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**Educational counter culture:motivations, instructional approaches, curriculum choices, and challenges of home school families**

Kenneth Vance Anthony

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EDUCATIONAL COUNTER CULTURE: MOTIVATIONS, INSTRUCTIONAL  
APPROACHES, CURRICULUM CHOICES, AND CHALLENGES  
OF HOME SCHOOL FAMILIES

By

Kenneth Vance Anthony

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
Mississippi State University  
in Partial Fullfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Secondary Education  
in the Department of Curriculum Instruction  
and Special Education

Mississippi State, Mississippi

May 2009

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APPROACHES, CURRICULUM CHOICES, AND CHALLENGES  
OF HOME SCHOOL FAMILIES

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INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES, CURRICULUM DECISION,  
AND CHALLENGES OF HOME SCHOOL FAMILIES

Pages in Study: 271

Candidate for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of this study was to gain an in depth knowledge of the day to day activities of home school families in order to better understand the instructional approaches, curriculum decisions, and challenges. Four themes were addressed: motivations, operations, resources, and challenges.

Findings about motivations to home school included: (a) motivations were complex and included a motivation that served as a catalyst to unlock other more important latent motivations; (b) the primary motivation was religious in nature; (c) secondary motivations encouraged them to continue operating their home schools; and (d) motivations to home school directly influenced their home school operations.

Findings about home school operations included: (a) the families operated their home schools using a combination of traditional and progressive approaches; (b) the primary teaching strategy was reading; (c) the families received the majority of their

curriculum from the cooperative; (d) the families made curricular decisions based on student need and interest, and (e) the families created a menu of educational choices that they could choose from in order to meet their educational goals.

Findings about home school resources included: (a) the cooperative was the most important resource used by the families; (b) books were also instrumental in operating the home schools because of the reliance on reading; and (c) the families used a variety of other resources to meet their educational goals.

Findings about home school challenges included: (a) in home distractions were significant challenges to home school education; (b) accountability issues had the potential to undermine the educational goals of the families; (c) finding and choosing curriculum was difficult because there was so much to choose from; (d) social isolation, and courses and activities not available through the home school were also challenges; and (e) the home school cooperative helped the families address some, but not all of the challenges of home schooling.

Implications and recommendations included: (a) replication of the current study with families not involved in a cooperative; (b) research into limited public school enrollment for home school children; and (c) that traditional schools adopt a service approach and provide a menu of choices for students.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Katie, and my daughters, Emilie and Isabelle. They are truly my inspiration and joy in life.

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I would like to thank Dr. Jianzhong Xu who helped me identify a dissertation topic early, helped with the development of the literature and methods section, and provided encouragement and advice along the way. Next I would like to thank Dr. Susie Burroughs who gave me the freedom to follow a topic I was interested in and provided the gentle nudges to get the job done, as well as the support to help me finish the project before I head to Iraq. She also helped me get back into the program by opening doors that were sometimes closed. My minor professor, Dr. Barbier, has been a constant supporter and source of encouragement during my studies here at Mississippi State.

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I thank the participants of this study. Home school families are generally wary of researchers. These families welcomed me in, taught me about how they lived and taught, and helped me gain an understanding of why they teach at home.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth knowledge of the day to day activities of home school families in order to better understand the instructional techniques and curriculum decisions that contribute to the success of home education as an educational treatment. Of particular interest are home education practices that may be useful in traditional education settings. The researcher will choose families who have at least three years of home school experience, who have children they are currently home schooling, and who have at least one child who has completed home school education and has moved on to college or the work force. This will help the researcher get a group who has experience with home education and with some of the challenges and successes of home education.

This chapter is divided into four sections: (a) cultural and historical context, (b) purpose and nature of the study, (c) definition of terms, and (d) review of related literature. The cultural and historical context places home schooling within its proper context relative to other forms of education historically used in the United States. The purpose and nature of the study provides an introduction to home schooling and details how this study extends and builds on current research and knowledge of home schooling. The definition of terms clarifies how important terms are used within the home school community as well as how these terms will be used throughout the study to reduce

confusion. The review of related literature provides background information about a topic that is not understood by many in the general public or in the field of education and also provides the basis of the research questions as well as informs many of the findings.

### Cultural and Historical Context

In describing her work Mead (1996) wrote, “We have tried to do only two things: either to convey that some one aspect of human behavior could be organized differently - such as adolescence, or a proneness to heavy drinking, or a sensitivity to art - or to convey the extent to which cultures differ from one another” (p. 31). This study will attempt to do a similar thing in education. Most Americans are educated through traditional means and fail to comprehend or appreciate that some people in our society would choose to educate their children differently than the vast majority. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century education in America has been associated with publicly funded schools with compulsory attendance (Basham, 2001; Knowles, Muchmore, & Spaulding, 1994). Education in colonial and early America was less formal and institutionalized. Many prominent Americans, including Presidents George Washington, John Quincy Adams, and Abraham Lincoln, were taught at home (Basham). The idea of a common education for all citizens of America dates back to the founding of the nation. Various early American thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Harrison Smith, and Samuel Knox, argued for public education in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century because it would help to unite Americans and build a better civil society (Dewey, 1940; Honeywell, 1931; Knox, 1799; Smith, 1798). Their calls were not acted on nationwide until the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century

when industrialization and increased levels of immigration heightened the need for a common education through state funded schools (Dewey, 1916). Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, public education grew as schools became institutionalized in the form of public schools replacing home education and other forms of education as the dominant practice in America. The current home school movement is an outgrowth of the liberal reaction against public schools in the 1960s (Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992). From its austere beginning it has grown into a group that, if considered as a separate school district, would be larger than the New York City public school system (Hill, 2000). The growth of the movement and its significant departure from the educational norms in America make it an interesting subject of study for a qualitative researcher who is interested in studying how humans can organize differently to teach and learn.

### Purpose and Nature of the Study

In 2005, Brian Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute estimated over 2.5 million students were home schooled in the United States (Roberts, 2005). Other studies estimate the number between 1.2 and 1.7 million students in America (Lines, 2000; McDowell & Ray, 2000). Home school students may represent as much as 2.4% (Basham, 2001) or 3.4% (Rhodes as cited in Basham, 2001) of the school age population in the United States. There are over 20,000 children home schooled in Mississippi (Davis, 2007a). As home schooling grows in the United States and Mississippi and a significant number of home schooled students attend college and move into the workforce, it is possible that they will begin to have a significant impact on

American society. McDowell and Ray (2000) stated: “The home education movement is a growing one. Its numbers are growing, its acceptance is growing and its power to affect the political environment is growing” (p. 1). The growth of home education highlights the importance of this group of students as significant for study. If McDowell and Ray are correct, home school children will have a significant impact on our society as adults, and an understanding of their educational background is important for those who are not a part of the minority who home school their children or who were home schooled.

Knowles, et al., (1994) described the beginnings of the modern home school movement as starting among liberal education reformers including John Holt, in the 1960s and 1970s who advocated home education as the most humane place to educate children. This changed in the 1990s when “Christian fundamentalists... swelled the ranks of home-educating parents”(Knowles, 1991, p. 205). Today, though home schooled students “run the full range of the societal spectrum from religious conservatism, to moderate views, to liberal humanism”(Knowles et al., p. 239) home schoolers as a whole are “not a cross-section of the public” (Rudner, 1999, p. 28). This report conflicts with a study conducted by Yang and Kayaardi (2004). They found there were no significant differences in demographic, religious, soci-economic, and family structure characteristics between families that home school their children and those who do not. But they admitted that the home school part of their study was only 2.4% and that more research is needed to draw more definitive conclusions. One possible explanation for this difference is sample size. The Yang and Kayaardi study was from a smaller sample size; the sample size for Rudner was 850,000 home schooled students and 50,188,000 total students.

Another possible explanation is that the Rudner study is based on a visual inspection of the data, whereas the Yang and Kayaardi study is based on statistical methods.

Home school families tend to be more affluent, white, socially conservative, and religiously fundamental. The family structure is also generally intact (Basham, 2001; Knowles, 1991; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). These demographic characteristics place many who are home schooled on a path to academic, economic, and social success. It is possible that many future leaders in our communities will be the product of home schools. In fact, that is one of the goals of many home school networks. They aim to produce leaders who will impact their community by spreading the social and religious beliefs they have learned while home schooled (Klicka, 2002). Knowles et al. (1992) stated that “home schools became grounds of and for ideological conservative, religious expressions of educational matters which symbolized the conservative right’s push towards self determination” (p. 227).

Home schooling is not new, but the increased numbers of home schooled children, the organization of the participants into a mass movement, and their potential social impact mark this as a significant segment of our population for study. Much research has been done by advocates of home schooling to legitimize or protect the rights of families to home school (Basham, 2001; Homeschool Legal Defense Association, 2004; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999). Much of it has been done by various home school advocacy groups, including the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). Their research indicates the academic success that home schooled students achieve. An example is that home school children’s average on the ACT has been consistently higher

than the national average for the eight year period prior to 2005. They base much of their research on independently gathered and often independently analyzed data (HSLDA, 2004, 2005). The data and research is sound, but it is advocacy research. Therefore, a need for independent study arises. One thing that must be remembered is that the purpose of the research on home school academic success is not to show that home schooling is superior to other forms of education, but to demonstrate that those who choose to home school can provide a good learning environment for their children (Rudner, 1999).

The focus of home school research has been on the reasons why people choose to home school and the academic and social success of home school students (Basham, 2001; Carper, 2000; Jeub, 1994; Klicka, 2002; Knowles et al., 1994; Princiota & Bielick, 2006; Ray, 2000). Less research exists that examines what exactly goes on in the day to day activities of a home school child (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Cizek, 1993; Knowles, 1991). This study will focus on the day to day activities of home school students and their families. It will look at curriculum choices, the nature of instruction, the role of parent as teacher and child as student, the balance between regular family activities and home education activities, and larger social interactions within the local home school community. This study is important for several reasons. As an educational treatment, home education has been shown to be as effective for those students who are homeschooled as traditional forms of education are for those who are educated in traditional schools. The question then becomes, what things are being done in home education that can be used in traditional education? Home schooling is also a growing movement whose members highlight the potential social impact their children will have

on our society in the future. Because of their potential influence on our society, it is important to understand the phenomenon of home education at the classroom level.

### Definition of Terms

Home schooling is defined in different ways by different organizations and individuals. Definitions of home schooling or home education terms are in Table 1. The definitions are important to help understand the phenomenon of home schooling. For purposes of this study, the term home education will be used to describe the process, and home school will be used to describe the location. Home school will be used as a verb when discussing the practice of running a home school. Terms will be used as authors use them when the terms are specific to understanding their theories or ideas.

### Review of Related Literature

There are four lines of research that influence this study. The first three lines of research will be discussed independently identifying gaps in research that they each indicate. After discussing each line of research separately the researcher will conclude describing how the three lines are inter connected and inform this study. Gaps in the research will be identified and will be used to guide the research in this study. The three lines of research are (1) motivations behind home schooling, (2) home school student academic achievement, and (3) curriculum challenges.

Table 1

## Home Schooling Definitions

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Source</b>
A “learning/ teaching situation where children spend the majority of the conventional day in or near their home in lieu of attendance at a conventional institution of education.”	(Ray as cited in Martin, 1997)
“home schooling occurs when a child participates in his or her education at home rather than attending a public, private, or other type school”	Canadian Government definition (Statistics Canada as cited in Basham, 2001)
“The education of school-aged children at home rather than at a school.”	U.S. Government definition (Lines as cited in Basham, 2001)
“We define the term home school as the site where home education occurs, whereas “home education” is the process of parents teaching their children at home.”	(Knowles, et al., 1994)
“Holt originally used the word unschooling to describe the act of removing one’s children from school, but it soon became a synonym for “home schooling” Over the past two decades, the meaning of the term has evolved and narrowed, so that unschooling now refers to the specific style of homeschooling that Hold advocated, based on child centered learning.”	(Griffith, 1998, p. vvi)
“Unschooling is simply a way to tailor learning to the specific needs of each child and each family.”	(Griffith, 1998, p.ix)
Home schoolers	Used in text to identify those families who home educate their children in a home school. This definition is used because it is the way that many families define themselves including the four subject families in the study.
Traditional or conventional education	Used in text to describe educating students in public or private schools more than 25 hours a week. Education including classrooms with a teacher responsible for teaching a number of students a particular subject. This definition is based on the NCES study which defined home schoolers as those who use public or private schools less than 25 hours per week. (Princiotta & Bielick, 2006)

A fourth line of research is criticism of home schooling. It is discussed separately to provide some balance to the first three lines of research that appear to be a positive treatment of home schooling.

*Motivation*

The first line of research is the reason families run home schools. Home education has grown as an educational alternative for many who are dissatisfied with public education as well as schools in general (private and public). Jeub (1994) identified four main reasons parents home school: social, familial, academic, and religious. A 1999 National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) study as cited in Basham (2001), reported the percentages of the main reasons that parents home school. The study included data on a total of 50,188,000 students in the United States including 850,000 children who are home schooled making up 1.5% of the data collected. These are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Primary Motivations to Home Educate in 1999

<b>Parents primary motivation to home educate</b>	<b>Percentage indicated as main reason</b>
Better Education	48.9%
Religious reasons	38.4%
Poor learning environment at school	25.6%

(Basham, 2001)

A later study by Princiotta and Bielick (2006) indicates similar reasons families home educate, but the priorities are different. The Princiotta and Bielick study listed the environment and safety as the number one reason. Possible reasons might be the increase in major violent outbreaks at public schools since 1999. Primary motivation to home educate are listed in Table 3. The study was conducted for the NCES. The purpose of the study was to estimate how many people in the United States home school as well as to get descriptive data on home school families. Survey data was used from the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) as well as interviews conducted with 239 home school families. This was part of a larger study of education in the United States.

Table 3

Primary Motivations to Home Educate in 2003

<b>Parents primary motivation to home educate</b>	<b>Percentage indicated as main reason</b>
Environment of other schools (safety, drugs, negative peer pressure)	31%
Provide religious and moral instruction	30%
Dissatisfaction with academic instruction of other schools	16%

(Princiotta & Bielick, 2006)

Collum (2005) created a regression model (n=235) that identified four broad reasons that parents home school their children: dissatisfaction with public schools, academic and pedagogical concerns, religious values, and family needs. Other factors also influenced a parent's decision to home school. These included parental education

level, the number of siblings home schooled, and political identification. These statistically significant findings reinforce the descriptive data reported in other studies in this literature review. Collum concluded that:

parent demographic factors including educational attainment and family income do not uniformly affect the decision to home school. This is a heterogenous population with varying and overlapping motivations. Simplistic typologies cannot capture the complexities of homeschoolers. (p. 331)

This finding highlights that one should be careful not to identify home schoolers only with white, upper class, religious conservatives. The movement is much more diverse demographically as are the reasons that motivate individual families to home school.

Apart from these general reasons to home educate children, the motivations to home educate can be divided into two main domains: ideological and pedagogical (Basham, 2001; Knowles, 1991; Knowles, et al., 1994). Ideological reasons are primarily religious and social. Ideological home schooling was founded by Dr. Raymond Moore (Basham) and is characterized by the desire to transfer education activities from public school to home avoiding the “elements of institutionalized education that parents find undesirable” (Knowles et al., p. 240). Pedagogical home schoolers are primarily centered on the process of education. One of the key leaders of the pedagogical movement was Holt (Basham, 2001; Griffith, 1998; Holt & Farenga, 2003; Knowles et al.). Pedagogues do not view school and education as the same thing. They believe that education should occur in a less structured environment and students should engage in more experiential learning (Knowles et al.). There are similarities between the two domains, and a family may have reasons to home educate that include both ideological and pedagogical reasons.

Ideological reasons to home educate generally focus on family values issues (Ray, 2000); perceived lack of religion in public schools and a desire to educate their children in an environment that enhances the family's religious beliefs (Carper, 2000; Klicka, 2002; Pearson as cited in Martin, 1997); conflicts between families and schools over values and religion (Klicka; Knowles et al., 1994); family reasons or building a closer family (Holt & Farenga, 2003; Knowles, et al.); and safety concerns including moral, physical, mental, and spiritual safety (Holt & Farenga; Knowles et al.; Martin).

Kirschner (as cited in Ray, 2000) wrote that "We find many Americans turning to 'family values' and scriptural religion in a search for stability and something to believe in" (p. 2). Home education is the vehicle that helps families find stability (Kirschner as cited in Ray, 2000). The home education movement has almost taken on the feel of a religious revival and indeed has been characterized as such:

Home schooling has proven to be a revival of a time-tested method of individualized education. It reflects a deep concern by parents to be involved in the education of their children. The home school movement is profoundly religious, for the most part making the revival more than educational. It is a Christian revival and restoration of the family, with a focus on God's absolute moral values and principles. (Klicka, 2002, p. 439)

It is interesting that even in defining the movement as a revival there is definitely a pedagogical reason also identified. It is hard to separate the two, especially among ideological practitioners of home education. The roots of the ideological or religious break with the public school systems are found in the Supreme Court decisions that many felt removed God from public schools (Carper, 2000). The perceived lack of religion in public school feeds the value conflict between public schools and some families

(Knowles, 1991; Knowles, et al., 1994). These families are generally very religious, and many feel that schools do not take religion seriously (Jeub, 1994). The twin factors of the perceived irreligious or anti-religious nature of public schools (Carper, 2000; Klicka, 2002) and the importance of religion in developing and educating children (Basham, 2001; Knowles et al., 1994) work together to push some families out of public schools and into home schools.

Safety issues also influence ideologues to home educate their children. Some parents are concerned for the moral safety of their children (Knowles et al., 1994), others for the physical safety (Basham, 2001; Hill, 2000; Klicka, 2002; Martin, 1997; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006), and others for the religious or spiritual safety of their children as described above. The issues of safety paired with the religious conflicts come together in the minds of many who home school to create a feeling of crisis. Consider two quotes from Klicka (2002): “Public schools are failing, and parents need to realize the danger of sending their children to public school,” (p.41), and “The public school system, both academically and morally is still failing. In fact, it is destroying America’s youth” (p. 23). One final quote by Klicka shows the crisis mentality towards public schools:

Public schools have abandoned the absolute moral values and biblical morality on which our country was founded and replaced them with the religion of humanism, where man is the measure of all things and values are determined by the individual. (p. 47)

It is apparent that the ideological reasons to home educate students comes from a predominantly religious mindset for many who home school. But could not these ideological and religious conflicts with public schools be solved by educating children in private religious schools? Besides the conflicts with public schools, there is a deeper

ideological reason many home educate: the proper role of the parent in a child's education (Carper, 2000; Ray, 2000).

Many home schoolers feel that “they have abandoned institutional education for home schooling in an attempt to restore what they believe to be education in its purest form—parents teaching their own children” (Carper, 2000, p. 6). This may sound like a pedagogical reason (and ideologues have definite pedagogical reasons to home school), but it is not in this case. Many ideological home schoolers believe that they are fulfilling a religious mandate. Consider the following quote, “In home schooling, parents can fulfill the commands in scripture to teach their children God’s truth throughout each day” (Klicka, 2002, p. 124). Parents are exercising their rights to educate their own children. Mayberry (as cited in Ray, 2000) wrote that many parents “perceived home education as a way for parents to regain control of their own lives, a way to make the impact they want on the next generation” (p. 2). Many of these parents not only see home education as a right, but as an obligation they must fulfill. They see not only a fundamental difference between their value systems and the schools, but also see their role as a parent to develop a closer family (Knowles, et al., 1992). They see the “family as superior to any other institution in society” (Jeub, 1994) and, therefore, want to educate their children as a family. Many of these ideologues, as well as pedagogues, home school to build a stronger family (Holt & Farenga, 2003). They want to spend more time with their children. In Knowles’ (1991) qualitative study of four home school families he reported that “All were highly motivated to promote the well being of family and had strong community relationships, particularly within the context of their religious interests” (p. 207), and they

specifically wanted to protect their children from the negative family experiences they had as children and wanted to build a “special relationship” (p. 215) with their children. Klicka (2002) stated that families benefit from increased time together. This seems to be a goal of both ideological and pedagogical oriented home school families.

Home school families from both the pedagogical and ideological groups share some beliefs. Within each group there exists a feeling that traditional schools are not the best places to educate children (Knowles et al., 1994; Lubienski, 2003; Zehr, 2006). Klicka (as cited in Zehr, 2006) commented that, “we (home schoolers) don’t want that [curriculum] controlled by the government” (p. 8). Many feel that schools equal a less individualized education (Zehr, 2006), and some view home schooling as a less stressful learning environment (Holt & Farenga, 2003; Knowles et al., 1994). There is also an “anti-institutional element to the home education movement, where parents believe that institutions can be destructive, or think that they can do a better job than impersonal bureaucracy” (Lubienski, 2003, p. 176). Lubienski sums up the feelings of the pedagogues when it comes to the need for schools, “Home schooling families are- often consciously- rejecting interference from, and accountability to any external authority” (p. 167). These feelings are found in both groups of home schoolers. If the home schoolers are rejecting the educational authority and methods of traditional schools, one may ask, what are they replacing it with? We know that ideologues are focusing on religious education, but not all families home educate for religious reasons. Some do so for strictly pedagogical reasons, and there must be a pedagogical aspect to ideological home educators or they could simply place their children in private religious schools.

Pedagogical reasons for home schooling are tied to the relationship between the student and learning. Home school families value more freedom in the curriculum (Jeub, 1994). They also believe that school environments are detrimental to student learning (Holt & Farenga, 2003). Medlin (2000) reported that home school families describe traditional schools as “rigid and authoritarian institutions where passive conformity is rewarded, where peer interactions are too often hostile or derisive or manipulative, and where children must contend with a dispiriting ideological and moral climate” (p. 2). Once again there is cross over between pedagogical and ideological reasons to home educate. Medlin goes on to state that home schoolers believe that home is the best environment to educate their children. Their motivations are often more positive than negative, “When parents decide to home school they are thinking more of the advantages of home schooling than the disadvantages of conventional schooling” (p. 109).

Why do home school advocates believe home schooling is a better environment? Primarily because of the nature of instruction, home school advocates indicate that their success is because of the tutorial method (Basham, 2001; Klicka, 2002), and the ability of parents to individualize learning to the specific needs of the student (Klicka, 2002, Knowles et al., 1994). Home school parents’ philosophies of education are generally more liberal and open. They advocate experiential learning, individual freedom, and hands on learning in the real world (Griffith, 1998; Holt & Farenga, 2003; Jeub, 1994; Knowles, 1991; Knowles et al., 1994). Farenga (as cited in Jeub 1994) described the nature of pedagogical home schoolers: “Children like adults, need time to be alone to

think, to muse, to read freely, to day dream, to be creative, to form a self, independent of the barrage of mass culture” (p. 50).

Other families choose to home school because they want to teach their children to be independent life-long learners. These families use less structured learning environments than their children might experience in a formal education setting (Davis, 2007b). Some parents of children with special needs (whether gifted, learning disabled, or other type of special education) choose to home school their children in order to provide a more personalized approach to their child’s education (Ensign, 2000; Martin, 1997).

Clery (1998) conducted a qualitative study of two adolescent girls who were home schooled. She collected data using semi-structured interviews (30 open ended questions). Her analysis uncovered four themes: autonomy, self-awareness, socialization, and family relationships. These themes reinforce the idea that a home education creates an environment that fosters the development of independent, motivated and self disciplined learners. The subjects reported that “although they have adult input, it is generally confined to guidance and assistance” (p.5). The home school environment also allowed the subjects to develop a more individualized self awareness because their learning experience is based more on their individual needs. Of most interest to this study is the reported “improved levels of communication between the participants and their parents” (p. 12). This is interesting because many parents indicate that they choose to home school for family reasons. Finally, both participants had some input on whether

they home schooled or were educated in a more traditional setting. One participant had left home schooling and returned because she felt it was a better option for her.

Some families are motivated to home school based on the parents' past experiences in school. Knowles (1991) conducted a case study of four home school families in an urban setting in Utah. All were members of a church; one half was members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This study was part of a larger study of 12 families. Knowles used a list of topics to "elicit open-ended responses" (p. 208) about the parents' background and how that background might have affected their decision to home school. He found that parents' memories of experiences in school (pleasant or unpleasant) influenced their decision to run home schools. Knowles reported that "their experiences of schools were usually negative, and they did not want those experiences replicated in the lives of their children" (p. 223).

A similar study to the Knowles (1991) study was conducted by Neuman and Aviram (2003). The qualitative study of eight home school families in Israel conducted from 1999 to 2003 showed that families home school because they see it as a solution to fundamental problems. The three fundamental problems that the researchers identified were parents' negative school experiences as a child, negative family and marital experiences (home schooling would be seen as a way to increase family interaction), and negative experiences of the child in school. The final problem concerns the parents "rescuing the child from regressing emotionally and ethically or morally, which is what occurs when he or she encounters the conventional school system" (p. 136). Of interest to the study is the finding in the same study that home schooling represents a fundamental

lifestyle change for the families involved. The flexibility and easy going approach to life that home schooling provides was also reported.

Both ideological and pedagogical home schoolers have many things in common. Knowles, et al. (1992) write that the modern home school movement is an “outcome of a direct reaction to the many short comings of public education that was commonly raised by educational reformers of the 1960s and early 1970s” (p. 195). This movement slowly was co-opted by individuals and groups who were more religiously conservative in the 1980s (Knowles et al.). They adopted the pedagogical reasons to home educate and paired them with their ideological motivations. The result, concluded Knowles et al., was that “when contemporary home schools are examined it becomes clear that they are not closely tied to the liberal roots of home education. Relatively few home schools seem to operate on the premise that homes are superior places of learning” (p. 227).

Thus there is a need to examine if this particular statement is true. The families’ primary reasons will be ideological, but will there be strong underlying pedagogical motivations discovered from a more in depth case study? Will interviews and observations of actual instruction in a home school shed more light on the complicated motivations behind the decision to home educate? Studies of motivation to home school have been primarily survey research (Basham, 2001; Knowles et al., 1994; Princoiotta & Bielick, 2006). These have value, but there is a need to investigate the subtle ambiguities that exist when asking why parents choose to home school their child. Qualitative research in the literature has focused on (a) parents’ previous educational experience as a motivator (Knowles, 1991), (b) the changes in lifestyle as a result of home schooling

(Neumann & Aviram, 2003), (c) and indications that parents run home schools based on ideological motivations but do not operate their home schools because they see them as better places to teach their children (Knowles, et al., 1992). This study will address several gaps in previous qualitative research on motivation to home school going beyond stated motivations to describe how families make the transition from traditional schooling to home schooling. It will also explore the accuracy of the statement by Knowles et al. (1992) about ideological motivated home school families. It will address a gap in the literature on how parental motivations to home school affect their curriculum choices. Finally, this study will explore the day to day operations of home schools from a qualitative perspective. We have already seen in the literature review the lines are often blurred between the two motivation domains.

Of the many motivations that encourage families to home school their children, academic success of home school students compared to students in traditional settings is often cited (Basham, 2001; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). It fits into the pedagogical reasons that families home school. The academic achievement of home school students is important to understand though apart from the motivational factor. It is important to understand the academic achievement to understand why the movement has not only survived but grown unchecked by outside influences. It is the very academic success that home school families tout that has allowed them to gain legality in all states and defend their practices from detractors.

### *Academic Achievement*

The second line of research that informs this study is home education academic achievement. Home school academic achievement is not a large part of this study, but it is important to address it briefly in the literature review for two reasons. The first reason is that many question the validity of home education as an educational treatment. The second is that the academic achievement of students in home schools is one motivating factor that encourages others to begin home schools. Because of these reasons, it is important to review data to indicate the level of success home education has achieved over time. It is important to note that the research on home school academic achievement cannot be used to compare public school or private school success to home schools because the research is not experimental and does not control for demographic differences between the different populations of students. The goal of delineating the academic achievement of home schoolers is to show that they are successful in that particular educational treatment and should not be seen as an attack on other educational treatments. Much of the research cited is from advocates of home schooling who conduct the research as a defense of home schooling. These advocates make comparisons between public schools and home schools in order to defend themselves against legal threats to the right to home school.

Reports by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSDLA) indicated in a variety of ways that home school children achieve academic success. Home school advocates regularly highlighted home school student achievement in national academic

competitions including the national spelling and geography bees (Smith, 2007). They also reported SAT and ACT scores compared to the national average (Rudner, 1999).

Table 4  
ACT Comparisons

<b>Year</b>	<b>Home Educated</b>	<b>National Average</b>
1997 <sup>1</sup>	22.6	21
1998 <sup>1</sup>	22.5	21
2005 <sup>2</sup>	22.5	20.9

<sup>1</sup>HSDLA, 2004

<sup>2</sup>HSDLA, 2005

Table 5  
Expanded ACT Comparisons

<b>Year</b>	<b>Homeschool</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% of home school students tested</b>	<b>Home school students as % of total students tested</b>	<b>National Average</b>	<b>N</b>
1997	22.5	1,926	<1	<1	21	959,301
1998	22.8	2,610	<1	<1	21	995,039
1999	22.7	3,257	<1	<1	21	1,019,053
2000	22.8	4,593	<1	<1	21	1,065,138
2001	22.7	5,379	1	<1	21	1,069,772
2002	22.5	6,185	1	<1	20.8	1,116,082

(ACT, 2008)

The ACT data reported in Table 4 are from various HSDLA documents. In an effort to provide a more balanced and extended look Table 5 is the ACT data from 1997-2002 taken directly from the ACT website. This information includes not only the average score for home school students and the national average, but it includes the number of students for each category and indicates the percentage of home school students who took the test for each year.

Other data to support academic success of home education as a treatment include a U.S. Department of Education reported by Lines (as cited in Basham, 2001), “Virtually all the available data show that the group of home school children who are tested is above average” (p. 11). Rudner (1999) conducted a large survey for the HSDLA to evaluate the effectiveness of home schooling. The survey questions were based on U.S. Census and U.S. Department of Labor data for comparisons to national statistics. He also compared Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores (K-9) and Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) scores (9-12) for 39,607 home educated students to the national averages. Parents completed the surveys and 11,930 usable surveys were returned as well as 20,760 students’ test data was analyzed. They found that home school students scored between the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile and the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile on the achievement tests compared to the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for public school students and the 65<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for private school students. The survey revealed that 25% of home school students are enrolled one or more grades above their age level peers, and home school students in grades one through four perform one grade level above their public and private school peers on achievement tests. There were no achievement differences among home school students based on gender or

parental teacher certification. Rudner (1999) cautioned that the research should not be used to “demonstrate that home schooling is superior to public or private schools,” (p. 29) because it was not based on a random sample and did not implement controls for differences in demographics between the groups. Rudner indicated that the study showed “that those parents choosing to make a commitment to home schooling are able to provide a very successful academic environment” (p. 29).

Ray (2000) listed several studies that indicate home school academic success. Wartes (as cited in Ray), reported in a study of K- 12 home school students that they consistently score above the national average on the Stanford Achievement Test. The Alaska Centralized Correspondence study indicated that home school students scored higher than conventional students nationwide on the California Achievement Test on math, reading, language, and science (Alaska Department of Education as cited in Ray). The HSLDA reported that for the 16,311 home school students tested in the 1994-1995, school year scores ranged between the 62<sup>nd</sup> and 87<sup>th</sup> percentile. In a cross-sectional descriptive, multi-variate, and longitudinal study of home school families in the United States, Ray found that home school students scored on average at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile in all areas tested. The study was conducted by sending surveys to members of home school education groups. The researchers sent 5,995 surveys, and 1,657 useable surveys were returned for a 28.8% response rate. He converted test scores to z scores for analysis. He reported that home education students scored at the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile on reading, 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on total language, 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile on total math, and 84<sup>th</sup> percentile on total science. He was concerned that parents would not report low scores,

but parents reported the lowest possible scores for reading, language and math. He identified this as one of a few nationwide studies of home education. Limitations he identified included the lack of a random sample and the fact that it is more descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Jones and Gloeckner (2004) conducted a study comparing first year college performance of home school students (n=55) and traditional high school graduates (n=53). The independent variable was home school or traditional high school graduate. The dependent variables were overall cumulative freshman grade point average, credits earned, gender, race/ ethnicity, and ACT or converted SAT scores. The researchers did not find statistically significant differences between the two groups on any of the independent variables. They concluded “the academic performance analyses indicate that home school graduates are as ready for college as traditional high school graduates and that they perform as well on national college assessment tests as traditional high school graduates” (p. 20). They believe that the study showed that home education “does not have a negative impact on a student’s college success” (p. 20). They do admit that their sample was small, but point out that the average ACT score for the home schooled students was the same as the national average of 22.8 for home schooled children in 2000, and that the traditional student average ACT score in their study was 21.3, slightly higher than the national average of 21 in 2000.

One of the few detailed statistical studies on home school families was conducted by Collum (2005). His study included data collected using surveys as well as Stanford Achievement Test scores from 235 home school families. The survey had a 71% response

rate with 235 of 330 surveys completed. The researcher used regression models to predict both parents' motivations to home school as well as to predict student achievement. Of particular interest was the finding that gender, amount of instructional time, household income, teaching experience, and race were not statistically associated with student achievement within the sample of home school students. The researcher highlighted the fact that "the two great divides that public school children face- race and class- are inconsequential for student achievement among home-educated children" (p. 329). It appears that whatever academic success can be achieved from the education treatment home schooling applies equally across race, gender, and class lines.

One final note on home school achievement is that several studies have indicated there is a greater effect if students are home schooled their entire academic career rather than exposed to multiple educational treatments. An example is a study by Ray as cited in Basham (2001), where it was reported that students who were home schooled their entire academic careers scored at the 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile on average on the Stanford Achievement Test as opposed to those who were educated only one year who scored at the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile.

There is some criticism of the data used to indicate home schooled children's success. Lubienski (2003) states that other characteristics of home educated students could account for their academic success and that they would likely perform well in other school settings. Factors that Lubienski cites include higher income, parental education, and employment levels. There was little criticism of the actual numbers used to document home educated students academic success, but the nature of the research brings

it somewhat into question. As cited earlier, most of the data is drawn from independent sources, but is reported and interpreted by advocates of home education (Basham, 2001; HSLDA, 2004; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999). It must be remembered that the purpose of including this research is not to make a comparison between home schooling and other forms of schooling in order to prove it is superior, but to show that home school families are achieving academic success.

Aside from this criticism, home school children are experiencing success in their home based education environment. This presents an opportunity for further research. What can traditional education learn from home based education? Though not looking specifically at the measures of academic success, this study will look at the factors that contribute to home school success, specifically curriculum choices and instructional methods. It will then determine if there is anything that traditional schools can learn and use from home schools.

### *Curriculum and Instructional Choices*

The third line of research is curriculum choices and home school practices. Home school families have a variety of curricula to choose from. (Knowles, 1991; Martin, 1998; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006) These range from totally independently created to fully packaged commercially produced curricula (Holt & Farenga, 2003). There are curricula that are based on specific social and religious world views (Walsh, 2002). Some require more parent involvement, others less. Some incorporate technology to a great degree while others aim at a more classical curriculum. Parents must also decide how to

overcome obvious curriculum problems including how to teach higher level high school math and science. Choices include forming a local home school cooperative where families pool their expertise to tackle more complex subjects, using local community college classes, and video or Internet based instruction.

Martin (1997) described factors that exemplify home education practices. The first was individualized instruction. The home environment provides a nurturing environment where learning was not painful. Parents also know their children's weaknesses and strengths and adapted instruction accordingly. The home school provides the flexibility to teach anywhere anytime. The home school allows maximum curriculum choices empowering the parent to choose instruction that reflects their morals and values as well as time for full exploration and mastery of subject matter, both of which tie back to the ideological and pedagogical motives for home schooling, respectively.

In a nine year longitudinal study of six students with disabilities, Ensign (2000) found that the individualized nature of home education enabled parent teachers to focus on the needs of students with special needs including learning disabled and gifted students. Ensign identified the reasons home school as a treatment is better for students with special needs. This is because home education: (a) focuses on the whole child, not the disability or extreme ability, (b) students receive individualized attention, and (c) teachers can teach content when the child is ready. The teachers do not have to follow the rules for working with children with special needs; therefore, according to Ensign, the students end up "not following the expected patterns for students with their classification" (p. 8). Ensign also suggested that students develop into "self confident

students who have developed academic skills at very uneven rates, but who usually have achieved academic proficiency by high school” (p. 8). Ensign also reported that home school students with learning disabilities were more engaged in academic learning than their public school peers and that home school students with learning disabilities make large gains in reading and written language compared to their public school peers.

Rivero (2002) described a style of home schooling called creative home schooling as a “series of seemingly unrelated digressions combined with planned learning that continually move the whole life-long educational enterprise forward with a pace and momentum unique to the individual learner” (p. 2). In creative home schooling parent teachers address the needs of the whole child and integrate the child’s individual learning styles into the learning experience.

Home schools are operated in many different ways from highly to loosely structured (Knowles, 1991). When parents choose to home educate, they must make curriculum decisions. They must choose between two broad ways of home education: (a) school at home, which usually consists of a packaged curriculum, regular time schedules, and graded assignments; and (b) unschooling, which is characterized by less structure and child-led learning (Rivero, 2002).

Parents have decisions about what types of materials to use. Will they use pre-packaged curricula or custom design their own curricula? (Farris as cited in Martin, 1997). Prepared curricula are easier to use but like conducting a school at home, home schools provide some of the drawbacks to traditional schooling. Prepared curricula come from a variety of places and many parents shop around and use trial and error before they

settle on the right curricula for their home school. Martin (1997) identifies four sources where parents find curriculum: (a) home school conventions, (b) home school magazines, (c) state and local home school groups, and (d) books. Table 6 shows where, according to Princiotta and Bielick (2006), parents get curriculum materials to use in home schools.

Considering the conservative nature of many of home school families, it is interesting that learning in some home schools could be defined as liberal or progressive. Barratt-Peacock (2003), in an historical study of home school families in Australia, wrote that in a home school “learning is situated in the world of real practice rather than school” (p. 104). Home school is also a result of child play as well as the child fulfilling a role in the everyday practice of the family.

