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ABSTRACT

Observations and interviews conducted in three different series over an 18-month period provided data about the operation of one family's home school. When combined with data from observations conducted in two other home schools, the information led to a number of conclusions concerning both potential strengths of home schools as learning environments and potential hardships facing those operating such schools. The report presents extended descriptions of three typical days in a home school operated by a family for their four children. The "days" reported are condensations of typical activities from several days, and each represents one of the series of observations. The report also discusses the materials used, the children's achievement, the organization of the curriculum, and the school's impact on the socialization of the children.
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THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF
A HOME SCHOOL FAMILY:
A CASE STUDY

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THE DAILY OPERATION OF A HOME SCHOOL FAMILY: A CASE STUDY

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Objectives

The objective of this study was to generate hypotheses regarding the premises, daily operational practices, and procedures employed by home school families. These hypotheses were generated through the use of extensive naturalistic descriptions and analyses of three family home schools which fit the demographic and psychographic patterns identified as typical by Gustavsen (1981). Detailed descriptions of the families and the operation of their home schools were included, facilitating independent assessment of the hypotheses.

Perspective

Over the last twenty years, the nation has experienced a resurgence of interest in school learning. Some researchers (Bloom, Davis, and Hess; 1965) suggest that a large percentage of entering elementary grade students are unable to complete the typical public educational program. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (Gardner, 1983) has further pointed to a growing need for educational reform. As a result of many studies and reports, parents, educators, and government officials, have expressed a growing concern over the quality and quantity of learning in our schools.

In response to this and other concerns, a variety of alternative educational approaches have been explored. Some alternatives suggested by researchers have pointed to the need for including parents and families more in the educational experience in order to reinforce and lend continuity to what happens in the school. Bloom's (1984) study on the "2 sigma problem" of group instruction recognized home environment support as the elusive critical variable of his four variables (including favorable conditions, process of instruction, and tools of instruction), needed in achieving a "2 sigma" increase in learning above current practice.

Relatively few scholars have explored the nature and role of home environment support in children's learning. An optimal site for observing the interplay of parents and children in an educational setting is the family home school. There, many opportunities are available to observe the parent-child relationship with teaching and learning taking place in both formal and informal contexts. Though home schools have become a controversial issue, they still remain a valuable resource for observing parents in an educationally supportive role.

Methods and Data Sources

Methods have been developed for rigorously generating hypotheses and theories inductively from context-rich data banks. Glaser and Strauss (1967) detail one such procedure, the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis, in their book, The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Although their procedure can be used to analyze quantitative data too, it is most appropriate for the analysis of qualitative field notes gathered over a long period of concentrated fieldwork, focused on a limited number of cases. Such notes might be produced during a case study, an ethnography, or some other form of naturalistic inquiry. The analysis occurs as the data are being collected as well as when the researcher has left the field.

Listed below are some of the activities that were employed by the researcher doing the case studies of family home schools.

1. Access was obtained to individual home schools, the parents and children; workable and ethical contracts were established.
2. Productive and ethical relationships and roles were developed with the parents and children.
3. Many visits to homes and neighborhoods were made and extensive, detailed observations of the families in these settings were recorded in fieldnotes over a one and a half year period.
4. Many interviews (formal and informal, structured and unstructured) were conducted with the family members.
5. Critical documents, such as study schedules, test scores,

- etc. were located and permission was obtained for review.
6. Fieldnotes summarizing data gathered and tentative analyses made during and after fieldwork were maintained and reviewed regularly. Ideas from Miles and Huberman (1984) for analysis such as anticipatory reduction (deciding on a conceptual framework), concurrent data reduction (summarizing, coding, teasing out themes, etc.), and post reduction were employed.
 7. Controls such as triangulation, prolonged engagement on site and reviews of fieldnotes by families under study were used. These safeguards were intended to make the work defensible and to facilitate hypothesis generation and negative case analyses.
 8. Data were analyzed descriptively and theoretically, using the constant comparative procedure (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).
 9. This report was written to allow readers a minimal opportunity to vicariously experience what the researcher experienced and to make their own judgments about the validity of the summary and conclusions.

