce overcrowding and travelling times for children, etc, etc.

Many things could be said concerning finances, but let all of us focus on one command of the Lord. By "all of us" we do mean *everyone* in the congregation. The command on which we should focus is this: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). This is our Saviour's so-called "golden rule" of love for our neighbour. Obviously, running a Reformed elementary and high school is an enormous financial commitment. Tuition paying parents have to shoulder the greatest financial load. According to Christ's command, it should be completely obvious what all of us should do. If we would be tuition paying parents, then we would appreciate it so much if *all* of our brothers and sisters in this congregation did as much as they could – regularly, each month – in order to help keep the cost of tuition down. So, brothers and sisters, let's follow the command of Christ, and do unto others as we would have them do to us!

And in this department we do have a long ways to go. The fact is that there are many brothers and sisters in this congregation, both young and old, who are not financially supporting the schools and, therefore, are not helping the tuition paying parents. This is appalling! For this is not in line with the golden command of Christ.

Conclusion

Consistory acknowledges that, as such, Scripture does not forbid that parents would home school their children. However, consistory does not want to promote that, as a congregation, we go in the direction of cultivating two different ways of educating

God's children. We say this for the following reasons:

1) It is possible for all of us to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, working together to educate our covenant children in the same way. This may not be feasible in all locations and at all times (eg. small, remote congregations where Reformed schools cannot, or have not yet been established). However, here in Lincoln it is certainly possible.
2) Since the Lord exhorts us to be like-minded, one in spirit and one in purpose (Phil 2:2), as a congregation, we should put this into practice and strive to go in the direction of being more united in how we educate God's covenant children.

Brothers and sisters, we have received so much from the Lord here in Lincoln. We have communion with Christ, and we share in all His treasurers and gifts. We share our worship, our joys and our sorrows together. Yet there is room for improvement. One important area that should be improved is the one that this letter has been about: educating God's covenant children.

Under the Lord's blessing, we can become more united in this. So, let's work on it – together. Let us also not be afraid to speak openly and forthrightly with each other about this. To this end, the consistory also plans to reserve some time at the upcoming congregational meeting in February for a brotherly discussion on this topic. And may this all be to the furthering of God's glory in our midst.

Yours in Christ,
The consistory in Lincoln

December 16, 2003

Appendix G

Why not join other Christian schools?

There is a difficulty with Van Brummelen's (1986, pp. 260, 276) charge that Canadian Reformed people wanted to protect the purity of the group when they started their own schools. Although it may have played a role, they would argue that the separation begins with a conviction regarding the condition of the covenant child before God. This appendix shows that this was not always an issue, how it became one, and how it remains one.

School with the Bible

Before 1945, leaders told members of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands to support the non-denominational, but predominantly Reformed, Christian School with the Bible. Van Brummelen speaks of these schools as well. "Denominational schools are church-ism," Janse (1936) said, and he recognized "God's covenant faithfulness to those who do not follow Jesus with us" (p. 202). While church-union was not kid's work, he argued that this Christian school must yet talk about God's Word and the church:

> in order that the children learn to appreciate this as a great gift of God, as a covenant holiness, as one of the greatest benefits of the communion of saints in the church: the communion with Christ Himself in the worship service and together. (p.203)

Holwerda (1941/1974, pp. 92-96; 99) also encouraged people to fully support the School with the Bible, reminding them that these schools integrate the Bible with all subjects to recognize God as creator and ruler of the cosmos, and that children must be trained to serve Him in all of life. Christian education is a matter of the covenant, which sets God's people and their children apart from the rest of the world. The triune God calls for this separation and will provide the means for it:

> For God, who will, in answer to the prayer of his church, one time destroy the world, will, in answer to the prayer for the hallowing of his Name, also make the world new in and through the school. (p. 102)

Some people in Holwerda's audience likely doubted that children of believers do belong to God's covenant. The Bible tells something about God's decree of election (e.g., Ephesians 2), which sets certain people apart from others to believe and be saved from God's wrath. It speaks more elaborately of God's covenant, in which He includes believers as well as their children (e.g., Genesis 17). However, as people do not know who is elect, some would say that it is equally unclear who is in the covenant. For some believers it becomes important to *lead their little ones to Jesus*, overlooking that they already belong to Him. Pride (1985) refers to "making sure they turn out to be (God's) kids" (p. 99), and Bethany accepted only students likely to "go on to serve the Lord" (Peshkin, 1986, p. 48).

Abraham Kuyper

The seeds of doubt had been sown by Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). Trying to meld covenant and election, he devised the *theory of presumed regeneration*, by which the obscurity of election overshadowed the certainty of God's covenant. Reformed churches had always taught the certainty of God's covenant promises as sealed in Baptism (de Brès, 1561/1995, 34; Ursinus and Olevians, 1563/1995, 26-27; Canons of Dordrecht, 1619/1995, I:17; Form for the Baptism of Infants, 1995), but Kuyper subjected the certainty of these promises to a presumed bud of regeneration God might plant in the child before, during, or after Baptism. Without the bud, Baptism wasn't real, and God promised nothing. The doctrine left parents in doubt about the condition of their children before God. However, Baptism does not seal God's work (of planting a bud), but God's promises (see also Faber, 1995, p. 13; Stam 1999, p. 166).