Barratt-Peacock (2003) identified four key processes in home education: “a) domestic occupation; b) parents as guides/ tutors to fields of authentic adult practice; c) family conversation as a forum [for learning]; and d) role modeling [the family’s values]” (p. 105). Barratt-Peacock described home education families as avoiding the simple methods used to socialize and teach in school. These statements describe the educational beliefs of John Dewey and other progressive or liberal educators rather than religious and social conservatives, but many conservative home schoolers are practicing similar educational practices in their homes.

Home school parents cannot teach everything that is required because they may not have the resources or knowledge. Because of this, many are forming support groups to help with instruction and other challenges of home education (Griffith, 1998; Klicka, 2002; Martin, 1997). These groups organize to conduct social activities, field trips, and

other learning activities (Martin). Many work together and cooperate when teaching classes (Klicka).

Table 6

Sources of Curriculum for Home Schools

<b>Source of curriculum</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Used public library	78%
Home school catalog, publisher, or individual specialist	77%
Retail book store or other store	69%
Educational publisher not affiliated with home schooling	60%
Used distance learning	41%

Princiotta & Bielick, 2006

This line of research leads to several questions about what curriculum individual families choose and why as well as the process of finding and settling on the right curriculum for their family. Were there periods of trial and error during the home school start up process when the family went through several curricula until the best one was found? It also addresses a research need identified by Cizek (1993). Cizek identified the need for research that studied “what home educators actually do” (p. 10). He recommended that studies focus on teaching strategies and the role of parents in home education. The current study will focus on the day to day operations and it fills a gap that was identified in 1993 by Cizek.

Knowles, et al., (1994) stated, “The most creative and innovative home-school parents and home educated adults have extensive knowledge about learning in alternative

and diverse contexts, and mainstream educators could benefit from this expertise” (p. 242). This study looked at home school instruction and curriculum in depth to identify best practices that can be transferred to traditional settings. One of the founders of the modern home school movement, Holt and Farenga (2003), wrote:

It seems very likely that the one place we can hope and expect to see some really fundamental and long-term research on learning, on the kinds and amounts of teaching that most help learning, and on the usefulness of different methods and materials, is in the home of people teaching their own children.... From these people and their work, all serious schools and teachers, many of them now severely limited and handicapped by the conditions under which they have to work, stand to learn a good deal. (p. 263)

Holt’s statement paired with Knowles, et al., (1994) statement highlights the value of the home schoolers as a group for in-depth study. Much that has been done is advocacy research designed to defend home schooling as a treatment, but little has been done to see what can be learned from home schooling.

This review of the literature began by looking at the motivations behind the decision to home school. There were two main domains that interconnect and are inseparable. For discussion purposes, they were artificially separated and a research gap was identified. One might ask how much overlap exists between these two main domains. If a parent’s stated reason for home schooling is ideological are there hidden pedagogical factors as well as unstated ideological reasons? What pressures exist to home educate among their peers? How did they decide to home school? What factors did they consider? After they have decided to home school, have other more relevant reasons to home school emerged?

The second part of the literature review focused on academic achievement. Though not a major part of this study, it informs the study in three ways. First academic performance and success is a major reason for the defense of home education as a treatment as well as a motivating factor to actually home school. Second, academic success is tied to the nature of home education instruction and curriculum. These tie directly to the third part of the literature review. Third, the continued academic success of home school students overtime makes them a worthy population for study in and of itself.

The third part of the literature review focused on the nature of home school instruction. That discussion leads to one major question: What can traditional schooling learn from home schooling?

### *Criticism of Home Schooling*

The fourth line of research concerns criticism of home schooling. While much of the literature is overwhelmingly favorable towards home education, examples of criticism in the literature can be found. The criticisms generally are opinion based and theoretical or philosophic in nature. Lubienski (2003) wrote that home school students would have performed just as well in other settings; therefore, the home school claims of a superior teaching environment are overstated. Apart from this criticism, there is little question about the nature of the academic success home school students achieve in the home school environment. The criticisms center on the effect home schooling has on the society as a whole and on the socialization of the home school student.

The most significant criticism of home schooling was that it undermines the civic foundation of American society (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000). Lubienski argued that home schooling “undermines public education’s singular potential to serve as a democratic institution promoting the common good” (p. 211). Home schooling removes money and students from the public schools that can help them be successful. Apple and Lubienski criticized what they saw as a consumer mentality towards education. Parents make the decision they feel is best for their children without regard for how it affects others. Kohn (as cited in Lubienski, 2000) wrote, “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).

Lubienski (2000) echoed Kohn, stating that “home schooling denies democratic accountability and disenfranchises the community from its legitimate interest in education” (p. 229). While reinforcing Kohn’s idea of consumerism, Lubienski raised another criticism that home schooling pulls the power over education away from an interested public and rests in solely in the hands of the parents. Reich (2002) also criticized the sole control of parents over education. He stated, “Home schooling is the apogee of parental control over a child’s education, where no other institution has a claim to influence the schooling of the child. Parents serve as the only filter for a child’s education, the final arbiters of what gets included and what gets excluded” (p. 4). Reich believed that parental limitations restrict students’ access to information that they will need in the future: “Students should encounter materials, ideas, and people that they or their parents have not chosen or selected in advance” (p. 58).

Reich's statement in the previous paragraph introduced what is probably the most cited concern about home schooling: lack of student socialization. Reich (2002) built his argument against home schooling by stating that home schooling insulated students from diverse ideas and people. The idea of socialization was raised in a *Newsweek* article by Kantrowitz and Wingert (1998) where they cited critics who believe that home school children will not acquire adequate academic and social skills they need to participate in our democratic society. Kantrowitz and Wingert indicated that "social isolation can be especially damaging in the middle school years" (p. 64).

Aside from the damage to the student who is not seen as being adequately socialized in the home school environment, the philosophical question of privatization was raised by Apple (2000). He saw home schooling as a part of a larger movement in America from public institutions to private institutions: "The movement toward homeschooling mirrors the growth of privatized consciousness in other areas of society... It is the equivalent of gated communities and of the privatization of neighborhoods, recreation, parks, and so many other things" (p. 66). Apple compared home schooling to the Internet because it enables the creation of "virtual communities which are perfect for those with specialized interests" (p. 67).

These criticisms focused on the relationship between the individual, or individual family, and society. The fear was that the individual will follow his own path to success at the detriment of or with little concern for the greater community. The critics feared that this will hurt the greater society. Are these criticisms valid? They are hard to test, but in

this study the researcher attempted to gather information that will further inform this debate.

### *Limitations of Literature Review*

The nature of home schooling does not allow for many experimental studies. Most studies were descriptive or causal comparative using historical data. Several that were not discussed because of the varied nature of the data they reported and their use throughout the review are discussed now. Basham (2001) conducted a historical review of home schooling in North America. He also reported the findings of multiple research studies conducted in both the United States and Canada focusing on motivations, demographics, academics, and socialization.

One of the limitations of the literature review is that many of the studies are meta analyses of existing studies and data. The nature of home schooling has prevented direct comparisons of home schooling and traditional schooling using experimental methods or longitudinal studies. Another limitation is the source of the research. As discussed earlier, much of the research is advocacy research, even if found in peer reviewed journals. The research is designed to defend home schooling from detractors and to embolden others who are home schooling or considering home schooling their children. The nature of home schooling lends itself to qualitative studies, and several were found that placed home schooling in a context that can be better understood (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Knowles, 1991; Knowles et al., 1994). These limitations should not detract from the efficacy of the literature review, but should be kept in mind when drawing conclusions as

well as serve as an indicator that further research is warranted in the field. The intent of this study was to gain independent and more detailed insight into the motivations and day to day operations of home schools. It will build on the knowledge from existing literature in an effort to confirm or deny the extent that the families in the study reflect the view of home school families discovered in the literature.

### *Summary*

The literature review provided herein addressed the motivations behind the decision to home school. There were two main domains that interconnect and are inseparable. They were artificially separated for discussion reasons, and a research gap was identified. How much overlap exists between these two main domains? If a parent is overtly home schooling for ideological reasons are there hidden or covert pedagogical factors as well as unstated ideological reasons that influenced them to home school? What pressures exist to home educate among their peers? How did they decide to home school? What factors did they consider? After they have decided to home school, have other more relevant reasons to home school emerged?

The second part of the literature review focused on academic achievement. Though not a major part of the intended study it informs the study in three ways. First academic performance and success is a major reason for the defense of home education as a treatment as well as a motivating factor to actually home school. Second academic success is tied to the nature of home education instruction and curriculum. These tie directly to the third part of the literature review. Third the continued academic success of

home school students over time makes them a worthy population for study in and of itself.

The third part of the literature review focused on the nature of home school instruction. The discussion leads to two questions: (a) What can traditional schooling learn from home schooling and (b) How do home schools operate on a day to day basis?

The fourth part of the literature looked at criticisms primarily focused on the impact home schooling has on public education and the greater society. There is also literature that questions the socialization of home school students. This leads to another research gap: how do parents view their decision to home school in relation to the greater society? Do they view it as a positive or negative, or are they indifferent to the effect on society? A less important question for this study, because it has been addressed by others in previous studies (Basham, 2001; Ensign, 2000; Medlin, 2000; Rivero, 2002), is how well are home school students socialized? Of more interest for this study would be, how are or what does socialization look like for home school students?

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter is divided into five sections: (a) research design, (b) research questions, (c) sample, (d) qualitative procedures, and (e) methodological concerns and trustworthiness. The research design describes the basic structure of the research project, including how the sample was chosen, entry gained, and research conducted. The research questions were developed as a result of gaps identified in the literature review and provided guidelines for data collection. The qualitative procedures section includes descriptions of the researcher's role, data collection, and data analysis. The methodological concerns and trustworthiness section addresses the lens of both the researcher and study participants, as well as concerns about the trustworthiness of the study, and attempts to address these concerns.

#### Research Design

This study was a qualitative study of four home school families who are active in a local home school organization. The organization was a home school cooperative that used a classical approach to education. Herein, classical is defined as the study of the medieval trivium, Greek and Latin methods, and great books curriculum. The four families were chosen from a larger pool. The criteria for choosing the families were that they (a) had at least three years of home school experience, (b) had children they were

currently home schooling, and (c) had at least one child who had completed the home school education and had moved on to college or the work force. This helped the researcher purposively select participants who had experience with home education and who had experienced some of the challenges and successes of home education.

The researcher contacted the head of the organization for contact information and referrals. Data was gathered through interviews with the family members (parents and children together, parents and children apart), observation of the family in various home school environments (teaching, preparation, social activities with home school organization, home school advocacy meetings, and field trips), and collection of artifacts.

Case methodology was used to seek answers to the research questions. “Case study is appropriate when the object of an evaluation is to ‘develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program’” (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). The literature review indicated a lack of understanding of how home schools operate on a day to day basis. The literature indicated that there are things that traditional education can learn from home education. A more detailed and in-depth study of four home school families will provided data to support the research questions.

### Research Questions

The data collection was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors influenced the family to home school and what does home schooling mean to these families?

- a. Social

- b. Religious
  - c. Family
  - d. Academic
  - e. Special needs
  - f. Relationship of home school family to larger society
2. What does home education look like day to day?
- a. What is the typical parent (teacher)/ child (student) interaction?
  - b. What types of teaching strategies does the parent use?
  - c. What is the nature of the educational environment (constructivist or traditional)?
  - d. What can be learned from home school instruction that will be of value to traditional education?
3. What support systems are in place to help them be successful?
4. What curriculum choices do home school families make?
- a. How do they make curriculum decisions?
  - b. What are their concerns about home schooling?
  - c. What are some of the past challenges they have overcome?

### Sample

Four families were identified from a larger pool that had experience in home education using the criteria already identified. The participants were drawn from a larger pool of families from a home school organization. The town where they were located is

in northeast Mississippi. Educational opportunities for the children in this program included a large public school system where most schools rated at level four or five, which by the state standards indicates the school system is regarded as an excellent school system. There is also one large private religious school and several smaller religious schools in the area.

Table 7

Sample

	<b>Smith Family</b>	<b>Harbor Family</b>	<b>Johnson Family</b>	<b>Riley Family</b>
Family structure	Intact	Intact	Intact	Intact
Father's occupation	Constitutional Lawyer	Business owner	University employee (non faculty)	Business owner
Mother's educational level	B.S. History	Some college	Some college	B.S. Education/M.S. Education administration
Children in home school	Male (16), Female (13), Female (8), Male (6)	Male (16), Male (10)	Male (15), Female (8)	Male (15)
Children in college	Male (20), Female(18)	Female (18)	Male (18)	None
Adult children out of college or work force	None	None	None	Female (26), Male(25)
Children ever in private school?	No	Yes	No	Yes
Children ever in public school?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Three of the families in the study had excellent educational choices besides home education because they had access to the public or private schools described above. The fourth family did not have highly accredited public schools to choose from. The families were primarily white, middle-class, and religious conservatives, which, matched what was found in the literature review about the *typical* home school family. Table 7 provides details on the sample.

### Qualitative Procedures

The study was divided into three phases. The first phase was the initial research phase. A literature review and initial fact finding interviews were conducted with home school families to get background knowledge for the study. During the first phase the researcher identified and approached families about participating in the study. The purpose of the first phase was to gain basic knowledge of the families studied and to gain entry and rapport with the families studied.

The second phase was the data collection phase. The researcher conducted interviews and observations and collected artifacts from the identified families. The information collected was initially analyzed and the literature review further refined.

The third phase was the data analysis phase. Data were analyzed, conclusions drawn, and the literature review refined and completed.

Additional branches of study were identified during the qualitative study and followed up. Possible branches included interviews with adult family members who were home schooled and are now in college or have jobs, as well as friends and family of the

home school subject families, about their perspectives. Another branch identified was a brief addition to the literature review of books and articles that are important to the home school families studied and are referred to by the families as critical in their decisions to home school as well as serve as resources to guide their efforts.

For the study, interview field note sheets, observation data sheets, and archival data sheets were used to collect data for later analysis. The sheets were linked to the research questions. The data sheets helped to create the triangulation effect that protected internal validity. Table 8 shows sample data collected using various qualitative methods. Each research question was shortened to a research domain. Within each domain, interview questions were developed. Observation aspects were created to guide observation. Archival data was collected to support both the interview and observation data.

An initial interview was conducted with each family prior to the first observation in order to collect data related to the research questions. After the first observation, a second interview was conducted and archival data requested. To cover times when direct observation could not be conducted, the families were asked to keep a log of daily activities. Subsequent interviews and observations were guided by the research questions and domains, as well as information discovered during the conduct of the study.

#### *Researcher's Roles*

The researcher is from a public school background. He was educated and taught in public schools for ten years. He is from a conservative religious background, and he

has peers who have home schooled or considered home schooling as an educational option for their children. The researcher has previous connections with some individuals in the home school group. There was a danger that the participants would be overly accommodating and provide the researcher data that he was looking for in an effort to help him complete his project because of previous connections and their knowledge of him from mutual acquaintances.

Interviews and observations were conducted and archival data requested to support the research questions. Interviews and observations were primarily of the four families. Additional observations were conducted of the whole home school organization during its Friday activities.

Home school families erect barriers to outsiders asking questions. Home schoolers are leery of outsiders and are often encouraged to not share what they are doing for fear of legal action by local or state education officials (Klicka, 2002). This was not a barrier to building rapport, because of the researcher's previous connections with some families in the home school organization and religious background. The researcher did reinforce the idea that the goal was to get a more balanced view of home schooling, including the good, the bad, and the ugly.

### *Data Collection*

The researcher collected data through three different methods: (a) semi-structured interviews with participants, (b) observation of home education activities, and (c) archival data. Table 7 details the domains and sample data collected.

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with parents and children. All four families allowed the researcher to interview the children separate from the parents. Interview transcripts and recordings were made available to the parents for all interviews. Interview questions were drawn from the research questions as informed by the literature review. The purpose of the interviews was to allow the families to tell their own stories about home schooling and help to answer the research questions. Sample questions are seen in Table 9. The interview formats were initially semi-structured, but became less structured as the study progressed. Interview data was used to identify areas for observation as well as archival data for collection. Areas identified for observation and archival data collection included the nature of parent-student relationship as teacher to pupil. For archival data the researcher looked for documents that indicated the amount of parental control or student freedom over day-to-day decisions about what was studied.

### *Observations*

Areas for observation were identified during the interviews. Observations were conducted using observation data sheets supported by the research questions and domains identified in Table 8. Table 8 also shows sample information collected during the observations. Observations were conducted over an extended time. A total of two observations per family were conducted. Three observations of the home school cooperative were also conducted. The purpose of the observations was to help confirm or deny information gathered from interviews. The researcher looked for things that were

common and different among the families studied. Observations helped the researcher see what home schooling looked like on a daily basis. Observations were conducted of both parent and student interaction and of students at home school organization activities. Observation aspects were developed from the research questions, and the researcher used a descriptive question matrix (Spradley, 1980) and checklist to help observe found in Merriam (1988). Sample observation aspects are in Table 9.

### *Archival Data*

Archival data were collected to provide additional data to help triangulate with data from observations and interviews. The researcher identified archival data to request after interviews and observations. Sample archival data collected are listed in Table 6. Archival data were used to collect data that could not be observed. It was used to support data collected in the interview process. One example of archival data was a log that families were asked to keep of a week's home school activities. The researcher took photographs during the observations to help write up the observations, but also to serve as documentary data to support analysis. Archival data provided evidence to back up data collected during interviews. As parents referred to resources they used in their home school, the researcher collected samples by taking photographs or collecting copies of the resources.

Table 8

Research Questions and Collection Methods

Research Question	Domain	Interview	Observation	Archival data
What factors influenced the family to home school and what does home schooling mean to these families?	Motivation	1. What was the primary reason you decided to home school? 2. If someone asked you what reasons they should home school what would you tell them?	Observe to see if actual conduct of home school matches stated motivations	Ask for documentation that they use to encourage others or were used to encourage themselves to home school  Student work, photographs of the home school environment in the home as well as other places education takes place. Log of daily activities.
What does home education look like day to day?	Operation	1. Describe a typical home school day for you. 2. How much time do you devote to direct instruction during the school day?	Video tape learning sessions to see if what happens day to day matches stated activities	Statement of purpose from home school organization, web site data, letters from the organization
What support systems are in place to help them be successful?	Support	1. What support do you receive from the local home school organization? 2. What things does the home school organization provide that are key to the functioning of your home school?	Observe to see what academic as well as moral support organization provides	Collect examples of old curriculum now discarded, use follow up interviews to discuss reasons curriculum not used. Receipts for curriculum purchases to show economic cost to the family, correspondence with state or local education officials
What curriculum challenges does the family face (now and in the future)?	Challenges	1. What were some of the challenges you encountered when you first started home schooling? 2. What is the most difficult challenge you have overcome so far in home schooling?	Observe and note challenges in curriculum that arise during teaching and how they are addressed	

Collecting data from three different sources (interviews, observations, and archival data) from various roles (parent-teacher, child-student, and members of the support group) helped to develop a more complete view of home education. This triangulation increased the credibility of the data collected and served as a check on any researcher bias. Combining interviews, observations, and archival data allowed the researcher to get more credible information from each participant individually.

The resulting thick description enabled the reader to transfer the findings to other situations. The multiple data helped to increase the objectivity or confirm-ability of the data collected from the subjects. The goal of collecting all the data from multiple sources was to identify themes that emerge across data within and between participants.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were organized and analyzed using a matrix for the purpose of tying research questions to specific domains (identified in Table 8) and supporting dimensions. Each source of data (interviews, observations, and archival data) was analyzed independently using the matrix. After each was analyzed independently, an overall analysis of the data was conducted using the same domains and dimensions. From this analysis the researcher identified themes and patterns that emerged. He looked for converging and diverging themes among the four families studied. The emergent themes and patterns served as the basis for the findings and discussions. Table 10 shows the domains and supporting dimensions used for analysis.

Table 9

## Sample Observation Aspects

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Observation Aspects</b>
1. Motivations	1. Diagram of room/area 2. List of educational materials in the room/area. 3. How are actors involved in activities? 4. What activities are linked to stated goals? 5. Describe the participants interactions. 6. Note rapport between parent and child. 7. Note parent's familiarity with the subject being taught. 8. Describe the activities. 9. Do the activities conducted match the stated motivations?
2. Operations	10. What role does the parent perform? 11. How does the parent begin the learning activity? 12. What is the relationship between parent and child? (teacher-student, facilitator-learner) 13. Note non-verbal communication of parent and child. What attitudes are displayed? 14. Amount of engagement between parent and child. 15. Nature of engagement. Correction (stay on task), assistance with learning activity, direct instructions. 16. How do the stated motivations affect the parent and child? 17. Ways feelings affect activities?
3. Support	18. What activities do the support organization conduct that are not conducted in normal day to day activities at home school? 19. What is the nature of the activities conducted at support organization events?
4. Challenges	20. What problems occur? 21. How are problems solved? 22. What goals are being met? 23. Signs of visual frustration. 24. Note amount of equipment. 25. Note ease of parent's delivery or facilitation of the process. 26. How do activities fall into time periods? 27. Note student or parent frustration and how it is dealt with.

Data were analyzed within subjects well as among the four subject families using the various types of data collected as. Vertical and horizontal angles were considered when conducting analysis. The researcher looked for similarities and differences among

different types of data collected within and among the four families studied. An example is the motivation to home school. Of interest were how each family's motivations compared to the others and how their motivations impacted their curriculum choices. These methods were used to get a complete picture and thick description from the data collected.

### Methodological Concerns and Trustworthiness

A few concerns about the trustworthiness and credibility of the study must be addressed. Based on past relations with individuals in the group the researcher may have had some bias when conducting interviews or observing activities. Interviewing resulted in amicable feelings. There was a danger that the researcher was more generous in the analysis based on positive relationships developed during the data collection. Conversely, the researcher's public school background and advocacy could negatively influence the analysis of the data and conclusions towards home education that were drawn from the data.

### *Lens of the Researcher*

To account for potential bias the researcher conducted peer checks of the analysis. The participants were also allowed to check findings. In addition, the amount of data collected from multiple sources enabled the researcher to analyze and identify themes and patterns that emerged within participant families and among families. This triangulation provided the researcher with multiple perspectives which served to reduce the threat of

bias. Using a standardized set of domains in analysis also helped control for bias and increased trustworthiness.

### *Lens of Study Participants*

To account for potential bias among participants, the researcher used increased time in the field to reduce the likelihood that participants were providing misleading information. The researcher used multiple data sources to validate or invalidate claims made during interviews and to control for the possibility that observations were contrived. Participants were made aware of the objectives and research questions. Prior to initiating the study, the researcher met with members of the home school group and discussed the need for objectivity and trustworthiness in their responses and the importance of them to act as normally as possible during observation.

### *Credibility, Transferability, Confirm-ability, and Dependability*

The study, data collection, and analysis were designed to increase the credibility of the study. Triangulation methods, self monitoring of subjectivity, peer checks, and member checks were used to increase the credibility. One factor that greatly increased the credibility of the study was prolonged engagement in the field. The researcher gathered data over one and a half school years.

The ability to transfer the results to other situations was improved by the thick description of the phenomena studied. The researcher collected sufficient data to answer

in detail the research questions, and he used purposive sampling to find participants who could more effectively answer the research questions based on their experiences with

Table 10  
Domains and Dimensions for Data Analysis

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>
What factors influenced the family to home school and what does home schooling mean to these families? (Basham, 2001; Carper, 2000; Knowles, 1991; Knowles, et al, 1994, Martin, 1997; Ray 2000)	Motivation	Pedagogical Ideological Family Religious
What does home education look like day to day? (Barratt-Peacock, 2003; Ensign, 2000; Knowles, 1991; Martin, 1997; Rivero, 2002)	Operation	Resources Methods (direct or indirect) Time factors Location
What support systems are in place to help them be successful? (Griffith, 1998; Klicka, 2002; Martin, 1997)	Support	Skills Knowledge Advocacy
What curriculum challenges does the family face (now and in the future)?	Challenges	Skills Knowledge Local or state officials Money

home schooling. The data was obtained from knowledgeable individuals from different perspectives and using various methods. The analysis was conducted using a matrix with supporting domains and dimensions (See Table 8). The study was limited to home school families from a fundamentally religious background. This limits the ability to generalize to the larger population of home schoolers, but provides a more complete understanding of the particular type of group studied. Dependability was increased using overlap or triangulation. The design of the study and the standardized products used to collect data helped to increase the likelihood that similar results might be found if the study is replicated with different participants.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the study. The chapter includes: (a) an introduction to the results, (b) a description of the home school cooperative, (c) case studies of the participant families, (d) within-case data analysis, (e) cross-case data analysis, (f) chapter summary, and (g) conclusion.

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the day to day activities of home school families. Case studies were conducted of four families that home schooled their children. The study focused on their motivations to home school; the activities conducted during the typical home school day including teaching strategies and the nature of instruction; resources used by home schoolers; and challenges faced by home schoolers. The results indicate that motivations to home school were much more complex than is often described in the literature; that these families operated their home schools on the understanding that the home is a superior place to learn; that they were flexible in the selection and use of various educational programs, including the home school cooperative to support their educational goals; and that they face challenges while running their home schools, including frustrations between parents and children, social isolation and a significant change to their family lifestyle.

## Case Studies

The following case studies are intended to give the reader a detailed understanding of the motivations and operations of the home school families. First the home school cooperative is described and discussed. It is addressed first, because it is vital to each of the families' home school operations. After discussing the cooperative, each individual case family is described and discussed. The nature of the discussion follows the four lines of study: (a) motivations, (b) home school operations, (c) support systems, and (d) curriculum choices and challenges. Each case begins with a description of how the family made the transition from traditional to home schooling and then continues with a more thematic discussion of motivations. Likewise, the section on home school operations begins with a composite description of a typical home school day and is followed by a more thematic discussion of home school operations, curriculum, and resources.

### *Cooperative*

The families in the study all participated in a Christian-based classical education cooperative. The cooperative had been operating in the area since 2001. Several families came together to help teach and provide group academic and social activities to their children. Cooperative meetings were held in a local church, but the cooperative was not affiliated with the church. A few members of the cooperative were also members of the church, which was how they were able to negotiate use of the facilities. The cooperative met in a building that once was used as a children's education facility. The cooperative

used this building for class meetings. They also had access to the church gymnasium and a room adjacent to the gymnasium that they used for a lunch room.

The curriculum was based on the classical trivium: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Joseph (2002) defined the constituent parts of the trivium: “Logic is the art of thinking; grammar, the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought; and rhetoric, the art of communicating thought one mind to another, the adaption of language to circumstance” (p. 3). To help understand the nature of the curriculum consider the following explanation of the purpose of the trivium by Joseph:

The function of the trivium is the training of the mind for the study of matter and spirit, which altogether constitute the sum of reality. The fruit of education is culture, which Matthew Arnold defined as the knowledge of ourselves [mind] and the world [matter]. In the sweetness and light of Christian culture, which add to the knowledge of the world and ourselves the knowledge of God and of other spirits, we are enabled truly to see life steadily and see it whole. (p. 8)

The classical model of education rejects the notion that education should prepare students for particular jobs or careers, but rather it should according to Joseph, “teach one how to live; they train the faculties and bring them to perfection; they enable a person to rise above his material environment to live an intellectual, a rational, and therefore a free life in gaining truth” (p. 5).

On their website the cooperative declared that students no longer know how to think. The goal of the cooperative was to help teach their members’ children how to think by using the classical trivium. The cooperative met on Fridays. Monday through Thursdays, the children were taught at home or in other arrangements made individually

by the families. The high school students also met on Tuesday afternoons, because there was not enough time to get all of their tutorials in on Friday.

Each family's father rotated as headmaster for a Friday and each family was required to teach two courses. The parents volunteered to teach classes. As part of the cooperative agreement, families agreed to teach two classes per year. The teachers included doctors for science, lawyers for logic and rhetoric, engineers for science, pastors for theology and history, and an author and editor for composition. There were also parents with experience teaching in public and private schools as well as in college. Not all parents had the professional background to teach a particular subject or teaching experience. Some parent-teachers studied the subject they were to teach in order to be prepared to teach. An example of this was the astronomy teacher who took astronomy in high school and re-taught herself in order to teach astronomy at the cooperative.

The cooperative divided the course work along the classical trivium lines. Kindergarten through sixth grade was the grammar stage. In the grammar stage the courses available were Latin, history, science, grammar, literature and composition, and art and music appreciation. Junior high was the logic stage. They had all of the grammar stage classes available but at a more advanced level plus a logic class. High school was the rhetoric stage. They had all of the logic stage classes at an advanced level plus a rhetoric class and a choice of science courses. They could choose from four sciences: biology, chemistry, astronomy, and physics. The children did not have to take all of the classes. They had the flexibility to pick and choose some courses. The core of the curriculum was the history curriculum which had four strands that they rotated through

each year. If a student attended the cooperative for all twelve years he or she would have received the full curriculum three times, just at different levels. The four strands were Ancient, Christendom, Early America, and Modernity.

The cooperative had a statement of faith published on their web site. It was inclusive in nature to what they described as orthodox Christian faiths. They listed several creeds and confessions that their teaching adhered to including the Nicene, Apostles, and Athanasian. Their goal was to adhere to doctrine that historically separated Christianity from the other religions, but stayed broad enough to maintain the nondenominational nature of the cooperative.

Parent-teachers posted their syllabi and assignments on the cooperative's website. They taught their tutorials on Friday and the students worked on their assignments at home from Monday through Thursday. The parent-teachers also administered and graded tests. Parents were free to use the test grades in evaluating their individual student's progress but were not required to do so. Parent-teachers and students communicated by e-mail and also via postings on the web site.

Families applied to participate in the cooperative. Included in the application was the question: Can you give testimony of your conversion to Christ? This indicated the importance of religion in the cooperative. Other questions addressed how the family planned to help improve the cooperative and what the family expected to receive from the cooperative. The cost of participation in the program was listed as \$80-\$100 per year. This included the costs of classroom supplies, a science lab fee, and an art instruction fee. Required textbooks must be obtained at additional cost.

The nature of the cooperative was important in several ways. The first way was that it linked to the idea of home schooling becoming more like traditional schooling. Hill (2000) predicted that “as home schooling families learn to rely on one another; many are likely to create new institutions that look something like schools” (p. 21). This cooperative was one of these new institutions. Families abandoned some of their aversion to traditional schooling and struck a compromise, moving from home schooling independent of any outside agency to limited cooperation with others who have similar educational goals. Unlike public schools where the family has to participate in all or nothing that the school offers, the families of the cooperative formed a limited social contract and were free to pick and choose what they want from the cooperative.

Families used the cooperative to address several problems associated with home schooling, such as the difficulty of preparing and teaching all of a child’s classes and social isolation of the children. The parents took advantage of a division of labor in teaching and evaluation. The cooperative also allowed the families to teach their children the classroom skills they needed if they went to college. By participating in the cooperative, parents voluntarily gave up some of their curriculum autonomy, but in exchange gained the expertise and knowledge available from other parents.

The classical nature and purpose of the cooperative’s curriculum was qualitatively different from what was available in other traditional education environments in the area. The stated goal of the cooperative was to teach students to think and live as whole or complete persons. They were less focused on teaching and training skills for a particular purpose or job. They felt that a liberal and classical education would prepare students for

anything they might choose to do in life. There was also a decidedly Christian worldview in their curriculum. By participating in the cooperative the home school families were provided a powerful tool to enable them to exercise curricula autonomy and teach not only different subject matter but with different methods than would be available in either public or private education in their home towns.

### *Cooperative Classroom Description*

The following is a description of a one hour class period on a Friday at the cooperative. The composition class was taught in a Sunday school room at the church. The students were sitting at wooden tables and in wooden chairs. The table and chairs were the size for elementary aged children, but the students in the class were in ninth through twelfth grades. There was no black board or other traditional classroom amenities in the room. The teacher had a lectern.

Mary Reilly was the composition teacher. She was a certified secondary English teacher and had previously taught English in public schools. There were 10 male and 3 female students in the class. They were in grades 9 through 12. The students were self segregated by sex. The boys sat at three different tables; the girls sat at one table. Mary was teaching the weekly composition class to the students. The class was continuing work on their research papers. They had to write an 8 to 10 page research paper on a self-chosen topic. The students had already begun conducting initial research for the paper including topic selection and thesis development. Mary told them that they had to insure that they had sufficient resources available to support their topic. The students

were working on their thesis statements for their research papers. They were generating problem statements that would become part of their thesis statements. They were sharing their statements with Mary and other students.

One student shared his problem statement: “Should the account in Genesis be trusted as written.” He had been at a recent Creation conference and picked the topic because of his experience there. He said he wanted to do further research into Creationism. Another student was interested in studying the development of weapons. One was interested in the history of *Bible* texts. He wanted to trace the development of the *Bible* “from Barnes and Noble to the original texts.” The teacher asked each student questions, helping them narrow them down to manageable topics. She warned them, “If you can’t come up with enough sources you will have to change your topic.” Other student topics included: flood evidence, strategies and war tactics of Alexander. That student commented, “I need to narrow it down to one or two battles.”

Students continued to propose topics: Aristotle on music, the fall of Rome, Socrates and philosophy, aqueducts, and King Tut. A twelfth grade student said he wanted to study the “life of Augustine mostly centering on how well educated he was and how conversion affected his belief system.” The student was reading *City of God* and said, “I’ve ordered several books.” The children supported each other by giving advice on how to narrow topics and where to find information.

Mary encouraged them to tie in their research paper topic into their 40 hour project they must complete in their humanities class. Mary indicated that whatever they

chose should be of some value not just a research paper. Mary asked the students, “how many of you have started taking notes?” About seven raised their hands.

One student asked about common knowledge information they came across in their note taking. Mary responded that she would write it down and cited in the paper so she could defend the paper if necessary. Mary told them to only put one idea on each note card. Mary told them, “If you copy a direct quote, put it in quotes.” She further instructed them to “put topics and sub topics on top of cards.”

Mary explained to them that after they took notes they needed to organize them into an outline. She said, “Your outline helps you organize and plan.” She continued explaining that “poor organization is a reason research papers don’t get done.” She completed her instruction about outlines when she said, “An outline keeps you from getting off track.”

The class operated similar to a traditional school class. Mary provided guidance on topics and the students asked questions and made comments. The class was very teacher focused. Mary later indicated that at times the class is more student driven, but that day she had to put out direct information on how they should write their research papers.

Mary asked if the students had any questions. No one asked a question. She then told them about a website that will format their outlines. A student then told the class about a website that would cite their sources for them.

Teacher asked for the students’ writing journals. She was collecting them for another teacher. One student said he was not sure how to write the journals. Mary gave

them some help for their journals. She told them, “I found a web site with journaling ideas on *Plutarch’s Lives*.” The students had to write a journal on what they read in their literature class. Mary said she would email the site to the students.

The students complained about reading Plutarch in their other class. Mary responded that “Reading *Plutarch’s Lives* changed the course of Benjamin Franklin’s life.” Mary told them that the whole point of *Plutarch’s Lives* focused on how one person’s actions can change society. Mary told them that the book was valued by the United States’ founding fathers, but was now no longer read and valued in schools. She told the students that “We are losing it in this country.” She said this to indicate that she felt that the country was going in the wrong direction because of what was not taught in the schools.

Mary returned to the research paper and began to speak about writing the first draft: She told them it should have three main parts: (a) an introduction, (b) body, and (c) conclusion. She explained what should be in each part. Finally, she provided the students a brief checklist to help them know if they had all of the important elements in their first draft. Once they received the checklist Mary dismissed class.

### *Smith Family*

The Smith family was an intact family that lived about one hour south of the town where the cooperative was located. The father, Jack, was a non-faculty employee in a professional position at a local university. He was a professional photographer. The mother, Jane, was the primary teacher in the family. She did not work outside the home.

The father had a university degree and the mother had some college. The family lived in a modest house outside the city limits of the nearest city. In socio-economic terms, the family would be described as middle class. The father and mother operated a home business selling bookmarks with religious themes using photographs the father had taken during their travels. They also took school pictures for home school families and photographed events such as weddings. They were located in a county school district that was failing by state standards of accreditation.

The family had three children. The oldest son, Jonathan, had completed his home school education and was a student at the local university where his father worked. Prior to enrolling at the university, he attended a local community college about five miles from their home. He was in public schools as a second grader when the family decided to home school. He was the only child who attended both public and home schools. The mother indicated that they had some troubles home schooling their oldest son. There were frustrations schooling him, but when they joined the cooperative, some of those frustrations were alleviated. The mother reported that he had done well in college.

The middle child, Joseph, was 15 years old. He was in junior high when the study began and in high school at the conclusion of the study. He would have been in ninth grade by traditional school standards, but home school families have the option to graduate their students when they are ready to move on to college, not necessarily after 12 years. He was taking several classes from the cooperative. His course load there included humanities, history, composition, speech (half year), astronomy, and art appreciation. His mother taught him a basic algebra course because math was not offered

at the cooperative. Math was not offered because it did not fit into the classical curriculum and the families made a decision to handle it at home. The family used a series of workbooks for algebra. He also took piano lessons and practiced piano daily. He took biology from a friend of the family who was a microbiologist and also home schooled her children. This class was at her house on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. He was also involved in church activities, recreational soccer, and Boy Scouts.

The youngest child, Jennifer, was in elementary school when the study began. She was in junior high when the study concluded. She took several courses from the cooperative, including science, literature, art appreciation, history, and composition. Her mother taught her mathematics using a commercially produced math system called Singapore Math that was used by home schoolers and based on the math system taught in Singapore. She was in sixth grade in math, one year behind her grade in the other courses. She was involved in church activities and took piano lessons and practiced piano daily.

Neither of the children was taking Latin during the second year of the study even though their mother taught the elementary Latin course at the cooperative. The mother indicated that they were both ahead in Latin and could afford to take one year off from formal study and would resume their study of Latin the next year. They also did not take the theology course offered by the cooperative because it was the last class offered during the day and they chose not to stay for the course. The courses they took during the second year were different from the courses at the beginning of the study. Joseph was in junior high and moved to high school and Jennifer was in elementary and moved to junior high.

The mother indicated that the move was a significant change over the previous year because they both were doing “a lot more work.”

The variety of courses and the choices that the family was able to exercise when choosing which courses the children took was an example of the flexibility and autonomy that home school allows a family to exercise. The family was free to select not only what courses their children took, but also from whom and in what format. The children took some, but not all, of the courses offered through the cooperative. The mother taught math courses at home with help from commercially produced programs in a variety of formats including workbooks, CDs, and Internet.