Portrayal

Three family home schools participated in the study. However, because of a need for brevity, only one was described in this report. The two families which will not be described had previously enrolled all their children in the public school system. The first family, the Palmers, had been operating their home school for the last three to four years, after pulling their school age children out of the local public schools to enroll them in a correspondence school. The other family, the Bentleys, had most of their school age children enrolled in the public school system while operating their home school for two of their children who had experienced severe social problems in the public school system. The family described in this report, the Cohens, had been operating their home school virtually from the time their oldest child was born (about nine years). Having incorporated a private school, none of their children have been enrolled for a school year in a public school. During the 18 months of the field study, the Cohens went through three distinct periods, each corresponding to a different place of residence. Each residence and its location presented different circumstances, different opportunities, different challenges, and, consequently, slightly different operational approaches to home schooling.

Period 1.

When I first considered studying home schools, there was only one with whom I was familiar. My wife and I had known the Cohens for a number of years; but because we lived 20 to 30 miles apart we visited only occasionally.

About a year before I started my field research for this study the Cohens moved into the same community, facilitating a much more regular association. Through regular contact, we developed enough rapport I felt confident they would consent to participate in the study. When I explained my desires, Anne remarked, "Our home school is such a personal thing that normally we wouldn't consider allowing someone else into our home to observe us. However, because of our friendship and the fact that all the children know you, I'll allow you to come and we'll help with the study." Her response surprised me to some degree because it hadn't occurred to me she would feel so private about her home school activities. Reflecting on Anne's comment later, I realized that under similar circumstances my wife and I would probably have resisted opening up our private home lives for some outsider to scrutinize, no matter what the friendship.

I began my field research with the Cohens on the sixth of October, 1983. The following is a compilation of several days of visits which is presented as one day to give the description continuity.

I walked over to Isaac and Anne Cohens' home about 9:30 in the morning. Anne had asked me to wait until she phoned before coming over so she could get everyone up, dressed, fed, and ready for the day. It was a crisp October day as I walked with the Autumn leaves gliding and dancing to a light breeze which added some chill to the air.

During this period of the study the Cohens lived in the upper floor of a brick two story duplex. An expansive lawn surrounded the home. There was a single car garage to the right and a covered patio in the rear. The front of the house had three openings: a large picture window in the living room, the front entry with a little awning covered porch, and a modest sized kitchen window. There appeared to be the remains of a small vegetable garden on both the right and left sides of the entry porch.

As I rang the doorbell I could see through the picture window that Anne was sitting on the sofa with her four children, their backs next to the window. Anne was sitting in the middle with Reuben and Caleb sitting on her left side and Jesse and Miriam on her right. Miriam and Jesse quickly jumped up and opened the door. Anne remained on the sofa because she was then about eight months pregnant with the fifth child.

Jesse, the oldest child, was eight years old at this time. He stood about four and a half feet tall, having a normal build which was neither too heavy nor too slight. He was dressed in a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers. His dark brown hair was cut moderately short and his dark brown eyes seemed to shine with the usual healthy exuberance of a child his age.

Reuben was two years younger than Jesse and, though built in the same way, was four inches shorter. Reuben had fair straight hair, dark sparkling eyes, and a pixie nose. He was wearing a t-shirt, jeans, sneakers, and a warm smile with which he greeted me.

Caleb, the third son, was four years old. He was about three and a half feet tall and built much the same as his older brothers. He had blond hair, a fair complexion, and blue eyes. Like his other brothers he was dressed in a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers.

Miriam, the two year old daughter, stood about three feet tall. She had sandy colored hair which was cut about shoulder length. Miriam wore a little dress with slacks underneath to keep her warm. Her lithe figure was quick and active as her broad warm smile reassured me I was welcome.

As I entered the living room I quickly took off my coat and sat down on the piano bench on the opposite side of the room from Anne and the children. The living room was a large rectangular room functioning as the primary classroom. Besides the large sofa in front of the picture window and the piano on the opposite wall, the room also contained four book shelves crammed full of books. There was a stereo phonograph in one corner and a small trampoline next to the piano. In the corner next to the entry door was the dining table which doubled as a work table. There were also a couple of other tables placed around the room as well as a small stuffed bear, a toy shopping cart, and a blue and white parakeet in a cage.

The floor of the living room was covered with a green shag carpet. The walls were painted white as was the ceiling. Besides the entry door, there were two other doors which lead out of the living room. One lead into a fairly small kitchen and the other opened into the bedroom hallway.