Kuyper made this uncertainty explicit in a booklet that was popular as a gift for young people who publicly professed their faith for over fifty years. He advised parents to pray for the mercy of certainty (1891). He writes:

> If it doesn't please Him, the Father of all spirits, to give your little child the mercy of regeneration beforehand, and to thus plant the bud of faith-capability, then Baptism will be of no value to your child, even if it were baptized ten times; yes, then that Baptism would rather make the judgment heavier for your child.(p. 52).

On subsequent pages, Kuyper reiterated the implications of this uncertainty. At Baptism, parents were asked whether they believed that their children were sanctified in Christ, and Kuyper counseled that "you don't really know this for sure." (p. 72).

Parents were also asked to promise that they would instruct their children, or have them instructed, in the doctrine of the Old and the New Testament to the utmost of their power. Kuyper, who worked hard to promote Christian education and *Schools with the Bible* (see also Langley, 2001), counseled to also choose a school with much care:

> From generation to generation the knowledge of God must be transplanted through the work of nurture and education, and it is this vow at Holy Baptism by which you bind yourself to cooperate in that great work. And as this nurture and education takes place to a significant extent at school and in catechism class, you have to consider well where to send your child to school, and where you send it for catechism, because it would be a burden of guilt before God if you were to choose carelessly in this. But even if you did choose with care, it only remains a matter of assistance, and nothing relieves you from the vow to also personally, yourself, to help instruct this God-given little child in the way of life. (p. 73)

In 1892, one year after the publication of Kuyper's booklet, a unification of Reformed churches took place that had left the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 and 1886, respectively. In this unification, Kuyper's theories were an issue that was but temporarily resolved at the Synod of Utrecht, in 1905. Keizer (1990) quotes,

> According to the confession of our churches, the seed of the covenant is to be considered regenerated and sanctified in Christ according to God's promises, until the opposite becomes clear in their lives and in the ideas they hold when they grow up. However, it is less accurate to say that baptism is administered to the children of believers on the ground of their presumed regeneration, because the ground for baptism is God's promise and ordinance. (p. 187)

The *less accurate* section in the second sentence in the formula set out the controversy, and was meant to gently correct Kuyper. Holwerda and Janse could thus promote *Schools with the Bible*, because the matter had been left alone until the 1930s.

Critical Review

In the 1930s, church leaders like K. Schilder, S. Greijdanus, and B. Holwerda began to critically analyze and review Kuyper's theories from a scriptural perspective. They faced solid opposition from people who favoured Kuyper's bulwark and reputation. The latter swung subsequent synods to a sectarian move (see also Schilder, n.d.) which made Kuyper's theories binding doctrine. Further, in 1944, synod usurped power and proceeded to suspend and depose all professors of theology and office-bearers who seemed to disagree. This led to a schism, in which Kuyper's critics liberated themselves from a sectarian synod that assumed powers that belong in the local church. The critics continued as the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated), and when, upon immigration to North America, some of them found that the Christian Reformed Church sided with the sectarian and hierarchical Dutch synod, they established the CanRC.

The schism ended fruitful cooperation in the schools: there was a fundamental, explicit, and unavoidable difference of opinion about the condition of the children in the classroom: are the promises of the covenant valid for them, or are they not? Should the child be disciplined as one who does belong to God's covenant, or as one who may? Can a teacher or a parent appeal to what God has done for the child, or must they hope for the best?

The issue became personal for me in the mid-1960s, when my father's milking business was floundering. Providentially, several of his customers joined resources to build what would become the largest dairy farm in the country, and asked Dad to become the salaried manager and live on the farm. We would have to ride our bikes more than 10 km to attend a Reformed school, but the prospect was very appealing. The entrepreneurs pressed their solution: send them to the Christian school in town! "In that case," Dad responded, "Sikkema is not coming." His baptismal vows counted, and the general Christian school in town would not meet the standard. They acquiesced to his principles, and we rode our bikes.

Three Streams

Van Middelkoop (2001a, p 76) describes three general streams of Christian education in The Netherlands, which roughly parallels the classification of Vriend (1992) for the North American situation. One stream, not unlike Peshkin's Bethany Baptist Academy,

and Vriend's *antitheticals*, has an *Anabaptist, pietistic, and experiential* slant that emphasizes not to be of the world; it looks at the soul and personal commitment to Christ, and views the world as a sinking ship from which to save as many as possible. The school prepares students for witness and saving souls, with a strongly heaven-ward orientation.

Another stream, which Vriend characterizes as *positive Calvinists*, is known for being *in the world*. It seeks engagement in God's creation and culture to improve the world and to strive for peace, justice, love, and redemption. Avoiding dogma, it is earth-bound, secularizing, activist, and modern, and trains students as soldiers against war, for peace, and to humanize society. Snyder (1991, p. 101) identifies a North American parallel in the *Kingdom as Christianized Culture*, with goals of transformation and social reconstruction. Walsh and Middleton (1984, pp 90, 160-186) for instance, believe that Christians should seek an understanding cultural phenomena and bring them under the *lordship of Christ* as a *redemptive task*. The Christian community must thus transform culture to conform to Christian norms, and get engaged in scholarship that gives hope for a renewed Christian academic presence, which in turn spreads *shalom* throughout our culture. Van Brummelen fits here, as does the school my Dad rejected.