The family conducted its school throughout the house. There was an enclosed car port that served as a family office and work room. In the room was a computer station; a separate desk the mother used; book shelves with various types of books, including home school resources, nature books, literature, and history texts from the home school curriculum; and religious texts, including *Bibles*, *Bible* studies, and *Bible* commentaries. The house was rich in a variety of print resources. Titles on the shelves included: *The Holy Bible*, *Ivanhoe*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Huck Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Literature of England*, *Timetables of History*, *DAuvair’s Book of Greek Myths*, *Great American Speeches*, *The Iliad*, *The Aenid*, *Greek Histories*, *Financial Peace University*, *Teaching the Trivium*, *The Well Trained Mind*, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, and *The Church in History*. These books were instrumental in the operation of the home school. As will be seen later in the discussion of the day to day operations and curriculum, reading was the primary mode of instruction in the home school. In the classical education tradition, the

author of the book is considered a teacher much as a teacher lecturing in the classroom. These books were keys to the curriculum autonomy that the family was able to exercise at home. The books were also indicators of the nature of the curriculum that the family used in the home school. The family used a great books approach to learning. Their religious beliefs were also enshrined in their education practices as evidenced by the number of *Bible* related books on the shelves.

Of particular interest in the work room was an old style pupil desk. It was wooden with an attached black board. The mother bought it intending for the students to use it, but it was used by the daughter Jennifer as a storage place for her school books and work. The kitchen, dining room and living room were in one large room. An island bar separated the kitchen from the dining room. Furniture arrangement separated the living room from the kitchen and dining room spaces. The hallway that led to the bedroom and bathroom area of the house extended into the large room as a walk way separating the living room from the kitchen and dining spaces between the living room furniture and the bar. In the living room was an upright Kawasaki piano, two chairs, and a couch. The television was not prominent in the living room and had rabbit ears because the family did not have cable. The piano that both children used to practice was against the wall in the living room.

The children studied at the bar, kitchen table, chairs and couch in the living room, on the floors of both the office and living room, and their bedrooms. There was a covered patio off the dining room with chairs, and the family conducted school there sometimes if weather permitted. Using the whole house as a school house allowed the students

freedom to move about and study where they were comfortable. The freedom to move was important because the mother used read aloud in her home school practice and sometimes it was necessary for the student studying independently to find a quiet place while the mother read to the other student. The old style student desk was an artifact of earlier attempts to be more structured and operate a school style of home schooling. The Smiths abandoned this type of home school operation the first year.

### *Transition from Traditional Schooling to Home Schooling*

The Smith family was initially motivated to home school because of conflicts with the public schools. Jane was involved in her children's education and active in the public school. She began to be concerned about some of the teachings that she felt were contrary to her family's religious beliefs,

I got involved in the schools and didn't agree with a lot of things. It was New Age stuff in the schools. I always said I would never home school, but it felt like God changed my heart, and led me toward home schooling.

When asked for a specific instance she replied,

One stands out, they were doing these guided imagery classes, and I knew about New Age and all and asked questions, and they did not like it. Once I started asking questions, my son started getting checks all the time. I felt they were taking it out on him.

Jane's attempts to address the issue led to further conflict with the schools. Her child's teacher was defensive when asked about the guided imagery activities, and the school system would not allow the mother to see the curriculum. This story was echoed by the younger children. When asked why they home school, Joseph replied, "When my older

brother was little he went to public school and there was something with the teachers and I don't remember exactly, but my mom found out about home school."

In spite of the conflict with the school, the family tried to keep the child in public schools. Two additional factors influenced the decision to home school. The first was financial. When asked if private school was ever an option, Jack replied, "It was really just the money," and Jane added, "Financially it was not an option." The second factor was religious and family reasons. The mother initially wanted to home school, but the father resisted, even though he understood why his wife wanted to home school: "She more or less had a spiritual calling and wanted the children to have a Godly upbringing." Jane added, "We were uncomfortable with the public school system but really feeling like that's what God wanted us to do as a family." The initial catalyst to home school for the Smiths may have been conflict, but the desire to do what they felt God wanted them to do with their family was the reason that they actually made the move. The reason that they did not transition to private school was financial.

The family continued to home school for several reasons, including family and religious reasons as well as two additional reasons: flexibility and pedagogical reasons. Flexibility encompasses both curriculum and family flexibility. During one observation the mother told her daughter, "You can read Aesop when we go to the orthodontist." During an interview the father indicated that one of the best things about home schooling was flexibility regarding vacations, "One of the major differences, I really love is vacation. We can take vacation any time we want. It still is like school, because they still learn where we go, like the Capitol Building."

Interestingly, though this family was conservative, they operated their home school incorporating a mixture of progressive and traditional beliefs and practices. Jane stated that “critical thinking makes them think logically and be able to understand what they read.” There definitely was a desire to go beyond the basics and teach the children to become life-long learners, but the family also focused on memorization of facts, poems, and *Bible* verses. Jane justified memorization by saying, “You memorize things that are in your head and at a later point they remember it. They put things together. It’s training for self discipline.” The point of memorization was for later use as information to draw on for critical and creative thinking. The family used the *Bible* as a primary text for both literature and history. The researcher observed the mother reading the Old Testament to the youngest child during their history class.

The motivation to home school directly influenced this family’s curriculum. They deliberately chose to align themselves with a home school cooperative made up of a group of religiously conservative families. The cooperative was run on a classical education model and was focused on helping families educate their children from a Christian worldview. The religious motivation was seen directly in their curriculum. They used the *Bible* as a primary text and many of their assignments involved comparisons between the *Bible* and other things they read (e.g., Greek philosophers).

### *Motivations to Home School*

The Smith family’s motivations to home school were complex. Their reasons included social, religious, family, and academic motivations. Social reasons included

what the family viewed as proper socialization, leadership development, and a form of *negative education*. The Smiths viewed socialization of children primarily with their age peers as a negative thing. They believed that their children had an advantage, because they were socialized with children of different ages and adults. Jane stated that her children had developed the “social skills to make them function with people of all ages.” Jack emphasized the idea that traditional schooling handicapped students because they were only socialized with their age peers. This belief contradicts the ideas of some home school critics (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998; Reich, 2002) that home school children will be hurt because of their lack of socialization in traditional schools. Rather than seeing socialization as a deficit of home schooling, the Smiths saw it as a motivation. The difference between the Smiths and the critics of home schooling centered on the nature and definition of socialization as well as the idea of which organization was primarily responsible for the socialization and education of children. The Smiths believed the family was the primary organization responsible for education including socialization. When prompted to respond to a statement about the role of government in education, Jane responded that leadership of the family, particularly the father, was what is necessary to address educational problems in the society.

A second factor associated with social motivations was leadership development. When discussing home schooling motivations, Jane stated, “part of our motivation is to raise a higher standard of young adult to be the next leaders.” What types of leaders did the Smiths want their children to imitate or replace? The mother bemoaned that “you don’t see leaders like Billy Graham and Winston Churchill.” Graham is a Protestant

evangelist who preached and helped spread Christianity around the world, and Churchill led the United Kingdom during the dark days of World War II. Graham fits into the religious revival that some ideologically religious conservative home schoolers want to develop in their home school educated children (Klicka, 2002).

Rousseau (as cited in Gutek, 1998) believed that children should be guarded from “the prescribed and proscribed, patterns of social convention that limited one’s openness to experience” (p. 68). He called this negative education. The Smiths’ motivation to home school was to be able to exercise a form of negative education. In their home school they did not avoid controversial topics or ideas and beliefs that conflicted with their social and religious beliefs. This was because they addressed these topics in the safety of their home which allowed the parents to provide a defense against the influence of these ideas on their children. Home schooling allowed the Smiths to protect their children against what Rousseau described as “the prescribed and proscribed, patterns of social convention” (As cited in Gutek, 1998, p. 68) that the family did not agree with until they were old enough and prepared to face them alone. The mother stated that she was not worried that her children would be drawn away from their social and religious beliefs because “I think that if they are grounded in the word [*Bible*] then I don’t think they are going to be led astray.” One of the key motivations to home school for the Smiths was to ground the children in the *Bible* and their beliefs and in a way negatively educate their children against current social conventions and beliefs. Their mother explained that this negative education also protected their children from “being exposed to things we don’t want them to be exposed to” including “promiscuity” and “the way kids talk to each other.” This

statement might seem contradictory, but they wanted their children exposed to contradictory ideas in a safe environment.

Religious reasons to home school seem to underpin everything that the Smith family did in their home school. In addition, they provided the underlying motivation to home school. It was religious concerns about perceived New Age practices in their oldest son's public school classroom that motivated them to home school. An even deeper motivation than the conflict with the public schools caused by religious belief was the belief that home schooling their children was "a calling from God." It was this calling that helped overcome the father's initial objections to home schooling. The family believed that it was their responsibility to provide their children with a "Godly upbringing." In fact when asked what the most indispensable part of the curriculum was Jane responded, "God's word... really we want our kids to have a Biblical worldview." When asked, "How would you respond to the idea that homeschooling your children hurts the common good? In other words, if your children were in school, other children might have the benefit of learning from your children." Jane responded, "Mine and Jack's responsibilities are not to the common good. Our responsibility is to raise Godly children." These statements about their responsibility to raise Godly children and home schooling as a spiritual calling help to clarify why the Smiths saw the greater society, including traditional schools, as subordinate to the role of the family in education and socialization. To them, the family was the primary organization upon which society was founded, and this was based on their religious beliefs.

Family reasons to home school were closely aligned to the Smith family's religious and social beliefs about the role of the family. Their concern with New Age practices in the public schools prompted them to consider what their roles as Christian parents were in relation to their children. It took their concern for the religious well being of their children combined with the conflict with the school to push them to move into home schooling. Their religious beliefs about their responsibilities as parents were instrumental in their decision, as seen in the description above of their move from public to home schooling. After they decided to home school, other family reasons to home school emerged. One was the opportunity to spend more time with their children and get to know them better. The researcher commented on how well the mother seemed to know her children, and she responded, "It takes time. It is one of the greatest things of home schooling." Other family reasons included the flexibility to take vacations during the school year and combine travel with education.

Academic reasons were not as significant motivators as the social and religious reasons to home school. The academic reasons did not center on academic success as measured by standardized test scores, but rather on pedagogical concerns. The father commented that their oldest child began to do better when he made the transition from public to home schooling:

My son started doing better and being more attentive. She [Jane] was able to meet his needs one on one. Who better knows your children than you-the parents? It makes sense to teach your child yourself because you know the way they learn. You know their gifts and can gear the curriculum towards their strengths.

Home schooling allowed the parents to differentiate the curriculum based on the individual needs and interests of their children. The children reinforced this during an interview when Joseph commented, “Mainly we enjoy it more and get more out of it... I understand better.” The students enjoyed learning at home and having their mother as a teacher. The family’s academic concerns focused more on creating an open adaptable environment for learning.

A final motivator that arose during a conversation was the parents’ previous school experience. Both the mother and father reported negative school experiences and wanted their children to avoid the same type of negative experience. Jane stated,

My experience with public schools is that, I didn’t like school because I was bored. I could do nothing and make A’s and B’s. You could be absent 20 days and pass, and I was absent 20 days. It did not challenge me. And I did not want my kids to experience this. I want them to love learning.

In summary, the Smiths’ motivations to home school were complex. The initial catalyst was the conflict with the schools over perceived New Age practices, but other latent or underlying motivators, including family and religious reasons, were the driving force behind the move from public to home schooling. Their religious beliefs prompted the conflict as well as helped form their belief that their primary responsibility was to educate the children in their family rather than to the greater society. Reasons to continue home schooling were identified after they started home schooling. These included the flexibility and autonomy that home schooling allowed the family in relation to curriculum decisions and the ability to take family vacations without considering the school calendar.

Knowles (1991) concluded that contemporary home school families do not home school because they believe that “homes are superior places of learning” (p. 227). For the Smiths this might have been true for their initial decision to home school, which was based on the conflict with the public schools and their family and religious beliefs, but it is not totally true. The Smiths did operate their home school in a way that they felt was qualitatively superior to the learning environment in a traditional school. They used the opportunity to home school as a chance to differentiate their curriculum based on student interests and needs as well as to provide a more open flexible and free learning environment. The mother in particular desired to create a learning environment that was different than the one she experienced in a traditional school environment.

### *Home School Operations*

#### Typical Morning

The following is a composite description of part of a typical instructional day at the Smith home school. It is based on data collected from observations, interviews, and archival data. Interactions between the mother and children and other activities described were either observed by the researcher or were described by the subjects during interviews and were supported by data discovered in archival data.

8:00 am

About eight in the morning Joseph and Jennifer woke up and moved to the kitchen where their mother had breakfast cooked. Joseph was wearing jeans and a t-shirt, but not shoes or socks. Jennifer was wearing pants, a t-shirt, and no shoes or socks. Their father had already left for work. Some days they woke up in time to see him before he left for work. The children ate breakfast and then helped their mother clean the kitchen. After they cleaned the kitchen, Joseph moved to the living room and sat at the Kawasaki upright piano. He has been playing for six years. He did not always like to practice piano. His mother told him to practice for 10 minutes. He got up, moved to the kitchen, and set the timer on the microwave for 10 minutes. While he practiced piano, Jennifer moved to her school desk in the room adjoining the kitchen and got a copy of a poem she must memorize for literature class at the cooperative. She gave the copy to her mother and she practiced reciting the poem, and her mom evaluated her progress. The song Joseph was practicing was "He's a Pirate." He did well at the beginning of the song, but had to work through the later stages of the song. The microwave beeped signaling 10 minutes was up and Joseph promptly got up from the piano. He moved to the island bar in the kitchen and looks at the planner that he used to keep up with his lessons. His mother also had a small poster board about 10 inches by 12 inches with all his classes and activities listed on it for the day. He decided that he was going to study his logic first. He went to his room and got his logic book and materials and sat down at the kitchen table to work. While he was doing this, Jennifer finished up her memorization practice and moved to the piano to practice.

8:30 am

While Jennifer practiced piano and Joseph worked on his logic, Jane went to the laundry room and switched out the laundry. After she switched out the laundry, she moved to the computer in the family office and logged on to the cooperative web site. She checked for any updated assignments or messages from the children's teachers, questions from students in her elementary Latin class, and her e-mail for any home school messages. When she was finished she asked Jennifer, "Where's your lesson plan book?" Jennifer responded, "You put it in my book bag." Jane asked Jennifer to get the lesson plan book. Jennifer brought the lesson plan book to her, and she checked it to see what lessons were planned for the day. She used a standard teacher lesson plan book to make a weekly and daily plan for Jennifer. Jennifer was going to study history. Jane was going to read to her from the Old Testament in the *Bible*. The cooperative used the *Bible* as a history text. They were not sure where they had stopped during the last lesson because they had not mark it in the lesson plan book. While the mother was looking through the *Bible* to determine where they stopped, Jennifer went to the family office and brought back construction paper and scissors. While her mother read, she was going to work on a book about ancient Egypt that she had to make for history class. Jane read a verse or two to Jennifer and asked, "Did we read that?" Jennifer responded, "I don't think so." It took about five minutes to determine where to start reading. Before she started to read, Jane asked Joseph, "Are you still working on logic?" He responded, "I'm doing what I forgot to do last week." Jane told him to "leave it for me so I can check it." She then began to read to Jennifer.

9:00 am

Jane was sitting on the couch and Jennifer was sitting on the floor cutting construction paper and making the book for history. She listened to her mother read about David and King Saul. As Jane read, she stopped and asked Jennifer questions, “So he let him go, now Saul’s being nice to David? Jennifer answered, “No.” Jane, “What does lament mean?” Jennifer answered, “Weep.” After a few minutes Jennifer stopped cutting and moved to the couch with her mother. Joseph was still working independently at the kitchen table. Jennifer moved back to the floor and started working on the book again. Jane asked her, “What was the song they sung about David?” Jennifer answered, “Saul has slain his thousands, David has slain his ten thousands.” After 30 minutes of reading, Jane stopped reading and asked, “Where’s your composition?” Jennifer quietly said, “No.” Jane responded jokingly, “I’m forcing you to do it. You tell it to me and I will write it down for your rough draft. No dialogue, no metaphor- all you have to do is write who, what, where, when, and how.” Jennifer got her composition notebook and found the outline she had previously written for the paper that she had to complete for her composition class. She sat down on the couch and looked over the outline.

9:30 am

Jane moved over to the kitchen where Joseph was working and asked, “Are you still working on logic?” He responded, “I have one more left.” Jane’s assignment was to read a story from *The Book of Virtues* and write a summary of it. Two minutes after he told his mother he had one more, Joseph declared, “I’m done.” Jane said, “Why don’t you

get a snack or something?” He moved to the cupboard, looked inside, sighed and closed the cupboard getting nothing out. He moved to his room, retrieved his *Bible*, and sat down at the kitchen table and began to read from the book of Proverbs. Jane was silently reading the story “King Canute on the Seashore” from *The Book of Virtues* while Jennifer stared at her outline and blank paper. Jane asked, “Do you have a title yet?” Jennifer answered, “King Canute.” Jane responded, “That’s boring.” Jennifer stated, “I don’t know how to start it.” Jane offered, “Well you have to have who, what, when, where, why and how, so you can start with them, get one of them out of the way. Why don’t you start with the octopus ate the green fish.” Both of them laughed. Jane reminded Jennifer, “The hardest part is starting.” To help Jennifer, Jane offered to write as Jennifer dictated. Jennifer replied, “King Canute...” Jane interrupted with, “Boring.” Her daughter was using her outline to go by. Jane recommended that Jennifer “move outside to help you think more.” She then offered Jennifer a smoothie to help her think. Jennifer accepted and Jane went to the kitchen to make her a smoothie while Jennifer moved outside to work.

10:00 am

Joseph was still reading at the table looking out of the glass patio sliding door from time to time. Jennifer was avoiding working on her composition. She was watching the dogs play while her mother swept the patio. Jennifer decided to take a break from her composition. She got up and went inside to eat her smoothie. After the break and smoothie she moved back outside and began to dictate her first draft of the composition to Jane. After a few minutes, Jennifer decided to write for herself. She wrote about five

lines and her mother looked at the paper and circled a word. Jennifer asked, “Why did you circle it so big?” Jane responded, “I wanted you to know it was illegal. Didn’t Mrs. Julia (composition teacher at the cooperative) give you a list of illegal words?” In their composition class the teacher was focusing on form and wanted the students to avoid using too many descriptive words until they had the basic form down. Jennifer went back to dictating as Jane wrote. They finished the rough draft and moved back inside. Jennifer joined Joseph at the dining room table. He was still reading from Proverbs. Jane brought Jennifer her Latin lesson. Jennifer did not sit down, but worked on her Latin while standing. She was not happy about doing Latin.

10:30 am

Jane asked Joseph, “What do you have to read today?” He answered, “Today I need to read Proverbs 1- 8 and *Within Town’s Gates* [a historical novel].” She reminded him, “You are supposed to read Aesop,” he responded, “I forgot about that.” She told him, “You can read Aesop when we go to the Orthodontist.” Jane checked Jennifer’s progress on the Latin lesson and showed her that she was not following the directions. Jennifer declared, “I don’t know how to decline it!” Jane told her to “remember you use it with the normative singular.” Jane got out the Latin text book and checked Jennifer’s work. They discussed the lesson. Joseph stopped reading and listened to the conversation. Jane intervened and sat down to help Jennifer with her Latin lesson. When Jennifer got stuck, Jane prompted her to recite the proper declination, which they were required to

memorize. This helped Jennifer get the right answers to her Latin lesson. Joseph was still distracted by the interaction between Jane and Jennifer.

11:00 am

When Jennifer was finished with her Latin, her mom announced, “Now you have to do your grammar test.” Jennifer moaned, “Oh no,” and tried to keep hold of her Latin book, which her mother playfully took away. Joseph closed his book and watched Jennifer take her grammar test. Jane asked him, “Is your brain gone? Do you want a smoothie? Do you need brain food?” He did not want a smoothie. Jane told him, “Go get your lesson plan book, here’s a highlighter and mark off what you have done.” She commented that he did not like to write because she thought he was avoiding an assignment. He responded, “I don’t hate to write, I hate the assignment I have to write about.” While he was looking over his lesson plan book, Jane was checking his logic lesson. The lesson required him to write his own syllogisms. She commented, “Oh, that’s a good one.” She then told him, “I don’t see much pink on that page.” He said, “That’s because there’s not much for me to do.” She retorted, “The first thing you need to do is organize your grammar notebook.” His grammar notebook was disorganized. She did not intend for him to do it immediately, but at some later time. Jane told him, “Eat a brownie and do [i.e. clean] your room.” Before he went to clean his room, he clarified one of his logic answers so his mother could grade it. Joseph went to clean his room and Jonathan, the oldest son, came into the kitchen. He had been at class at the local community college. Jennifer was still working on a grammar test. She asked, “What’s not? A

pronoun?” Jonathan responded, “I know what not is in Latin, non.” Jennifer continued to ask various parts of speech, “An adjective,” Jane responded, “No,” Jennifer asked, “An adverb,” Jane said, “Right.” Jennifer then asked, “Is a question interrogative?” Jane answered, “Yes.”

11:30 am

Jonathan moved to the kitchen and made a sandwich for lunch. He told his mother that he made a 72 on a lab test. The quiz was based on notes from the lecture not the lab so he studied the wrong information. Joseph came back into the kitchen from cleaning his room and looked at his lesson plan book. His mother recommended, “I think you should do science.” Jonathan was looking at Joseph’s logic assignment and stated, “The subject of logic is way too complicated.” Jane finished checking Joseph’s logic work. Joseph sat down with his science work, but did not start immediately because he was distracted by his older brother. Jane commented that “About this time he [Joseph] checks out, eats lunch, and walks the dogs.” Jennifer was still taking her grammar quiz and exclaimed, “I don’t know that.” Jane looked at the question and reminded her to “think about the jingle,” reminding her to recite grammar rules she has memorized to help. Jennifer finished her grammar quiz. It was about noon and Jennifer and Joseph ate lunch and prepared to go to the orthodontist.

## *Curriculum*

The nature of the Smiths' curriculum links back to their motivations to home school. They wanted to create an educational environment that supported the development of their children's religious beliefs. Because of this their curriculum was based on what they called a Christian worldview. They viewed everything in light of their religious beliefs as outlined in the *Bible*. Because of this they chose to join the home school cooperative since the cooperative mirrored their belief system and the curriculum was designed to teach from a Christian worldview. The Smiths received the bulk of their curriculum from the cooperative. Their children received 90% of their instruction and lessons from the cooperative.

What the cooperative did not provide, the Smiths looked elsewhere to find. This included math. Jane found commercially produced programs for both Joseph's and Jennifer's math curricula. Jane also used a local microbiologist to provide biology instruction outside the cooperative. In the past the Smiths dually enrolled Jonathan in the local community college. Though the cooperative provided some art and music appreciation as well as athletic competition in the way of fencing and cross country racing, the Smiths also augmented their extra curricular activities using Boy Scouts, church activities, family vacations, and piano lessons. Though the cooperative provided most of their curriculum, the Smiths were free to use what they wanted and added to their educational endeavors from other sources. Indeed, the Smiths opted out of several of the cooperatives classes.

The curriculum was designed to give Joseph and Jennifer a well balanced liberal education. Jane and Jack were not concerned about specific career or job preparation. Their most important concern was to help their children develop a “Biblical worldview.” The Smiths believe that a Biblical worldview requires them to interpret the world using the *Bible* as a lens. Though their curriculum was based on the accumulation of knowledge through memorization, Jane stated, “Our goal is not to teach the kids everything but to teach them the way to look things up and get the answers they need.” She further emphasized that, “you want them to be able to teach themselves.” Though it may appear from looking at their teaching strategies that they were mainly concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and facts, they wanted something much deeper and lasting. Jack emphasized that one goal was to create logical thinkers when he said that “critical thinking makes them think logically.”

The Smiths’ statements about the nature of their curriculum were reinforced by the books that they used to teach in their home school. The books they used as texts were written to help build character or reinforce a Christian worldview, including *The Bible*, *The Book of Virtues*, *Plutarch’s Lives*, *Aesop’s Fables*, and *The Church in History*. They were also reinforced by the types of lessons that the Smiths’ are assigned at the cooperative. When studying non-Christian authors or philosophers, including the Greeks and Romans, one of the objectives was usually to compare and contrast those beliefs with their own Christian beliefs. This also included discrepancies between history and science and their Christian beliefs. They did this to help their children analyze and evaluate both their own beliefs and those that differed from their own. This was an important part of

their education because it helped to prepare them for college or other settings where they would encounter belief systems that were different from theirs and served as an inoculation against infection from anti-Christian ideas. This links back to the parents' motivation to provide a kind of negative education that initially protected their children and then built immunity as they got older and were exposed in their home school to ideas that were different from their own.

The Smiths made curriculum decisions based on their assessment of their student needs. The decision to move to a classical education and affiliate with the cooperative was because they wanted to challenge their son Jonathan. Jennifer was one year behind in her math because her mother felt that she did not learn enough and needed more work at that level. Neither child took Latin during the second year of the study even though their mother was the Latin teacher because they were competent in it and needed to focus their efforts elsewhere that year. They were not only interested in student needs, but also interest. Jane indicated that she regularly had to do things to make her teaching more interesting. She said she had to constantly "raise the bar with them so they won't get bored." Like most teachers she realized that finding and keeping student interest was an important part of teaching. The final thing that drove their curriculum decisions was their religious beliefs. Their religious beliefs drove them to home school, helped bring them to the cooperative, and, as stated by Jane, was the most indispensable part of their curriculum.

### *Teaching Strategies*

Jane used a variety of teaching strategies in the Smith home school, including silent reading, read aloud, help or support when Jennifer or Joseph were having difficulties, direct instruction of a lesson or concept, memorization, and questioning. She also monitored their work on their lessons assigned by the teachers at the cooperative. The amount of monitoring and support was greater for Jennifer than for Joseph because she was younger. Jane expected more independence from Joseph and would expect more from Jennifer as she got older.

Reading was the primary teaching strategy used in the Smith home school. The children spent over half of their instructional day reading or being read to. Lesson plans from their cooperative teachers required them to read every day. They were required to read *The Bible* and other classical texts, as well as historical novels designed for young people for their ancient history class. Their other classes required reading, too. The mother used read aloud with Jennifer while Joseph did most of his reading independently. The mother avoided textbooks and declared that she was “anti-textbook.” Reading was important to the family because it was fundamental to independent learning. Jack stated, “The fundamental of reading contributes to your education. It is a building block that develops a love for reading that makes them teach themselves. It is self sufficient.” Jane emphasized the importance of reading aloud, “Reading aloud is crucial. I still read to Jennifer.” Jack continued her thought explaining that “The aspect of you (Jane) reading out loud is like multi-tasking. Listening is important. Hearing it and understanding it is important.” Jane completed their thoughts on reading by saying, “Our goal is not to teach

the kids everything but to teach them the way to look things up and get the answers they need.” Reading was the primary teaching strategy and mode of instruction in their home school because the Smiths saw reading as a key to developing independent learners. The Smiths viewed the author of the text as the teacher and the reader of the text as the pupil.

Memorization is important in the classical education tradition. The grammar stage is basically a time when students gather facts and knowledge to be used in the later logic and rhetoric stages. Because of this, the cooperative required the students to memorize a lot of information. Information the students memorized included passages from the *Bible*, poems, Shakespeare, history facts, and selections from famous speeches and writings. They also had to memorize English grammar rules, Latin declinations, and Latin vocabulary. Memorization did not stop in the grammar stage, but continued in the logic and rhetoric stages. Both Joseph and Jennifer spent about an hour a day working on recitations that they had to memorize for different classes.

Because the children received their primary direct instruction on Fridays from the teachers at the cooperative, other than reading, Jane’s primary teaching function was to plan their instructional week, insure that the children stayed on task, evaluate their work, and help when they were experiencing difficulties. Jane did not provide as much direct instruction to Joseph because he was older. Jane did not prepare his lesson plan book for the week. He did that. She only provided a list of the courses that he was responsible for completing the work in. She did check his work and prompted him to get back to work when necessary. Joseph was expected to exercise more independence than Jennifer. Jane spent more time with Jennifer. She provided direct instruction and intervened to provide

support to her learning. Jane reported during the first year of the study that she provided direct instruction for about an hour and a half with Joseph and about two hours with Jennifer. She indicated that this had changed some once they moved up another grade. They were doing more difficult work so they initially needed more help.

Aside from reading, the most often practiced direct teaching strategy was questioning. Jane asked questions as she read aloud to the children. She also asked questions about their assignments to evaluate their learning. Her questions ranged from basic knowledge and comprehension level to analysis and evaluation level. She often interrupted her reading to ask a question about the previous day's reading or to check if Jennifer was paying attention or truly understood what she was hearing.

The children were required to do things with the knowledge that they gained from their reading. The primary products that the children created were written products. The ability to communicate well is a primary objective of classical education. The focus is on written communication. The students did have the opportunity to make projects. The Smiths, as well as the other teachers at the cooperative, valued making school interesting and developing student creativity so they designed learning opportunities that allowed students to show what they had learned using their creativity.

The Smiths supplemented their teaching strategies with the use of commercial programs, technology, and experts outside of the cooperative, including a piano teacher and a biology teacher. These will be delineated during the discussion of the curriculum.

In summary, the Smiths' primary teaching strategy was reading, both silent independent reading by the student and read aloud by the parent to the student. Jane read

more to Jennifer than to Joseph, but Joseph indicated that he still enjoyed his mother reading to him. Reading as a teaching strategy facilitated learner independence, one of the family's stated goals to home school. It is interesting that reading is seen as a teaching or learning strategy rather than a separate subject of study. As the students got older, Jane's role changed from primarily providing direct instruction to generally guiding their learning and keeping them on task. The primary provider of direct instruction was the parent-teacher at the cooperative on Friday, and Jane provided learning support as the students needed it at home.

### *Resources*

The Smiths used a variety of resources to help run their home school including: the home school cooperative, books, Internet, technology, and outside resources. The most important was the home school cooperative.

The home school cooperative was the source of most of the curriculum that the Smiths used in their home school. The cooperative supported their efforts in two ways: first, it provided support to the parents' teaching efforts, and second, it provided support to the learner providing opportunities not available at home. The first thing that the cooperative provided the Smiths was a rich variety of curriculum choices that would be difficult to provide alone at home. The cooperative provided the Smiths access to both elementary and secondary classes except for mathematics. The Smiths took advantage of most of the courses. It also provided curriculum expertise, which Jane highlighted when she said, "you can find other people to teach certain things, so it is a trade off." An

example of this was the new government class at the cooperative that was taught by a parent who graduated from college with a political science degree.

The second thing that the cooperative provided the Smiths was shared accountability. In some ways the Smiths gave up some of their autonomy to the cooperative and the other parent-teachers, but in their view this was a good thing. They had some trouble home schooling their oldest son, Jonathan, until they joined the cooperative. Jack commented: “We struggled for years. But it was different with a co-op. That schooling system was different. He was able to get with peers and adults in the teaching environment.” The cooperative provided another instructional environment that helped both Jonathan and his parents’ educational efforts. The cooperative was difficult for Jonathan, but the more difficult environment and the opportunity to be in class with other students at least one day a week played a positive supporting role. His father continued, “He got low scores, but really was working harder. Now he knows how to study and learns.” The cooperative also reduced some of the pressure on Jane to be the sole educational authority figure:

It lets them have another authority over them that they may work harder for. Whereas they may argue with me about doing something, if they have to do it and turn it in on Friday, they just have to do it.

The third thing that the cooperative provided the parents was support to lesson preparation. Jane did not have to prepare multiple lesson plans for her children because those were provided by the teachers at the cooperative. She only had to prepare lessons for the classes that she taught at the cooperative. She also has help with grading and assessment. The teachers at the cooperative gave and graded tests that Jane could use to

evaluate her children's progress. She also conducted assessment at home, but usually these were assessments provided by the teacher at the cooperative. This assessment help also provided some independent evaluation of her children's progress.

The cooperative not only provided support to the parents but also to the students. The primary thing that it provided the students was the opportunity to be in a classroom environment. Jane pointed out that the students had to prepare for the classes at the cooperative. The classroom experience also helped their oldest son, Jonathan. Joseph commented that the difficult classes at the cooperative were good because they prepared him for college: "College is almost easier than that. It taught me how to study, especially in history class" and "there is a really good writing program." Joseph also indicated that the cooperative was good because it gave him an opportunity to be in a class with other students. When asked what the best thing about the cooperative was, he answered, "Cracking jokes in the classroom." Though meant as a joke, it shows the importance of social interactions with both a teacher other than his mother and other students. Both children indicated that they enjoyed their time at the cooperative.

The cooperative was the most important resource that the Smiths had because it helped to overcome some of the handicaps that are systemic in home schooling including, the parents' inability to teach all subjects and the students' lack of classroom experience. It also provided the children with an opportunity to socialize with children and adults outside of their immediate family, a constant criticism of home schooling (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1998). The cooperative required the family to give up some of their curricular

autonomy, but what they received in return was very important to the Smiths' ability to conduct their home school.

Books were another important resource that the Smiths used to provide their children an education at home. As seen earlier, reading was the main teaching strategy that the Smiths' use in their home school and because of that, books were key to their ability to run their school. Jane indicated that she "is always feeding him [Joseph] the books that they are doing in the literature class," because he [Joseph] was not taking the literature class offered by the cooperative. The children also indicated that books played an important role in their home school. Joseph said, "She looks in the books and figures it out," in response to how Jane helped them if she did not know the answer to a question they had at home. Joseph's math curriculum consisted of a commercially produced series of work books. He received his instruction through working the lessons in the workbooks.

Books were not only important to their instruction, but one book was important in helping Jane determine what type of home schooling to conduct. Jane said that she tried many different curriculum changes throughout their home school experience. The book *A Well Trained Mind* was instrumental in her decision to adopt the classical home school model.

It should be remembered that the classical model recognizes the author of a book as a teacher just as a teacher in the classroom is a teacher and the reader is the pupil (Joseph, 2002). Because of this, the family needed many books. Jane indicated that they had lots of books because they did not go to the library often. Their home was full of

books, as noted earlier in the description of their home school. The books included novels and various types of nonfiction books but very few textbooks because Jane was “anti-text book.” She and the parent-teachers at the cooperative primarily used novels and nonfiction for instructional texts. Not only did they utilize novels in literature and composition classes, but they also use historical young adult literature in history class.

The Smiths used technology, including the Internet, to make their home school run more smoothly. Some of the ways they used the Internet included checking the cooperative’s website for lesson plans and messages from the teachers posted on message boards, as well as for research purposes. The family also used e-mail to communicate with other families in the cooperative. Jane communicated with her students from the cooperative, and Jennifer and Joseph also used e-mail to communicate with their teachers. The final way that they used technology was with videos. Some of their classes were taught by teachers on video. Most notable was the Gileskirk humanities course offered through the cooperative. The course included lectures on video combined with classroom discussion and extensive reading by the students.

The Smiths also brought in other outside resources above what the cooperative provided to support their home school. These resources helped the Smiths address areas of the curriculum not provided by the cooperative. Both Joseph and Jennifer took piano lessons from a private teacher. They also took a biology class from a friend of the family who was a microbiologist.

The Smiths wanted to provide the best education they could to their children so they went outside the family to bring in resources to support their efforts. The most

important resource they used was the cooperative. The cooperative helped them find a balance between home schooling and traditional schooling. They benefited from the division of labor with the other families in the cooperative, but were free to pick and choose what they wanted to use from the cooperative. Because reading was so important to their educational methods, they provided many books in the home for their children to use. The Smiths used technology to communicate and provided additional instruction to their children by video tape. They also provided additional educational opportunities to their children by bringing in additional resources not provided by the cooperative, including piano lessons and a biology class. The support structure that the Smiths developed in many ways indicated the way that they view education. Education was not linked to a particular institution like a school, but rather was a process in which the family, as the primary organization responsible for educating their children, identified their educational objectives and then located and provided various resources to help them achieve those objectives.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The Smiths acknowledged that there were some challenges to home schooling, and they shared some of their concerns. Jack stated that “there are some downsides” to home schooling. Among the “downsides” or challenges were the nature of the teacher student relationship that exists between parent and child, socialization, life style changes, the decision to return to traditional schooling, and addressing ideas in the curriculum that were contrary to the family’s beliefs.

The most significant challenges that emerged were related to the parent being the child's teacher. When asked what was most difficult about home schooling, Joseph answered, "The fact your mom is your teacher." Jonathan backed that idea up with, "Being honest with yourself and your parents. Because it would be easy to cheat and you don't want to tell your parents you did." The father echoed both sons' concerns when he said that home schooling can be "frustrating for the parent and the student." This was seen when Jane became frustrated with Jennifer's slow progress on an assignment when she inquired for the third time, "Please tell me you are finished."

Jane indicated that addressing the individual instructional needs of her children can be a challenge: "It can be frustrating. All children learn differently." When looking for curriculum material, she said, "What sounds good for me may not be good for the children, because they all have learning styles." Not only was it hard to find curriculum to match their learning styles, but she also had to change her teaching as they changed. She said, "As they grow, they may out grow our way of teaching so we grow." The nature of her instruction also had to change as Joseph and Jennifer got older. Though her goal was to develop independent learners, when both Joseph and Jennifer moved up a level in the trivium at the cooperative, Joseph from logic to rhetoric and Jennifer from grammar to logic, both needed more help and time from Jane. Before the move, both children had become very independent, but because they were beginning new levels, they needed more instructional support from their mother.

Most home school families deal with whether to return their children to traditional schools. This happened for the Smiths when their children approached high school. The

decision had to be made prior to high school because of the role Carnegie credits play in high school graduation. If a home school child went back to traditional school after ninth grade he or she would be behind in Carnegie credits. Because of this Jane stated, “During the teen-aged years a lot of people give up on home schooling and send their kids to high school. One reason for that is if your kids don’t go to school, they don’t get credits [Carnegie].” Other reasons for sending children back to traditional schooling involved the social and athletic activities at a school. This was not a major issue for the Smiths, but socialization with other children was an issue raised by the children as a negative aspect of home schooling.