As I sat on the piano bench, Jesse and Miriam ran and hopped on the sofa next to their mother. Anne was reading to them from the Old Testament. I wasn't quite sure but it sounded as if she was reading from somewhere in First Samuel. She read a phrase or two then stopped, asking the children questions about a word's meaning or about what was going on in the narrative. If the children didn't know an answer, Anne explained. Sometimes, her questions sparked some questions from the children and these were answered directly.

During this scripture reading time the children also were each working on something of their own: Reuben was solving some math problems in a workbook (Conaway, 1983); Caleb was coloring a Puff the Magic Dragon puzzle; Jesse was coloring some three-by-five cards with a blue and a green crayon; and Miriam was coloring in a cartoon coloring book. Though they each were busy, they seemed to be listening to their mother because they readily responded to her questions and even came up with some of their own.

After Miriam had sat on the sofa for about five minutes she went over to a small panda bear left next to a book shelf, picked it up, and came over to show it to me. As she sat next to me, Miriam said, "Dis is my baby," and seemed so pleased to show it off. After I admired it, she took it back to where she had retrieved it, got the toy shopping cart, and went outside to play.

Ten minutes after I arrived, Anne finished reading the scriptures to the children. She asked Jesse to work on the Stanford Achievement Test she was administering to him. He responded, "Can I show Pete my boats?" Anne countered, "If you'll do two pages on the test first, then you can show him your boats." Jesse consented, "... but will you help me with the instructions?" Anne agreed so Jesse went over and sat at the dining table with the test.

Meanwhile, Caleb asked Reuben to help him with his coloring and Reuben asked his mother if he could stop doing his math problems to help with the coloring. Anne asked, "Have you finished the problems on the page?" He said he had so she gave him permission. As Reuben began to color, Caleb got some scissors and cut out the pieces he had already colored. They continued to work together without any argument for the next twenty minutes.

Jesse worked on the achievement test for ten minutes before he finished the agreed amount. After his mother verified he'd completed it, he immediately approached me asking if I would like to see the boats he'd made. I was delighted he'd asked so he took me outside to the back patio where he kept them. He showed me three boats: a luxury liner, a tug and barge, and a yacht. Each

was made of a rough piece of two-by-four lumber with some smaller pieces of wood nailed in the middle. It was clear a lot of imagination had been used in their construction. No ship builder could have been more proud of his work than was Jesse. After I looked them over carefully we went back into the house.

When we came back in, Anne asked Jesse to help her take some garbage out to the garbage cans. It only took a moment before they were finished. Anne then told Jesse it was time for him to do his math lesson. Jesse protested that he didn't want to have a math lesson at first, but after Anne agreed to sit with him during the exercise, he changed his mind. Consequently, they both sat at the dining table reviewing the numbers and problems.

I noticed Anne used a kind of "reverse psychology" to encourage Jesse in his work. As he came to a new problem, Anne would remark, "This is difficult!" Jesse would look it over and say, "No, it's easy." Anne would respond back, "Right!" Whereupon, Jesse would quickly solve the problem. Anne would then compliment him with, "Perfect! Perfect!" or "Very good!" and Jesse would beam with the accomplishment.

While working with Jesse, Anne occasionally got up and looked at what Reuben and Caleb were doing. The two boys seemed pleased to show her and Anne seemed to genuinely appreciate their work. This went on until Caleb decided to color like Reuben. They got into a pulling fight over the puzzle. Anne immediately started talking to them asking, "Can you both work on the coloring?" Reuben cried, "But Caleb keeps wanting to do what I'm doing." She reminded Reuben that the project was Caleb's in the first place. With this in mind, they decided they could work together again.

Anne also kept track of what Miriam was doing outside. Once she had to yell out to Miriam to stay out of the garbage cans. Miriam turned and looked at her for a moment then obeyed, returning to play with her toy shopping cart.

Jesse, who was working on his math, stated, "I feel restless with this book. It's too much like a school book." Anne, again sat with him, helping him with the problems. She read and then solved a problem, explaining how she did it. Jesse then read and solved the next problem. After a few repetitions of this they began to see who could do the problems the quickest, making it into a game. Soon, Jesse started to change a few of the words in the problems, making them sound funny. Both of them got a number of laughs out of this. After about ten minutes, Anne asked Jesse, "Do you like the math book, now?" He responded, "It's OK."