Van Brummelen (2000) does regret the secularizing decline of many of these schools in The Netherlands, and calls for Christian schools to appoint good board members and teachers and to recapture what he sees as the Christian distinctiveness of a Christian school. He also advises to not build it on covenant theology or the Reformed confessions. He does not seem to grasp how basic covenant theology and Reformed confessions are to Reformed education. Snyder (1991) correctly identifies that there is a mismatch between the (Kuyperian) Calvinism of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto and Calvin himself: "For Calvin himself (as for Schaeffer) such (cultural) activity flows from rather than replaces the fundamentally inner and spiritual nature of God's reign" (p. 49).

Reformed education is Van Middelkoop's third stream, which parallels Vriend's *confessional* class. It acknowledges God the Father's good creation, man's fall into sin, God the Son's redeeming mercy, and renewal of God's rule through the Holy Spirit. It sees Christians as *in the world, yet not of the world*: as God brings salvation to people, their whole being and way of life on this earth becomes a life in communion with God. Without this communion, it is impossible to exist, to know, and to be actively engaged in his world (see also Snyder, p. 49). The Reformed faith receives direction from God's revelation only, and Reformed education leads to a world- and life-view that is dependent on the preaching of the Word, and that cannot be passed on other than by people who are committed to it. This is also the strong link Reformed schools maintain with the church.

The reason to have closed Reformed schools for governance, membership, staff, and students is not just a desire to protect the sociological purity of the group, but a conviction that faithfulness in the covenant and the church is a prerequisite for faithfulness in nurture and education (Van Middelkoop, 2001a, pp. 77-85). It is striking

that Van Brummelen (2000) rejects precisely that.

Appendix H

Issues about research in home schooling

Researchers in home schooling face various obstacles in their work. Knowles (1998, p. 305) notes that until the 1980s home schooling research was difficult because it existed largely underground. Archer (1999) further observes that typical pitfalls of social science research are exacerbated by home schoolers' hesitance to participate, and by the often politically and emotionally charged nature of the discourse. Scholarly journals appear less interested in topics further removed from public education, and studies may appear to be skewed because representative samples are hard to get, or because they receive funding from organizations interested in positive or good-looking outcomes. Ray (1999, p. 18) acknowledges the non-experimental nature, lack of long term research, and the sampling problem in his studies.

There also is disagreement among researchers. Kaseman & Kaseman (2002) of Home Education Magazine (HEM) argue that Stevens' (2001, pp. 143) simple dichotomy (HSLDA *believers*, and HEM-associated *inclusives*) does injustice to the diversity that exists (see also Homer, 2002; Knowles, 1998; Lines, 2000b; MacMullen, 1985; Ray, 1994, 2000). Stevens' dichotomy diminishes each family's right and freedom to home school according to their own principles, they claim, and home schoolers are better placed on a continuum from strict curriculum-followers to avowed unschoolers.

Cizek (cited in Archer, 1999) sums up that home schooling has a very uncoordinated research agenda, that very little research is of an experimental nature, that much is based on small samples, that it is very descriptive and often limited to achievement and socialization questions, and that little is known about who is and how many are involved in home schooling. He also notes the variation in estimated numbers of home schoolers (see also Cloud and Morse, 2001; Diamond, 2001; Lines, 1999).

Bias also plays a role in the research. Willard (2001) of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) shows this when evaluating Basham (2001). Rudner (1999) is careful to point out that it is hazardous to compare home school achievements with those of public or private schools, especially because many variables are not accounted for. He cites one-on-one education vs. large school classes; individualized vs. reaching a wide range of abilities; widely varying levels of parental involvement in their children's education; differences in curriculum flexibilities; and others (e.g., CCSD, 1999).

Many data presenting strengths of home schooling are American, and American studies are not necessarily representative of Canadian realities. Arai (2000) finds that the reasons parents have for home schooling differ, but it is also reflected in the PISA 2000 (2000) results about school achievement. These differences may not be huge, but they are significant. For instance, of the 28 participating countries,

- Canada ranked 3rd in general reading proficiency at level 3 or above, and the USA

15th, or just above average;

- Canada ranked 4th, with 17% of Canadian students rated at the top reading level 5; but the USA ranked 7th, with only 12%;
- 8% of Canadian students could only just manage the simplest reading tasks at level 1, ranking 3rd, with a corresponding figure of 18% for the US, ranking 18th;
- Canada ranked 2nd for mean reading literacy with a score of 530, while the US ranked 15th, with a score of just over 500;
- In math and science literacy, Canadians also scored well above their American neighbours.

Furthermore, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest that a strong sense of efficacy combined with attributions to effort result in improved achievement. In general, American parents trust that ability caps attainment, and they have low expectations of improved effort. They praise their children for even modest accomplishments–unlike Chinese and Japanese parents, whose children perform much better. To complicate matters, Calamai (1999, p. 6) quotes figures from *Reading the future: A portrait of literacy in Canada* (1996) that look much worse than PISA outcomes, calling into question whether any data can be trusted at all. Hepburn (1999) gives data that are more closely aligned with Calamai's. The available research suggests not to assume the validity of US data for Canadian reality.