When asked what was bad about home schooling, Joseph replied, “Friends that I don’t see that often.” He indicated that the cooperative, church, and recreational activities gave him opportunities to see his friends, but another comment about making jokes in the classroom indicated that he enjoyed the classroom time with other students. It should be noted that he reported, and his mother concurred, that he never asked to go to traditional schools, but he did recognize that socialization in the classroom was something that he was missing by being home schooled.

Jane highlighted a very interesting negative aspect of home schooling when she said that “home school students don’t always test well, but they are very intelligent. Our kids don’t test the highest.” Testing referred to standardized tests. This was interesting because of the research on home school academic achievement that indicated that the home school students, who test, test as well or better than their traditionally educated peers. Most home school parents were aware of this, and in a way it appeared that Jane

was apologizing that her children had not tested high like home school students are supposed to. It should be pointed out though that she was not concerned about their test scores. She viewed their ability to think and learn independently filtered through a Christian worldview as a more important goal.

The very act of home schooling was a challenge because it required many changes to the way that the family operated. Jane commented that,

It is a life style change. Mothers can get discouraged very easily. They deal with a lot all the time. When you home school there is a lot of sacrifices. Monetarily you don't have time, money, a social life to an extent. The mental energy is drained.

This change was born mostly by the mother. Jack worked during the day while Jane taught the children. Her teaching activities prevented her from doing other activities, including working and socializing. Jack delineated a few other ways that home schooling changed the life style of the family, "As far as monetary things and things in general, only having one car. You have to pay for the curriculum and everything in home schooling. Public school you send them to school and it is taken care of like lunch and other expenses. It is a strain if you have only one income coming in. You have to budget." Home schooling reduced the Smith family income and also added additional expenses to their budget. One area that the family sacrificed on was cable television. They had an old television from the 1980s and used rabbit ears to pick up broadcast stations. At times they also did not have Internet service at home to save money. To deal with the financial strain of having only one income, the family conducted a small business out of the house. Jack took pictures and they made religious book marks from them. Jane operated the business while conducting the home school.

Home schooling was not only a change in lifestyle, because of financial sacrifices, but it also was a form of isolation. Jane indicated that “social isolation” was one of the most difficult parts of home schooling. As already seen, this was also raised as an issue by Jonathan. The most significant aspect of the social isolation was the way that Jane felt that home schoolers were viewed by others in the larger society. She said, “The mothers and some dads have to sacrifice your life. It is all of your time. Taking care of a family and home schooling is a lot. You don’t get a lot of encouragement. People look down on you. I say, I work for the Lord.”

The lifestyle change was not all negative. The flexibility of home schooling was a positive aspect. Jack indicated that the ability to take vacations during the school year was a significant motivator to continue home schooling. The family also could take time off from home schooling and not get very far behind. They did this one day close to the Christmas holidays when Jonathan brought some friends from college over one week night before they went home for Christmas break. All of the children stayed up late with his friends, and because of that Jane cancelled school the next morning. Because they were not tied to a school calendar, they could make the instruction time up at their leisure. This flexibility was an important motivator to keep the family home schooling as seen from the earlier discussion of motivations.

The final challenge or concern about home schooling was confronting ideas in the curriculum that contradicted their Christian worldview or other beliefs. These contradictory ideas could be found in the various subjects that the Smiths studied, including evolution in science and humanist philosophy in history and literature. Jane

indicated that they did not view contradictory ideas as a major problem. One of the reasons was that she felt that her children were receiving an education that would help to shield or protect them from contradictory ideas as well as prepare them to defend their own ideas. Jane also took advantage of contradictory ideas as they arose to juxtapose against their own ideas. The family evaluated what was similar and different between the opposing views. The potential for Jonathan, Joseph, and Jennifer to be exposed to ideas contradictory to their worldview was not only academic. Jane's step-father was a paleontologist who believed in evolution. Jane stated that they had never avoided talking about their divergent beliefs: "We've always just been open to that [talking about evolution and creation]."

#### *Johnson Family*

The Johnson family was an intact family who lived in the town where the cooperative was located. The father, Chris, was a constitutional lawyer. He worked for a non-profit legal center that represented the rights of religious families. He had gone to court against public school districts over curriculum and religious rights issues. He worked from an office in the home and sometimes traveled to do his job. The legal center he worked for was located in Virginia. The mother, Cynthia, did not work outside of the home. She was the primary teacher in the home, though Chris helped the children with math and rhetoric. Cynthia had a Bachelor of Science degree in history and political science. She taught the history class at the cooperative. She was also on the board of the

cooperative and was instrumental in starting the cooperative and developing the curriculum.

The family lived in an upper middle to upper class neighborhood in a school district that exceeded the state accreditation standards. The district also had several schools including the high school, that have been recognized at the national level for academic achievement. Before the family began home schooling, their children attended the local public schools.

The family had six children: three boys and three girls. Two children, Carl who was 20 years old and Cindy who was 18 years old, were in college during the study. Carl took classes at a local community college and Cindy took online courses at a community college. Carl had a brain injury as a child that impacted his learning. Both Carl and Cindy attended public schools through junior high.

The Johnsons had four children at home being home schooled and attending the cooperative. Calvin was the oldest. He was 16 when the study began. He was in high school and preparing to graduate from high school the second year of the study. His goal was to score high on the SAT, which would possibly make him eligible for a good scholarship. During the first year of the study, he took humanities, literature, history, theology, rhetoric, Latin, composition, biology, music appreciation, and fencing at the cooperative. He also took an online astronomy class and violin lessons. He took math using a commercially produced curriculum at home. His father helped with math lessons if he needed it. He not only took classes from the cooperative, but he helped teach Latin to the younger children at the cooperative. He planned to get academic and strings

scholarships in college. He averaged over seven hours of studying per day at home Monday through Thursday. He worked independent of help in his studies. He was also involved in soccer and other recreational sports, as well as church activities.

Caroline was 13 years old when the study began. She was taking junior high courses at the cooperative and then moved up to high school courses during the second year of the study. Her mother stated that in most subjects she was ahead of her age peers except in math where she was a year behind. She took Latin, science, history, grammar, geography, music appreciation, literature, and composition classes from the cooperative. She took math at home using a commercially produced program. As with Calvin, her father helped her if she experienced trouble with math. Caroline had an August birthday, so her mother stated that most likely if she was in public school she would have been in seventh grade. Her mother had her in eighth or ninth grade classes for most subjects except math where she was in a seventh grade course. The second year of the study she studied math at a private education corporation dedicated to math instruction. She also took piano lessons and practiced piano most days. Like Calvin she worked independently though she did not spend as much time studying per day as he did.

Caitlin was eight years old when the study began. She took elementary courses at the cooperative, including literature, history, Latin, science, grammar, logic, and music appreciation. Caitlin received math instruction from her mother, who used math work books to teach her math. Because she was younger, she received more attention from Cynthia than the older children. The older children spent much of their time reading and studying alone, but Cynthia read to and taught Caitlin directly. She spent less time

studying each day than the older students. One of the major focuses of her education was building her reading and math skills. She also played soccer and other recreational sports and participated in church activities.

Conner was the youngest child. He was six years old when the study started. He was not always actively involved in learning throughout the day. His mother focused on phonics, reading, writing and math. He would listen in during Caitlin's history and literature lessons, but he did not do the work for those. He would do some work independently, but usually he received direct instruction from his mother or help from either Calvin or Caroline. Because he had less school work to do, sometimes he would distract the other children, by playing with the dogs, playing on the piano or running and walking from room to room.

The family conducted its home school operations throughout the house. The house had two levels. There was a foyer at the front of the house. To the left of the foyer was the dining room where the older children sometimes studied. To the right was an office where Chris worked when he was home and a stairwell leading up to the bedrooms. The foyer led into the living room. In the living room was a couch and two chairs with a coffee table. Against one wall were two book shelves full of books. The books included novels, biographies, histories, religious books, study guides, home school resources, and curriculum materials. The books included: *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *Aesop's Fables*, *PSAT study guide*, E.D. Hirsch's what children need to know books, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the works of John Milton, *The Patriots Handbook*, *Biblical Greek*, *A History of Christianity*, *Learn at Home*, *Comprehensive Curriculum*, *A Child's History of*

*the World, The Roman Reader, and Greek Histories*. There was also a piano next to the book shelves. All of the children played an instrument. The living room connected to the kitchen through an opening in a wall. The kitchen and living room shared a fire place. The living room had a series of windows on the outside wall that allowed one to look into the back yard. Cynthia read to the younger children in the living room. Because of this there were often books laying on the couch as well as the coffee table. On the walls were several pieces of framed student art work. There was also a telescope and a chart of the different types of clouds in the living room.

The kitchen had a sitting area in front of the fireplace and a breakfast table in a bay window that was set off from the rest of the kitchen. The younger children did work there, and the table was often covered with their school materials. The kitchen proper had an island in it. In the kitchen was an old student desk on which school supplies and books were stacked. The students did not study at it. Above the student desk was a chart of the different types of butterflies. The kitchen connected by way of a short hallway with the dining room where the older children worked during observations. The children's bedrooms were upstairs. The older children sometimes worked upstairs in their bedrooms.

There were three dogs in the house. One was a Great Dane that could open the back door with his head and go outside when he desired, another was a retriever, and the third was a small terrier type dog. Sometimes they would distract the children from studying, and Cynthia would put them in the backyard or would put them in another room away from the common areas of the house where the children studied.

The students studied in their bedrooms and in the common areas of the house. Calvin and Caroline studied at the dining room table and sometimes in the kitchen on the chairs by the fire place. The younger students usually studied in the living room with their mother on the couch and chairs or at the table near the kitchen bay window. All of the children were free to move about and study where they pleased. The ability of the students to move around the house was an indicator of the autonomy that they exercised in their home school. Because there were only a few children, their movement generally did not disrupt the education efforts of the other children.

#### *Transition from Traditional Schooling to Home Schooling*

The Johnson's were initially motivated to home school because of conflicts with the public schools. The father was a constitutional lawyer and represented conservative religious families in cases against public schools throughout the nation. Their children attended public schools until there was a conflict over Outcome Based Education (O.B.E.) and practices that they felt were in opposition to their religious beliefs. The mother stated that

Some of the things that offended us were: At our son's elementary school one year, during Earth Day one classroom had a board that said ask mother earth to forgive us. I felt that violated everything I believed about God, and that was a different religion to me. My children did not go to DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), did not attend Earth Day. We were always opting them out of things.

Like the Smiths, the Johnsons tried to reconcile their differences with the school district. They transferred their child to another school and tried to find conservative or traditional teachers. The decision to actually leave the public school system came several

years later when they had more children in school. The school system reorganized. The mother explained, "I would have been at three different schools." Their then youngest child was about to start kindergarten. She requested a transfer, "But they did not grant my transfer. I would have had four kids at four different schools. I had said Lord if you don't want me to continue this then don't grant the transfer." The family was denied the transfer, and they decided to home school all four of their children.

When discussing the reasons they home school, both the mother and the father agreed that the conflict with the school over religious beliefs and O.B.E. were the reasons they started to home school, but that the primary underlying reason was, that "we wanted our children to be raised in a Christian home and felt home schooling was the best way to do that."

Like the Smiths, the Johnsons also mentioned the flexibility of home schooling as a reason to continue to home school. The father mentioned, "One of the great things of home schooling is there is a real freedom in the natural kind of pursuit of knowledge and new things and understanding more deeply." The family also took vacations during the school year, because they were not tied down to the school district's calendar. Finances also played a role in their decision to home school. The mother at one time stated, "I would have been pleased to send my kids to a private school, but we could not afford it at \$3,000 a kid." She quickly stated that might not be totally true, because she felt that home schooling was a better environment for her children than any traditional school setting.

The Johnson family exhibited a combination of traditional and progressive curriculum and teaching strategies. Indicating his disdain for much of what is seen as progressive in public education Chris said,

That's one of our greatest frustrations with the public school approach is the way they tinker with pulling out phonics and the whole language approach and all this spelling is another... it almost appears as if there is a concentrated effort to keep kids from learning how to read and reading quality material.

Ironically, when discussing the ways they run their home school, he said, "The word we like to utilize is integration. In our history we try to integrate with our science which we integrate with our literature, and hopefully it all ties together so that they'll understand."

Observation of the children at their home school indicated that the family operated a home school that allowed for children to move about freely during their studies. There was little control over when something was studied especially for the secondary age children. The mother provided them their assignments at the beginning of the week, and they worked at their own pace and in their own order. There were no set periods. These examples tie back into one of the stated reasons that the family continued to home school- the desire to develop independent learners.

The family's older children attended a Creation Science seminar at a church during the school year along with the children from the Harbor and Riley families. The stated purpose of the seminar was to "educate children in nature, nurture, and admonition of the Lord" and "use the *Bible* to explain dinosaurs rather than fitting dinosaurs into the *Bible*." This indicated that the learning activities the family used were directly related to their stated religious reasons for home schooling.

### *Motivations to Home School*

The Johnson's motivations to home school included social, religious, family and academic reasons. Social reasons to home school were generally based on their views of society and their political and religious beliefs. The social reasons to home school were also based on the development of their children's character and values. The children raised concerns about school safety, although these were not raised by the parents.

The Johnsons desired to provide their children with a moral and philosophical base different from what they would have received in the public schools. When asked about whether home schooling their children hurt the common good, both Cynthia and Chris indicated that they felt that home schooling did help the common good. Cynthia said that it was

for the common good to not have someone trained in the gerbil-hamster wheel of public education. They are spouting them out with all the same moral, philosophical thoughts... and our kids are going to be going against the grain challenging other people, hopefully.

Chris indicated that the public schools teach all students the same basic beliefs and information. The Johnsons wanted to do things differently. Chris explained, "I think the beauty of the approach we are taking with the classical reading of the pagans and all the great works of Western civilizations. We are not spoon feeding them; we are challenging them to think deeply." The Johnsons wanted their children to be able to learn to think differently than the larger public, so they could challenge the prevailing ideas in society.

The Johnsons viewed diversity differently than most people. When asked if they felt that their children were missing out because they were educated in a less diverse environment than they would be in the public schools, both Cynthia and Chris responded,

“No.” They then explained that their children were exposed to people from diverse populations including race. They indicated that in their church several families had adopted children internationally, including two from Ethiopia and two from China. There was also a family from Korea in their church. These same families’ children go to the home school cooperative. Cynthia explained that their children “don’t see any difference” when they go to school or church with these children “They don’t see that those children with different skin color and different eye shapes are different from them.” When the Johnsons spoke of diversity they were more concerned about diversity of ideas. They believed that the education they provided was diverse when compared to the education offered in the public schools. They felt that they provided their children with the knowledge and skills to challenge the unified lock step ideas of others. They believed that public schools taught children to all think alike. The Johnsons also thought there needed to be some things that help unify people who are from diverse populations. They saw their Christian beliefs as the foundation of ideas, equality, and unity among diverse groups. Cynthia explained:

There is no commonality and nothing that really unifies and reaches above that diversity that does come naturally. It’s interesting that, I mean the whole concept of course, stems Biblically that there is neither Jew nor Greek. That is a uniquely Christian contribution to civilization. And yet, we squelch the Christian influence in public schools and really in society at large. And consequently we have destroyed the whole value of diversity.

One of the Johnsons’ goals was to raise their children with ideas and beliefs based on this Christian idea of diversity and equality. They believed that this would provide for the common good in society.

Neither of the parents brought up physical safety concerns. They also did not indicate that they taught their children at home because they were worried about their moral safety. The children did, however, bring up physical safety concerns. Caroline told a story about a friend of hers who went to public schools who “got beat up a few days ago and they didn’t do anything about it. They didn’t punish the girls who beat her up.” Calvin also relayed a story about “a bunch of kids from that neighborhood for no reason just sort of to have fun came up and were threatening to shoot us with potato cannons and random things like that. And we went and told their parents and they said, ‘oh boys will be boys’ and stuff like that.” Both children indicated that they had some fear of public schools, because they did not feel that the institution of the public school could protect them.

Other social motivations to home school included more affective educational goals including character and citizenship education. When discussing how the family measured success in their home school, Cynthia explained,

I measure it statistically with test scores. But more importantly, I look at their character. When they went to public school I did not see that. By being home all day I can see the defects that we need to address and that’s helpful.

The family saw home schooling as an opportunity to raise children with strong character. This character was influenced by their religious beliefs, as well as by the lives of other great people from history. The motivation to improve their children’s character was seen in some of their curriculum choices, including reading biographies of people whom the family respected, including Winston Churchill. They also indicated that they desired to raise children who would be good citizens and leaders in society. Cynthia explained,

We are creating better citizens. If you ask a public school student a list of questions about what it means to be a citizen and about the Constitution the home schoolers will nail them and the public school will not. The greater good is a well informed educated citizen. The public schools are no longer giving us this. Our democracy is no longer as strong as it was.

She contrasted the education in a public school with one in a home school: “What I saw in public school, was here is how to be a good factory worker, not training to be leaders. They should be teaching this is what it takes to be a leader.” The goal of home schooling was to provide an education that was different than what could be found in the public schools as far as character and citizenship education. The family believed that their children would have stronger character, be better citizens, and be taught to be leaders through home education as opposed to public education.

The family indicated that religious reasons were their primary motivations to home school. When asked why his family home schools Calvin answered,

The primary reason is definitely religious reasons because my dad is a constitutional lawyer and he’s got all these cases where just horrible things are going on in public schools... and because we are taught to be rooted and grounded in the faith and so education is really just not a primary thing it sort of branches out of faith.

When asked what the most indispensable part of their home school curriculum was, Cynthia replied, “I would say for us the most indispensable part would be our faith because that’s the most important part and that’s our motivating factor because we want to please and glorify God.” Religion was an important motivating factor because of the relationship that Cynthia and Chris felt there was between religion and education. Cynthia stated that “all education is religious in nature. And the question is which

religion, at least being in charge of our own children's education we know which religion we are trying to infuse and pass along to them." Chris said in education there is

Some perspective that you take, some understanding of the world as a whole, that you're infusing, maybe subconsciously but it's there whether you like it or not... so the idea that most home schoolers echo is we need to conscientiously take a note of the significance of worldview as a metaphysical foundation for your education. It's the presupposition from which you approach everything.

This motivating factor can be seen in the children's studies. Caitlin commented that "we're reading the Christian books so they go ahead and say this (things that they do not agree with) is wrong." Calvin added, "We approach everything basically and then go back to scripture and then we have to counter balance it." Cynthia said, "We are reading Aesop's fables this week and on Friday at the cooperative in class the children will compare the wisdom of Aesop's fables to the wisdom of Solomon found in Proverbs."

The Johnsons believed that religion was a vital part of education. Chris indicated that the original purpose of public education in the America was for religious reasons:

Historically, nobody required schooling for centuries and what gave birth to the idea was the Old Deluder law. The first one was in Boston in 1642 in order to read their *Bibles* and be spiritually educated. That's the whole purpose. Northwest Ordinance: religion, morality, and knowledge are essential to good government than school shall forever be encouraged.

Because religion has been removed from public schools, the Johnsons insured that their children received instruction from the Christian worldview they desired by home schooling.

Family reasons to home school included autonomy from the rest of society, the time learning with their children, and what they felt was the religious mandate to educate their children in a certain way. The Johnsons valued the family as the prime organization

in society. They felt that some practices in public schools invaded the privacy of the family and took away from its primary role in society. Chris was concerned with the practice of journaling in schools. He explained,

People that are carefully schooled from ages four and up are a whole lot easier to control. The whole notion of journaling in public schools, the things they discover about families. I mean write down everything that happened to you over the weekend. What they are really doing is like putting a little camera in the home to see the parents of all the kids. What educational value that has still escapes me.

The Johnson's concern about family privacy resulted in interpreting many things that the public schools do as interfering in private family matters. One possible reason was the father's experience litigating cases against public schools. A related concept to family privacy was control over education. Home schooling guaranteed Cynthia control over education. She stated, "There are different kinds of freedom. I feel I control what they are doing and learning. There is a freedom in what they are not hearing." By this she meant that her children were free from negative ideas taught in the public schools.

Their family motivations were closely related to their religious reasons to home school. The combination of their religious and family beliefs led to conflict with the public schools. Their religious beliefs impacted their ideas about their proper role in their children's education leading them to the belief that they were doing what God wanted them to do with their family by home schooling. They felt that God wanted their children raised in a Christian home, and home schooling was the vehicle for achieving that goal.

Other family reasons centered on the rewards the family reaped from home schooling. Cynthia explained, "It is the most rewarding thing they will ever do in their whole life. Nothing is more important in your life than what you invest in your children.

There is no better investment knowing what they are learning.” Cynthia also indicated that the family learning together was a benefit; “the great fun for me comes when we are all studying the same thing together and I’m getting excited about it.” They then had the flexibility to travel as a family to visit places related to their studies. One time they visited the replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee, while they were studying about the ancient Greeks. She stated that before they started home schooling, they did not take these kinds of trips. The family valued the opportunity to spend time together, get to know each other, and learn with each other. The family also did things together to help others in the community. One example was the mother and children delivering meals to homebound senior citizens for the meals-on-wheels program. They also indicated that when families in their church or the home school cooperative were in need, they would help. They viewed this as a vital part of their family life and education.

Academic reasons to home school focused less on student achievement and more on the nature of the curriculum and methods of instruction. As seen above, the Johnsons home schooled because they wanted a curriculum based on their religious beliefs, but also one that taught their children to be thinkers, leaders, and good citizens. They also wanted to counter the prevailing ideas and philosophies taught in public schools. They were concerned about falling standards in public schools when Cynthia stated that “unfortunately the public schools are deteriorating every year. It seems like if the test scores aren’t going down; they are dumbing down the tests.” They wanted to avoid this by teaching their children at home.

The family wanted to provide a curriculum that was different from public or private schools. They wanted their children to have a classical education. Calvin stated that classical education was one reason they home schooled. He said, “I actually enjoy classical education... I kind of enjoy reading and I think that definitely came from our version of home schooling.” Cynthia also indicated they that wanted to provide a liberal arts education and specifically a classical education that was not available in any public or private school in the area.

The family also home schooled because they valued certain instructional strategies that were not available in traditional school settings because they were not practical or because they believed that they were not valued in traditional schools. These strategies included one on one tutoring, reading aloud, intensive independent reading by the students, and memorization. Cynthia explained that when they were in the public schools, they sought out the most traditional teachers who reinforced reading and memorization. Their experience indicated to them that this was hard to do and that these traditional teachers were pressured by their principals to use less traditional methods that the Johnsons did not agree with. Cynthia stated that “when my children were in public schools memorization was on the downside. They did not appreciate or approve of it, but I have found is that it helps on many levels.” The value of one-on-one tutoring was that Cynthia could tailor the instruction to her children’s needs: “The beauty is you have one on one mentoring and you can tell what the student understands and you can skip the long drawn out parts of what they understand and go straight to what they don’t understand.”

The Johnson's motivations to home school were primarily religious combined with family reasons. They were prompted to consider home schooling by a conflict with the public schools over curriculum issues that they felt were also religious issues. This conflict served as the catalyst that ignited the underlying or latent religious and family motivations to raise their children in a Christian home. They felt that the best way to do this was to home school their children. Other reasons included social and academic reasons, although to a lesser extent. The social reasons linked back to their religious beliefs and their belief about the role of the family as the primary organization in society. Academic reasons generally focused on the type of curriculum they wanted to provide and the types of teaching strategies they wanted their children to use in school. The motivations to home school directly influenced the practices in their home school. They based their curriculum on their religious beliefs and used the more traditional teaching strategies of memorization and sustained intensive reading to teach their children.

### *Home School Operations*

#### Typical Morning

8:00 am

Chris was away on business in Virginia working on a case and would be home later that evening. Cynthia cleaned the kitchen from breakfast and put the dishes in the sink and then went and looked at the lesson planners for Caitlin and Conner. She planned

to start reading history to Caitlin and Conner so she found her *Bible* and set it on the coffee table in the living room.

8:30 am

Calvin came down stairs from his bedroom carrying three or four school books and a notebook. He was wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and socks, but no shoes. He set the books and notebooks on the dining room table. He then picked up *The Odyssey* and moved into the kitchen, moved one of the chairs closer to the fire and sat down to read. Caroline, Caitlin, and Conner were still upstairs getting ready for school. Cynthia went up stairs and checked on the children to make sure they were preparing to come down.

9:00 am

Caitlin and Conner came down stairs and joined their mother on the couch. They were wearing athletic pants, t-shirts, and no socks or shoes. Caroline stayed up stairs to study. She studied her grammar lesson from the cooperative. Cynthia opened the *Bible* and asked them where they had stopped reading. They had been reading from the book of *Judges* in the *Bible*. Cynthia began to read about Gideon. As she read, she would stop and give explanations or ask questions. The Israelites under Gideon's leadership were chasing down the remaining enemy and killing them. Cynthia asked, "Who was Gideon fighting?" Caitlin responded, "The Midianites." Cynthia followed up with, "What was Gideon angry with the people at Succoth?" Neither child knew the answer so Cynthia explained why Gideon was angry with the people. The children were sitting with pillows

in their laps and Caitlin was quite content to sit quietly and listen, but Conner tossed his pillow in the air. At first this did not distract Caitlin or Cynthia, but it did when Conner tossed the pillow and it hit Caitlin. Cynthia told him to put the pillow down and listen. Caitlin interrupted her mothers reading and asked, "What is a snare?" Cynthia answered, "It's a trap." Cynthia then asked, "How many years did the Amorites oppress Israel?" The children answered in unison, "Seven years." That question was from the previous days' reading. Cynthia asked, "How did Gideon fight the battle?" They answered together, "they blew their trumpets and it scared them and they killed each other." While Cynthia was reading, the retriever came up to Caitlin and she petted it while she listened to her mother read. After they finished reading the story from the *Bible*, Cynthia told Conner that he could go and play. They were finished reading their history, and he did not take literature, which Caitlin was about to study. Conner went outside for about five minutes and played in the tree house and then came back inside and played with the dogs.

9:30 am

Conner continued to play with the dogs in the house. Caitlin and Cynthia started to read Aesop's Fables for literature. Caroline was still up in her room, but was working on a writing assignment for her composition class at the cooperative. Calvin was still sitting in the chair reading. He changed books and was reading a historical novel for his history class. The fables that Cynthia read to Caitlin were very short stories- just a few lines. Some of the fables that she read included, "The wolf and the young lamb taking refuge in the temple," "The wolf and the lion," "The wolf and the ass," and "The wolf and

the shepherd.” Caitlin was especially interested in “The country and town mouse” because it was something that she was familiar with and there was a version in the children’s picture book that she was looking through while Cynthia read from the Penguin version. Caitlin was less interested in the unfamiliar fables. As the mother read each fable, Caitlin was writing in her notebook. After reading each fable, Cynthia would explain the lesson of the fable. One lesson was “it is honorable to die in battle.” Cynthia asked questions about vocabulary encountered during the reading. Examples of vocabulary included: ewe, arable, gorged, cultivated, ass, heron, intoxicated, diviner, and agora. Cynthia asked, “Do you know what arable is?” Caitlin responded, “No.” Cynthia explained, “Someone planted in it, it was cultivated and planted.” Cynthia made comments about each fable including one after the “The wolf and the ass”: “Sounds like communism to me.”

10:00 am

Cynthia finished reading with Caitlin and told her it was time for her to work on grammar. Caitlin moved to the kitchen table to study her grammar independently. Cynthia told Conner it was time to study phonics. Calvin moved to the dining room table to study history. Caroline moved downstairs and joined Calvin. They were studying for a history test at the cooperative that Friday. The exam was on Christendom. They were working on a study guide together making a list of people, places, and terms. Conner asked, “Can we do the other phonics?” He had two phonics books. He liked one, but not the other. He had an assignment for the cooperative to write a poem about a tree. It was

due in two weeks. He had to describe the color, sound, taste, look and smell of it. Cynthia went through each question with Conner. She asked, "How does it look?" Conner answered, "Like it's going to fall down." Cynthia then asked, "How does it feel?" Conner responded, "I want to climb it." Caitlin needed help in the kitchen and Caroline left the dining room and helped her look up a word in the dictionary. Conner was sitting on the couch with his mother and reached around and played a few notes on the piano. His mother had started pointing to words on a page in the phonics book and asked him to read them. She pointed and he read, "Sad." He pointed to each word and read it loudly. He continued, "That looks like une, but it's one", "that looks like bean, but really is been", and "that looks like me, but is my." After they completed the phonics lesson he moved to the kitchen table to do some independent work. He had to put words into alphabetical order. Caitlin was still working on her grammar independently.

10:30 am

Conner and Cynthia argued about what he needed to do with his assignment. They argued about the directions. He ended up being right. He had to write the words in alphabetical order. She helped him get started, "Is that a d or b" when he got one word out of order. She indicated that at times he got them confused. Cynthia asked, "What comes next?" After he got started, he worked on his own. Periodically Cynthia checked both Conner's and Caitlin's progress. Caitlin asked, "How do you spell endanger?" Cynthia answered, "Look it up." Caitlin asked Calvin and Caroline the same question and they replied in unison, "Look it up." When he finished the phonics lesson in the book he

did not like, he went to the book that he did like. This required that he sound out the initial consonant sound of the pictures in the book. Conner sounded out, “ERRRR, UMMMM, EHHHH.” Then he said the complete word, “ERRRRR, RRRat.” Calvin and Caroline took a break from studying their history and took two of the dogs outside. Calvin took the Great Dane on a run, but since it was raining Caroline took the retriever out to the bathroom and came back inside. Caroline went upstairs to get her Latin book. The retriever wanted to go back outside, because the other dog was still outside. Cynthia told Conner, “On this paper you are going to write the sounds that I write.”

11:00 am

Cynthia and Conner finished with the phonics lesson, and she went to help Caitlin with her grammar lesson. Conner went outside to play but came back in because it was raining. He then got food out of the refrigerator. Calvin came back in with the dog and sat down to grade Latin quizzes for the class he taught at the cooperative. Caroline came down from her room and sat at the dining room table to study Latin. After Caitlin finished her grammar lesson, she and Cynthia went to the living room and sat on the couch to study about Renaissance architecture. They looked over several books and information cards about cathedrals. Cynthia read from different books. Caitlin asked, “Have you been there?” about a cathedral they were studying. Cynthia answered, “Yes.” The daughter got excited about the gargoyles and asked several questions. Cynthia asked Caitlin how the church paid for some of the cathedrals. She told her mother that they paid for them using money from indulgences. She also understood what an indulgence was.

Cynthia read the word scholasticism and had Caitlin repeat it several times to insure that she could say it properly. Cynthia told her the meaning of the word. Cynthia pointed to one of the cards with a cathedral and said, “This one is in Rheims, Caroline drew that one.” The picture that Cynthia referred to was on the wall in the living room. Caitlin and Cynthia had discussions about the relative size of cathedrals. They discussed which ones were bigger by looking at various pictures. Cynthia explained that a person can tell how big the cathedrals were in relation to other things in the pictures. Cynthia asked some questions about cathedrals. For the class each week they had to learn three facts. She asked, “What are the three facts?” Caitlin quoted the three facts. Conner went into the foyer and played with the retriever. He pulled on a rope and the dog pulled back. They distracted Caroline studying and she told them to stop. Earlier he had disturbed her studying by playing with a toy cell phone.

11:30 am

While Caitlin and Cynthia were studying Cathedrals, Caroline and Calvin were in the dining room studying, and Conner moved from the kitchen to the dining room to join them. He sat by Calvin. He was working on math. Conner was memorizing “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” Caitlin was studying Latin. Conner asked Calvin, “What do I do here?” He did not understand the math directions. Calvin read and explained the directions to Conner. Calvin commented that “he knows how to do math, but can’t always read and understand the directions.” The family studied until noon and took a break for lunch.

## *Curriculum*

The nature of the Johnson's curriculum was closely related to their motivations to operate their home school. They wanted to raise their children in a Godly home, and they designed their curriculum to do that. When asked what the most indispensable part of the curriculum was, Cynthia answered, "I would say for us the most indispensable part would be our faith because that's the most important part and that's our motivating factor because we want to please and glorify God." One example of this is that they used the *Bible* as a primary text. They also used their curriculum to reinforce the worldview that they wanted to pass on to their children. They approached everything from the *Bible*. If there was a difference between the *Bible* and information found in other places, they presumed that the information in the *Bible* was correct. An example of this was when they studied Aesop's Fables. They compared the wisdom found in them to the wisdom of Solomon in the *Bible*. They wanted to provide an education that was qualitatively different than what was available in both local public and private schools. They wanted to provide a curriculum that was different from what they had as children. Both Cynthia and Chris stated that they were educated in public schools but felt like they received a narrow education. They wanted to provide their children with a broad and diverse education. Chris commented, "You know we talk about diversity today, but I think true intellectual diversity comes from reading broadly." Because of this, they adopted a classical approach to education. The cooperative required that the children read broadly to receive their education. Reading was considered a teaching strategy. The Johnsons were instrumental in the establishment of the cooperative. Cynthia was on the cooperative

board and helped make curriculum decisions for the entire group. They received about 90% of their curriculum and lessons from the cooperative.

Their curriculum was designed to be an integrated whole. Cynthia and Chris felt that divisions between academic disciplines were artificial and hurt their students' abilities to understand the world. They used their religious beliefs as a unifying factor among the various disciplines. Cynthia commented,

I think the word we like to use is integration. History we try to integrate with our science, which we integrate with our literature, and hopefully it all ties together so that they'll understand and not just have stand alone subjects that they walk into for 50 minutes every day and never ever see how they correlate.

Chris continued,

That correlation, I just love because, too... say we are studying science or something. Well what were the developments in the time of the Renaissance? Well, what's going on philosophically, and politically, and theologically that plays into that. That's where I think the classical approach... emphasizes the inter relatedness of the developments. I think it really brings the studies to life.

The curriculum that the Johnsons wanted to provide was integrated and tied together with their Christian beliefs. The key to providing that integrated curriculum were great books and primary sources.

The Johnsons intended their curriculum to help develop independent or autonomous learners. When asked how they fostered or encouraged autonomy, Cynthia answered,

They have to be. I think its sink or swim... fear is a great motivator. They are taught at the earliest stages that high school is hard. The Gileskirk (humanities course) is very time consuming and demanding. Caroline who is in ninth grade this year, has known for years that she was going to have a huge challenge in her life. And she has risen to the occasion.

The curriculum they provided through the cooperative required that the students study, work hard, and read significant amount of materials. Because of this the students had to be disciplined to keep up with their studies. Because the family relied on the cooperative for much of the direct instruction, the parents did not help with every subject, so in a way the curriculum encouraged independence.

The cooperative did not provide everything that the Johnsons needed or wanted for their children. The cooperative did not provide math instruction, so Chris taught the children math. Caroline received additional math instruction from a private educational corporation in their town. Calvin, Caitlin, and Conner had math workbooks they used to study their math. If they had math questions, they usually had to wait for their father to come home. The Johnsons also augmented Calvin's curriculum with other learning opportunities. During the first year of the study, Calvin took an astronomy class online from a classical Christian tutorial. The instructor worked for NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). All of the children also studied a musical instrument. They each studied piano and Calvin played the violin. The family considered music as a part of the curriculum. Calvin wanted to earn a strings instrument scholarship at college.

The Johnsons were not concerned about preparing their children for a specific career or for the work force. They considered the public school attempts to prepare students for employment a dumbing down of the curriculum. Their goal was to provide a curriculum that would develop independent learners who would become leaders in whatever area they pursued. Like other families in the study, they identified their learning

objectives and then found the learning opportunities wherever they could, including the cooperative, the Internet, prepared curriculum books and workbooks, and for profit educational corporations. The Johnsons did not participate in all of the classes at the cooperative.

The Johnsons made curriculum decisions based on what they felt was best academically and developmentally for their children. Cynthia was on the board of the home school cooperative and was important in their curriculum decisions. One example of a curriculum decision that Cynthia was involved in was about their composition curriculum. The existing curriculum that the cooperative used did not match the basic stages of the trivium. She felt that the course taught rhetoric level lessons at the grammar level. She provided an example,

Whenever you started the program you used what they called dress ups. And they didn't teach the basic structure of a paragraph, they taught the dress ups. They were already adding strong verbs and strong adjectives and parts of speech that my children didn't even know. They are adding parts of speech and they are not sure what those parts of speech really are. So I felt like we needed to go back to a grammar stage curriculum.

The cooperative decided to adopt a new writing curriculum that was based on the trivium.

Other things that guided their curriculum decisions were age appropriateness and time. If there was too much to do in the time allotted, then they determined what was most important to their overall objective of providing a Christian home. Student interest was also a determining factor. Calvin took the online astronomy course because he wanted to be "able to go out and look at the sky and tell you where everything is, and the rotation of the moon and the sun relative to the earth." The online astronomy course

ended up being more astrophysics, so the next year when the cooperative offered an astronomy course, he took astronomy again to learn what he wanted to learn.

### *Teaching Strategies*

Teaching strategies that the family used included: reading, instruction at the cooperative, direct tutorial by the mother at home, and memorization. The most important instructional strategy was reading. Calvin reinforced this when he said, “Our parents aren’t really our teachers- it’s kind of, they’ll give us the material and then the books themselves are the teachers. Our parents are kind of there just to enforce.” Cynthia stated and observation and archival data indicated that reading made up over 75% of their instructional day. Reading included Cynthia reading aloud to Conner and Caitlin and independent reading by Calvin and Caroline. Cynthia said that she sometimes spent an hour and a half a day doing read aloud with Caitlin. Conner was present for about 45 minutes of those read alouds. The older children’s instruction at home primarily consisted of reading assignments made by their teachers at the cooperative. Chris indicated how important reading was as a teaching strategy in home schools when he commented, “One theory in home school circles is that you teach them some reading and you teach them to like it and basically you let them go.” That was what the Johnsons did. Their goal in the younger years was to teach their children to learn and love to read and then when they were older reading was, as Chris said, “the key that unlocks everything.”

The majority of the direct instruction they received was from the cooperative. Cynthia said that their primary “instructional methods are getting minor instruction from

their Friday teachers and then sitting down and doing the work themselves.” Cynthia provided some support that she described as “hands on tutorial.” She also used the “Socratic method just to make sure they are understanding and a little narration in addition to that.” She included her read alouds as part of her direct instruction. She asked questions primarily while she read to her children. She also helped if they had difficulties. The majority of her direct instruction was with the two younger children. Caroline said, “They [her parents] teach Caitlin and Conner.” The older children studied on their own with little interaction with their mother. Her primary function with them was to keep them on task. The nature of Cynthia’s instructional methods changed as her children got older. When they were younger she spent a lot of time with them. As they got older they became more independent and her role shifted to monitoring and support.