After Anne warned Reuben and Caleb not to use too much glue, they worked more carefully on their project. Upon completing the dragon puzzle, Reuben went over and jumped on the trampoline while Caleb spent some time looking at the parakeet. After a few moments, they asked if they could practice pounding nails and building more toy ships. Anne consented, telling them to get some scrap lumber out of their pile by the side of the house, hammers from their work bench in their room, and the nails from the kitchen drawer. The two boys seemed excited as they quickly ran to gather the materials.

At about this same time, Anne and Jesse decided to stop doing math for the morning. Jesse asked if he could pound nails as well. With this, Anne decided to allow everybody this privilege. She told everybody to go out on the front porch. Miriam returned from her playing, Reuben and Caleb came out with the materials and tools, and they with Anne adjourned to the front porch.

They all seemed excited to be working. Anne started the nails and then the children hammered until the nails were all the way in. Jesse exclaimed, "I like pounding huge nails ... but not too big." Caleb decided he needed a screwdriver to do his work. Each began working on new boats, continuing at it for the next half hour.

Gradually, the children tired of boat building and went into the back yard to play in the sandbox. However, before they were permitted to go and play, they had to put away their hammers and materials. Jesse, Reuben, and Caleb took their boats and tried to sail them in a puddle they made in the sandbox.

In the meantime, Anne and I went with Miriam into the house. Miriam began to color in her coloring book, again, while I interviewed Anne briefly on the history of their family. She explained that her husband, Isaac, was born in the Netherlands in 1940. His family continued to live there through the war and post war period, deciding in 1950 to move to New Zealand.

Through Isaac's childhood and teenage years he attended the public schools both in Europe and New Zealand. During these same teenage years and later during his early twenties, Isaac was a rock musician, doing a lot of traveling with his performing group. The group became quite famous in New Zealand.

Eventually, however, there came a time when Isaac felt the rock music was harming him. Consequently, he quit the rock group and found other employment at a variety of jobs. He worked as a laborer in construction as an anesthetist technician, and as a cook on a sheep ranch. Isaac still believed something was lacking in his life.

In his late twenties, after much thought and work, Isaac moved to Israel because he felt he was of the lost ten tribes. He was given a new name by the Rabbis when he became an Orthodox Jew and this is the name he presently uses. There, he began to study the Talmud, Pentateuch, and a wide array of religious writings and commentaries.

Isaac spent a lot of time working on a Kibbutz, studying religious writings, and meditating on what he was learning. During this period of religious experience, Isaac was introduced to a book called the Book of Mormon by a librarian working in the Kibbutz library. The book spoke of an ancient people that immigrated from the Middle East around 600 B.C. to the American continents. After reading the book, Isaac soon received a strong spiritual witness it was true.

Isaac tried to locate the L.D.S. Church in Israel but couldn't find any members for the next three years. Finally, he met some members and was able to be baptized into the Church. After a year of preparation, Isaac travelled to the L.D.S. temple in Salt Lake City, Utah. While visiting the Salt Lake area, he was offered and subsequently accepted a full tuition scholarship to the Brigham Young University. It was during this period Anne and Isaac met.

Anne, in contrast to Isaac, was born and raised in southern California to Jewish parents. Life was different because her parents went through a number of cycles of divorce and marriage. As a result, she became quite independent at a rather young age. When Anne was about 15 years old she met an L.D.S. girl who soon became a dear friend. After a time Anne was baptized into the L.D.S. Church. Her joining another faith outside Judaism caused her parents to expel her from the family. Consequently, at the age of 16, she moved to New Mexico to live with some friends while attending the University of New Mexico. After her first year of college she transferred north to BYU.

As Anne explained, at BYU she was really on her own. She was 17, single, and expecting no monetary help from her family. Therefore, she worked half the day as a secretary and went to school the other half. Going to school in this fashion, she was able to graduate from BYU at the age of 21 with a B.A. in English and a Secondary Education teaching certificate.

Upon graduation, she accepted a teaching position in a small rural high school near the Utah/Wyoming border. Anne's eyes sparkled as she explained that the students came from an interesting mix of backgrounds, i.e., a third of the students were Indians, a third had parents who were oil workers, and the final third were L.D.S. The three groups were highly polarized, each having its own cultural background. Consequently, dealing with the inevitable group clashes and customizing a teaching approach which worked under such circumstances was no easy task. Patience and a sense of humor were critical. Though Anne was unusually successful that first year, she seriously questioned whether she wanted to teach at that high school a second year. Only after much deliberation did she decide to renew her contract.