In short, research in home schooling is plagued by several elements. They include the reluctance of home schoolers to participate in studies, the difficulties in finding representative samples, internal controversy, difficulty with generalizations, a poorly coordinated research agenda, the descriptive nature and a limited scope of much data, guesswork, dangers of applying data of one country or study to another, the interpretation of data, and political bias.

Appendix I

Achievements of home schooling

Rudner (1999) conducted one of the most significant achievement studies of home schooled children in the USA. The study involved 20,760 K-12 home school students in 11,930 families in 1998. All of these students were enroled in a Bob Jones University home schooling program. Depending on their current grade, they were administered the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (ITBS) or the *Test of Achievement and Proficiency* (TAP). Rudner summarizes the achievement findings of his study as follows (pp. 27-28):

- Almost 25% of home school students are enrolled one or more grades above their age-level peers in public and private schools;
- Home school student achievement test scores are exceptionally high. The median scores for every subtest at every grade (typically in the 70th to 80th percentile) are well above those of public and Catholic/Private school students;
- On average, home school students in grades 1 to 4 perform one grade level above their age-level public/private school peers on achievement tests;
- The achievement test score gap between home school students and public/private school students starts to widen in grade 5;
- Students who have been home schooled their entire academic life have higher scholastic achievement test scores than students who have also attended other educational programs;
- There are no meaningful differences in achievement by gender, whether the student is enrolled in a full-service curriculum, or whether a parent holds a state issued teaching certificate;
- There are significant achievement differences among home school students when

classified by amount of money spent on education, family income, parent education, and television viewing.

Welner and Welner (1999, April 11) pointed out some of the difficulties with Rudner's (1999) work. Aside from his relatively small sample, they emphasized, for instance, that home schoolers are far more racially and religiously diverse than those who work with Bob Jones University (BJU) only, from whom Rudner took his sample, and that increasing numbers of home schoolers (especially *unschoolers*) do not administer standardized tests. In addition, they also found that Rudner's findings about home schoolers' median family income, family composition, habits of television watching, and ideologue orientation may fit well with the BJU population he studied, but would need further scrutiny if applied to home schoolers in general. For the Christian community considered in this present study, one would expect more similarity with the BJU population. It also would be of interest to compare Rudner's (1999) demographics with the ones found by Van Pelt (2004).

Appendix J

Perceptions and expectations of the impact of home schooling

On February 26, 2002, I asked a university class to prepare testable hypotheses about "the current status of home schooling and 1) its effect on literacy, 2) its effect on school achievement in general, and 3) its effect on public education or your job." The chief purposes of the exercise were to gauge perceptions of home schooling, and to arouse interest in a presentation about actual data available from research (Wlodkowsky, 1990).

I divided the class into three groups. Group A consisted of teachers only; Group B included a JK teacher, a primary teacher, and a social worker; and Group C included some full time students.

Table 7 represents the responses of each group. Considering that the sample was highly selective and very small (less than ten adult university students; all but one female), and conducted in an informal manner, it would be precarious to base any general conclusions on its outcomes. It is shared here for interest only.

Analysis of the responses, and comparison with actual data (Ray, 1997), gave the following results.

Group 1 lumped the first two hypotheses together, and was moderately right. Ray suggests that religious affiliation and parental education have little predicting power about home schooling achievement. If private schools receive funding, and parents have more choice, overall achievement goes up, and the socioeconomic effect is reduced. Home schooling is expected to level off at perhaps 3% of the population: it just is not something everybody can do.

Group 2 was much too pessimistic. Home schooled children perform exceptionally well in all academic learning areas, and typically score in the 75th to 85th percentile on average. The effect on (teaching positions in) public education is fairly small.

Group 3 was surprisingly right if it meant to say that there is a positive effect on achievement in the first two scenarios. The fear that it will lead to school closures appears unwarranted in view of Ray (1997).

Table 7
Hypotheses Regarding the Effect of the Current Status of Home Schooling on Literacy, on School Achievement in General, and on Public Education or on Your Job.

	Effect of Home Schooling On:		
	Literacy	**School Achievement**	**Public Education or Your Job**
Group A	Home schooling has different effects on literacy and school achievement, depending on the educational level and religious affiliation of parent-teachers.		Other than Private Schools, home schooling has a marginal impact on public education
Group B	Home schooled children have the same or higher literacy rates	Home schooled children lack in areas of math, science, extra curricular, and social skills	There is no effect on public education and our jobs
Group C	Home schooling and literacy are positively correlated	Home schooling is positively correlated with achievement	It will have a negative effect and lead to school closures

Appendix K

Sample request to participate in research letter[24]

Dear Toc, ON, home schooler or school representative:

In September, 2000, I enrolled in the Graduate Studies in Education program at Brock University in St. Catharines, to work towards a Master of Education degree. I also noticed at the time that there continues to be tension in the Niagara Peninsula Canadian Reformed community regarding home schooling. One of our ministers spoke on the topic in the spring of 2001, but that occasion gave limited voice to home schoolers. When I tried to write an *Education Matters* column on the topic for CLARION, I found myself unable to give it a fair representation that would also alleviate tension in the community. The topic was just too big for a column, and I made it the focus of my M.Ed. studies instead.