Memorization was an important teaching strategy in the Johnsons’ home school. It was important because it supported the classical model they were using at the cooperative. Cynthia said that memorization and the accumulation of facts was important because “for those that follow the trivium and the classical model, it’s the bottom level. It’s foundational. Because what is knowledge if it’s not facts, and what are facts if you don’t know them.” Chris added,

When they’ve got good quality material to memorize in the early years- while they might not fully understand it, might not can rearrange it, and sort of create anything new with it, then as they get older they draw from that. Kind of like basic building blocks for use in the rhetorical type of process of fashioning their worldview and thoughts and ideas that they put down in composition for instance.

Cynthia provided an example of the value of memorization. She explained about how

Carl in his literature class [at college], they were studying Lord Byron and Keats and he had memorized several pieces from both of them when he was in high school. He completely spaced [forget to study] his midterm and didn't study one minute... he walked in and made the highest grade in the class because he had memorized all this study before and it was still there.

Observation and archival material indicated that the children had a lot to memorize including poems, *Bible* verses, and speeches from history. The poems included "Ozymandius" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn." They memorized many facts for recall on tests. When asked if memorizing all of the facts were stressful, both Caroline and Calvin said, "Yes." They did indicate that the more they memorized, the easier it got. Both of them indicated that they were glad they had to memorize even though it was not easy.

They understood the purpose of memorization. Calvin said,

It [memorization] seems kind of central in some aspects because if you don't really remember then there doesn't seem to be much of a point. Like reading textbooks is easy to go over the words with your eyes and not get much from it. And then you have tests, but memorization is sort of central to actually learn the material.

### *Resources*

The primary resources that the Johnsons used to operate their home school were books and the cooperative. To a lesser extent they used outside resources for math, music lessons, athletics, and social activities. Books were important, because reading was the primary teaching strategy. The family had many books on the shelves as described earlier in the physical description of the house. When Cynthia was teaching her children she was primarily using books they owned. They used many different types of books, including young adult historical novels, biographies, books of primary source material, literature

classics, Greek and Roman writings, *The Bible*, and other religious materials. They generally avoided traditional textbooks. They did use some text books for math, grammar, and phonics. This was primarily with the younger children. The older children used textbooks for math and Latin. The Johnsons differentiated the books based on the ages of their children. They had different versions of *Aesop's Fables*, including a Penguin version and a children's version with pictures. They also had multiple versions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. When Cynthia was teaching Caitlin about Renaissance architecture she used three or four different books, a set of fact cards about cathedrals, a tourist pamphlet about cathedrals, and photographs of cathedrals. *The Bible* was used as a history and literature text. Calvin highlighted the importance of books when he said, "books are our teachers."

The cooperative was an important resource because it was the source of most of their curriculum. In response to a question about the importance of the cooperative, Cynthia said,

Um, wow. In every way, I'd say because it's not one person doing all the work and then everyone just following like sheep. What we have is a bunch of strong willed, opinionated home schoolers. Hopefully, we have found each person's strength and interest. So that they can pour out their knowledge and love of a subject into my children and there's no way with four kids, used to be six, I could love and be as interested and well-informed in every subject for every single grade level.

Her comment showed how important the cooperative was to the operation of their home school. It allowed the Johnsons to provide a wide range of curriculum choices with minimal input. Cynthia and Chris did not have to prepare all of the lesson plans for the classes for the four children they were teaching. They only had to prepare for the classes

that they taught at the cooperative. Their children were taught by a medical doctor in science, an editor and author in composition, a certified English teacher in literature, and a lawyer in rhetoric. Calvin said, "That's mainly what the coop is for. It's just enlarging upon the material we've already done." Cynthia described how the cooperative changed the operation of their home school when she said, "We did not have the coop for the first two years. Just figuring it out was hard. I had to figure out how to teach four children all the subjects each day." Then they joined the cooperative because, "we wanted to teach logic and I didn't want to learn it and then teach it so we found a friend who studied logic in college and started it for us."

The cooperative also provided socialization opportunities for the children. Chris stated in response to a question about socialization, "And I am sure Cynthia's touched on before, they are involved in a large community. First, the coop, and then also with the larger home school community, and we do activities with the other families." Cynthia added, "There are over a hundred families in our home school group." When discussing some of the negatives of home schooling the older children indicated that not being around other people as much was one of them. They also said that the cooperative helped overcome this problem because they could see their friends at the cooperative.

Another purpose that the cooperative played was accountability. Calvin said, "I have some accountability with the coop, but I really am a procrastinator, and I'm sure that if I didn't have the coop, I'd get a whole lot less done." He said that he got further behind with his studies before the family joined the cooperative. Besides keeping the children accountable to someone other than their parents, it also helped the parents

evaluate their children. When asked how he got graded, he said, “That’s what our coop is for. Usually we turn in the tests to the teacher there (the cooperative) and they do the grading.” Cynthia backed this up with, “In most of their classes they have tests and so you can tell if they get it or not, because they’ll do well on the test if they get it and they’re flunking if they don’t. And that’s with most of our advanced cooperative work.”

The cooperative also provided classroom experiences to the children. The teachers at the cooperative ran their classes like traditional classroom teachers. Caitlin’s *Bible* class teacher had a syllabus and class rules. The rules were very similar to those found in traditional classrooms. The rules were

1. Respect the teacher
  - a. Do not talk while the teacher is talking
  - b. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized before speaking
  - c. Look at the teacher while she is speaking
2. Respect others
  - a. Keep your hands to yourself
  - b. Only say things that are true and kind
  - c. Do not distract others

The teachers provided the students with their daily assignments, tests, and weekly instruction in a class room. The cooperative allowed the Johnsons to balance the independence of their home school experience with the classroom experience they would need if they went to college.

The cooperative provided unique out of classroom learning opportunities. When they were studying the medieval period the families in the cooperative put on a medieval fair. Caitlin's literature teacher also invited all of her students over for an overnight party so they could watch the movie version of *Ivanhoe*. Some members of the cooperative also got together and attended a Creation Science seminar at a local church and tied their science instruction at the cooperative into it.

Other resources that the Johnsons used, besides books and the cooperative, were technology and other people outside of the cooperative to teach their children. The family used the Internet to communicate with the other students and teachers in the cooperative. They also could check their lessons on the cooperative's website. Calvin took an astronomy course over the Internet. The family also supplemented the music appreciation course at the cooperative with resources on the Internet. The family also used people to teach piano and violin to their children.

The resources that the Johnsons used helped them provide the unique education that they wanted for their children. They used what ever resources they could find within and outside the cooperative to support their educational goals.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The Johnsons acknowledged that home schooling was not always easy. Some of the concerns and challenges of home schooling they identified included curriculum choices and decisions; dealing with age appropriate materials and material that conflicts with their belief systems; distractions to teaching in the home; the challenging curriculum

at the cooperative; lack of access to activities at the public schools; accountability; and frustrations resulting from teaching their own children.

Choosing a curriculum was very difficult. There were many different programs for the Johnsons to choose from before they joined the cooperative. One problem was the large number of choices. Because there were so many choices, it was hard to know if something was good quality or not. Chris said,

There are a lot of fads that run through the circles, everyone is doing it kind of thing, but it doesn't make the product any better, it happens in home school and classical education the same way. Something hits at a home school convention and it's all the rage and it doesn't necessarily mean it's a quality product. You have to beware of that everywhere.

The problem was compounded because the Johnsons at one time had all six of their children in their home school. During the study they had four children in their home school. Cynthia said that one of the biggest challenges was preparing curriculum in all of the subjects for all of her children. Cynthia described how she looked for curriculum,

Before I started, I went to two home school conferences. They had book fairs, it is overwhelming. Many vendors had much different things. I realized which approach I wanted to take and that was a classical approach, then I started looking at recommendations. I had a catalog to look at. It had everything broken down by grade and that helped.

The cooperative addressed this problem for the Johnsons. It not only relieved the Johnsons from preparing all the lessons and finding curriculum, but it also helped with quality concerns. Being involved in the cooperative did not mean an end to concerns over curriculum. The members of the cooperative had conflicts over which curriculum to use for both composition and logic. It took several years to achieve consensus.

Another concern that many home schoolers addressed was dealing with material that was in opposition to their beliefs or inappropriate. Cynthia said that they had no problem exposing their children to ideas that were in opposition to their beliefs. She explained,

I have absolutely no problem with subjecting my children to beliefs that we don't agree with because I think that best equips them to understand what they believe. And to defend hopefully what they believe. How could you defend what you believe when you don't really know anything else? And I think that's where classical homeschoolers come into friction with other home schoolers who don't believe you should ever read pagans.

They studied the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans, which were in opposition to their Christian beliefs. Calvin explained how they handle ideas that disagree with their beliefs,

We've had a lot of that. A lot of it is in our history class, he [teacher] goes through the Greek/ pagan philosophies and shows their worldview and sort of the effects of it where you can look at the Greek culture and we think of them as the founders of democracy but like 98% of their population were slaves and mistreated and not even considered people so just looking at things and their effects. That would be one way of handling it. We approach everything basically and then go back to scripture and then we have to counter balance it- that's the check.

The Johnsons compared and contrasted the divergent beliefs with their own beliefs. They used it as an opportunity to strengthen their own belief systems. The parents did say that when dealing with some material, they insured that their children were guided through it. Chris stated, "Reading is wonderful, but if left to their own devices somebody that picks up Mein Kampf, and we've read that here, uh without some sort of guidance would maybe be in big trouble." He said that they used their faith for guidance through material that was in opposition to their beliefs.

The Johnsons also dealt with the problem of age appropriateness. When dealing with material they felt was inappropriate, they would not expose their children until they felt it was the right time. An example of this was with *The Canterbury Tales* that they read at the cooperative's literature class. Cynthia explained, "the next two weeks the high school literature students are reading Canterbury Tales, there's a lot of inappropriate Canterbury Tales. So we have had to cull through them and pick out the few that we thought were still appropriate."

Other concerns with home schooling were in home distractions to learning. One distraction was just being in their home. When asked what things distracted them, Calvin replied, "Just being in your house and basically for some kids- we aren't into video games- but for some kids I think that would be hard, your sitting down and just a room over from what ever you like to do. Caroline added, "Computer. It's hard not to just sit and not work." Then Calvin said, "It's not like you are going to a place where you don't have anything else to do," and Caroline continued, "You feel like you have a lot of freedom. You can just sit down and stop. It's hard to stick with it." They ended with Calvin saying, "You always have the excuse of later," and Caroline added, "Unless it's Thursday." The home setting itself was a distraction for the children. Other distractions included the other children, especially the younger children, who were not studying as much as the older children, and the dogs. A final distraction was when the public school children were out of school on a holiday and the Johnsons were still having school. They generally avoided this by maintaining a schedule that was similar to the public schools.

The older children indicated that the nature of the cooperative curriculum was one challenge to home schooling. They acknowledged that their experience with the cooperative was overall positive, but that they had to work very hard to keep up with their lessons. Cynthia said one concern with the cooperative was that there was very little support for children who were having difficulties. Most of the responsibility for learning the material was placed on the backs of the older children. Cynthia's comment summed up the support for students having difficulty when she said it was "sink or swim."

The Johnsons indicated that there were some activities that their children did not have access to as home schoolers. They used the cooperative to compensate for some of them, but they could not do that with all of the activities that they would like to provide their children. Some of the activities that were not available included: drivers education, sports, band, extra curricular activities, and advanced placement classes. They indicated that if these activities were open to them on a limited basis at the public schools, they might participate in them.

Accountability was a challenge to home school families including the Johnsons. The children said that before they started to home school with the cooperative, their mother would tell them to study and study, but they would never take the test. It was easy to avoid work. They also said that many home school children had a hard time meeting deadlines. Cynthia told a story about another family whose daughter failed at college because she could not meet the deadlines. The home school cooperative helped to address this challenge.

The final challenge for home schooling was the nature of the parent as teacher. Cynthia explained that sometimes she would get frustrated when working with the children. This was especially true when she was trying to work with one of the older children and a younger child wanted to play or was distracting. She gave an example during an interview of an event that happened that same morning,

This morning we were reading this book for Caitlin's literature class...I look forward to it. I'm into the book and we finished doing history. And I felt as if I were competing with Conner who had to talk every once in a while. And that's ok because lots of times his questions are helpful, but then I started reading the book and I found that I read the same paragraph three or four times. And so I had to close the book and tell Caitlin you know this is just too frustrating right now for me to keep reading the same paragraph over because there's an interruption or a distraction. So you just read the last three chapters yourself and that was fine.

The distractions of the younger children were one the most difficult problems that Cynthia identified. She said, "I went through infants and toddlers with home schooling; that was always my biggest frustration then."

### *Harbor Family*

The Harbor family was an intact family that lived about twenty minutes west of the town where the cooperative was located. The father, Robert, was a business owner. The mother, Rachel, was the primary teacher in the home. She had some college, but had not finished her degree. The family lived in an upper middle class neighborhood in a multi-story house. The family would be described as upper middle class socio-economically. They lived in a school district that was rated at the highest level by the state department of education.

The family had three children. The oldest daughter, Rachel, had finished her home school education the year before the study began. She was attending a small selective liberal arts college in the state capital. Her mother reported that she had little problem getting accepted into multiple universities, including the University of Chicago, but chose to attend a school in state.

Randy was 16 and in high school when the study began. He took several classes from the cooperative, including composition, biology, Gileskirk humanities, rhetoric, grammar, astronomy, theology, literature, and fencing. He took geometry at home. All of the classes were on Friday except for theology and the humanities classes which were on Tuesdays. The family used a computer based curriculum to teach geometry. He took piano lessons from a lady in a town north of their home town. He also participated in Boy Scouts and was working on his Eagle Scout project during the study. His mother said that he was mostly interested in math and science and that composition and literature were his weaknesses. He worked between seven and eight hours a day on school work. About 75% of each school day was spent independently reading. He was a very self-motivated student. He craved knowledge and was recognized by others in the home school cooperative as very scholarly.

Ray was the youngest child and was 10 when the study began. He was in junior high during the study. He took composition, literature, history, grammar, logic, music appreciation, and fencing at the cooperative. He took a computer based math course at home from his mother. When the study began, Ray was in a pre-algebra math class, but his mother stated that she deliberately held him back to work on his computational skills.

He complained that if he was in algebra he would have finished math two years early. He worked on school about five hours a day. He never attended public schools. At one time, he wanted to attend public schools because some of his friends did, but he reported never having a strong desire to stop home schooling. He was involved in Boy Scouts and church activities.

The family conducted its home school primarily in an office just off the foyer as one entered the house. It was a room dedicated to school. When the study first began, there were desks for three students and a desk that the mother used. During the second year of the study, the third student desk was removed. The desks were computer type stations against the wall with shelves built in. On the walls were samples of student work from the cooperative, including poems, art work, and other projects. On the wall by the door was a framed newspaper article about Rachel's dessert making business she ran while she was home schooled. There were also bookshelves on either side of the doorway leading into the room and on the wall between Randy and Ray's desks holding workbooks, novels, history books, literature anthologies, and other books used to conduct their home school. Titles included *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Pharaohs of Egypt*, *Tales of Ancient Egypt*, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, *King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table*, *Red Badge of Courage*, *Great Gatsby* (three copies), *Romantic Poets*, *The Once and Future King*, *Saxon Math*, *Canterbury Tales* (picture book), *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*.

Rachel worked in the room with her children helping them with their work, as well as doing household duties and work for the cooperative. She helped order the

lunches for the Friday class days at the cooperative. There were three computers in the classroom, including one that Rachel used. Randy and Ray kept their student work in binders on the shelf between their work areas. They both posted reminders on their desks of what to study. On Randy's desk were two recitations that he had to memorize- "Ozymandius" and "On first looking into Chapman's Homer." He also had two lists of merit badge requirements for Boy Scouts.

The Harbors primarily conducted their home school in the room off of the foyer. When Rachel wanted to work with a student alone, they would sometimes move into the living room to study. If one of the children needed help on the computer with math, she would stay in the room. When working on math lessons, Ray would wear headphones so he could hear the lesson and not disturb Randy.

### *Transition from Traditional Schooling to Home Schooling*

The Harbors initially home schooled for pedagogical reasons. The oldest son was having difficulty in school. The mother explained,

I really promise you I was not mad at the public school, but I was seeing my own child sort of fall between the cracks. By this time he was not reading toward the end of his first grade year and he was just not really picking up and catching on.

She began to teach her son at home after school. Finally, she thought that if she was going to have to re-teach everything after school, she might as well teach him at home and save him from the wasted time at school. Though this was the initial motivating factor another factor, was stronger and the primary reason the family began to home school. The mother explained, "The reason to home school is not knowledge itself

because I would say that education encompasses a lot more than knowledge. It includes skills. It was important imparting our values to them.” She indicated that it upset her that she was not the primary influence in her daughter’s life, “I would say things to her and she would say, ‘well my teacher said this,’ just the real pull of somebody else's influence being holding more weight with her than what we said.”

Though the initial reason to home school for this family was pedagogical, there was a source of religious conflict between the family and the public schools. When asked why they home school, the oldest son responded, “Because of the lack of God inside the public school system, and I came out of first grade not being able to read. “ He identified both pedagogical and ideological reasons to home school. The mother ordered the motivations in her statement, “I know a lot of people will say religious reasons to home school was the reason they started, but for us it wasn’t the reason we started, but it is the reason we stayed.”

This family also exhibited progressive and traditional educational beliefs and practices. They were traditional in that they believe in a great books curriculum and classical education. The mother explained,

What we are having them read is not just fun or entertainment but actually to teach them how our culture developed. Why we are where we are. Why we think the way we do. Those kinds of things. Those shaping influences have shaped the people who have gone before us.

But their education was not limited to just things that their family believed as Rachel explained, “We are even exposing them to ideas that we wouldn’t necessarily agree with their stance or their philosophy; they greatly influenced the people before us so for that

reason we do a whole lot of reading.” An observation of the books in the house reinforced the mother’s statement about learning ideas that are divergent to their beliefs.

Like the previous two families, the way the family operated their home school was indicative of the motivating factors that drove them to home school. This family was concerned with their child falling through the cracks in the public schools, and in their instruction and evaluation they directly addressed the individual needs and academic shortcomings of their children. Once after he took a standardized achievement test, the parents realized that their oldest boy was a grade level behind in spelling. The next year the mother focused on spelling and the deficiency was corrected. This example was tied directly to the flexibility that home schooling offered this family and was mentioned as a reason that they continued to home school.

### *Motivations to Home School*

The Harbors’ motivations to home school included social, religious, family, and academic needs. Social reasons related to the nature of socialization available at public schools, that society was improved by home schooling and the ability of the family to shape their children socially. Rachel explained that “I wouldn’t necessarily agree that all socialization that goes on is good” in public schools and that she wanted to have a degree of control over the type of socialization her children received. She indicated that by saying,

I remember when we first started home schooling I thought to myself as we worked on lessons and the children asked me questions, ‘who would be answering these questions or would they even get to ask the questions in class? Would those people answer from the same point of view as I

would?’ Whatever the question was during they day I got to answer it. And so often they were life questions, not necessarily knowledge based questions... there’s a lot more that goes on to shaping children.

She further stated, “if my child is taught in a way that is adequate and good for him and you know taught sort of right from wrong, I guess what I mean is it may be productive for the greater good.”

Not only did Rachel want to provide a different type of socialization from what might be available in public schools, she also believed that society as a whole would be improved because her children were home schooled. When asked if home schooling her children hurt the common good, she responded that not all socialization was good and “that society as a whole would benefit more in this way than for my child to be there” because they would be socialized differently with different values. Like the other families in the study, Rachel believed that her children were socialized in a more natural way. She said, “Seldom in life are you just in a group of people your age, you know, and to me that was more of an unnatural setting to be surrounded by your peers all day long. It’s more natural to be around people of all ages in your family, at church, when you go to work.”

The Harbors also home schooled for religious reasons though, as indicated earlier, these were not the initial reasons. When asked why his family home schooled, Randy answered, “So I can be raised in a Christian environment. So that basically the people I am around will influence me more and if I am around my parents who are Christians I will follow those beliefs.” Rachel reinforced this when she said that home schooling was not necessarily superior to public schools: “If you strictly went by education I would have probably have put them back in for high school.” Their religious motivations influenced

their home school practice. Rachel stated that she taught from the belief that “everything is by God, for God, for His glory, for instance I tell the kids that reading their *Bible* is more important than their other studies.” Home schooling allowed the family to make the religious part of their education number one on the priority list of subjects. As discussed earlier religious reasons were not the initial reasons the family home schools, but it became the reason they continued to home school.

Family reasons to home school were linked to academic reasons and their belief that the parents’ primary responsibility was to their own children. Rachel initially was frustrated because Randy was falling behind academically in the public schools. She stated, “I felt like if he was going to be away from home from eight to three he should learn to read.” She was re-teaching Randy what he was supposed to have learned at school each night at home. Rachel decided that the remedy was home schooling. Related to Randy’s academic problems were concerns about who had the most influence on her children. Rachel was concerned that others, primarily teachers in school, would have more influence over her children than she did. This combined with her belief that her and Robert’s primary responsibility was to their children, were the primary family reasons to home school. Rachel stated, “I thought my primary responsibility was to my children. My little ones God has given to me to see about.”

Academic motivations were the primary reason that the Harbors started their home school. Randy’s difficulty learning to read was what prompted the Harbors to home school. There were other academically related reasons to continue home schooling, including the nature of the classical curriculum. When discussing what drew her to the

cooperative Rachel said, “I sort of liked what they were doing, what they were learning, and how they were learning in an integrated way. Integrating your literature and history and those things sort of learning from the ground up in that order.” Academic flexibility was another reason to continue home schooling. When asked what he liked best about home schooling, Randy answered, “Going at my own pace. I really like that part. Some things, I am slower at and some faster at. Especially, like in math. I can skip over lessons that I know. Rachel indicated that she had made decisions about both math and spelling based on evaluation of Randy and Ray’s progress. She made Ray wait to begin Algebra I an extra year to improve his computational skills. The first year that they home schooled, Randy’s standardized test score indicated that he was behind in spelling. The next year they started every school day with spelling.

The Harbor’s motivations to home school were initially academic but the reasons that they continued to home school were primarily religious. They did not necessarily believe that home schooling was a better academic environment, but rather it was the best way to address a specific learning need at the time. Rachel was also concerned about other people having a greater influence than her over the children. This fear was directly related to the family’s belief that they had a responsibility from God to pass on their religious beliefs and practices to their own children. Other reasons to home school, including social, religious, and other academic reasons, emerged after the initial decision to home school. These motivations served to help encourage the Harbors’ home school efforts.

## *Home School Operations*

### Typical Morning

8:00 am

Rachel was in the kitchen preparing breakfast for Randy and Ray and moved upstairs to their bedrooms and woke them up for school. They got dressed and came down wearing jeans, t-shirts, socks, and shoes. Rachel did not allow the two boys to go to school at home wearing pajamas. They had to get fully clothed. She felt that it helped keep them focused on school. After eating breakfast, the boys moved from the kitchen into the school room at the front of the house.

8:30 am

Both boys looked over the lesson plan books for the daily schedule that Rachel had filled out on Monday. Randy sat down at his desk, which was cluttered with school books and notebooks. He reached for Homer's *Odyssey* and began to read. Ray and Rachel began to go over a math lesson. Ray moved to the book shelf against the wall and opened a notebook holding the CDs that provided the instruction and practice work for his pre-algebra course. He chose the appropriate CD for the lesson he was to complete, put it into the CD-ROM, and began to look over the lesson. While Ray did this, his mother checked e-mails from other home school mothers in the cooperative. Most of them were orders for food on Friday. Rachel was responsible for the lunch orders on

Fridays. Each Friday the cooperative ordered food from a different local restaurant, and she took the orders and called them in prior to Friday.

Ray's lesson was on how to add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators. He had some difficulty finding common denominators. Rachel asked, "Do you see your problem, signs?" Ray answered, "That's why I set it up this way." Rachel commented, "You understand your concepts." They continued to work. They moved to a problem that requires him to multiply two large fractions. Rachel prompted him with, "What can you do when you are multiplying large fractions?" He answered, "Cancel out." They continued to work this way through different problems. She would give a hint or offer help, and he would respond to it.

9:00 am

Randy interrupted Ray's math lesson when he asked his mother about an e-mail they received from another home school mother. She stopped working with Ray and read the message. They then discussed a planned cookout at another family's home. Ray finished the tutorial part of his pre-algebra lesson and then took a quiz. While he took the quiz, Randy continued to read Homer, and Rachel continued to work on the lunch list for Friday. Ray finished his quiz and handed it to Rachel. She graded it and announced, "Ninety-three point five." She then filed the test away in a folder. She told him what problems he missed.

9:30 am

Ray stopped working on math and moved to science, but did not close the pre algebra computer program. It remained visible on the monitor. Randy put down Homer and started to read biology. Ray started to answer the “On your own questions” in his science book. For three of the questions he wrote, “I do not know.” Randy continued to read independently until his mother asked him a question about a geometry test she was grading. She asked, “Tell me orally what the converse was” as she showed him the problem in question. Randy gave the correct answer. He then stated, “If I’m right, to be a linear pair the angles have to be adjacent.” He then pulled out his geometry text book and checked his assertion. He made the statement to Rachel because he failed to provide a full answer on the test and Rachel was quizzing him to check if he knew the answer. She marked it wrong on the test but he answered it right when she asked him. She followed up with another question, “89 and 91, are these two linear pairs?” He answered, “It’s not a linear pair because they aren’t adjacent.” Rachel had been checking the test without the answer sheet and Randy opened up a notebook and removed the CD with the test answers on it and said, “You might need this.” After he answered his mother’s questions, he went back to reading his biology.

10:00 am

Rachel continued to grade Randy’s geometry test, while Randy read biology, and Ray worked on his science questions. Rachel interrupted Randy’s reading, “Randy, you left off something, this was a two part question, you did it on nine, but not on ten.” She

marked off the question even though when she asked he knew the answer. She told him, "I knew you knew it, but part of it is teaching you to follow directions completely." She then noticed another question he did not work because of carelessness. She gave him the test and told him to work the question. He got out a grey dry erase board and marker and began to work the problem. At about 10:30, they stopped working and took a break. They moved to the kitchen and got something to drink and had a small snack. They resumed work at about 10:45. Ray closed his science notebook, put on headphones and returned to his pre-algebra lesson. The lesson was on fractions and decimals. The computer program showed him step by step how to work each problem on an animated piece of paper. Each time a step was completed numbers were added to the page imitating a pencil writing on paper. A voice on the computer told him what was happening on the screen during each step. While Ray was doing pre-algebra, Randy was working on geometry and called to Rachel, "Hey, mom, I just can't get this one." He was still working on the problem he did not work on the test.

11:00 am

Rachel moved to where Randy was working and told him to get out the CD for that lesson. He found the CD and put it into the computer beside Ray. Randy and Rachel started to re-watch the part of the lesson he did not understand. Rachel stopped the lesson and asked, "How would you set up the equation?" Randy got out his marker board and wrote a formula and drew a diagram of the angles. They worked out the problem together. Rachel said, "One angle is going to be X." Randy interrupted her with, "Wait,

wait, wait.” Rachel responded, “Go ahead.” He continued to work. Rachel started, “How can you represent...” Randy did not verbally answer, but drew the answer on the board before his mother could complete the question. They completed the problem together. Once the problem was complete, Rachel asked, “You got it?” Randy answered, “Uh huh.” Rachel said, “You were on the right track, just got stuck right there” pointing at the marker board. Randy gave his test back to Rachel, she continued to grade, and he went back to reading biology. When she finished grading the test, she told him he made an 82 and put the test in a folder. She let him read for about ten minutes, and then told him that she wanted to go over the problems he missed on the test using the teaching CDs. Rachel said, “You had problems with these, we’ll go back until you get it.” They reviewed the type of questions he missed on the test. Randy responded, “Oh I get it, corresponding angles are equal.” Randy showed his mother on the marker board. She did not like him using the marker board and stated, “This is why I want you to show your work. Do you remember why that degree is 137?” Randy answered, “No.” Rachel explained, “In a problem like this you have to show your work, that’s the only way we can know what you missed. From now on show all your work. I really don’t like you doing your work on that [the dry erase board].”

11:30 am

Randy stopped working on math and had to get ready to go to his piano lesson in a town north of their town. His aunt was going to pick him up and take him to the lesson. Rachel asked both the boys, “What do y’all want from Danvers on Friday?” She wrote their

answers down. Ray asked his mother to help him with his math lesson. He brought one of the CDs to his mother and asked her, “Mom does this look like syrup, it smells like it?” There was a thick substance smudged on the CD. He was working on a lesson requiring him to add fractions with unlike denominators. After he got the answer, he converted the improper fractions to mixed numerals, and the computer counted off. He did not understand why he was missing a problem that he got right. His mother explained, “It’s a pre-algebra lesson and because in algebra you use more improper fractions than mixed numerals, they are probably teaching you to leave them like that even though your answer is correct.” They worked until about noon. By that time, Randy has eaten his lunch and left for piano lessons, and Rachel and Ray took a break for lunch.

### *Curriculum*

The Harbor’s curriculum was similar to the other families in the study because they received the majority of the curriculum from the cooperative. The nature of the curriculum was based on a Christian worldview and was designed to reinforce their religious and cultural values. Though conservative in this sense, their curriculum was also progressive in that it was designed to provide an integrated curriculum that transcended traditional academic divisions. Rachel described why she was attracted to the cooperative,

I sort of liked what they were doing, what they were learning, and how they were learning in a sort of integrated way. Integrating literature and history and sort of learning from the ground up in that order. That was one thing that always troubled me. I felt like I had such a disjointed picture of history and I didn’t know who were contemporaries .

The cooperative curriculum addressed concerns she had about her own secondary education. The curriculum goals were also progressive in that they addressed the traditional liberal educational goals of providing a broad base of knowledge and skills, but it also allowed for more in-depth study based on student interest. Rachel explained, “I want them to have a broad approach in one sense, but at the same time get the opportunity to explore a little more sometimes.” She also wanted to achieve a balance in the curriculum between their strengths and weaknesses. An example of this was with Randy. He was strong in math and science, but weak in English. She needed to address English, but did not want to focus too much on English and neglect math and science. With the cooperative, she had the freedom from year to year to choose what courses her children participated in to achieve that balance.

The Harbors received about 90% of their curriculum from the cooperative. Since the cooperative did not teach math, they used a commercially produced software package for mathematics instruction. It was designed specifically for home school students. They also supplemented the cooperative curriculum with piano lessons, Boy Scouts, and church activities. They participated in the cooperative’s athletic activities, including fencing and cross country. Like other members of the cooperative, they did not participate in every class offered by the cooperative. At various times, they elected to skip a subject for a year based on Rachel’s assessment of their progress. One example was that Randy only took one year of Latin. He was more interested in Chinese and planned to use a commercially produced computer based language program to learn the language.

The Harbor's curriculum goals focused on reinforcing their belief system, but also on accumulating facts and skills at younger ages and then applying the knowledge and skills as they got older. Rachel described her philosophy when she described Ray's current place in the classical education system, "You teach lots of memorization and those kinds of things in the early stage and then where Ray is now would be more of like teaching how to think and how to reason." She elaborated on the relationship between accumulation of facts and knowledge and learning to think when she said,

There's no way you can learn everything. I would say it's not just accumulating facts but learning how to think and how to think for yourself. Take those facts and make whatever, but based on critical thinking not based on opinion. Teach them to think objectively about it. Yes, learn the facts, but learn to use them too.

Learning to think critically and objectively was an important part of their curriculum goals.

The books in their classroom were evidence of the conservative, Western orientation of their curriculum. The books included *Tom Sawyer*, *Tales of Ancient Egypt*, *Red Badge of Courage*, *Romantic Poets*, *Canterbury Tales*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*. Other books they used included historical novels to supplement contemporary writings and primary sources in history. The family generally avoided history textbooks. Rachel explained, "I would say that history is not a history book, which is an overview of history, but either a document or primary source. History reading is trying to get as close to the source as possible." When reading certain books, they were concerned with age appropriate material. When studying Homer, the elementary children read *The Children's Homer*. The author had removed the extremely violent battle

descriptions and used prose rather than poetry. When studying some of the Western culture that conflicted with their belief systems, they took the opportunity to compare and contrast the opposing systems. They also did not assume that everything was bad from the opposing system.

The Harbors made curriculum decisions based on providing a broad education that reinforced their belief systems. When they first began to home school, Rachel adopted a complete program that was based on workbooks and videos. She said it was good for the first year, because everything was provided. She explained,

I remember looking for something that offered lots and lots of help to the parent and that's where the videos came in. The videos had the complete planned curriculum and sort of your whole day planned out. And after doing that for about two years and mainly being more like an assistant in the class, I saw like hey maybe I can do this and just pulling together. I guess what I saw then was it was that it was still like a one size fits all and it didn't necessarily fit all you know.

After deciding that the video curriculum was not a right fit anymore, she began to look for a program that would allow her to “Do something that was more tailored to their individual” needs and interests. They chose the cooperative because “You can pick and choose your classes so you're not really committed to the whole package” and “You still have the freedom of four days a week with you and your kids.”

The Harbors had developed a very flexible approach to curriculum. When describing how they were different from other educational settings Rachel explained,

That we have flexibility to sort of take this class and really go in-depth with it or just do what's required for the class. We kind of shift around what's important because we have this heavy load or because we have this other class that we really want to emphasize this year.

They had done this when considering what classes Randy and Ray took at the cooperative. One year Randy considered auditing the literature class so he could focus on science and math, but he opted to take it for full credit, because he thought it would help him more in the long run. If he had audited the class, he would have attended, but would not have been required to complete assignments or take tests.

### *Teaching Strategies*

The teaching strategies that the Harbors used in their home school included reading, memorization, technology based learning, tutorial method, and Rachel acting as a guide and facilitator of their learning. Reading was the primary mode of instruction in their home school. They received their reading assignments from the parent-teachers at the cooperative and read at home. They were also required to keep a journal and answer questions about the reading. Rachel stated that Randy and Ray spent about 75% of their day reading. This was supported by data from observations and a review of their lesson plans. They focused on reading primary sources, contemporary writings, or historical novels.

Memorization was also an important teaching strategy. They memorized facts and information about the topics they were studying with the intent of applying it at a later time. One interesting motivation for memorization was they felt that it helped improve writing. When they first began to memorize, Rachel questioned why they were memorizing certain works. Later she realized it helped them become better writers. She explained that Benjamin Franklin

Learned to write so well because he took the writings of those before him that historically stood the test of time and he mimicked them. I would say that memorization of great poems and great works of writing would be one benefit of memorization. You are actually taking their language and learning it and being able to speak that back.

She believed memorization helped them learn and that if you were going to memorize something, it might as well be worth remembering. When asked how his mother helped him the most, Ray indicated that she was the most help with memorization. She would listen to them as they recited and let them know what they got wrong.

Rachel did provide some direct instruction. When she first started home schooling and used the video curriculum, she was primarily a teacher's assistant and would check their work and keep them on task. When the Harbors began to attend the cooperative, she became more of a facilitator. She made charts to track their assignments, helped them study for tests, and assisted if they needed help with certain lessons. She indicated that her primary task was to say things like stay on task and back to work. She did help more with math because it was a subject that the students did not receive direct instruction in at the cooperative. Rachel estimated that she spent between 3 and 4 hours per day total working with Randy and Ray. She also said that there was an inverse relationship between age and the amount of time she spent in direct instruction. The older the children the less they received direct instruction from her.

The Harbors used technology as a teaching strategy. The math curriculum was primarily delivered through a series of CDs. Randy and Ray would watch and listen to an instructional CD, then watch examples on the CD, and finally work their own practice

problems. If they did not understand something, Rachel would watch the CD with them and ask questions to help improve their understanding of the objective being taught.

### *Resources*

The most important resource that the Harbors had was the cooperative. Rachel explained that “I don’t have to go and prepare a whole curriculum, a whole lesson plan for astronomy and one for composition and all that.” The cooperative helped expand the curriculum options for the Harbors and at the same time reduced their workload. The cooperative provided a balance between the traditional setting provided in a public school and the strictly home school setting that Rachel started when they first home schooled. It also provided courses that she did not have the expertise to teach, including Latin and astronomy. The cooperative addressed one significant concern that Rachel had about home schooling and that was activities that Randy and Ray missed including sports. The cooperative offered both fencing and cross country to the students. The final thing that the cooperative provided was accountability. Rachel was always concerned about whether she was teaching enough, and she was worried that she was not teaching the right material. The combined efforts of the cooperative helped her to feel that she was providing her children with a quality education.

Because reading was the primary mode of instruction in the home school, books were a very important resource. The school room was full of books. A partial list of books was provided earlier in this description. Randy and Ray used the books in the home to complete their assigned work from the cooperative. Because they had been in the

cooperative for several years, they owned many of the books that were needed. The oldest child, Reese, had used the books and now Randy and Ray were using them. When studying for an astronomy test, Rachel used three different books to help Randy study.

The types of books they used varied. As mentioned before they avoided textbooks in history and literature. They preferred to read primary sources, books written by contemporary authors, or historical novels written about the time period studied. Rachel also had various editions of books to help her provide age appropriate materials. Examples of this were the two different editions of *The Canterbury Tales* available. When the younger children studied *The Canterbury Tales*, they used an edition designed for younger children that avoided the more crass stories. A standard edition was available for the older students. A similar situation existed for Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The Harbors used various forms of technology to support their home school operations. Initially their curriculum was video based. Rachel would play videos, and the children would watch a teacher on the television and then do assigned work with Rachel's help. When they transitioned to the cooperative, Rachel found a mathematics program that was on CDs to provide pre-algebra and geometry instruction to the children. Randy and Ray watched and listened to the lessons on the computer screen, watched practice problems, and then worked independent problems assigned through the CD program.

They also used technology to communicate with other home school parents including their teachers. The teachers sent out reminders and updates to assignments via e-mail. They also posted their lessons and syllabi on the cooperative website. Rachel used

e-mail to receive Friday lunch orders from other parents. She also kept their grade books on the computer.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The Harbors identified several challenges and concerns associated with operating a home school. The challenges included worrying about what others thought of them for home schooling their children, the danger that one is home schooling for the wrong reasons, how to get foreign language credits needed for college, the change in life style home schooling requires, and missing out on sports and other activities available in public schools.