During the second year, on weekends and vacations, Anne made a practice of driving all the way back into Provo to be with friends. On one of these trips into Provo, during October, she met Isaac. That December they were married. Because of her marriage, Anne decided to stop teaching the second half of the school year and moved to Provo to live with her husband.

Both Anne and Isaac went to BYU at this time. Anne also worked as a graduate student instructor. Anne earned her Master's degree in American Literature and Isaac completed his Bachelor's degree in General Studies. Also during this time Jesse and Reuben were born.

About a month after Reuben was born, the Cohens moved to the Southern end of Utah Valley. They rented a modest-sized home which was situated between an orchard and a grain field. They hoped to become as self-sufficient as possible so they raised much of the food they required. Caleb was born during this time. Isaac completed his Master's degree at BYU in Ancient Studies and was busy translating Biblical texts into modern English.

Shortly after completing the Master's degree, Isaac began his work on a Ph.D. in the same field. However, soon after this work began, his committee decided he should study a year at some other institution besides BYU. This decision was quite disruptive for the Cohens because they had just purchased the home they were renting. However, as Anne explained, "We tried to make the best of it, anyway." Therefore, they sold their home, packed their belongings, and moved to Toronto for a year to continue Isaac's studies.

Upon their return from Toronto, the Cohens moved back to the Provo area so Isaac could finish his degree. Miriam was born a few months after their return. In 1982, Isaac graduated with a Ph.D. in Ancient Studies.

I asked Anne when they started their home school? She responded that they began teaching their children soon after Jesse's birth. This seemed very natural because she had taught in the public school. Anne and Isaac decided to continue teaching their children after they became school age because Anne felt the children were much more advanced than their age group in school. Therefore,

the Cohens incorporated their own private home school, continuing to operate it wherever they have lived.

By the end of this interview, it was time for lunch. Though Anne invited me to stay, I declined because of previous commitments. I asked her what time I ought to return? Anne said, "I take a nap with the younger children until 3:00 p.m. During this time Jesse and Reuben read their own books or work on the boats they started this morning. Come over about three."

Later, in the afternoon I knocked at the Cohen home. Anne was seated at the dining table with all the kids working on some Halloween masks. As I came in, she said, "We are getting ready to make our costumes for Halloween." I sat on the piano bench as Anne turned to Reuben and said, "Go and get the box of patterns for me." Reuben responded, "I don't know where they are." Anne directed him to get them out of a dresser drawer in the hallway. He went to the dresser and returned with a shoe box full of patterns. Anne went through the patterns until she found what she was looking for.

A large box the size of an orange crate was sitting on the table with cloth in it. Anne got up and showed Reuben how to lay out the cloth on the table. She then started him pinning the patterns to the cloth. Caleb and Miriam also got to pin a small pattern to a piece of cloth. In the mean time, Jesse continued to work on a Batman mask. When each child finished pinning, Anne showed Reuben how to follow the marking lines on the pattern when cutting out the cloth. Reuben got frustrated about every three or four minutes shouting, "I can't do this!", but Anne calmly complimented him on how well he was doing. This usually pacified him and he'd try it for another few minutes.

Anne then pinned the pieces together, giving them to Jesse to sew together. The sewing machine was located in the master bedroom so Jesse went in there to work. Apparently, Jesse already knew how to operate the sewing machine because he never asked for directions nor did Anne offer any. Reuben went into the bedroom with Jesse to watch.

Jesse had just started sewing part of the costume together when a neighbor friend, Wayne, about the same age as Jesse, knocked at the front door. Anne along with the two younger kids met him at the door telling him that Jesse was in the bedroom sewing on his Halloween costume. Anne suggested he go on back there to see what they were doing. Wayne went on back, sitting on the bed to watch.

When Jesse and Reuben saw Wayne, they greeted him with delight. Jesse quickly finished the piece he was sewing and then showed it to Wayne. Jesse said, "This is part of my Batman costume. Would you like to see my batman mask?" Wayne responded with, "Sure!" The three of them came back into the living room and Jesse showed Wayne the mask. Jesse put it on and then let Wayne try it on. Reuben, in the meantime, got his ghost mask and asked Wayne how he liked it? Wayne said, "Yeah, it looks OK."