I have since been reading much literature related to home schooling, and now need to do research on which to write a thesis. As a researcher, my goal is to hear and record the individual voices of home schooling parents in the context of the indicated tension, and hopefully find common ground or make suggestions that can help build bridges to alleviate the strain. After all, it is more important to live in love and harmony with each other (Book of Praise, p. 603) than to follow exactly the same format for educating our children.

For my research, I would like to record (on audio-cassette) your responses and reactions to several questions. I ask you to be a focus group for my study, as you have a reputation for maintaining a cordial relationship with the local Canadian Reformed schools. The questions all relate to the reasons why you chose to home school, why you continue to do it, how you see it fit (theologically, philosophically, and socially) in the Reformed tradition of schooling, what you think causes the tension around this matter, and especially what can be done to build bridges overcoming the tension. I encourage

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[24] This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for page margins, numbering, and deletion of name, address, and date information.

you to contribute points I have not asked for, but that you think are important for me to record and consider.

The interview would last from one to two hours, and I would like to arrange that at our mutual convenience in the month of November, 2002. In order to keep the voices separate and individual, I would ask that you do not discuss your responses with other participants or on the home school loop until after the interviews have been transcribed and edited by December, 2002. After I have transcribed the interviews, I will ask you to edit your transcript for errors or clarification. Unless you desire otherwise, your responses will remain anonymous. I will keep you posted about the progress of my study after that, and invite you to my thesis defence sometime in the fall of 2003.

For your information, I will also be discussing the same issues with past and present leaders in the John Calvin School society, as well as with home schoolers in the Niagara Peninsula.

Please give this some thought, and consider whether you would be interested in being a participant in the study. I will be contacting you regarding this on .....

Sincerely,

Appendix L

Detailed information letter and consent form[25]

Dear prospective participants:

Since September, 2000, I have been working towards a Master of Education degree at Brock University in St. Catharines. To graduate from this program, students need to complete a research thesis or project on a topic of their choice. When one of our ministers addressed the issue of home schooling in our Canadian Reformed community in the spring of 2001, home schoolers received but a limited voice, and the discussion illustrated well how high the tensions run on this matter. I chose to seek University approval for doing a study on that tension, with the hope that ways can be found to resolve it and to restore harmony on this point. My study proposal has since been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board of Brock University, and has received its approval on April 22, 2002, to proceed under the working title, "Home Schooling in View of John Calvin". My supervisor for this study is Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir of the Education Department at Brock University, who can be reached at 905-688-5550 (ext. 3710) or Manleyc@ed.brocku.ca for email. I invite you to be one of the participants in this study. If you are interested, please read on, and sign the consent form attached.

The purpose of the study is to hear and record the voices of home schooling couples in the context of the indicated tension, and to hopefully find common ground or make suggestions that can help build bridges to alleviate the strain. For the context, a separate interview will be conducted with a focus group consisting of past and present chairmen of the school board. To help find ways to alleviate the strain, a separate interview will be conducted with a focus group of home schoolers in a community that reportedly does not experience the tension we do. I work from the premise that it is more important for us to live in love and harmony with each other (Book of Praise, p. 603) than to follow exactly the same format for educating our children.

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25 This document was copied electronically and has not been altered from the original, other than for page margins, numbering, and deletion of name, address, and date information.

During a confidential interview that will last from one to two hours, I will record (on audio-cassette) your responses and reactions to several questions relating to the reasons why you chose to home school, why you continue to do it, how you see it fit (theologically, philosophically, and socially) in the Reformed tradition of schooling, what you think causes the tension around this matter, and what can be done to build bridges overcoming the tension. I also encourage you to contribute points I have not asked for, but that you think are important for me to record and consider. I would like to arrange the interviews at a place and time of your convenience on an evening in the month of October, 2002, if you are a home schooling couple, and in November, 2002, for the focus groups.

After the interview, I will as soon as possible transcribe all that was said, and send the transcript back to you, the participants involved, for editing and/or clarification as you see fit. The edited transcripts will become the basis for my research. I hope to have all edited transcripts in my possession by Christmas, 2002. Until that time, I would like you to keep the content and nature of the interviews strictly confidential, as it might otherwise skew the outcomes of the study.

During the following months I will analyse the collected data, looking for emerging patterns, categories, and themes that will help me with the stated goals. I will keep you informed of my progress every three or four months, and hope to be able to invite you to my thesis defence in the fall of 2003 if all works out well. The final results of my study will be placed in the thesis section of the Instructional Resource Centre on the second floor of Welch Hall at Brock University, and I intend to make a copy available to Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College in Hamilton as well. In addition, it is likely that elements of the study will show up in columns in CLARION or other, perhaps more scholarly, publications. I also envision conducting presentations on the topic in our communities and beyond.