When asked about home school challenges, Rachel immediately went to her concerns about how others would view her family when she decided to home school. She said that her initial challenge was, “Man fearing. Man fearing was my biggest. Worrying about what everyone was thinking about what we were doing.” She said, “Would everybody think we were teaching as much as we were supposed to and those kind of things?” Initially she was worried that others would not support her efforts. After more than 10 years home schooling, this concern still existed but in another form. She no longer worried about what others would think, but was concerned that others did not appreciate the sacrifice she and the family made to home school. One area she pointed out was that they paid taxes to support the public schools and also paid for all of their own home school expenses.

Rachel was quick to point out that she was not opposed to or angry with the public schools when she began to home school. She said that she discouraged families from home schooling who said they were angry with the public schools. When someone asked about home schooling she told them,

It's very hard. Usually if they are telling me things like they are mad at the school system, I tell them it's not a good reason to start home schooling. Because what I found that the people I've known over the years who have pulled their kids out of school because they are mad usually do it without a lot of forethought or planning and preparation.

Because they were angry, they did not consider the commitment and significant life style change that it required and were often not successful.

Rachel described at length how home schooling changed her life. One sentence explained it all, "Really you have to approach it like this is my job." She explained that she no longer could do the things she wanted to when she wanted to. "If you want to go shopping in the afternoon you can't." One story that Rachel told highlighted the extent of the change home schooling had on the family,

We stayed in the car...before we started home schooling. I did a lot of stuff with my friends. I was very civic minded- involved in a lot of social and civic organizations and so I did a lot with that. I did a lot with my friends and I did a lot at the school. So I guess we were just rushed all the time. We were sitting here reading one day and we saw a bird with something in its mouth- stuff for nest building. We went to the window and looked and the bird was going through the front grill of our car building a nest. I said this is really different because before our car didn't sit still long enough for a bird to build a nest in it.

Rachel willingly accepted the change in lifestyle required to home school her children, but she wanted others to understand how difficult it can be to operate a home school before they tried to do so without counting the cost.

Other challenges and concerns centered on the curriculum. One major area that was a concern was foreign language instruction. The cooperative taught Latin, but did not offer a modern foreign language. Many colleges her children were interested in required two years of high school foreign language credit. When asked if there was anything that she felt they could drop from their curriculum, Rachel answered, “No” and added

There are probably some things that I would add. One thing that has really dropped off the radar has to be foreign languages. We wanted to do Chinese this year and we did try to get a program and we borrowed it but it is missing the first CD. I think foreign languages are important but that is one thing that we have let drop.

Because Randy needed two years of foreign language instruction, they had to find a foreign language program of study either through computer instruction, video instruction, or dual enrollment at a community college. He had one year of Latin, but needed the modern foreign language requirements for college.

Another concern was whether colleges and universities would accept a child who had graduated from a home school. When asked if she ever considered sending her children back to public schools, Rachel said she did when Reese started high school. She was worried about Carnegie credits and if “They would be able to get into a good college.” She decided to teach her at home, but had to make sure that “She took the right classes at home that were required for college.” Reese was accepted to several universities, including the University of Chicago.

One challenge Ray identified was the classes at the cooperative. He said that when he missed class, it was hard to make up the work because they only met once a

week. This was compounded because the teachers at the cooperative don't "Read out of the book" when they taught. So if he missed something he had to get notes from a friend.

Rachel conceded that she could not do everything in her home school. There were things like sports that home school children miss out on. She explained how she dealt with the things that home school could not provide:

I've always seen that there were things that could be perceived as lacking in home schooling and things that could be perceived as lacking in public schooling and every year I've sort of look at that and said here are the positives and here are the negatives, which one outweighs the other.

For the Harbors the positives of home schooling each year outweighed the negatives of home schooling.

Distractions during school were also challenges the Harbors faced when operating their home school. The children distracted each other. Both Ray and Randy identified their mother helping the other with school work as a distraction. Rachel added that when she helped one child, the other would stop and listen and sometimes try to help. This led to a digressive conversation, and she would stop it and get them back on task. She said diversions were not necessarily bad things, but they lengthened the school day. The children also said that neighbors outside in the yard working or playing distracted them from school. They also said that it was distracting to do school work in the car. The final distraction was when Reese was home from college. They usually were more interested in what she was doing and talking to her than in their school work. Rachel said that one benefit of home schooling was that limited distractions could be tolerated, because they could make up the school work, since they were not tied to a set calendar.

### *Riley Family*

The Rileys were an intact family who lived in the town where the cooperative was located. They were a middle class family. The father, Mark, was a small business owner and had a college degree. The mother, Mary, was the primary teacher in the home. She did not work outside the home during the study. Before the family began to home school, she worked as a public school teacher and then a private school administrator. Her education included a Bachelor of Science degree in education and a Master of Science degree in education administration. The family lived in a city school district that exceeded state accreditation standards. The high school offered many advanced placement and honors classes and a wide variety of choices in both arts and athletics. The high school historically had four to five National Merit Scholars each year.

The family had three children. The oldest child, Madeleine, was home schooled but had also attended both public and private schools. She went to college and graduated with a four year degree. She then got married and started her own family. She was 26 when the study began. Mary sometimes babysat Madeleine's newborn during the day. The middle child, Mike, also went to public and private schools, but was not home schooled. He graduated from a private Christian school. He was always involved in sports, which was the reason he stayed in traditional schools. He lived in the same town as his parents and worked for a local company. He had not completed college. He was 25 when the study began and was considering marriage and starting his own family. Neither Madeleine nor Mike were a part of the study. Both Madeleine and Mike had the option to

attend public schools. Madeleine chose to go to home school, and Mike chose the private school.

Matt was the youngest child. He was 15 when the study began. He was the only child at home during the study. He was born 10 years after Mike and was unexpected. He was given the opportunity to choose between a local private religious school and the local public high school when he was preparing for ninth grade. He almost chose the public high school and even visited with the counselor, but in the end he decided to stay at home, because he liked the freedom at home. He also said that he felt that “No one was getting the education I was getting” at home. Mary was glad he decided to stay at home, because she felt that it was a better way for him to learn and previously she had had problems with the local public schools.

Matt was very independent. There was a slight tension between Mary and Matt concerning school work. She said that every year she would try to provide him a schedule, but he resisted it. She realized that he was not a structured learner, so she let him set his own schedule and only helped when needed. She said that this was hard because of her background as a teacher. Since Matt learned without help from his mother, there was very little interaction between the two about school work. Usually they communicated about his school schedule or big projects rather than daily learning activities. Matt’s passion was music. He played both piano and guitar. He played guitar in a church band and also played during some worship services. He wanted to use music in some sort of ministry.

Matt took composition, history, science, astronomy, Latin, and music appreciation on Fridays at the cooperative. Because there was not enough time on Fridays, he also took theology, literature, and humanities on Tuesday afternoons at one of the cooperative's family's home. The second year of the study, he opted out of the theology class. In previous years, he wanted to skip art appreciation and Latin, but his mother insisted he take these because she felt they were too important to miss. Like the other families, the Rileys had to find their own math curriculum. They used a local private educational corporation to provide mathematics instruction. During the second year of the study he was in eleventh grade and planned to graduate that year. He planned to attend a local community college the next year and live at home.

Matt primarily did his school work in a room connected to the kitchen. In the school room were several book shelves with Mary's home school resources. These resources included books she used to teach at home and books for the literature and composition classes she taught at the cooperative. The book shelves included some of the same texts on the shelves of the other families in the study. On the shelves were literature classics, religious books and *Bibles*, non fiction books, poetry books, and books about ancient Greece and Rome. Matt did most of his work on an L-shaped sectional couch. There was a coffee table in front of the sectional that he used to stack books on while he studied. He had an Apple laptop to access the Internet and to do his school work. Against the wall, by the door going outside, was a desk that Mary used. On it was a printer and a desk top computer with Internet access. On the wall adjacent to the kitchen was a piano. In the corner by the sectional along the same wall were two electric guitars, an acoustic

guitar, an amplifier, and other guitar related accessories. There were two arm chairs opposite the sectional. Mary put her school material on those chairs. When Matt took breaks from studying, he practiced guitar for the church band or just played for fun.

### *Transition from Traditional Schooling to Home Schooling*

The initial motivation to home school for the Riley family was conflict with the public school over sex education. The mother did not agree with the content or the way the program was implemented. She tried to address the issue with the school district and went to a meeting: “So we went to a meeting, and were treated like we were idiots.” She got a copy of the sex education curriculum and

There was a long list of things you had to do and couldn’t do. If you gave them up for adoption there was half the problems. When you got to abortion, there was nothing. So if you have an abortion, you don’t have to face all the problems. It said if you and your partner decide to have sex, it never said husband and wife. I saw a clip of the video they show. My kids were not happy with this and wanted to be home schooled again.

This family had been in home school, private school, and public school before the final decision to home school. The family did not initially go into home schooling. They attended a private religious school, but finally opted on home schooling, because they found the home school cooperative and it was using a classical approach to education from a Christian perspective. The mother stated that she would send her child to a private school if there was one that offered classical education. Like the other families the mother indicated that the primary reason they chose to home school was that “We wanted our children to have a Christ centered education and see a whole complete picture

revolved around Christian principles.” This combined with the pedagogical motivation for a classical education is what pushed the family into home schooling.

The family combined progressive and traditional education. The family relied on reading as the main mode of instruction. There was very little direct instruction. This was similar to the other families. The mother, who is a certified teacher and administrator, stated that “They read all the time, books and articles, I feel the more they read the better the student is.” On the progressive front the mother was trying to foster independence in her child: “He is more independent. So he gets his assignments out on Monday and chooses what he wants to do. We don’t have a set thing on times or a set schedule.” The mother did not make out a weekly schedule for her son, but gave him the freedom to organize his education.

One of the reasons that this family continued to home school was flexibility. Over a period of two years both her father-in-law and her parents were extremely sick. During that time she was able to continue teaching her children and let them have increased visitation time with the sick grandparents. The family was able to care for their family and maintain their educational efforts. The mother explained, “Once there was a time like that when it was hard, my mother was here and we took care of her. What was so wonderful was I would go stay with her at her little apartment and my son would go with me and I still did his school work. It was a blessing.”

### *Motivations to Home School*

The Riley's motivations to home school were multifaceted. They included religious, family, academic, and freedom reasons. Religious reasons and their Christian worldview were the main reasons they decided to home school. The conflict with the public schools over sex education was based on their Christian worldview. Mary was concerned about the way that public schools treated religion. She believed it was either ignored or attacked. Their family's values were not supported in the public schools. Matt indicated the importance of religion and worldview in their decision to home school when he was asked why his family home schools. He said, "I guess so we can get a Christian worldview.... And just the environment too. You don't have to be among everything that's at public school." Religious motivations were evident in the familial reasons to home school. Like other families in the study, their religious beliefs influenced their views of the relationship between the family and the larger society.

Mary and Mark believed that their primary responsibility was to their own children. Mary had been a public school teacher and a private school administrator, but she decided to home school because she felt that ultimately she had to take care of her own family first. She declared, "We are responsible for our children. When we first started, my parents did not agree. I told them, I won't put my child into a snake pit and let them figure it out." She felt that she was hurting her own children by sending them to public schools. This does not mean that she believed that all kids who went to public schools would turn out badly. The opportunity to spend more time and be a larger

influence on her children was also important. She explained that home schooling allowed a parent to

Spend that time with the child and know what they are getting is your Christian worldview. They are seeing it up close and personal. I know kids that came from Christian homes and turned out terrible, and kids from public schools that turned out very well.

Other family reasons to home school included the ability to spend time with their extended family. Home schooling allowed Mary to take care of her parents and her in-laws when they were ill. While she was taking care of them, the children also were able to spend time with them and learn about aging and death. Mary believed that that social experience was as important as other academic things that the children might learn at school. The family was also involved in many church activities. Both Mark and Mary and the children were active in church worship and seasonal productions. Because they home schooled, the family could do things to prepare during school hours. They had the flexibility to arrange their schedule to participate in these activities.

There were academic reasons for the Rileys to home school. The family believed that home schooling was a superior environment than traditional schooling. The family's desire for their children to receive a Christian education could have been fulfilled in a private Christian school. Mike, the oldest boy, actually graduated from a private Christian school. Mary's decision to home school was linked to her desire to provide a different type of education to her children. Mary was drawn to the classical form of education. She said, "We say we are getting the education we never got. Doing it the co-op way is really truly better. Most freshman literature classes are not getting what my son gets." She said that if there was a private school that offered a classical education, she would have sent

her children there if that was what they wanted. Matt also believed that he received a superior education at home, which is why he chose to stay at home.

A pedagogical motivation related to academics was the goal of teaching their children how to learn. Learning facts was important, but Mary wanted her children to have the skills to be an independent, life-long learner. She said, “Basically we’re trying to train our children to be self-learners. We want them to be that way all their life.... We want them to be able to figure out things on their own.” Even though the classical model depended heavily on memorization and the accumulation of large amounts of knowledge, the ultimate goal for Mary was to be able to use that knowledge as a base for future learning.

Freedom was an important motivator. They were free to choose a curriculum that supported their religious and academic goals. They were also free to pick and choose what they wanted based on Matt’s interests and academic needs. Matt could graduate when he was ready to move on to college. Matt indicated the importance freedom played in his decision to home school when he said, “My main reasons was that I could sleep in a little.” He also enjoyed the academic freedom: “Everything is not as structured as much and I just kind of do my work at my own pace and don’t have to sit through all the classes all the time. That’s probably the main reason.” Mary highlighted the importance of freedom from what she called the “government schools.”

The children were free to choose where they went to school. Each child individually discussed educational options with Mary and Mark to determine the type of school attended. Before they entered ninth grade, the children were all given the option of

returning to a traditional school setting, including both private and public schools. Mike chose to attend a private religious school. Madeleine and Matt chose to home school. Mary described her position on the children choosing their education: “I know at their ages they have to be a part of the decision. I take the approach they are closer to adulthood than childhood and they have to start making decisions that impact them.” Freedom extended also to which courses Matt took at the cooperative. He chose to not take the theology class and his mother supported him. She did reserve the right to veto decisions. She did not let him opt out of Latin and music appreciation.

The Riley family’s motivations were primarily related to religion and worldview. The catalyst for them to move from public schools to home schooling was a conflict over a sex education program. This served to unlock the latent religious and family reasons. The family wanted to provide their children with a Christian education and they felt that it was the family’s responsibility to do so. The family did send their children to private religious schools, and the children had choices when they began high school. Mary believed that the home school combined with the classical curriculum and the cooperative was superior to other educational environments, but was still willing to give her children choices in the method of their education. In elementary and junior high school Mary and Mark made the education decisions, but as the children approached high school, freedom was the strongest determinate of where their children ultimately graduated from school.

## *Home School Operations*

### Typical Morning

8:00 am

Matt woke up, got dressed and moved into the kitchen to fix his breakfast. His father and mother had been up earlier and ate breakfast. Mark left for work before Matt woke up. Mary was in the school room sitting at her desk grading composition papers that she had to return to the students on Friday. After he had breakfast, Matt moved into the school room, and he and Mary discussed what work he needed to complete for Friday. He was wearing sweat pants and a t-shirt, but no shoes or socks.

8:30 am

Matt sat down on the sectional and logged on to his computer. He checked his e-mail and the cooperative website to see if there were any updates to assignments. His mother asked him, "Did you get that e-mail about the Plutarch assignment?" Matt responded, "No." She told him she would look for it and forward it to him. Matt picked up Plutarch's *Lives* and began to flip through the book. The phone rang and Mary answered it. Matt began to read while his mother carried on a conversation with her daughter. When she got off the phone, she sat down at the computer and then said, "I forwarded you something, Matt. You are supposed to read the introduction by James Atlas and the essay by Clough- it's in

your book” Matt responded that he had not received the e-mail yet. He turned to the introduction in the book and began to read it.

9:00 am

Mary interrupted Matt’s reading and said, “Next week we are going to use the time off from the cooperative to catch up on your school work.” Matt answered, “I didn’t know I was behind.” Mary told him, “Gileskirk. I ran off what you need.” The cooperative was not having school the next week, because many of the students were participating in a Christian youth conference. While he read the introduction to the book, Mary moved to the kitchen and started to clean. After reading for about 15 minutes, Matt put the book down and called to his mother, “I’m not understanding what I’m reading.” She answered, “Just get through it and we’ll see.” She wanted him to read the entire introduction first before she helped him. He continued to read.

9:30 am

Matt put his book down and moved into the kitchen. Mary asked, “Do you need a break?” He said, “Yes.” He made himself a cup of hot apple cider. He told Mary, “You know you don’t have to give us a grammar test on Friday.” Mary just smiled and laughed at him. She was his composition teacher at the cooperative and had a reputation for being a hard teacher. After drinking his cider, and having a short conversation with his mother, he went back to the school room. He sat down at his mother’s computer, because it was hooked up to a printer. He navigated to the humanities curriculum website and printed off

an essay that he was required to read. It was an essay titled, “Why read Plutarch.” After he printed it off, he sat down to read it. While he read the essay, his mother moved to the living room and vacuumed.

10:00 am

Matt finished reading the essay and told his mother that he understood it. He then went into the living room where his mother was reading. He asked her, “For the Gileskirk project can I use the computer to do the project?” They had to create a coat of arms for their family and Matt could not draw very well. Mary told him, “Go ahead and use the paint program to make it.” Matt returned to the school room and got out the research he had done on his family history. He had taken notes and decided what colors to use to represent his family. He was also using an existing family crest as a guideline. That crest had yellow and black in it, so he decided to use those colors. He researched what the colors represented. He worked on the family crest for about 20 minutes. He found pictures and clip art on the Internet to use to build his family crest. He designed the crest to emphasize the importance of religion to his family. Matt closed his computer, got up from the sectional and picked up one of his electric guitars. He sat on a straight back chair and began to play.

10:30 am

He practiced a few songs that he was going to play at church that night during the Wednesday night services. After practicing those songs, he began to play some music for

fun. His mother came into the room and smiled at him. He stopped playing and said, “I have a science test to give you.” She said, “Oh no.” Matt told her, “It’s a B.” He put his guitar down and rummaged through his backpack and pulled out the test. It had been folded several times and was a bit crumpled. She took the test and put it in a folder. She moved to her desk and answered a couple e-mail questions from students in her composition class. Matt went back to playing guitar.

11:00 am

Matt stopped playing guitar. He asked Mary if she would help him with his recitation before he went to his math class. She said yes. He got out a copy of the poem “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and gave it to his mother. He practiced reciting the poem, and his mother let him know when he missed something. They practiced for a few minutes and then he stopped reciting. He needed to eat lunch before he went to his math class. His mother told him not to forget that on Friday he had to turn in his bibliography for his research paper. He opened a notebook and got his bibliography out and showed it to his mother. She looked at it and told him that he needed more resources. He then went to make a sandwich. While he was eating, Mary asked him if he had moved up to the next level at the math center. He said he had not. She told him that she was not happy with his progress. He told her that the work he was doing was too easy, but they would not let him move on to more advanced material. She told him that they told her he would move up three weeks ago. Mary asked him to let her know if they moved him up or not when he got back from the math lesson. She intended to talk with the director, because she felt

they were not moving him along fast enough considering he understood the work he was doing.

11:30 am

After he ate lunch he grabbed his car keys, left the house, and went to his math lesson. He was there until 12:45. He came back to the house and he went to the church with his mother. She had some church business to conduct, and he intended to practice guitar with another member of the church band.

### *Curriculum*

The nature of the curriculum was similar to the other families in the study. The Rileys received 90% of their curriculum from the cooperative. They only supplemented the curriculum in mathematics. Matt went to a local private education corporation for math instruction once a week. Mary wanted her children to have a classical education, because she could not find it at a traditional school, she home schooled and partnered with the cooperative. She said, “To me it is expanding the mind and using the mind. Making you have to work.” Their curriculum was based on reading what they believed were works of literature that have withstood the test of time as well as works that reinforced their worldview. The goal was to help develop independent learners. Mary said, “Basically we’re trying to train our children to be self-learners.”

While she wanted Matt to be a self-learner, she wanted him to be guided by a Christian worldview: “I teach through a Christian worldview. The best place for

examples is the *Bible*. Not only do they get knowledge, they get wisdom for their hearts. Mary was more concerned with his character and religious development than with his intellectual development. She explained, “I’ve said before... I am not grooming my child for society or for this world. I am grooming my child for the Lord’s Kingdom... I don’t care if he ends up working for Wal-Mart. Whatever he does is as unto the Lord.”

One way she groomed Matt was to prepare him to defend and articulate his religious beliefs. She said, “As Christians we have to articulate the truth in a way the rest of the world can see.” In order to do this, Matt needed to be able to look at situations and ideas from multiple points of view. She said in their composition curriculum, she required the students to read a story and tell why the story was true. After telling why it was true, the students then had to tell why it was false. The responses could not be based on opinion, but must be backed by fact. In this way, she hoped to develop articulate, critical thinkers who could defend and advance their Christian worldview. Not only did Mary want Matt to have the skills to defend and advance their worldview, she wanted him to have knowledge. To help build his knowledge, Matt and Mary attended a Creation Science conference with other members of the cooperative in order to learn how to defend and strengthen their religious beliefs.

Mary did not equate education with school. She believed that the family activities and social activities at church, they were able to do because they were not constrained by a set school schedule, were important parts of the curriculum. The opportunity to serve others through the church and the ability to spend time with ailing grandparents were seen as valuable lessons.

Like the other members of the study, the books used as texts reinforced their worldview. Many of the same books found on the other families' bookshelves were also on the Riley's shelves. They used works that differed from their worldview to compare and contrast in order to help prepare them for college. Mary said that she was not afraid to let Matt study ideas that conflicted with their belief system. She explained,

I mean our kids need to understand what worldview is; I mean I want my kids to understand about snakes. I want them to understand that there are poisonous snakes and there are good snakes, but I'm not going to throw them in a pit with a bunch of snakes and say, you figure it out, which one is which? I think they need to see what the other worldview is and when you compare the hopelessness you see in much of the literature, then you see the hope that you have in Christian literature our children will say, hey this is the direction I am going.

In her view putting her children in the public schools to learn the other worldview would have been putting them into a pit of snakes. Because she would not do that, she had to insure that her children learned the same academic material that other children will learn so they would understand their worldview.

The Riley family made curriculum decisions based on what they felt would best help them meet their children's learning needs. When Matt wanted to opt out of Latin and art appreciation at the cooperative, Mary did not let him because she felt it was vital to his education. When he wanted to opt out of theology class, she let him. She felt that he had enough knowledge and could gain that knowledge from Mark and her, as well as at church. Mary said that she viewed curriculum decisions through two lenses: classical education and Christianity.

Mary evaluated Matt's progress primarily using the grades provided by the parent-teachers at the cooperative. She did not do any grading at home. She said that the

teachers at the cooperative sent e-mails if he turned in a paper that was not good. She did admit that she did not really keep up with his grades. She did not use standardized tests to measure his progress. He had not taken the ACT at the time of the study, but was preparing to do so because he intended to go to community college the next year.

### *Teaching Strategies*

When asked how much time she spent in direct instruction each day, Mary responded, “Very little. He is motivated to do it himself. Sometimes I’ll hear the piano or guitar going and I figure that’s just the freedom of home schooling.” At home she used very few teaching strategies. Both she and Matt stated this in interviews, and it was born out through observation. Matt received direct instruction on Tuesdays and Fridays from parent-teachers at cooperative classes. The rest of the week he decided what to study and when. His mother did not provide him with a schedule, but only encouraged him to get his work done.

Like the other families, the Rileys relied on reading, writing, and memorization as their primary teaching strategies. Matt read, wrote, and memorized with little support from his mother. He had always tried to work independently of his mother, but when he was younger, he sometimes did not get his work done and his mother had to intervene. During the study, Mary said that he had become almost totally independent in his studies. In the past, Mary had helped Matt learn Latin with flash cards, listened to his speeches, and reviewed his writing assignments. She said that, “Now we don’t have to tell him to

get the work done, he does it. I feel fortunate we rarely have to tell him. I want him to have independent skills.”

When asked what role memorization played in their home school, Mary replied, “It’s a big part. Classical was started when Matt was in seventh grade. With the younger children we started early. Once they learned the facts they can apply the facts.” One thing that Matt had to memorize was the first couple of chapters of *Genesis*. Reading was also important to Mary. She felt that “the more they read, the better the student is.” She stated that Matt was a good reader and enjoyed reading. She attributed this to classical education. She believed that the key to being an independent learner was reading.

Mary identified writing as a teaching strategy. She believed that it was the most indispensable part of their curriculum. It was important because it helped develop critical thinking. Good writing was also linked to reading. She said that “The reading and composition go hand in hand with the way I am teaching, because the more well read you are then the better writer you will be.” Because her goal was to build an independent learner, who could articulate and advance his faith, reading and writing were the most important teaching strategies. Reading was the tool to independence, and writing was the key to critical thinking and articulation of their faith.

### *Resources*

The Rileys used the home school cooperative, computers, Internet, books, and a private educational corporation to support their home school efforts. Like the other families in the study, the most important resource was the cooperative. The cooperative

provided the majority of Matt's course work, freeing Mary from the burden of preparing multiple syllabi and weekly lesson plans. It also added flexibility to the courses that the Riley family was able to study. The most important thing that the cooperative provided was the classical education that Mary could not find in a private or public school setting. When asked how the cooperative supported her educational efforts, Mary responded,

It is incredible. We have a physician teaching our kids biology, chemistry, and physics. Subjects that I'm not equipped to. Our kids learn Latin. An editor and author teaches literature. Chris Johnson teaching too. All the talents together. We are all raising our children different and go to different churches, but are all on the same page for what we want in Classical education, in the Christian way.

Not only did the cooperative provide classes taught by other parents that Mary would not be able to provide, but it also provided social and moral support. She said, "We have the best of both worlds. On Friday they have interaction with other students: It's a good group of kids. Moms are being supported by each others' prayers. Everyone cares for each other's family and children." The children got social time with other children, and the mothers supported each other through prayer. The cooperative served as a learning community. It helped bridge the gap between totally independent home schooling and traditional schooling. The cooperative helped Mary reach her goal of curriculum freedom for her children.

The Rileys used computers and the Internet to make their home school run more efficiently. They used them to communicate with other members of the cooperative. Matt checked his assignments on the website and received updates from teachers through e-mail. He e-mailed his teachers if he had questions. Likewise, Mary used the Internet to communicate with her students at the cooperative. Matt also used the Internet to conduct

research and the computer to compose his various assignments. Matt and Mary even used the Internet to communicate with each other when they were in the same room together. Mary forwarded Matt an e-mail she had received about one of his assignments.

Because reading was the most important strategy used in their home school, the Rileys depended on books. Because Madeleine had already graduated from the home school cooperative, Matt had many of the books used in the high school classes. Mary also had many books to support her class preparation. She also indicated that there were several books that helped her learn about the Classical education model. One book that was instrumental in her decision to use the Classical model was *A Well Trained Mind*. The Rileys used books in the same way as the other families in the study. The author of the book was the teacher and the reader was the pupil. Books were important because, as Mary indicated, in Classical education “everything they do is reading, outlining, and applying what they learn” from books.

Because math was not available at the cooperative, Mary had to find another source for Matt’s math instruction. She used a local private educational corporation dedicated to math instruction. The corporation served many home school children as well as children from traditional schools who had problems with math. The corporation assessed the learner’s math ability and developed a program based on the assessment. Mary was disappointed with the rate of progress that Matt was making at the corporation. She felt that they were too slow in advancing him. For several weeks he was practicing material that he already knew. She wanted them to test him and, if he understood it at mastery level, move him on until he reached a point where he could not operate at

mastery level and then begin instruction. She was considering moving him to another program.

One resource that Mary mentioned that the other families did not was their church. Mary said, “We were in a church that favored home school. Our kids had friends that were home schooled.” This helped the children not feel different in social settings because, in the most important social setting outside their family, many of the children were also home schooled. Their church provided the facilities for the cooperative’s classes on Fridays.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

Mary identified several challenges and concerns when operating a home school. The first concern was time management and her activities that distracted Matt from his education. She explained, “I tell my family my priority is Matt. I am so busy involved with church things; it’s time management.” She continued, “I am the big distraction. Because I am so busy taking care of parents and church things and don’t always set boundaries. I get too involved in things.” She stated that home schooling was her job and because of that she had to adapt her lifestyle to that. She could not go to lunch when she wanted to or do social things during the day.

The lifestyle change that home schooling required was something that Mary said she would emphasize with anyone who asked her about home schooling. She said she would tell them, “If you are not dedicated to the task, then don’t do it. Because I have seen kids home schooled and everything else gets in the way. Both husband and wife

have to be committed.” She emphasized the fact that to home school effectively the family must sacrifice. This sacrifice included loss of the mother’s income, as well as the freedom to go out and do social activities during the school day.

When asked if she had concerns about what others thought about her home schooling, she responded, “No, it’s not my temperament. If God tells me this is what I am supposed to do, then you can take it up with Him. Even my parents finally see the good.” Initially her parents objected to her home schooling her children. She believed that the success that her children and others she knows have had vindicates her choice. She said, “Some people don’t see the results right off, but you can’t argue with them.”

Home schooling was frustrating at times for the Rileys. Mary’s biggest frustration was that she didn’t feel she had accomplished everything she wanted. Interruptions were also frustrating, even if they were worthy activities. She was frustrated when she did not accomplish all of the things she intended, because of interruptions and distractions. She was also concerned about whether or not they could teach what their children needed: “I wanted to be sure we were doing right and would be able to give the children what they needed.” Matt was frustrated when he saw other children who were home schooled going out to lunch and not studying as hard as he did.

Learning to work within a set time schedule was a challenge that Mary identified for many home schooled children. She said that because the students work at their own pace, when they are in traditional educational settings, including college, they sometimes have trouble completing assignments on time or finishing tests during a class period. This caused problems for some home school students. Mary experienced this when home

school children enrolled in the private school she administered. She felt that the cooperative helped to address this problem.

The final challenge or concern was the activities that home schooling could not provide, including sports. Their oldest child Mike enjoyed sports. He wanted to play high school football. Primarily because of sports, he attended a private religious school. This was not a problem for Madeleine and Matt. Both of them found social outlets at church and with the home school group. Matt was more interested in music and was able to pursue his musical interests at church.

#### Within-Case Analysis

This section includes the within-case analysis for each of the subject families. The analysis is organized along the lines of the four research questions. First is an analysis of their motivations to home school; second is an analysis of home school operations focusing on their teaching strategies and resources used to support their home school operations; third is an analysis of their curriculum; and finally is an analysis of the challenges and concerns that the families have experienced while home schooling.

#### *Smith Family*

##### *Motivations*

The Smiths' experiences operating a home school were generally positive. They have operated their home school for over ten years, in two different states, and with three

children, including one who has entered college. The decision to start a home school was initiated by a negative experience with a public school over New Age practices and the school's and the Smiths' inability to reconcile their differences. Though this initiated the process of moving from public schools to home schooling, it was not the primary motivating factor, but rather a catalyst that sparked underlying latent factors. The latent factors were religious and family reasons. They felt that God wanted them to teach their children at home. This desire was centered on their view of the proper role of parents. They believed that they were primarily responsible for teaching their own children and educating them in an environment that would help build in them a Biblical worldview. After they began home schooling, other motivations to continue to home school emerged, including the ability to differentiate the curriculum to their individual children's needs and desires, flexibility to take vacations during the school year, and autonomy to choose not only what to teach but from where to get the curriculum.

### *Home School Operations*

The Smiths operated their home school in a very flexible and open environment. They received most of their instruction from the cooperative and Jane served to support the children's efforts to complete the assigned work and study for tests. The primary mode of instruction was reading, including read aloud and silent reading. The Smiths viewed the author as a teacher. Reading helped the Smiths build learner independence. Jane used other teaching strategies, including direct questioning, technology, and memorization. The nature of the instructional environment on the surface appeared to be

very conventional or traditional, because it included memorization, a significant amount of reading, and little of what would be considered progressive methods, but a closer look indicated that the educational efforts were progressive in that they were designed to provide the student with both the skills and knowledge that allowed him or her to be independent learners. The goal was not the accumulation of facts and knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but the accumulation of facts and knowledge to be used in the production of new and independent ideas and products. The production of new ideas and products was not designed only for the school years, but for life.

There was a traditional or conservative goal in the Smiths' home school as they aimed to preserve and pass on their Christian worldview. The Smiths' home school was similar to other educational environments in that it could not be described as either progressive or conservative, but rather as a mixture of the two. One thing that is of value to traditional educational settings was the use of reading to develop independent learners. This began early and rather than viewing reading as a subject, it was viewed as a tool to develop educational autonomy in students.

### *Resources*

The Smiths used a variety of resources to operate their home school including the cooperative, books, technology, and outside providers of education. The most important support system was the cooperative. It was the source of 90% of their curriculum and relieved Jane from having to create and implement curriculum for her children. Because reading was their main teaching strategy, books were very important to the operation of

their home school. The Smiths also used technology to communicate with the cooperative, for research, and as a mode of instruction. The Smiths went beyond the cooperative and used other educational resources including a piano teacher, biology teacher, and dual enrollment in a local community college. They identified their learning objectives and sought out the method to achieve it whether it was at the cooperative, a commercially produced program, or another teacher in the community. Their use of support systems indicated that they do not associate education with a particular place or institution, but rather view it as process.

### *Curriculum*

The Smiths' curriculum was based on a Biblical worldview, but was designed to provide the children with a liberal, balanced education. Their curriculum was primarily provided by the cooperative. The family's stated goal was to teach their students to learn on their own. They based their curriculum decisions on their children's needs and desires and on their assessment of their progress. Their curriculum decisions also indicated the progressive nature of their home school. Their efforts were focused on the children's learning rather than on a particular program or curriculum.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The Smiths' efforts to run a home school were not all positive. They experienced some challenges and admitted that they had been frustrated in their efforts. Jane and Jack both identified the nature of the parent-student relationship as a primary downside to

home schooling. Their decision to use the home school cooperative was based on their frustrations home schooling Jonathan. Their efforts to individualize the instruction were difficult, because as the students progressed in their education their needs changed, and Jane had to make changes to her instructional styles. There were also social problems identified. Jane identified social isolation as a challenge for her. The children identified the need for socialization as a positive reason to attend the home school cooperative. The most significant challenge might have been the resulting change in the family's lifestyle. These changes include a reduction in income and limits on Jane's daily activities and social life. The final challenge was dealing with ideas that contradicted their religious beliefs. The Smiths acknowledged that they encountered ideas that were different than their family believed, but that it was not a problem because they used them as learning opportunities. Addressing contradictory ideas served as a form of negative education in the Smith home school. It allowed the children to learn about these ideas in a safe environment with support from their parents.

### *Johnson Family*

#### *Motivations*

The Johnson family had an overall positive experience home schooling. They had taught as many as six children in their home school. Two had graduated and were in college, and another was preparing to graduate from high school. The initial event that sparked them to move from public schools to home school was a conflict over

curriculum. This catalyst event did not result in their immediate transition to home schooling. It encouraged the family to think about home schooling as a viable option. The latent or underlying reasons were religious. The family wanted to raise their children in a Christian home with an education that supported their religious and social beliefs.

There were secondary reasons to home school, including the flexibility and freedom that home school allowed. The family was free to choose the curriculum, who taught their children, where they were taught, and how they were taught. The children could also pursue their own academic interests. They were also free to take vacations when they pleased without regard to the school calendar. Finances were important in their decision to home school. Though they home school because they feel it is the best environment, their mother indicated that private schools were not an option because they were too expensive for six children.

There were some academic reasons they home schooled. These included the opportunity to provide a classical curriculum, use traditional teaching strategies, and differentiate the curriculum based on student need and interest. Finally, the Johnsons were motivated to provide a different type of socialization than was available in a traditional school. They socialized their children within the family with the understanding that the family was the fundamental organization in society. The parents' first responsibility was to raise and educate their own children.

### *Home School Operations*

The Johnsons operated their home school in varied ways depending on the age of the children. The older children were basically independent. They received direct instruction from the parent-teachers at the cooperative and worked independently to complete their assignments at home. The majority of their assignments were reading. Independent reading was the primary mode of instruction for the older children. They received almost no direct instruction at home from their mother. The primary mode of instruction for the younger children was reading also, but the mother read aloud to them. Cynthia would ask questions and check for understanding as she read aloud to Caitlin and Conner. Her main role with Calvin and Caroline was to keep the younger children from distracting them. Cynthia provided one-on-one tutoring to both Caitlin and Conner for math, phonics, grammar, and composition.

Memorization was an important instructional method. All of the children had to memorize passages of scripture from the *Bible*, poems, speeches, writings, and facts. This was part of the classical curriculum. The information memorized would help them write and speak better. The facts would also be applied at a later date to create a new product or idea in other classes.

The Johnsons operated their home school using both traditional and progressive methods. Their overall goal was conservative. They aimed to transmit their Christian beliefs through their home school, but they also wanted to develop independent learners. They used traditional teaching methods to achieve the progressive goal of creating learners who had the skills and knowledge to learn without help from a teacher.

### *Resources*

The Johnsons primary resource was the cooperative. It provided them with teachers and courses that they would not have available without it. It freed the parents from developing or buying individual curricula for six children in each subject. It also provided the classical and Christian based education that was important to the family. The cooperative also provided socialization outside the family.

Because the cooperative did not provide everything that the family needed, they had to supplement the curriculum with outside resources. These included piano and strings teachers, local community colleges, and online classes. The Johnsons relied heavily on books to teach their children, and there were many in the house. The family used the Internet to conduct research and communicate with other families in the cooperative. Cynthia used it to answer student questions and the children used it to ask their cooperative parent-teachers questions. Like the Smiths, the Johnsons identified learning outcomes and gathered the requisite resources needed to accomplish their goals.