After they looked at the masks, Jesse asked Wayne if he'd like to see the boats they were building? Wayne agreed and followed Jesse, Reuben, and Caleb out to the back patio. After a short while they returned. Jesse told Wayne he had a present for him. Jesse went into his bedroom and brought out an airplane he had made out of paper and match sticks. Wayne seemed delighted. Jesse then asked his mother if they could go over to Wayne's house. Anne said they could if they came back by 5:30. They agreed so Jesse, Reuben, and Caleb went off with Wayne to his house. Miriam also asked to go but Anne told her she had to stay at the house, allowing her to play outside. Anne and I went outside with Miriam, watching her play with her toy shopping cart.

I asked Anne how often friends came over to visit. Anne answered, "We meet with another home school family once a week, usually for a half a day or more. The children also informally have friends come over about twice a week on the average."

When asked what a typical day's schedule was like, Anne responded:

"The children usually get up around 7:00 in the morning and read or play with their Leggos. We're (Isaac and Anne) lazy bones and don't get up until about a half an hour later.

Once we're all up everyone gets dressed and we have breakfast.

After breakfast we all do our chores. If we don't do our chores first thing in the morning, they usually don't get done."

I asked what the chores usually included. Anne answered, "The chores are cleaning the place, washing breakfast dishes, making beds, picking up and putting away, vacuuming the floors, and so on."

As we talked about their school schedule she said, "The main part of the day goes much the same as you've seen it. We also go to the library at least once a week, usually for one or two hours where we all pick many of the books we use for lessons or projects. I monitor the books the children check out, making sure they are at the appropriate reading level and are well written." Anne explained these books included anything from how the human eye works to Tom

Sawyer. They also viewed selected movies and video tapes on subjects of interest while at the library. Other materials they get from the library included classical music for their stereo and photos of art work by the masters.

As we wound up our discussion about a typical day, Anne said, "In the evening Isaac usually comes home around 5:30 and we all have dinner together." She went on to explain that after dinner, the children were free for an hour to play, read more from their books, or simply talked as they watched the sun set over the valley.

Anne mentioned the whole family usually retired rather early, the children around 8:00 p.m. and the parents around 10:00 p.m. While the children get ready for bed, the children often ask if they can study certain subjects. Anne said she takes these requests seriously as ideas for future lessons and activities. Then, later on in the evening, before retiring to bed, she plans the requested activities.

Period 2.

On November 10, 1983, Isaac jr. was born. This event changed the Cohen home school operations for the remainder of the year. For the first couple of weeks, Anne spent a lot of time with the baby. Home school took a backseat with the children reading books they were interested in and doing personal projects. In December, the Cohens packed their belongings for a move out to Orem, Utah, about ten miles from where they had been living. A friend and colleague was moving south to Arizona for the remainder of the Winter and asked the Cohens to move into and care for their home during this time. The house was much larger than their apartment. It also had a few conveniences the other place lacked like a washer and dryer, a dish washer, and a microwave oven. These were welcome improvements for the Cohens.

As I visited the Cohens during this period, there were some interesting changes they made in their home school. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the children spent an hour at a nearby public grade school taking a combined P.E. course for Kindergarteners and First Graders. On Tuesday and Thursday the Cohens hired a professional tutor from Colombia to teach Spanish. Also during the week, the children took music lessons: Jesse was learning to play the recorder, Reuben, the violin, and Caleb, the piano.

The general feeling of the home school was also different in Orem. During the Provo period I regularly mentioned in my field notes how calm and serene the family seemed to be. If one child got upset, Anne quickly restore peace by talking with the child. During this time, I never saw her lose her patience. However, this was not always the case in Orem.

For example, in my field notes, dated April 13, 1984, I arrived about 9:30 in the morning. Anne and Reuben were working together in a math manual (Conway, 1983), doing the exercises. Reuben would read and do the problem by himself if he could. If not, he would hesitate, look up at his mother, and she would show him how to do it. Jesse was in his room making a skeleton out of home-made clay.

After fifteen minutes, Anne told the children it was time to practice their musical instruments. Jesse walked out of his bedroom and began looking for something. Anne asked him what he was looking for? He answered, "I'm looking for my handwriting exercises." Anne suggested a place he might look. He looked a few minutes more and then started yelling at her because he couldn't find the book. The other children at this same moment had gotten into a fight over a book that Reuben and Caleb both wanted, joining the chorus of yelling. Anne shouted a warning to them all, "You must stop yelling or I will get very cross with you." Everyone calmed right down.