Depending on who you are, and what your status is as a participant, you may feel somewhat uncomfortable about participating in this study. First, home schooling participants may perceive me as an agent of John Calvin School, trying to convince you to join the school society. In the context of this study, however, any attempt on my part to convince you of a certain position would jeopardize both the outcomes of the research and my graduation with the desired degree. My purpose is to ask, listen and record, not to argue or to persuade. Second, you may be concerned that my partial sponsor, the board of John Calvin School, may pressure me to 'find' a particular set of outcomes. However, this board fully understands my purpose, and recognizes that my studies have a much wider application than the particular question I chose to investigate.

If you are participating as a home schooler from outside the core area of the study, you may wonder whether your responses will be the sole basis for possible solutions. They are not. There are many examples of schools in which similar strain has been experienced, and where solutions have been found. I am looking for a distinctly Canadian

Reformed situation in which things have fallen comfortably into place.

If you are participating as a board member, you may be concerned that this study will distract from my commitment to our Canadian Reformed Schools. I am wholeheartedly committed to Reformed education and our communities, as you may have gleaned from my columns in CLARION. However, mindful of the premise on which I am doing this study, I am open to creative ways in which we can grow and continue to support one another in the education of the next generation. Home schoolers may not be excluded from the communion of saints.

In either case, whether you are a home schooler or a board member, it is conceivable that you are uncomfortable with me using your name in a study, which will later be available for public perusal. Unless you desire otherwise, you will be identified by code name in the thesis to preserve your anonymity and confidentiality. Finally, you need to know that all the raw data for the study, as well as the code for your name, will be kept in a secure place for three years after completion of the study. After that, they will be shredded or erased as appropriate for the format in which they are kept. Furthermore, if at any time during those three years the need would arise to revisit the raw data to which you contributed and to identify you as the subject, you will be re-contacted for your consent, unless you wish to give that consent up front. I trust that re-contacting will be possible either directly, or through the consistory of the church to which you may have moved at the time.

The study also has potential benefits. Until now, home schooling parents in our community have not been generally well received by those who continue to support the school. Their voice is now not hard or well understood, and I sincerely hope that my study will help change that. For my focus group in the other community, the benefit is in the opportunity to express how things go well with you, and to help others that struggle on this point. For school board members, the study will undoubtedly help shed light on the nature of home schooling, and encourage a broadening of scope when it comes to educating the next generation. In the end, I hope the study will promote the love and harmony to which I referred above. That is, in fact, the overall benefit I am looking for.

It is conceivable that you may wish to ask the Research Ethics Officer regarding legal rights or other questions you may have. It is good for you to know that your participation is voluntary and that you have no obligation to continue as a participant at any point during the process. If you do have other questions, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer at the Office of Research Services at 905-688-5550 (extension 3035).

As suggested above, the board of John Calvin School partially sponsors my Master of Education studies at Brock University. This sponsorship is part of a contractual stipulation, by which teachers are entitled to a 50% contribution towards tuition for courses that can be interpreted as professional development.

CONSENT FORM:

BROCK UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Informed Consent Form

Title of this study: Home Schooling in View of John Calvin

Researcher: Keith Sikkema

Supervising Professor: Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir

Name(s) of Participant(s): as appropriate

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate is an effort to hear and record my voice regarding my reasons to home school even as there is a Canadian Reformed school in the area. The thrust of the investigation will be to look for ways in which the tension that exists in our community regarding this matter can be bridged, and harmony can be restored. The investigation will involve a one- to two-hour interview at a place agreeable to me, and some effort on my part to edit the transcript of the interview before Christmas, 2002.

I have read and understand the accompanying letter of information, including the potential harms and benefits this study may have for me.

I understand that this study is partially sponsored by the Board of John Calvin School in Smithville, and that the outcomes of this study in no way affect that sponsorship.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.

I understand that there will be no payment for my participation, but that my participation will be formally recognized.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive, offensive, or inappropriate.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers, unless I desire otherwise. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.

I understand that I will receive regular updates on the progress of this study until its completion, and that I will be invited to the thesis defense when the date, place, and time have been established.

I understand that I may ask questions in the future, and give my free consent to participate in this research by signing this research consent form.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

I also give my prior consent to use the data collected in this study for secondary analysis, if so desired.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock Research Ethics Board, file # 01-259, Sikkema. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you may contact Keith Sikkema at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or Professor Manley-Casimir at XXX-XXX-XXXX, extension XXXX.

Thank you for your participation! Please take one copy of this form with you for further reference.

* * *

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteers.

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix M

Sample feedback letters[26]

(After each interview)

Dear participant,

This letter is to express my appreciation for your participation in my research for a Master of Education thesis I am currently preparing at Brock University. The impact home schooling has on our communities is significant, and it is important for us not to overlook the higher calling to live in love and harmony with each other.

You have previously received a draft transcript of the interview in which you participated. In order for me to proceed with the research, I would ask you again to read the transcript and edit it for clarification or correction as you see fit, and to return it to me by December 20, 2002. Please give special attention to areas in which I indicated that I was not sure what to write. If I do not receive word from you by December 20, I will assume that you are comfortable with the transcript without the need for editorial changes, and use it for further analysis.