### *Curriculum*

The Johnsons' curriculum was primarily classical as described earlier in the study. Besides being classical it was based on a conservative Christian worldview. Their religious motivations to home school were reflected in their home school curriculum. They did not want to shelter their children, but wanted to give their children a broad, liberal education while using their religious beliefs as guidelines. The bulk of their curriculum was provided by the cooperative. They based their curriculum decisions on

what was best academically and developmentally for their children. The Johnsons saw the curriculum as an integrated whole. Everything was connected. They used history as the organizing subject and attempted to link the other subjects studied to it. The desire to integrate their curriculum and remove artificial subject boundaries was an example of the progressive nature of their curriculum. The desire to transmit their belief system to their children was an example of the conservative or traditional nature of their curriculum.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The Johnsons acknowledged that home schooling was not always easy. One of the biggest challenges that families face when home schooling, is finding the right curriculum. There are many home school programs to choose from and not all of them are quality programs. The Johnsons went through this when they decided to home school. They had to research and purchase programs until they joined the cooperative. Another concern was how to address material and subjects that opposed their beliefs. The Johnsons used this as an opportunity to teach critical thinking and allowed their children to compare and contrast the opposing view points.

Probably the biggest challenge was in-home distractions. These distractions included the younger children bothering the older children, the dogs playing, and the lure of competing opportunities to studying including surfing the Internet. Other distractions were public school children in the neighborhood playing when they were out for a holiday.

The difficult nature of the cooperative was highlighted by both the children and Cynthia as a concern. There was very little additional help provided to those who fell behind in the curriculum. The cooperative could provide some things that schools provided, but it could not provide everything. Because they home schooled, the Johnsons missed out on drivers' education, sports activities, band, extra curricular activities, and advanced placement classes. Though they enjoyed home schooling, there were some opportunity costs when opting out of public schools.

The parent student relationship was also a problem identified by the Johnsons. Cynthia had to be disciplined to keep the children on task because it was easy for the children to avoid work. She also was the only teacher. If she could not reach them or was frustrated with them, there was no one to intervene. Unlike in a traditional school, she could not wait for the bell to ring and classes to change, and the child could not request a schedule change.

### *Harbor Family*

#### *Motivations*

The Harbor family was motivated to home school primarily for academic and pedagogical reasons. Their oldest son was having academic problems and they decided that home schooling was the proper response. Like the other families, the initial motivation served as a catalyst that unlocked other latent motivating factors. The most important latent factor was the desire of the family to impart their own values to their

children. The family saw teachers outside the home as competitors. Rachel wanted to be the primary influence on her children. The competition with teachers was important because of the way that the family believed public education treated religion. They believed that the public schools did not support their religious beliefs.

There were definitely social motivations to home school. Rachel wanted her children socialized in a different environment and with different values than she believed were available in the local schools. The social reasons were linked to family reasons. The Harbors believed that their primary responsibility was to their children first, not to the children in other schools. When she had to determine how to teach her children, Rachel made her decisions based on what was best ,in her opinion, for her children. She did not believe that she had a direct responsibility for another family's children's education in the public schools.

### *Home School Operations*

The Harbors were more structured than the other families in the study. Rachel required them to be dressed as if they were leaving for school. She also had a room set aside for a classroom. Randy and Ray received most of their direct instruction from Rachel. Her primary role was to structure their weekly assignment and insure they completed them for Friday classes. The primary teaching strategy was reading. The children also wrote and memorized like the other families. Rachel supplemented their instruction with computer based mathematics programs. She also actively helped them study for tests and provided one-on-one tutorial when needed. She identified her primary

role as keeping them on task. She was more directly involved with Ray than with Randy, because Ray was younger and Randy was operating as an independent learner.

The Harbor family home school was run on a more traditional basis. Randy and Ray had set schedules and were more closely monitored than some of the other children. The goal was similar to the other families in that Rachel wanted to support the development of independent learning. She felt she had been successful with Reese and was well on the way with Randy and Ray. Reading, memorization, and writing were the key elements in developing learner autonomy. She also allowed some student choice and based instructional decisions on student progress and interests indicating elements of progressive education.

### *Resources*

Like the other families, the cooperative was the most important resource the Harbors used to operate their home school. It provided most of their curriculum, and Ray and Randy received most of their direct instruction from the parent-teachers at the cooperative. The cooperative was a vital resource because it provided teachers to teach subjects that the Harbors could not teach alone. It also addressed social and athletic needs that the family missed because they were home schooled. The cooperative helped insure educational quality control for the family.

The family used books as resources because the curriculum at the cooperative was based on reading. The Harbors tried to avoid textbooks and used primary sources, contemporary sources, or novels to teach. They also supplemented their cooperative

education with technology. Randy and Ray received their mathematics instruction using a computer based program designed for home school children. Rachel used e-mail to communicate with other home school families, to take lunch order, and to ask questions about her children's lessons. The children checked their lessons on the cooperative's website.

### *Curriculum*

The Harbors depended on the cooperative for over 90% of their curriculum. In addition to what the cooperative provided, the Harbors provided mathematics instruction using computer based programs. They also provided foreign language instruction to their children using computer programs. The nature of the curriculum was classical. The family's goal was to provide a liberal education that reinforced their religious beliefs. Future college success was important to the Harbors, and they envisioned extensive reading and writing as the keys to this success. The family was less concerned with academic success as measured on standardized tests and more concerned with the development of their children's character. The family used a mixture of traditional and progressive methods to achieve their curriculum goals.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

Like the other families Rachel admitted that home schooling was not always easy. Rachel's initial concern about home schooling was how others viewed her decision to home school. She was worried that people would not support her and appreciate the

sacrifice she was making. She also was frustrated that people thought that she did not work when she viewed teaching her children as her job. She pointed out that home schooling resulted in a change of lifestyle for her. Before she home schooled she was very involved in the community, but when she started home schooling she had to focus on her children and her level of involvement declined.

Rachel identified foreign language instruction as a very important challenge. She wanted her children to learn a modern foreign language, but did not have the ability to provide the course. The choices she had for modern foreign language included internet, dual enrollment at a college, and a computer curriculum. She was also initially concerned about whether or not her children would be accepted into college out of a home school. This fear was allayed when Reese was accepted to college.

Other challenges included the difficult classes at the cooperative as well as the things that she could not provide in her home school. These included sports and other extra curricular activities. She also identified in-home distractions as a challenge. When she helped one child, the other would stop working.

### *Riley Family*

#### *Motivations*

The Riley family did not home school all of their children. Their motivations to home school were mixed. The initial catalyst to leave traditional schooling was conflict with a public school over their sex education curriculum. Mary tried to keep her children

in the schools, but opted to home school some of her them. She did not home school all of her children, because one, Mike, wanted to stay in traditional school to play sports. She did home school her other two children. She provided all of them the option to return to traditional school, including public school. The primary motivations were family and religious in nature. Mary wanted to provide her children an education based on Christian principles. Her child who did not home school attended a Christian school with her support. Her educational decisions were based on her view of her responsibility as a parent. She felt that her responsibility was to raise Godly children. She wanted her children to learn and be socialized differently than children in public schools.

Secondary reasons to home school included flexibility and freedom. Home schooling allowed the family to spend time with ill family members, as well as participate in more church activities. Mary did believe that the education she provided at home was superior to what her children would receive in a traditional school, public or private. Part of this was based on her view of the classical education model.

Freedom from the curriculum of the public schools was also a motivating factor. By home schooling she was free to teach what she wanted, how she wanted to teach it. Freedom to study at his own pace was important to Matt. He also had the freedom to graduate early.

### *Home School Operations*

The Rileys operated their home school based on an autonomous model. Matt received his direct instruction from the parent-teachers at the cooperative on Tuesdays

and Fridays. Apart from that instruction, he received very little instruction at home. Mary did not schedule or control his school work. He was nearly completely independent. He studied when he wanted to and took breaks when he wanted to. The primary thing that Mary did was hold him accountable if necessary. Her goal was for him to become an independent learner and he was almost there during the study. The primary teaching strategies used in their home school were the same as the other families: reading, writing, and memorization. Like the others he did work on hands-on projects and research papers as assigned by the parent-teachers at the cooperative. Mary emphasized the importance of writing in the curriculum. She believed that writing was a way to teach critical thinking. She also believed that reading was the key to independent learning. Their home school relied on both.

Like the other families, the Rileys used traditional methods to achieve progressive goals. Reading, writing, and memorization were used to develop an independent learner. The overarching objective to pass on their religious and cultural heritage along with the skills to be life-long learners was a combination of traditional and progressive goals.

### *Resources*

The family used the cooperative to provide most of their curriculum. The cooperative provided what Mary felt was a corps of qualified parents to teach the classical curriculum she desired. The cooperative also provided social and spiritual support. What the cooperative did not provide, the family found elsewhere. The cooperative did not provide mathematics instruction so Matt received his mathematics

instruction from a local private educational corporation. The family also relied on books in the house to serve as Matt's teachers.

Mary identified her local church as a helpful resource. Many of the families in the church home schooled, so when she decided to home school her children, she felt like she had support from a large group of like-minded friends.

The family used technology to make their home school run more efficiently. Mary believed that it would be impossible to home school without computers and the Internet. It gave them the ability to communicate with other members of the home school cooperative. It was also used to send and receive assignments and to conduct research.

### *Curriculum*

The Rileys' curriculum was traditional in the sense that it was based on a religious worldview and relied on traditional teaching methods. It was progressive in its goal to provide the classical education. Her goal was to provide her children a broad, liberal education that would give them the knowledge and skills to be self learners and critical thinkers. She wanted them to be able to apply their knowledge at a later date to advance and defend their religious views. Because of this, she did not shield him from material that differed from their beliefs, but used divergent beliefs as a way to compare and contrast with their own beliefs. Finally, her curriculum was progressive in that she did not equate education with a location. She believed education was an ongoing process. She sought out different opportunities for her children to learn.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

Mary believed that the home was the best place to learn, but that learning in the home had its own set of challenges. One challenge was distractions. She admitted that her level of activities sometimes distracted from the home school. She had to remember that teaching was her job. She also pointed out that the decision to teach at home resulted in some changes to the family's life style. These included loss of income for the family, and loss of freedom for the mother. She was not concerned about what others thought when she decided to home school.

At times she was worried that she was not providing her children with an adequate education. She felt that she did not accomplish everything she wanted to with her children at home school. She felt this way when she let outside activities distract their home school. She wanted to be sure that she was giving her children the education that they needed.

The lack of social and athletic activities was also a cause for concern. The reason Mike did not home school was that he wanted to play sports and they were not available in home school. When asked if she would opt into public school activities on a limited basis if available, Mary said she would not. She did say she might opt into limited activities at a private school.

### Cross-Case Analysis

The participants were a purposive sample. Criteria for inclusion in the study included: (a) at least three years of home school experience, (b) have children who are

currently home schooling, (c) and have at least one child who has graduated from their home school. These criteria were used to help find families with vast experience and knowledge who would provide data to help answer the research questions.

The cross case analysis of data is divided into five sections. The first four sections follow the lines of study. They are (a) motivations; (b) operations, including teaching strategies and curriculum; (c) resources; and (d) challenges. Links to the existing literature are discussed as they arise in the analysis.

### *Motivations*

All four families in the study exhibited complex motivations to home school their children. In each case there was an initial event that served as a catalyst to unlock a latent motivation. For three of the families, the Smiths, Johnsons, and Rileys, the catalyst was conflict with the public schools. All three tried to reconcile the conflicts, but all attempts failed. One reason the attempts failed was because the conflict caused the families to seriously reconsider home schooling. The families had thought about home schooling before, but had not acted on it until the conflict. For each of the three families, the latent motivations were based on their religious beliefs and family concerns. The families all believed that God expected them to provide a Christian education to their children. Further, they believed that their responsibility was to their own children first and to others in society second. These motivations will be discussed in detail later. The Harbors are the only family whose initial motivation or catalyst was not religion or family. Their catalyst was academic. They were concerned with Randy's academic problems in school.

The latent motivations were Rachel's concern over who controlled her children's education and the desire to provide her children with an education based on her religion. This finding indicates that motivations to home school are complex. The move from traditional schooling to home schooling is often based on a multitude of factors that work together to encourage the change. The families also were slow to make the transition and tried to reconcile the nature of the conflict with the public schools. This finding clarifies existing research on motivations to home school (Basham, 2001; Collum, 2005; Princiotta & Bielick, 2006). The families indicated that there were multiple reasons to home school that worked together to encourage them to make the move from traditional to home schools rather than one overarching motivation. Table 11 provides data on the varying motivations of the families.

Religious reasons were the prime motivators for all of the families. Each family wanted to raise their children in a Christian home. Religious beliefs were the source of conflict with the public schools for the Smiths, Johnsons, and Rileys, but the motivations went much deeper than concerns about sex education programs, New Age practices, or Outcome Based Education. These families believed that their children were a gift from God and it was their responsibility to raise them with a Christian worldview. They believed the best way to do this was outside of the public schools. They all believed that the public schools had abandoned traditional religious beliefs in favor of a secular religion. All of the families exhibited elements of the religious revival that Klicka (2002) described as a part of the home school movement. A part of this revival focused on the resurgence of Christian beliefs in America.

Table 11

Motivations to Home School

Case	Catalyst	Latent	Children	Parents
Smiths	Conflict with public school over New Age practices	Family/Religious	“When my older brother was little he went to public school and there was something with the teachers and I don’t remember exactly, but my mom found out about home school.” Joseph	“She more or less had a spiritual calling and wanted the children to have a Godly upbringing.” Jack
Johnsons	Conflict over Outcome Based Education practices	Family/Religious	“The primary reason is definitely religious reasons” Calvin “Basically that and I mean the environment in public schools isn’t good and well we don’t really like evolution and that type of stuff.” Caroline	“ We wanted our children to be raised in a Christian home and felt home schooling was the best way to do that.” Cynthia
Harbors	Academic	Control over education/Religious	“Because of the lack of God inside the public school system, and I came out of first grade not being able to read.” Randy	“The reason to home school is not knowledge itself because I would say that education encompasses a lot more than knowledge; it includes skills. It was important imparting our values to them.” Rachel
Rileys	Conflict with public school over sex education program	Family/Religious	“I guess so we can get a Christian worldview and teach what I guess more what you can have taught than just what’s offered at public school. And just the environment” Matt	“The main reason was we wanted our children to have a Christ centered education and see a whole complete picture revolved around Christian principles” Mary

The religious motivations of these families and their concerns about the secular or anti religious nature of public schools are similar to findings found in the existing

literature (Carper, 2000; Jeub, 1994; Knowles, 1991; Knowles, et al., 1994). The findings are different from these previous findings because they indicate that these families struggled with the decision to move from traditional to home schooling and tried to reconcile their differences with the public schools. The motivations were also more complex than is often described in the previous literature on motivations.

The Rileys and Johnsons were stauncher in their stance against public schools than the other two families. They lived in the same town and went through their transition from public to home school at almost the same time. Both families tried to work within the school system and became frustrated with what they felt was the system's efforts to wait the families out without making any concessions. They would both agree with Klicka's (2002) statement that "The public school system, both academically and morally is failing. In fact, it is destroying America's youth" (p. 23). The Smiths and Harbors took a less hard-line stance. Rachel Harbor made it a point to indicate that she did not feel that the public schools were bad and that what worked for her might not be right for others. The Smith family sent a similar message. Though more hard-line in their opinion on public schools, the Johnsons did say they would use some public school programs if they were open to home school children. The Smiths also indicated they would use public school programs on a limited basis if available. The Rileys and the Harbors would not use any public school programs including sports. Mary Riley felt that the public schools had nothing positive to offer. Rachel Harbor was worried that limited participation would result in control of her home school by the public schools, so she preferred to stay totally

separate. These beliefs were important because they indicate a nuanced view of the public school system in light of each family's move from public schools to home schools.

Family reasons to home school were varied and included what the families viewed the proper role of the family was in society and the opportunity to spend more time with their children. All of the families in the study viewed the family as the foundational institution in society and felt that their responsibility was to their family first. When asked if they were hurting the larger society by home schooling their children rather than letting them attend public schools, they all agreed that was not their first concern. They had to raise their own children first. This view of the family had an impact on how they viewed socialization. They did not believe that socialization primarily with age peers was best. The families all felt that socialization within the family and outside the school setting was more beneficial. In many ways they were all exercising a form of negative education. They used their home schools to shield their children from the negative effects of socialization in the public schools until they were immunized and had the knowledge and skills to withstand what they viewed as negative influences. These families' actions are similar to what Holt and Farenga (2003), Jeub (1994), and Knowles, et al., (1992) described in the literature as families home schooling to build stronger families. The family reasons to home school were not only negative to public or traditional schooling, but also include positive aspects in relation to their own families. Each family identified the opportunity to spend more time with their children and getting to know them more than they would if they were in traditional schools as one of the

reasons they continue to home school and one of the unforeseen benefits of homeschooling.

Family reasons to home school were closely linked to some of the pedagogical reasons to home school. Knowles, et al., (1992) stated that “relatively few home schools seem to operate on the premise that homes are superior places of learning” (p. 227). The current study contradicts their findings, by providing a more nuanced look at families’ motivations to home school. It identifies that these domains overlap. The families in this study all indicated that one of the reasons they continued to home school was that they felt that their children were receiving a superior education to what was available in either the private or public schools that were in the vicinity. Part of this is because of the classical model they have all adopted and the role of the cooperative. Other reasons are because the families view the curriculum at other schools as watered down or weak. This was especially true for the Johnsons and the Rileys. The Smiths believed that they were providing their children an education that was superior to what was available at the local public schools and home schooled rather than sent their children to private schools because of cost. The Harbors indicated that they did not necessarily believe that their children were receiving an academically superior education to that provided by the local public schools, but that the religious, family, and social benefits of home schooling outweighed any academic benefits public schools might provide. None of the families expressed a current concern that their children were not receiving a quality education at home.

The families in this study would raise concern for critics of home school education who believe that home schooling takes the power of education away from the larger society and places into the hands of the families, results in a situation where parents make education decisions based on the narrow needs of their own children, and fosters a consumer mentality towards education (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000; and Reich, 2000). These families were aware of the criticisms of home schoolers and agreed that they were guilty as charged. They did not believe this was a problem, because they felt that their responsibility was to their children first. Each of the families also indicated that they believed in the long run society was improved because their children were being home schooled, were learning to be independent thinkers, and were learning knowledge and skills that were being ignored in the public schools. They felt that their children would be leaders in society at a later date. The Johnsons and Rileys in particular indicated that the individualized home education their children were receiving was superior to what they described as the factory mass produced education that public school children received.

The question of private schools was an important one. The religious concerns that the families had about public schools could have been addressed in private schools. The fact that the families did not settle on private schools indicates that there were more than just religious concerns involved. The Johnsons, Harbors, and Rileys could have provided their children with a religious education in private religious schools near their homes. The Harbors and Rileys actually sent their children to private religious schools for a while, but ultimately settled on home schooling. The Smiths were more limited on private

religious school choices due to their location. Why did the families forgo private education in favor of home school? The Johnsons indicated that finances were a concern. They had six children and felt they could not afford to send them all to a private school. Another concern for the Johnsons was the classical education that they wanted to provide their children that was not available from another educational outlet. The Harbors abandoned private schools because Rachel felt a strong calling to teach her own children and be the primary influence on their lives during their developmental years. The Rileys allowed their children to make their educational choices. The Riley children's freedom to choose was similar to research by Clery (1998) in which children were given the option to leave home schooling. The Smiths indicated that private schooling was not an option financially. The motivations to home school were further complicated by other factors including finances, the nature of the education provided, choice, and the role of the parents over education.

Interestingly few of the parents raised the issue of school safety. Most of the families felt that reports of school safety were overblown in the media. The only safety concerns that the families had was for their children's intellectual or spiritual safety. The children did raise some concerns about safety in public schools. These concerns were primarily based on stories they heard from children in the neighborhood who attended public schools or from the media. School safety was not a significant factor in any of the families' decisions to home school.

One motivating factor that emerged during interviews and observations of the family was flexibility. When discussing why they continued to home school, each of the

families indicated that the ability to be flexible with scheduling was important. For the Johnsons and Smiths this was flexibility to take vacations without regard for the school calendar. For all of the families, this included the flexibility to study what their children were interested in and to make flexible instructional decisions. Though involved in the cooperative, the families exercised autonomy to pick and choose what they wanted from the cooperative. They also were free to add to what was offered at the cooperative. They were free to focus on a particular topic or subject based on student need or desire. Another part of flexibility was the ability to study while traveling away from their home school. The flexibility also allowed the Rileys to spend time with ailing grandparents and to be active in church activities during the school day. For all of the families, it meant that trips to the dentist or doctors were not necessarily time away from school.

Pedagogical motivations were not the most important primary factors for the families, but as the families improved their home schools over time, they became important justifications to continue home schooling. Some of the pedagogical motivations were directly connected to religious beliefs. The Johnson family felt that public schools' curriculum was based on humanistic and culturally relativistic beliefs. In their home school they built a curriculum that emphasized absolute truths and their religious beliefs. The Johnsons, Smiths, and Rileys indicated that they believed that the one-on-one tutorial method used in home schooling was superior to a teacher instructing 20 students at a time. All of the families believed that the classical education model that emphasized reading and memorization and later application of knowledge was superior to the way that they had learned growing up. Knowles (1991) and Neuman and Aviram

(2003) both concluded that families home school because of past parent educational experiences. These parents were products of public schools. They all indicated that they wanted to provide their children with the education that they felt they missed. They wanted to home school in order to provide an education that was qualitatively different than theirs. Home schooling with the support of the cooperative allowed them to achieve this goal. This study is significant because it shows that families want to provide an education that was different from their own, but also showed how they went about providing that education.

Academic reasons to home school that centered on academic achievement as measured by achievement or other standardized tests were not very important to the families. Most of the families, by the time of the study, had stopped using yearly achievement tests to measure their children's progress. They all indicated that they were happy with the academic progress their children were making, but more importantly were pleased with the development of their children's character. This is important because much of the literature justifying home schooling as a practice focuses on the superiority of home schooling to traditional schooling (Basham, 2001; HSDLA, 2004, 2005; Lines, 2000; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999). This study further clarifies and extends understanding of motivations to home school. Though academic superiority is often mentioned in the literature, these families did not focus on it. The families only mentioned the literature supporting the academic superiority of home schoolers to their traditionally educated peers in discussions that centered on justifying home schooling against critics. This is significant because it indicates that the families were less concerned about the alleged

academic superiority of home schooling and more concerned about the individual needs of the learners in their families and providing an education that supports their own particular religious, family, and pedagogical beliefs. They were not primarily concerned about making statements for or against a particular form of schooling, but wanted to do what they felt was best for their own children.

In summary, these families' motivations to home school were complex. This finding is in contrast to the current literature on home school motivations. They were a combination of both pedagogical and ideological motivations. It is hard to determine which motivation was most important. Different motivations served as catalysts to spark an interest in home schooling and awaken latent motivations for each family. Once they began to home school the families then identified additional reasons to continue to home school. The overall theme for each family was that they were acting in what they felt was the best interest of their children. None of the families made rash decisions to pull out of traditional schools, because they realized the enormity of what home schooling would mean to their family's lifestyle. Finally, their measures of what was best for their children were directly tied to their religious beliefs, which informed their views on the relationship of the family to the rest of society. Rather than a group of individuals who outright rejected traditional schools because they were hurt and angry, these families are a group who surveyed the educational landscape and made a decision based on a wide range of factors and determined that home schooling was the best option for them.

### *Home School Operations*

The families in the study operated their home schools in similar ways, because they were all members of the home school cooperative. There were slight variations at each home school because each family supplemented the cooperative's instruction with mathematics instruction and other courses that their children were interested in or needed because of an academic deficiency. The families all received over 90% of their direct instruction and lessons from the parent-teachers at the cooperative on Friday. The other days of the week the children worked at home with help primarily from their mothers. The curriculum was based on the classical education model described earlier, and the teaching strategies were primarily reading and memorization. The children would apply knowledge learned through reading and memorization in writing assignments or other learning projects. The cooperative was instrumental in each of the families' home school operation.

### *Teaching Strategies*

The teaching strategies used by the families in the study were primarily traditional. The most important teaching strategy that they used was reading. The families used both independent reading and read aloud as a way to transmit knowledge. They all envisioned the author of the books their children read as teachers. The parents would read aloud to the younger children and the older children would read independently. The families reported that about 70% of the instructional day was spent reading. This finding

is significant; it fills a gap in the literature by answering the question what do the children do at home all day.

The children received lectures and participated in discussions at the cooperative's Friday class days. The parent-teachers used methods similar to traditional school settings. The teachers provided course syllabi, lectured, led discussions, took the children on field trips, gave homework, and tests. The parents in the study generally relied on the grades from the parent-teachers at the cooperative for evaluation of their children's progress. They did have the freedom to not use the grades provided or to conduct additional assessment.

Mondays through Thursdays the children completed assigned work from the previous Friday. If they had questions they asked their parents or emailed or called their teacher. The role of the parent at home during the week varied depending on the age of the children. The parents generally spent most of their time with the younger children and allowed the older children to work independently only intervening when needed. The parents tried to foster learner autonomy by encouraging independent work. The children also studied mathematics from Monday to Thursdays because it was not taught at the cooperative. The amount of parent interaction during mathematics instruction also depended on the age of the children. Like the other courses, there was an inverse relationship between the amount of direct parent student interaction and the age of the child. The families all used commercially produced mathematics programs at one time or another, but the Rileys and Johnsons also used a local for profit educational corporation for higher level instruction.

The instructional environments varied from family to family. This variation depended on the personality of the mother, ages of the children, and number of children in the house. The Harbor house was the most strictly run. The children generally worked in their classroom and were required to be dressed like they were going to traditional school. The Smiths and Johnsons were more relaxed. The children were free to study in their rooms, the kitchen, living room, dining room, or outside. The children generally moved around as they pleased. The most relaxed was the Riley family. Matt was the only child at home and he was in high school. Though his mother wanted more control at times, she had reconciled herself to his independence. Her desire for more control linked back to her past as a school teacher and administrator.

The direct interactions between parents and children were either reading aloud to them or were one-on-one tutorial interventions when children needed help. The parents indicated that their goal was to serve as a guide or helper to their children. They did not see themselves involved in directly teaching their children. This was highlighted by both the parents and children in interviews and during observations. The responsibility for learning was placed primarily on the learners shoulders. The parent was there to provide resources and assistance as needed.

### *Nature of Instructional Environment*

The families home schools operated somewhere between the highly structured school at home models (Knowles, 1991) and the child-led unschooling model (Rivero, 2002). The classroom instruction and assignments provided by the cooperative provided

the school at home part of the operation, but the freedom to study in depth other subjects the children were interested in as well as the ability to opt out of cooperative classes made the home schools appear more like unschooling. The families' abilities to operate between the two extremes indicated a degree of autonomy. The children were provided with a choice of courses from the cooperative, as well as other courses available through distance learning, computer based video instruction, other teachers in the community, and independent study. The families operated their home schools on the premise that education was not linked to a particular place or program, but rather was a process. Because of this they were able to identify their learning goals and provide an educational menu that their children could choose from with help from the parents. In this way the home schools were operated in a more progressive way.

There is some contradiction in the families' operation of their home schools and their stated motivations. The families criticized outcome based education and other progressive teaching strategies when describing why they home schooled, but integrated some of the very ideas into their home school practice including journaling, critical thinking, and relying on primary sources over text books.

The autonomy that the families achieved through home schooling also gave them autonomy from outside authority. They were not controlled by what a school board or teacher felt was important, but rather what they felt was important. They developed their curriculum using the freedom provided by home schooling. Their motivations to home school included the desire to provide a religious education to their children and they incorporated that into their curriculum. This can be seen by the nature of the history and

literature courses, which used the *Bible* as a primary text, the theology classes they taught, and the nature of their science instruction, which focused on a scientific view based on creation science rather than evolution. In this way the home schools were more conservative in nature in that they were trying to maintain and transmit their current values and beliefs. Though they had a conservative goal, they used a mixture of traditional and progressive methods. They also added a progressive goal of developing life-long learners.

The home school families' goals were not just to provide a religious education to their children. They all indicated that they wanted their children to become independent learners. Their reliance on independent reading and writing about what they had read as primary instructional methods were traditional means of teaching. The families intended to use these traditional instructional methods to achieve a more progressive goal. The progressive goal was to develop independent, life-long learners. Barratt-Peacock (2003) identified home schooling practices as historically progressive in that the parents served as guides and tutors and fostered the development of the children into the field of authentic adult practice. In many ways these families are trying to do this. When describing the goals of the families involved in the home school cooperative, Mary Riley made the statement that for the Johnson family, "Education is a way of life." Observations of the interactions between all of the families in the study as well as the fact that the parents are required to teach at least two classes at the cooperative indicated that the families in the study saw education as a way of life and the whole family was involved in learning, not just the children. The families are attempting to create

communities of learning within their families. These family communities of learning extended beyond the mother and children. The fathers also would become involved in what the children were learning by finding articles in the news that were related to what the children were studying as well as by incorporating educational objectives into family vacations. Table 12 provides data comparing the traditional and progressive aspects of each home school.

### *Curriculum*

As seen earlier, the majority of the curriculum was provided by the cooperative. That does not mean that the families were passive receivers of the curriculum. They had a say in what courses were taught and the option to choose what they wanted or did not want from the curriculum. There was not always agreement and the cooperative made changes based on input from the families. Notably, they changed the nature of the writing program and they also added an astronomy class. The families in the study also opted out of different classes for a variety of reasons, including disagreements over the nature of the theology class, time available, and student interest in a particular course.

Their classical curriculum as provided by the cooperative and the courses they provided at home were designed to be a rejection of what was taught in traditional schools both private and public. All of the families were particularly drawn to the cooperative because of the classical nature of the program. Both Cynthia Johnson and Mary Riley indicated that private schools may have been an option if there was one that taught from the classical model. Though the families rejected the traditional model of

education, they did incorporate some of the traditional elements. One notable element was the cooperative's structured classroom instruction.

The Johnsons, Smiths, and Rileys readily gave up their autonomy gained from home schooling to the cooperative in exchange for the benefits they saw from the classical education provided and the lessening of their work load. Rachel Harbor was concerned about the autonomy that she was giving up to the cooperative, but still opted to participate.

One interesting aspect of the families' rejection of what they identified as progressive practices in public schools was the fact that they frequently sounded like progressive educators when they described their goals. Another way that they appeared to be progressive was in their evaluation. The families kept samples of their children's best work in folders. When the researcher commented that they kept portfolios, Cynthia Johnson responded that they did not use that word because it was associated with O.B.E. When pressed, she admitted that, in fact, what they were doing was maintaining a portfolio of their children's quality work for evaluation purposes. Their ideological differences with the public schools sometimes made it hard for them to see that what they were doing that was similar to what was done in the public schools.

One way that the families insisted that they were different was in the focus on objective truth. When supporting an opinion or developing a hypothesis or supporting a theory, none of the families would allow the children to indicate how they felt. They were not concerned with the affective domain. They operated in the cognitive domain

Table 12

Traditional and Progressive Aspects of Home School Operations

Case	Traditional	Progressive	Observation
Smiths	<p>Mother: " You memorize things that are in your head and at a later point they remember it. They put things together. It's training for self discipline."</p> <p>Researcher: "What types of things do your children memorize?"</p> <p>Mother: "Lots of scripture. Things that go along with history. Some Shakespeare. Usually history."</p>	<p>Mother: "Critical thinking makes them think logically and be able to understand what they read."</p>	<p>Higher level thinking: Son had to evaluate syllogisms then write his own syllogisms</p>
Johnsons	<p>Father: "That's one of our greatest frustrations with the public school approach is the way they tinker with pulling out phonics and the whole language approach and all this spelling is another... it almost appears as if there is a concentrated effort to keep kids from learning how to read and reading quality material"</p>	<p>Father: "The word we like to utilize is integration. In our history we try to integrate with our science which we integrate with our literature, and hopefully it all ties together so that they'll understand"</p>	<p>Freedom to move: The two older children continued to work independently while the younger boy moved about playing with the dogs and the younger daughter moved to the kitchen table to work on grammar with the mother.</p>
Harbors	<p>Mother: "What we are having them read is not just fun or entertainment but actually to teach them how our culture developed. Why we are where we are. Why we think the way we do. Those kinds of things. Those shaping influences have shaped the people who have gone before us."</p>	<p>Mother: "We are even exposing them to ideas that we wouldn't necessarily agree with their stance or their philosophy; they greatly influenced the people before us so for that reason we do a whole lot of reading."</p>	<p>Books used in curriculum and on book shelf in "school room" at house include works that go against the families' conservative religious beliefs.</p>
Rileys	<p>Mother: "They read all the time. Books and articles. I feel the more they read the better the student is."</p>	<p>Mother: "He is more independent. So he gets his assignments out on Monday and chooses what he wants to do. We don't have a set thing on times or a set schedule."</p>	<p>Unlike other families, this parent does not make a lesson plan for the week. The student is responsible and works at his own pace.</p>

The core of the curriculum for all of the families was history. Their science, literature, and other instruction were linked to the particular time period of history that they studied. They aimed to break down what they felt were artificial barriers between the academic disciplines. Like the early social studies movement, they wanted to harness the knowledge and skills from the varied disciplines to create learners who would become good citizens. The difference was that these families aimed to create good citizens of both the United States and a heavenly kingdom. Once again there is juxtaposition between progressive and traditional goals in the operation of the home schools.

The families attempted to differentiate their curriculum based on their overall educational goals, student need, interest, and age appropriateness. The families made curricular decisions based on several factors. The first was their belief system. The families tailored their curriculum to reinforce their religious beliefs. This links back to their desire to provide their children with an education that would prepare them to defend and advance their religious beliefs. All of the families indicated that providing their children with an education that was based on their beliefs was a major reason they home schooled. The second factor was student needs or interests. The families adapted the curriculum based on their assessment of the individual student need. This was possible at home, but less so during the instruction at the cooperative on Fridays. At home the families allowed the children to choose what they wanted to study on a day to day basis, some with more freedom than others. The Harbors had the least amount of daily freedom and the Rileys had the most freedom. The Harbors exercised more control primarily

because of Rachel's personality. The Rileys had more freedom because of Matt's personality. If a student was behind, the parents would adapt the daily instructional activities to get caught up. The families would also address student weaknesses in particular subjects. The Harbors and Smiths kept children back one year in math because they were weak. The Rileys and Johnsons were considering allowing Calvin and Matt respectively to graduate early based on their strengths. A fourth factor that influenced curriculum material was appropriateness. The families as a whole were not concerned about subjecting their children to material that deviated from their beliefs, but they did control the ages when material was presented. Some topics were toned down. An example is, when the families studied Homer's *Iliad*, the younger children read a children's version of the book that skipped over the more graphic parts of the poem.

These attempts to differentiate curriculum extend findings in the literature. Martin (1997) described the home school environment as adaptable to student strengths and weaknesses and providing curricula that reflects the family's beliefs. Ensign (2000) emphasized the ability of the families to address student learning needs. Rivero (2002) described how home schools allowed families to move forward at their own pace. These families make decisions based on student interests and needs as well as allow their children control over what they study in school. Children have significant input, but parents maintain a veto over a child's decision.

The families operated their home school in a way that they felt would result in a superior education for their children. They believed that by providing a qualitatively different education to their children they were helping the nation. They felt that rather

than preparing their children for narrow careers or jobs, they were preparing their children for life and to be leaders in the community.

### *Resources*

The families relied on a multitude of resources to operate their home schools, including, Internet, books, videos, outside resources, and the cooperative. The most important resource was the cooperative. All of the families indicated that the cooperative freed them from preparing and teaching lessons for every subject and enabled them to avoid teaching subjects that they did not have the ability or desire to teach. The subject families' efforts with the cooperative extend findings by others about home school families forming support groups to help with instructional challenges (Griffith, 1998; Klicka, 2002; Martin, 1997). Like the groups described in the literature, the cooperative provided the subject families with social activities and field trips. It also provided the children with athletic activities including fencing and cross country. The cooperative was very important because it allowed the families to overcome the social isolation that can result from home schooling. It also allowed the families to socialize their children with same age peers who shared similar belief systems. Rather than viewing this as a negative, the families felt it was their responsibilities to safeguard their children from negative socialization that might happen in other less controlled environments.

A significant addition to the literature was the idea that the cooperative in many ways was the reason that at least two of the families continued to home school their children. The Johnsons and Rileys both indicated that the classical nature of the home

school was what drew them to home school and the cooperative helped them achieve their goal. They also both indicated that they would consider sending their children to a private school that had a classical curriculum. The cooperative allowed these families to provide their children with an education not available in public or private schools. The cooperative was a significant motivator and resource for these families. It was instrumental in their school operations.

The families all acknowledge that the cooperative was not all positive. They each acknowledged that there was a loss of autonomy when they joined the cooperative. This was mostly a concern to the Harbors. The Johnsons and Rileys were instrumental in beginning the cooperative so they were less concerned about a loss of autonomy because they had initial input in the curriculum. This initial input and influence did not mean that the Johnsons and Rileys were happy with everything at the cooperative. Neither of them liked the writing course and unsuccessfully worked to have it changed. Jane Smith also did not like the writing course. There were disagreements over the way the theology course was taught. Because of this, the Harbors, Smiths, and Rileys did not participate in the theology class the second year of the study.

The loss of autonomy was voluntary and the families did not have to participate in all activities or courses that the cooperative provided. The Smiths did not attend the Creation Science seminar, and each of the families missed cooperative social and academic activities periodically. Though there was the loss of autonomy, each of the families indicated that the benefit of participating in the cooperative outweighed the

costs. Some of the costs included an hour drive for the Smiths and a 30 minute drive for the Harbors.

The key role that the cooperative played in each of the families' home school is an important finding. Hill (2000) concluded that "as home schooling families learn to rely on one another, many are likely to create new institutions that look something like schools" (p. 21). These families created an institution that looked something like a school. They had a governing body, a set curriculum, teachers, and syllabi. They even had extra curricular activities. The cooperative gave them what they would describe as the best of traditional schooling and home schooling. They got classroom instruction on Fridays from other parent-teachers, which provided the students and parents with outside accountability and classroom experience, but they had the freedom to study at home at their own pace from Monday to Thursday. The cooperative provided just enough structure to help the students prepare for a future that might include college classrooms. It also addressed any social needs.