For the protection of your anonymity, and the integrity of my raw data, I would ask you to hold off sharing with others what transpired during this phase of my research, until after you receive my confirmation of receipt of the edited version of the transcript. I would expect that confirmation to come no later than the middle of January, 2003.

Thank you again for your participation in my study.

Sincerely,

(January, 2003)

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26 These documents were copied electronically and have not been altered from the original, other than for page margins, numbering, and deletion of name, address, and date information.

Dear participant,

Thank you for returning the edited transcript of the interview in which you participated. With it, I will now be able to do further analysis of the data in preparation for my thesis on home schooling.

Please expect an update on my progress in the analysis by May. At that time, I will not be able to disclose the conclusions for my study, but hopefully have a number of common threads that have emerged from the interviews. I may also be able to give an indication of how they contribute to the eventual outcomes of my study.

It is now fine to discuss our interviews with others, as far as the purpose of the previous confidentiality was concerned.

Thank you again for your participation in my study, for your patience in waiting for the outcomes, and for your commitment to building love and harmony in the community.

Sincerely,

(Spring, 2003)

Dear participant

This letter is to update you on the progress of my studies.

After completing the transcripts and incorporating your feedback, I have summarized everything that was recorded in the column to the right of the transcript as you received it. These summaries were then coded to facilitate reference to the original text, and each summary cell was transferred to one or more separate files of “umbrella themes” that emerged from the interviews, depending on the issue it addressed. Several cells addressed more than one issue, and were therefore placed under more than one umbrella theme. Until this point I kept everything you said about a particular theme together. This process reduced the 2-inch binder of transcripts to less than ¾ inch of broadly sorted thematic summary statements. The “Overview Chapter Four” chart which I also attach gives you an idea of the themes I identified in columns 2-5.

The next step in my analysis is to identify sub-themes under each umbrella theme, which should facilitate writing the actual chapter. For this part of the process, I pull together what different people say about each sub-theme, occasionally lump matters together, and sometimes go back to the original text to get a complete and verbatim quote. This stage is time-consuming, as I do not necessarily clearly see all the sub-themes up front, and may have to add some or combine some later. This will be important to keep the presentation of the material logical and manageable. Throughout this stage I maintain the reference codes, but personalize them by incorporating a name I have assigned to you. In the main text of the email I let you know which name you have received. I am almost half-way finished with the initial sorting by sub-themes, which

further reduces the amount of material I have to work with.

Last week I met with my committee (Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir and Dr. Michael Owen), and they were helpful in designing the further steps in the analysis. We are still on target for completion in the fall of 2003.

Thank you again for being a participant in my study, and may the Lord bless the churches with unity and harmony.

Sincerely,

(August, 2003)

Dear participant,

It has been some time since you last heard from me about the progress of my studies. I am making progress, but to write the thesis turns out to be tedious work. This summer I have been working on revisions of Chapter One: The Problem; Chapter Two: The Literature; and Chapter Three: The Methodology. I have also completed drafts of Chapter Four: The Findings (why to home school, how it is justified, and how it leads to tension); and Chapter Five: The Findings (how to resolve the tension). I am just about ready to start writing the Final Chapter: Conclusions.

Chapter One was easy: it was primarily a matter of moving a few blocks of text around, and changing it from a present tense to a past tense. I also deleted a few parts and added some others. For instance, I added chapter XXVI of the Westminster Confession, Of the Communion of Saints. I may have to move it to an appendix later, depending on what the committee of professors will say. Single-spaced, it is about 7 pages now.

Chapter Two was a lot of work. I am still not happy with it, even though I cut the length almost in half (from 97 pages to 52), by deleting parts, and moving some sections to appendices. I am awaiting advice from my committee on this. What I do like about it is that it has sections explaining how and why I approach the quest from a Reformed perspective; how communities work and/or should work; home-, school,- and community relationships; the appeal of Reformed day schools; the appeal of home schooling; conflict in community; and resolution of conflict.

Chapter Three was also easy: it entailed incorporating the actual process followed for data collection and analysis with what I had planned. It is 16 pages now, but I may be able to cull it a little more.

Chapters Four and Five represent what I originally envisioned as Chapter Four only, and do not exactly follow the structure I suggested in March. Chapter Four is 19 pages now, and I have subdivided it into three main sections: The Hook, The Line, and The Sinker. The Hook tells about things that triggered people to even start thinking about home schooling; The Line is the subsequent defense of the choice; and The Sinker is how

the situation leads to tension. Chapter Five is 12 pages now, and its content is labeled "The Catch", as it tries to capture the ideas you had to help resolve the problem. I await feedback on these two chapters from my committee.

My committee has Chapters One through Five in its possession now, and their response will make a lot of difference for the time it will take to complete the study. I certainly will not be graduating this fall: the deadline for submitting complete work is in the first week of September. However, I do still anticipate to have the thesis defense in the course of the coming school year and to graduate next spring.

As to the drift of my conclusions, see my article in Clarion, July 18, 2003: Is Home Schooling Less Reformed? If you happen to be a person who wants to challenge me on anything there, I'd love to hear from you!

Just yesterday, I ran into a fellow student at the university who works as a teaching assistant to one of the professors in the department. In that capacity she often gets hired to do interview transcripts, and I shared some of our frustrations with her. She had a lot of empathy: the same kind of thing happens all the time. As it turns out, she has just written a paper on that very topic, and promised to forward it to me soon.

Hopefully I have satisfied your curiosity with this. I appreciate your patience, and look forward to finishing the study. I also look forward to the day that these tensions are no longer there.

Kind regards,

Appendix N

Sample list of interview questions[27]

Thank you letting me have you as a participant. Please understand that you are entirely free not to answer a question if, for whatever reason, you do not wish to answer it, or not to say things that you are not comfortable to say in this setting. Also, if you have second thoughts about an answer you gave, you can improve or fix it afterward, when you receive the transcript. The idea is not to generate a hot dispute, but to draw out essential perspectives that have a bearing on the way we educate our children. So, let's stay calm and composed, and learn from each other tonight.

1. Could you explain what made you, or (if you are not home schooling) what you think made other people decide to home school, touching on key reasons and considerations for it, or even reasons for not using other available options?
2. My second focus area is about reasons why you (or others, in case you are not a home schooler) continue to do it, assuming that this may be different from why you (or they) started.

3 & 4 This question is about your fundamental world view. Traditionally, Reformed people were encouraged from pulpits and in articles to support the Christian school, often with *fundamental theological reasons or biblical references*. What is your perspective on theological aspects of your choice to home school or not to home school?

If a philosophy is built on an underlying world view, and considers the validity of basic principles, what other logical and ethical points would you wish to make for your position, or in trying to understand the position of others?

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5. Reformed people also have social arguments to promote the school. for instance, the school may be seen as establishing and promoting a sense of community and belonging among children and parents. What is your perspective on social aspects of home schools and of day schools?

6 & 7 Having given your thoughts on theological, philosophical, and social aspects of schooling, what are your thoughts on the tension that exists around this topic: is it related to these only, to these and others, or should I consider other aspects only? Could you elaborate on what you feel creates tension around the subject? In other words, what is it that causes harmony and unity amongst believers to get a little (or a little much) squeaky when the topic of home schooling arises?

8. This is my last question - unless you wish to comment on things that you feel I should know and that have not yet been said. This point touches the heart of what I want to get at in my thesis: what do you think we may be able to do, as communion of saints, to get the 'squeak' out of the home schooling topic?
9. What things would you like to address that you feel I should consider in my study, but have not asked for?

Appendix O

Research Proposal Approval[28]

On Mon, 22 Apr 2002 13:52:12 -0400 Deborah Van Oosten deborah.vanoosten@brocku.ca writes:

Senate Research Ethics Board **Extensions 3205/3035, Room C315**

DATE: April 22, 2002
FROM: David Butz, Chair
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)
TO: Michael Manley-Casimir, Education
Keith Sikkema

FILE: **01-259, Sikkema**

TITLE: **Home Schooling in View of John Calvin**

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: *Accepted as clarified. (The clarifications you have outlined are satisfactory. In response to your Point 3, it is sufficient merely to indicate when you expect bound copies of the thesis to be on the shelves. At some point before involving human subjects in the research, please send copies of your revised letters, and copies of School Board permission, to the Office of Research Services, for filing.)

This project has been approved for the period of **April 22, 2002** to **August 31, 2002,** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request. ***The study may now proceed.***

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html to complete the appropriate form ***REB-03 (2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing***

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Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council. Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project.

Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form **REB-02 (2001) Continuing Review/Final Report** is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

Deborah Van Oosten
Research Ethics Officer
Brock University http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/
phone: (905)688-5550, ext. 3035 fax: (905)688-0748

On Mon, 10 Feb 2003 15:55:23 -0500 Deborah Van Oosten
deborah.vanoosten@brocku.ca writes:

Senate Research Ethics Board **Extensions 3943/3035, Room AS 302**

FROM:	Joe Engemann, Chair Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)
TO:	Michael Manley-Casimir, Education Keith Sikkema
RE:	Continuing Review/Final Report

File #: ***01-259***

Researchers: Keith Sikkema

Originally Accepted: ***April 22, 2002***

Date of Completion: **December 31, 2002**

120968b.jpg

DATE: February 10, 2003

Thank you for completing the ***Continuing Review/Final Report*** form. The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed this report for:

Home Schooling in View of John Calvin

The Committee finds that as of **February 10, 2003**, research participants are no longer being studied or followed on the above protocol and therefore, this protocol is officially terminated by the Research Ethics Board.

- Final Report Accepted.

JE/dvo

Appendix P

Draft agenda for a meeting of

NPCR church councils, home schoolers, and JCS Board

Opening Prayer, Reading from 1 Co. 12 or Ro. 12, Singing Ps. 122 or 133
Adoption of agenda[29]
Introduction
Understand tension; Address tension; Promote reconciliation

Presentation A
Overview of origins of the controversy; Discussion

Presentation B
Community integrity and polarization
Scriptural conciliation principles
Discussion

Presentation C
Implications of Presentation B
Proposal for course of action
Discussion

Press release
Issue a joint statement of agreement and progress

Closing Singing of an appropriate Psalm or Hymn; Prayer

[29] It is important that stakeholders agree on the agenda *before* the meeting.