A significant addition to the literature is the irony of the cooperative. These families rejected the outside authority of traditional schools when they decided to home school, but in their practice they have not only joined a cooperative, but rely on it for 90% of their curriculum and instruction. In many ways, they traded one authority for another. One explanation is that these families have direct input into the nature of the curriculum of the cooperative and it is more responsive to their concerns than the traditional schools.

These families did acknowledge that there were some things that they could not receive at the cooperative. Two significant things that the cooperative could not provide were mathematics and modern foreign language courses. The families had to use additional resources to provide these for their children. Most of the families used some form of commercially produced program for mathematics. The Rileys and Johnsons also used a for profit educational corporation to provide advanced math instruction. In the Johnson and Harbor home schools, the father also assisted with mathematics instruction. The cooperative did teach Latin, but the Harbors wanted their children to study a modern foreign language. Rachel had decided to use a computer based language program to teach Randy Chinese.

All of the families relied heavily on the Internet and e-mail to communicate with other members of the cooperative. The parents answered student questions; the students asked teachers questions. The parents coordinated cooperative activities by email. The cooperative also maintained a website where parent-teachers posted their syllabi, communicated using web postings, and updated assignments. The families also relied on the Internet for research. They used sites on the World Wide Web, as well as, accessed library databases remotely via the Internet.

Most of the families also used their computers as instructional devices. The Harbors used a CD-ROM based mathematics program. The families also used video-based instruction. None of the families began home schooling at the cooperative. They each used a variety of instructional materials, including workbooks, computers, and videos, to provide instruction to their children. By the time of the study, most of the

families were relying primarily on the cooperative and the other resources helped provide instruction in the areas that the cooperative did not teach.

The most important non-cooperative resource was books. The cooperative's classical program demanded extensive student reading. As already noted, all of the families relied on reading as their primary teaching strategy. Because of this the families had to provide many books. All of the home schools were rich in print resources. One benefit of the cooperative was that the curriculum was on a four year rotation. This meant that families with several children home schooled could reuse the books. The book shelves of the subject families contained many of the same books. Books were also important for the parents. Books advocating home schooling were important motivators to the families as they wrestled with moving from traditional to home schools. The families also relied on instructional books to teach their children subjects not covered by the cooperative.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

Though all of the families had been home schooling for many years and were happy with their current operation, they acknowledged that home schooling presented its own unique challenges and concerns. The most cited challenge was the lifestyle change that accompanied the decision to home school. The Smiths, Harbors, and Rileys emphasized that the decision to home school resulted in an increased financial burden because the mother could not work outside the home. It also limited her ability to participate in social activities. This sometimes led to feelings of social isolation for the

parents. Cynthia Johnson did not emphasize the lifestyle change as much, but acknowledged that she had stopped working out at the gym because she did not have time because of teaching her children at home. All of the families indicated that this was probably one factor that people contemplating home schooling did not consider. The responsibility in the home school falls disproportionately on the shoulders of the mothers. The fathers go to work each day and have limited involvement. The fathers do help with some instruction and take turns being the headmaster at the cooperative on Fridays. The lifestyle change cited as a challenge by the families builds on and extends findings by Neuman and Aviram (2003) who indicated that home schooling represented a “fundamental lifestyle change” (p. 136) for families. Neuman and Aviram’s findings were focused on more positive lifestyle changes, and these families emphasized both negative and positive lifestyle changes including financial, social isolation for the mothers, and that the burden to home school falls primarily on the mother.

The second challenge was in home distractions. These distractions included siblings, the Internet, dogs, other children playing outside, and the parents themselves. The laid back atmosphere of the home schools allows distractions to go unchecked for a while, because the feeling was often that there was always time to get caught up. Distractions also included events and opportunities that distract the family from teaching for a day. Included in these distractions were trips to the doctor or family, as well as, other activities including church that were important to the family. Each of the families acknowledged that they had to work to protect school time. Outsiders were also a distraction because many did not respect the fact that the families were conducting school

at home. People would call and invite the mothers for social outings because they did not acknowledge the value of the mother's work in the home school. Rachel Harbor was especially adamant that many people did not appreciate her sacrifices and work teaching her children. All of the mothers indicated that they saw their job and number one function as their children's teacher.

All of the families listed addressing ideas contrary to their beliefs as a challenge in home schooling. They each indicated that they tried to expose their children to contrary ideas using age appropriate standards. They also compared and contrasted their family's beliefs with differing beliefs. Though listed by each family, none saw it as an insurmountable problem. This brought out one contradiction. The families home school to protect their children from negative influences at public schools, but they try to address ideas contrary to their beliefs. This is because they chose to do this in a safe environment at home.

Two of the families identified the difficult curriculum at the cooperative as a challenge. This is interesting because all of the families indicated that the cooperative was instrumental to their home school operations. Cynthia Johnson said that the curriculum was difficult and that it was basically sink or swim for the students. Randy and Ray Harbor also indicated that the work was difficult at the cooperative, but none of the students wanted to learn in a different environment. There were other concerns about the cooperative curriculum. The main concern for Rachel Harbor was the lack of modern foreign language instruction. This is a problem for other home schools. Families have a hard time teaching certain subjects that they lack the expertise in, but and they cannot

always find help in a home school group. Jane Smith and Cynthia Harbor said that finding curriculum can be difficult. Jane's problem was that before joining the cooperative she would search for new and interesting programs because she did not like to do the same things over and over again. Cynthia worried about the quality of many of the home school programs available. She felt that some home school programs were faddish and that there many of them that did not offer good options. Both of their concerns were allayed by the cooperative.

All of the families indicated that when they decided to home school they experienced various types of emotional concerns. All of them feared that they would be unable to teach everything effectively. They felt that they were accepting a heavy burden and were worried about the consequences if they failed. Rachel Harbor had additional concerns that others did not appreciate what she was doing. She was also worried about how others would view her decision to home school. She did not want to be seen as odd. Mary Riley stated that this was not a problem for her. She was worried that she would not be able to get everything done that was necessary to teach her own children.

Although one of the primary motivations was the opportunity to teach their own children, interestingly enough, this was also a source of concern for each of the families. This was especially so for the Smiths, Johnsons, and Rileys. They all expressed frustration at times when teaching their own children. For the Smiths, the frustration of teaching Jonathan was the reason they joined the cooperative. Being both a parent and teacher was difficult because unlike in a traditional school, if there was a problem between teacher and student, there was not opportunity to change classroom teachers.

Another related problem associated with the parent-student relationship was accountability. All of the children pointed out that it would be easy to cheat and that at times they had not turned in an assignment before they began participating in the cooperative. The parents also indicated that it was easy to let things slide another day or to put off assignments and tests. Because of this students often had problems with time management and working within set schedules when they entered traditional classrooms at college. Most of these problems were addressed when the families joined the cooperative.

All of the families indicated that there were some activities that they could not offer in their home school, even with the cooperative, that were available in public or private schools. The Smiths indicated that at times home schooling was lonely. The children acknowledged that being at home all day with their family members sometimes was boring. They wanted more social interaction with friends. Jane Smith indicated that she would take advantage of public school activities on a limited basis to address subjects and activities she could not provide at home. The Johnsons stated that they wanted their children to be able to take drivers' education, participate in band, or maybe take advanced and honors classes in public schools. Their neighbor, who was a state senator, had introduced a bill in the state legislature to allow home school children to opt into limited public school classes and activities. Rachel Harbor acknowledged that her children were missing out on some activities by not going to public school, but would not be interested in opting into public school activities. She felt that this was an opportunity cost of home

schooling, and she accepted it. The Rileys allowed their son Mike to stay in private school because he wanted to play sports that were not available if he was home schooled.

One of the unique contributions of this study concerns socialization. Socialization issues are one of the biggest criticisms of home school families (Kantrowitz, 1993; Reich 2002). The families in the study generally believed and stated that socialization was not a problem. They all indicated that they were tired of hearing about home school children's socialization problems. In spite of this, one of the biggest concerns and challenges that they each identified were activities that they could not provide in their home schools that their children could receive if they attended public schools. Their concerns were not, however, such that they were willing to place their children back in public schools.

The families' views on socialization indicate that they are not overly concerned about same age socialization. The families all reported that they viewed in family socialization as more important than socialization at school. They also indicated that they believed that any socialization at school would generally be negative and that they wanted to shield their children from this negative socialization. They believed that by teaching their children at home and reinforcing their religious and family values, they were doing the greater society a service because their children would behave differently as adults. They believed that their children would be more independent and virtuous as a result of their home education.

Though the families stated they adequately addressed social issues, social issues were the most often cited concerns. The families admitted that they could not address every social issue or provide the same types of activities provided in traditional schools.

Even admitting these deficiencies, they still felt that home schooling was the better option.

### *Summary*

#### *Motivations*

The families' motivations to transition from traditional schooling to home schooling were complex. For each family there was an event that served as a catalyst that awakened latent motivations to home school. The families did not home school for only ideological or pedagogical reasons. They home schooled for both reasons. They did home school to provide their children with a religious education, but they also did because they felt they were providing their children with a superior education than they could achieve in a traditional setting. The most significant latent factor to home school was religious belief paired with control over children's education. Other secondary motivations that helped keep the families in home schools included family, financial, flexibility, and pedagogy reasons. Family reasons included the ability to spend time with grandparents and the opportunity to be the primary influence over their children, as well as the opportunity to really get to know their children. Financial reasons centered on the cost of private schools. Flexibility allowed the families to make instructional decisions and make plans apart from school control. Pedagogy included the opportunity to provide an education that was not available in private and public schools in the area. The parents' religious and pedagogical motivations directly influenced the operation of their home

schools. These results indicate that the families were not just angry with the public schools, but rather they felt strongly enough about their children's education to make a significant lifestyle change and create a learning environment that supported their ideological and pedagogical beliefs. They aimed to create an education that was qualitatively different than that offered by both public and private schools.

### *Home School Operations*

These traditional and conservative families, who were motivated to leave public schools by conflicts over those traditional values, operated their home schools using a mixture of traditional and progressive practices. The families used traditional methods to reach progressive goals. They relied on reading and memorization as the primary mode of transmitting knowledge. They did not learn facts and knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The students were required to apply their knowledge. The goal of the families was to produce independent, life-long learners. Their curriculum was broad and historically liberal. They were not concerned with teaching skills that would prepare their children for a particular job or career, but rather wanted to provide a wide range of knowledge that would be useful in whatever endeavor their children would pursue. The families used the freedom of their home schools to tailor their instruction to individual learner needs and interests. The reliance on reading as an instructional strategy helped develop independent learners. The families operated their home schools much as a person in a restaurant reading a menu would choose food. The parents identified what their specific instructional goals were and then searched for a particular method to achieve that

goal. This might be instruction provided by the cooperative, internet courses, dual enrollment at a community college, or another resource person in the community. Education was not equated with a place, but was seen as a process. To achieve their educational goals, the families created educational menus. Their creation of educational menus reinforces one concern that both Apple (2000) and Lubienski (2000) reported about home schoolers' consumer mentality toward education. The heavy reliance on reading and memorization and the menu approach to education that was not linked to a particular institution are ways that the home schools were qualitatively different from traditional schools.

### *Resources*

The primary resource the families relied on was the cooperative. It enabled them to provide the classical education that they wanted their children to have. It also relieved the burden of preparing and teaching lessons in every subject. The cooperative helped address some of the concerns and challenges that home schooling poses for families, including social isolation, the ability to teach difficult subjects, and accountability. It also served as a compromise educational treatment between attending traditional school and home school. It gave the families the best of both worlds. Reliance on the cooperative accounts for much of the similarity between the families' home school practices. Other resources that were instrumental in operating their home school included the books, computers, and the Internet. These were used to teach, communicate, and research. Like

the educational menu that the parents chose from to meet their educational goals, the families also chose resources that would help them operate their home school.

### *Challenges and Concerns*

The families all encountered challenges while home schooling. They acknowledged that even after home schooling for many years they dealt with problems. Chief among these problems were in home distractions and accountability. These were directly related to another problem which was that all of the parents identified the role of the parent as teacher. When a parent was frustrated with a child, there was no one else to step in and intervene. Other problems centered on the life-style change that home schooling forced on the families. This life-style change included financial burdens due to a one income family and limits on the social life of the mother. Home schooling in many ways was an unequal burden borne primarily by the mother because the father worked outside the home. She had to teach the children and was limited in her ability to leave the house during the day. The mothers acknowledged this as a challenge, but all accepted it willingly because they felt that it was their responsibility to teach their own children. The families in the study warned that beginning a home school out of anger or spite was not advisable and usually resulted in a failed home school and a quick return to traditional schools.

## Conclusion

One way to envision these home schools is to think of the one room school house on television shows like *Little House on the Prairie*. Imagine children of various ages sitting in the same room studying different subjects quietly. Some were reading, others writing, some were at the teacher's desk getting help. The children completed their assignments at their own pace and placed them on the desk for the teacher to read and evaluate at a later time. But there were differences between this one room school house and Laura Ingalls Wilder's. This one was connected to the Internet. The children sometimes were not in the one room school house, because they were 20 miles away at a local community college taking a course. Sometimes they had a local doctor come in and teach their biology class. Sometimes they travelled to a church and listened to scientists who believed in creation speak. Other times they went to the lady down the street's house and practiced their piano. These families were operating their home schools like modern, one family, one room school houses. What they could not provide inside the one room school house, they went elsewhere to find. They used distance learning, other members of the community, local community colleges, and technology. As they searched for additional ways to teach, they found like minded individuals and formed a cooperative to share the burden of running their one room school houses and established a day when they shared the instructional responsibilities for their children. In doing this, they confronted some of the challenges of home schooling, including preparing and teaching classes for all of their children, teaching classes that they did not have much knowledge of or certification for, and the lack of same age peer socialization. No longer were they

alone on the frontier or fringe of society in their educational practice. They had banded together as part of a larger educational counter-culture.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature by providing an in-depth understanding of the day to day activities of home schools. The study was guided by four research questions: (a) What factors influenced the family to home school and what does home schooling mean to these families?; (b) What does home education look like day to day?; (c) What support systems are in place to help them be successful?; and (d) What curriculum choices do home school families make?

The results indicated that the motivations to operate home schools were complex, including a motivation that served as a catalyst to ignite a latent motivation. These motivations also directly influenced the operation of the home schools. Home schools were operated using a combination of traditional and progressive methods, and the families created educational menus that they chose from to achieve their specific instructional objectives. The primary resource that the families relied on was the cooperative. It allowed the families to provide a qualitatively different education than was available in private and public schools in their area. Finally, the families still experienced challenges when operating their home schools even after operating them for many years. One significant challenge that they could not address was providing adequate athletics and some advanced courses, particularly those in modern foreign

languages. This chapter contains three sections: (a) summary, (b) implications, and (c) recommendations.

### Summary

The literature review presented four lines of research that informed the study of home school families: (a) motivations to home school, (b) home school academic achievement, (c) curriculum challenges, and (d) criticism of home schooling. The first line of research delineated the many reasons that families decide to operate home schools. These reasons were divided into two domains: ideological and pedagogical (Basham, 2001; Knowles, 1991; Knowles, et al., 1994). Ideological reasons to home school include religious and social motivations (Basham, 2001; Knowles, et al., 1994). They primarily focus on family and religious issues and potential conflicts over family and religion with the public schools (Klicka, 2002, Knowles et al., 1994). Pedagogical home schoolers are concerned about the process of education. They do not view school and education as the same thing (Knowles et al.). Home school families that home school for pedagogical purposes generally value more freedom in the curriculum (Jeub, 1994). They also believe that the home is a better place to learn than school (Holt & Farenga, 2003). Knowles, et al., (1992) concluded that the modern home school movement has moved from its liberal roots to more conservative and ideological motivations and that few home schools are operated because the families feel that the home is a superior place to learn.

The second line of research was academic success. The purpose of this line was to indicate that home schooling is a valid educational treatment. In other words, to provide

evidence those children in home schools can do as well as those in other settings. Much of the research on home school academic success was done to defend home school families' right to home school. Examples of home school academic success cited include higher average ACT scores (ACT, 2008; HSDLA, 2004, 2005). Basham (2001) provides a review of U.S. Census and Department of Labor data that indicates that on various academic achievement tests, home school children out performed traditionally schooled children. Lubienski (2003) criticized the data used to indicate home school academic success because he believed that other factors associated with home school families could account for their success and that they would likely perform well in any school environment. The purpose of this line was not to prove that home schooling is superior or inferior to other forms of education, but to indicate that these children are not hurt by being taught at home.

The third line of research was curriculum choices and home school practices. Knowles (1991), Martin (1997), and Princiotta and Bielick (2006) stated that home school families have a variety of curriculum to choose from. These varieties include programs that are tailored to specific social and religious worldviews (Walsh, 2002). Home schooling is generally less formal and more student focused (Martin, 1997). Home schools can also be operated as highly or loosely structure organizations (Knowles, 1991). There are two broad ways that families home school their children: school at home and unschooling (Rivero, 2002). Because home school families can not teach everything that their children need to know, some families form support groups to help meet these and other challenges (Griffith, 1998; Klicka, 2002; Martin, 1997).

The final line of research was criticism of home schools. Much of the criticism focused on the idea that home schooling undermines the civic foundation of society (Apple, 2000; Lubienski, 2000). Lubienski believed that home schooling denied society its proper control over the education of citizens. Another criticism centered on socialization of the students. Kantrowitz and Wingert (1998) indicated that social isolation was a danger to children and reported that home school children might not have the adequate academic and social skills needed to participate in our democratic society.

The literature review provided a good introduction to the phenomena of home schooling, but it also led to several questions or gaps in the literature. One gap was how exactly families make the transition from traditional school to home schooling. The literature provided research listing the reasons why families say they home school, but few addressed how they made the transition. The literature also indicated that most families who home school for ideological reasons do not believe that their home schools are superior places of learning. Another gap identified was what exactly families do day to day in their home schools as well as what things traditional schools could learn from home schooling. Other gaps included how home school families view their relationship to the larger society and their ability to socialize their children in their home schools. The literature review indicated a lack of understanding of how home schools operate.

The study was a qualitative study of four home school families who participated in a local home school cooperative. The cooperative took a classical approach to education. Case methodology was used to study the research questions.

The participants were a purposeful sample. Families were identified from a larger pool that had at least three years home school experience, children currently home schooling, and at least one child who had completed home school.

Interviews, observations, and archival data were used to collect data. Three interviews were conducted with each parent, two with each child, and two observations were conducted of each family's home school activities. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed. Observation notes were taken during each observation and retyped with comments after the observation was complete. Additional observations of the home school cooperative and the subject families at an event outside of the cooperative and their homes was conducted. Archival data included student work, class schedules and syllabi, photographs, and information from the cooperative website.

Initial data analysis began after the initial interviews and continued until data collection was complete. The data was coded and analyzed using NVivo 8. Seven basic tree nodes each with several sub tree nodes were identified. The seven nodes used for analysis were (a) autonomy, (b) curriculum choices, (c) emerging themes, (d) home school operations, (e) motivations to home school, (f) support systems, and (g) home school life style change. For reporting of the results, support systems was changed to resources. Autonomy fell under both motivations and home school operations. Concerns and challenges were under curriculum choices because they were originally part of that research question, but they emerged as a more significant part of the study and were discussed independently. Home school life-style change was placed under concerns and challenges for discussion purposes.

Several methods were used to increase the credibility of the study. First, the study was designed to maximize credibility. The researcher planned to collect multiple types of data, from various people, across a wide time span. Second, triangulation of findings was used. Efforts were made to look within and across subjects for support to findings. Third, both peer checks and subject member checks were conducted. Finally, a thick description of each case was provided so the reader can determine whether the results follow the data. Transfer was also improved by the thick description. There was some concern about the ability to transfer to other home school populations. The standardized products used to collect data provide other researchers the tools to use if they want to see if the results transfer to other home school populations.

The research study was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of home school operations. The results were presented first in individual case studies. Following the case studies were the within case data analyses discussing the individual findings by theme. Next was the cross case data analysis, which presented the meat of the findings, and finally a summary of the findings.

The Smiths were initially motivated to home school because of conflicts with public schools over perceived New Age practices. This conflict served as a catalyst that stirred latent motivating factors. These latent factors were primarily family and religious. They wanted to raise their children in a Christian home. The mother had wanted to home school for many years and the conflict opened the door. The Smiths operated their home school using a mixture of traditional and progressive strategies. Their goal was in many ways progressive, but they used traditional learning strategies. The primary teaching

strategy was reading. To run their home school, the Smiths relied heavily on the home school cooperative. Because reading was their primary teaching strategy, they also relied on books as a primary resource. The primary challenge that the Smiths faced was the frustration that resulted from teaching their son Jonathan. Other challenges included social isolation and finding interesting curriculum.

The Johnsons' latent motivation was also religious, and the catalyst was a conflict with the public schools. Their conflict centered on Outcome Based Education. They tried to reconcile their differences with the school district, but when they were unable to obtain a transfer from one school to another, they decided to home school. The Johnsons also indicated that their primary reason to home school was religious. Like the Smiths, the Johnsons used a combination of progressive and traditional strategies. Their overall goal was to provide an integrated education that would provide their children with an overall understanding of how everything fits together. They wanted a classical education because they felt that it would prepare their children for life. They operated their home school with a wide range of freedom for the children. The children could study where they wanted, and they also had some choice in the courses that they studied. The Johnsons were instrumental in starting the cooperative and relied on it to provide the classical education that they felt was so important. They also used books and other outside resources, including music teachers, private educational corporations, and on line courses. The biggest challenge to the Johnsons was in home distractions. Additional challenges included accountability and the sometimes frustrating nature of the parent-student relationship.

The Harbors' catalyst to home school was different than the others because it was not a conflict with the public schools. They were concerned about their son's academic performance. Rather than re-teach everything when he came home, Rachel decided to home school her children. The latent reasons were control over her children's education, as well as religious concerns. The Harbors ran the strictest home school of the four families. In many ways Rachel was more traditional than the other teacher-parents. Like the others, though, she received 90% of her curriculum from the cooperative. Rachel identified concerns over what people would think about her home schooling as a challenge she had to overcome when she began home schooling. She also identified the significant change in lifestyle that home schooling forced on the family.

The Rileys' initial motivation to home school was conflict with the public schools over sex education. The latent motivations were family and religious reasons. Like the other families, Mary aimed to provide her children with an education based on Christian principles. She operated a very open and free home school even though it was not in her nature. Matt set his own schedule and decided what to study and when. She also based her educational decisions on his progress, not age. Because of this, she planned to let him graduate a year early. Mary indicated that becoming distracted was one of the greatest challenges she encountered in home schooling. She also stated that many home schooled children, including her own, had a hard time sticking to schedules and timelines.

The cross-case analysis of data was presented. The significant findings were that the motivations to home school were complex. There was a combination of a motivating factor that served as a catalyst and a latent factor. For three of the families, the catalyst

was a conflict with the public schools. This conflict alone was not enough to result in a move from public to home school. It took the awakening of the latent factor to push the families out of public schools. For the Harbors the catalyst was concerns over Randy's reading skills. For all of the families, the primary latent motivation was the desire to raise their children in a Christian home with a Christian education. There were other secondary factors that served to reinforce their decision to home school and keep them in home schooling. These secondary factors included the flexibility home schooling allowed and financial concerns.

A second finding was that the decision to home school was more of a positive decision in favor of home schooling than it was a rejection of public schooling. The families wanted to provide their children the best education they could and felt that home was the best place for it. The third finding was that their motivations to home school directly influenced the operation of their home school. They stated they wanted to provide a Christian education, and they did as evidenced from observation, archival data, and interviews with both parents and children.

The fourth finding was that the families operated their home schools using a combination of traditional and progressive approaches. Though their primary teaching strategies were traditional, they used them to achieve a progressive end. Their goal was a well rounded, liberally educated adult who could learn and think on his or her own. The fifth finding was that the primary instructional method was reading. The families viewed the author of a book as the teacher and the reader as the pupil. Reliance on reading as an

instructional method resulted in greater learner independence. They felt that the best way to learn was for the learner to grasp difficult ideas through reading.

The sixth finding was that the families viewed education as a process. They did not tie education to a specific location or institution. They treated the education of their children as a diner does a menu. They chose the educational opportunities they wanted from a wide variety and implemented them. The choices on their menu included courses at the cooperative, online courses, courses taught by other people in the community, video courses, and dual enrollment at community colleges.

The seventh finding was that the families' home school operations were dependent upon the cooperative. The cooperative addressed many of the challenges associated with home schooling, as well as criticisms from outsiders. The cooperative also signified a compromise for the families between the almost total freedom of home schooling and the accountability and support provided by a traditional school. It also was the vehicle that the families used to provide the classical education to their children.

The final finding was that home schooling is extremely difficult and is fraught with challenges even for those who have done it for a long time. All of the families were able to identify challenges they faced when they began home schooling as well as current challenges. The warning from this finding is to not enter into home school lightly. Using the language of the home school families, one should count the cost before starting a home school.

## Implications

The previous literature had listed the motivations of home school families and collected the data primarily through survey and other quantitative methods. The current study used qualitative methods to study the motivations to home school. The unique findings of the study indicate that the motivations to home school are much more complex and that these families did not make the transition from traditional to home schools quickly or based on one event. Rather they tried to reconcile their differences with the public schools. It took a combination of the catalyst event and latent motivations to push them into home schooling. This study provided a better understanding of the nuanced and complex motivations to home schools by traditional school personnel which can help these schools reach out to these families and keeps some of them enrolled or to help them educate their children at home by providing some resources to these families.

A second implication was based on the flexibility that these families exercise in their home school. The families' menu approach includes many options, but not public schools. Two of the families indicated that they would opt into some public school activities and classes if they were allowed to. The Johnsons actually tried to participate in limited activities, but were denied because they were unwilling to enroll completely in the school. The findings of this study indicate that at least some home school families would be willing to participate in public schools activities. This is important because it would help to reduce some of the barriers between the public schools and home school families. The ability to opt into limited activities provides additional choices to the home school families' menu of choices, and it would increase the public school's part- time

enrollment resulting in more revenue based on student attendance. The literature also supports the importance of future partnerships between public and home schools (Hill, 2000; Lines, 2000).

A third implication was the idea that education is a process and not linked to a particular place or institution. As home schools are evolving and developing institutions that look something like schools, schools can change too. One way is for the traditional school to operate as a community resource that provides educational resources, including instruction to members of the community. Rather than being the sole purveyor of knowledge, the schools would be a tool that people can use to achieve their individual family educational goals and needs. This would seem to reduce the influence of the schools in the community, but as members of the community took more responsibility for their own individual learning, the school would become more relevant because it would be meeting educational needs based on consumer type demand rather than guessing what is best for students and providing a similar education to all.

A fourth implication was the importance of reading to home school operations. Reading accounted for 70% of the instructional day at home. The students received limited lecture and discussions on Fridays at the cooperative and spent the vast majority of Monday through Thursday reading. This indicates the importance of reading as an instructional method. Reading was not seen as a subject that students took or a skill they learned separately; rather it was a tool necessary to learning. Because of this they did not place much emphasis on learning to read; rather they read to study other subjects and in the process learned to read. This idea could be incorporated into other traditional

education settings because it would help develop more independent learners and allow for very individualized instruction as the learner-reader chose or was given a book to read and learned from the teacher-author.

A fifth implication was the significance of the cooperative. Like Hill (2000) predicted, these families had become part of an organization that look something like a school. The cooperative was instrumental to the parents' ability to provide the classical education. It also helped address some of the problems associated with home schooling.

A sixth implication was that even though these families had run successful home schools for many years, they still admitted that it was not an easy thing to start or maintain. The idea that an angry parent could pull their child out of traditional schools and easily start a home school is a myth that has been busted. There are a legion of challenges and concerns that families must face, and families should understand these challenges and concerns prior to making the transition from traditional to home schools or the students will suffer.

The findings in this study indicate that these families have continued to hone and improve their home school practice over time. Their concept of home education has evolved based on need and their search for better educational opportunities for their children. Their view of education as a process not tied to any particular place is important because it frees education to become the process of learning skills and knowledge and allows them the freedom and autonomy to search where they please for those skills and knowledge. The final implication is the importance of freedom or autonomy. These families pursue their educational goals free of most outside influence, operate their home

schools with a degree of autonomy that allows the learners to make some choices, and provide an open free learning environment in which students can move about and study where they please. These families were free to use a mixture of traditional and progressive approaches. They used what they felt was good from traditional schooling and rejected what they felt was bad. If there is one thing that traditional schools can learn from home school families, it is that autonomy in education can work, but it requires the learner and parents to accept the bulk of responsibility for learning.

The final implication of this study is that it filled an important gap in the literature identified by Cizek (1993). Cizek stated that research was needed that described what home educators do, and this study has provided a detailed description of their day-to-day activities. The thick description provided in this study adds to the literature by providing a better understanding of what home school families do and why.

### Recommendations

This study was designed to provide a detailed understanding of the day to day operations of home schools, including their motivations, operations, resources, and challenges. The study focused on religiously conservative families who participated in a cooperative. Focusing on religiously conservative families was recognized early as a limitation, and because of this it is recommended that a similar study be conducted focusing on non-religious families that home school for strictly pedagogical reasons. Something that was not anticipated was the similarities found between the home school practices of these families because of the huge influence the cooperative had over their

home school operations. Because of this it is recommended that a similar study be conducted of families who home school independently to see what differences are found.

The importance of the cooperative to these families' home school operations leads to another recommendation. Further research is needed to determine the role of cooperatives in home schools nationwide. Is this a growing phenomenon? Do other home school cooperatives operate similar to the one in the current study? How did families develop the cooperatives? What challenges did families deal with as they came together to form cooperatives? Was it difficult to give up their freedom to others even if voluntary?

One implication of the research was the idea that public schools could allow home school families to opt into some programs. If this is to happen further research is needed to determine what barriers exist on both sides to making this happen. In Mississippi, school officials will not allow home school families to participate in public school activities. When a state senator wrote a bill to allow limited home school involvement in public schools it was defeated by home school advocates. This indicates that there are concerns on both sides. In order to understand these concerns, further research is needed into how home school students have opted into public schools in states where it is allowed. (Lines, 2000).

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APPENDIX A  
CURRICULUM VITAE

## **Kenneth V. Anthony**

### **Education**

Ph.D. Secondary Education- Social Studies, Mississippi State University, May 2009  
(Anticipated).

M.Ed. Gifted Education, Mississippi University for Women, August, 1997.

B.S. History, Cum Laude, Mississippi University for Women, December 1993.

### **Teaching Experience**

#### **Assistant Professor of Military Science**

#### **Military History Instructor**

Mississippi State University

August 2006- May 2009

#### **7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade gifted education teacher**

Tupelo Middle School, Tupelo, Mississippi

February 2006- May 2006

August 2003- May 2004

#### **English as a Second Language Teacher**

Youngdo English School Seoul, Republic of Korea

April 2002- April 2003

#### **Instructor**

Central Texas College, Camp Comanche Education Center, Tuzla, Bosnia

Effective Communication II Course (20 hour one week course, 1 credit hour)

January 2002

#### **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted education teacher**

Martin Luther King Intermediate School, Tupelo, MS

August 1998- May 2000

#### **Math, language arts, and reading teacher**

Sylvan Learning Center, Tupelo, MS

January 1999- May 2000

#### **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted education teacher**

Houston Upper Elementary School, Houston, MS

August 1997- May 1998

**Instructor, Interest area course: The Individual and Society**

Mississippi Governor's School, MUW

June 1997

**10th Grade world history and 12th grade economics teacher**

Houston High School, Houston, MS

August 1996- May 1997

**Alternative education program teacher**

Houston High School, Houston, MS

August 1995- May 1996

**7th grade English teacher**

Central Alternative School, Natchez, MS

January 1994- June 1994

**8th grade American history, reading, and math teacher**

Central Alternative School, Natchez, MS

January 1994- June 1995

**Additional experience**

Tupelo Lee Humane Society Board of Directors 1996- 1998. President of the Board  
December 1997- April 1998.

Chairman of Committee on Identification of Gifted Students from Atypical Populations  
for the Mississippi Association for Gifted Children. Conducted research on under  
representation of minority gifted students in Mississippi gifted programs.

Selection committee for Mississippi University for Women Alumni Board  
January 2009- April 2009

**Certifications, Professional Affiliations**

Mississippi Educator License: Social Studies A (7-12), English A (7-12), and Gifted AA  
(K-12).

National Council for the Social Studies- Member.

Mid South Educational Research Association- Member.

Kappa Delta Pi- Member

Phi Kappa Phi- Member

### **Grants, Presentations, and Publications**

Mid South Education Research Association Conference, November 2008.

Presenter: "Making the transition from traditional to home schooling: Home school family motivations."

Contributing teacher to the *Splendors of Versaille Teacher's Guide*. Primary author for two chapters: "History of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1589- 1799" and "Mississippi-French Connection." Fall 1998.

Mississippi Council for the Social Studies and Mississippi Geographic Alliance 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Joint Fall Conference, October 1997, Jackson, MS.

Presenter: "Curriculum differentiation: Meeting the needs of all students in the social studies classroom."

Anthony, K (1997). Alternative schools: Age limits need to be lowered to successfully help at risk students. *Mississippi Professional Educators Journal*, September, 1995. Opinion article.

Anthony, K. (1997). Identifying gifted minorities using Mississippi regulations. *Mississippi Association for Gifted Children Concepts*, 7 (1), Winter, 1997.

National Association for Gifted Children Conference, November 1998, Louisville, KY  
Presenter: "Dueling definitions and theories of gifted education"  
Poster presentation: "Collaborating to create changes in state identification procedures"

Teachers of the Gifted Instructional Forum, February 1998, MUW  
Discussion group leader for "Extending Versailles"  
Presenter: "Identifying Gifted Minority Students"

Teachers of the Gifted Instructional Forum, September 1997, MUW  
Presenter: "Experiencing History"

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of Mississippi Association for Gifted Children, Sept 1997, Oxford, MS  
Conference presentation: "Identifying Gifted Minorities Using Mississippi Regulations"

MUW Cooperating Teacher Conference, Spring 1996  
Speaker

Job Training through Intervention/ Prevention  
Central Alternative School, Natchez, MS, 1994- 1995  
International Paper EDCORE Open Opportunity Grant  
Planning and Advisory Board

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL OF THE RESEARCH STUDY BY THE MISSISSIPPI STATE  
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH



# Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

Office of Regulatory Compliance  
Post Office Box 6223  
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Compliance Division  
Administrative Offices  
Animal Care and Use (IACUC)  
Human Research Protection  
Program (IRB)  
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(662) 325-3496 - fax

Safety Division  
Biosafety (IBC)  
Radiation Safety  
Hazardous Waste  
Chemical & Lab Safety  
70 Morgan Avenue  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
(662) 325-8776 - fax

<http://www.orc.msstate.edu>  
[compliance@research.msstate.edu](mailto:compliance@research.msstate.edu)  
(662) 325-3294

November 20, 2008

Kenneth Anthony  
303 North Apache Drive  
Starkville, MS 39759

RE: IRB Study #08-279: Challenges, Instructional Techniques and Curriculum  
Choices of Home School Families

Dear Mr. Anthony:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 11/20/2008 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

**Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB's policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/human/aahrpp.php>. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRB approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.**

Please refer to your IRB number (#08-279) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at [cwilliams@research.msstate.edu](mailto:cwilliams@research.msstate.edu) or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

Christine Williams  
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Susie Burroughs (Advisor)

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS AND EXAMPLES OF ARCHIVAL DATA

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

### Parent Interview 1

1. What was the primary reason you decided to home school?
2. If someone told you they were going to home school their children what would you tell them?
3. What are some of the reasons you might consider stopping home schooling?
4. What reasons do you continue home schooling?
5. Describe one day of home schooling from this week?
6. Compare home schooling to traditional schooling.
7. How much time do you spend in direct instruction a day?
8. Overall what has been your experience with the home school group?
9. What benefits do you receive from the home school group?
10. What are some of the initial challenges you had to overcome when you started home schooling?

### Parent Interview 2

#### Curriculum questions

1. What role does memorization play in education?
2. How important is reading in education?
3. What role does the accumulation of facts role in education?
4. What is the most indispensable part of the curriculum?
5. What part of the curriculum could be removed if necessary?

#### Distractions

1. What things distract the students from their work during their lessons?
2. What things distract the family as a whole from lessons?
3. Can you give an example of a distraction that was difficult to overcome?

#### Frustrations

1. What are some sources of frustration for you?
2. What are some sources of frustration for your children?
3. Can you give an example of a time you were frustrated while home schooling your children?

#### Evaluation

1. How do you evaluate your children's academic progress?
2. Can you give me an example of a time when you evaluated one child's progress and recognized a deficiency and how you responded?

### Parent Interview 3

1. What books or literature did you read that influenced you to home school?
2. How much of an influence was literature about home schooling?
3. What is the future of American home schooling?
4. What principles guide your curriculum decisions?
5. How would you describe your instructional methods?
6. How do you determine what to put in your curriculum and what to leave out?

7. How do you handle material/ subjects that are in opposition to your belief system?  
Can you give an example?
8. How do your instructional methods change as a child moves through grades? Can you give an example?
9. How does the COOP support your educational efforts?
10. What ways do you use technology to teach your children?
11. How do you foster or encourage autonomous learning?
12. Other than the COOP what other support systems do you use?
13. Respond to the following prompt: "If we had leadership, our children could read!"
14. How would you respond to the idea that by home schooling your children you are hurting the common good?
15. Do you feel that your children are losing something by not being involved in a larger more diverse community of learners?
16. In some literature, home school advocates indicate that home schooling pre dates public schools as the original form of education in America. Do you see home schooling in America regaining status as the primary mode of education?
17. Would you consider using any public school resources if they were open for your use as a home school parent?

#### **Child interview protocol**

1. What reasons does your family home school?
2. Did you and your family discuss the decision to home school?
3. Have you ever discussed with your parents not home schooling?
4. What do you like about home schooling?
5. What things do you not like about home schooling?
6. What is hard about home schooling?
7. What is easy about home schooling?
8. How much information do you memorize? What types of things?
9. How do your parents teach you?
10. What part of your schooling would you like to stop doing?
11. What types of things frustrate you in school?
12. What types of things distract you from your studies?
13. How do you get graded?

## EXAMPLES OF ARCHIVAL DATA

- Student work
- Parent- teacher lesson plans
- Photographs taken during observations
- Cooperative website
- Weekly journals completed by participants
- Course syllabi
- Parent teacher planning books