Anne worked with the three older boys, one at a time. The others went on with what they were doing until it was their turn. She accompanied Reuben as he practiced the violin. Whenever the part was a little too challenging he would almost burst into tears, exclaiming loudly, "I can't play this! It's too hard!" Anne calmed him down by saying, "You played it very well, yesterday." He would put the half-sized violin back under his chin and gave it a try. This time he did quite well and Anne complimented him warmly, "Good job!"

There were good reasons for the less calm feeling in the home. Besides running the home school, taking care of a new baby, and operating the household, Anne was also supplementing the family income by functioning as an editor for a research newsletter. This was demanding work, pressuring her pressured with deadlines. She gave up her naps to work in the afternoon. She also worked whenever the children went to the grade school or were tutored by someone else. The pressure of the deadlines and feelings of fatigue made it more difficult for her to remain calm when the children got upset. Consequently, the children seemed to be more tense, all contributing to a kind of vicious cycle.

As previously mentioned, the Cohens were having the children tutored in Spanish. They planned to spend part of the Summer in Mexico so they decided to study the language. Maria was hired to tutor the children and it was clear she had had a lot of experience. She was well organized and had her equipment ready for use minutes after she arrived. With the exception of Isaac Jr., all the children participated in the lessons.

Maria organized each phase of the lesson into a game. She began with a game of identifying colors. Holding up a colored pen she asked one of the children to tell her in Spanish what color it was. If the child answered correctly Maria rewarded by giving the child a colored bead. These beads were kept in a pouch each had suspended around their neck.

Next, she read them a fairy tale in Spanish. The book contained a number of brightly colored pictures which helped them understand the story as she read it to them. She would read a few lines and then ask them a question in Spanish. Again, if a child answered the question correctly, in Spanish, the reward was a bead.

Later they made some flowers, played a game of ball, cooked something in the kitchen, and finally created something out of sticks. Only Spanish was spoken during these parts of the lesson. Depending upon how many reward beads each child had, she would give them a certain amount of candy treats. Every child, including Mariam, received some treat. The exercises were fast paced and the children seemed to enjoy Maria's teaching approach.

The children read a great deal, at least two or three hours every day. One reason they read so much may be because they didn't have a TV. It seemed that Anne had convinced them most of the programs were not suitable for their viewing. I observed their lack of interest in TV when the Cohen children were over at our home. I asked Jesse if they would like to watch television. He answered, "No! We don't watch television. Can we play on your computer, instead?"

From the very beginning of their home school, the Cohens emphasized reading as a first critical skill. According to Anne, the reading process started with her reading story books to Jesse. As time went on, she had Jesse and the other children, as they came along, go through McGuffey's First Eclectic Reader (McGuffey, 1920), the Lollipop Dragon's Beginning Workbook - Easy Phonics (Staff, 1980), the Sounds of Language collection (Martin & Brogan, 1972), the Let's Learn Consonants: Cut and Paste and More (Carson & Delloso, 1983), A Language Skills Workbook Grammar grades 1 - 3 (Klawitter, 1983), and Reading and I Know It! (Lane, 1979). One might work better for one child and not work so well for another. Anne used whatever worked best for the specific child. The children were also allowed to select their own books at the library.

I saw Jesse and Reuben reading technical books on areas they were exploring such as rocket motors, airplane structures, and elementary robotics. I also saw them reading classic novels. Reuben finished Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea (Kipling) during one of my visits. He told me he had read Huckleberry Finn (Clemens, 1959) and Oliver Twist (Dickens) as well. I found this mind boggling since he had only just turned seven years old.

As the children chose their own books, Anne made sure the books match their current reading levels. This way, as Anne explained it, "They are learning to read by reading about what they want to learn." Anne identifies what the children are interested in through their conversations at meal times, during the activities of the day, and especially when she is putting them to bed.

Anne's approach to teaching reading has worked remarkably well for Jesse and Reuben. When I took a look at the books Jesse and Reuben were reading, they were easily on a twelfth grade level. Further, the boys weren't struggling to read the books, which they readily demonstrated whenever I asked them to read to me. When I visited the Cohens in Orem, I observed that Jesse and Reuben were able to read a two or three hundred page book during the course of a single day.

In Orem, Anne also formally instructed Jesse and Reuben in spelling and writing. For spelling she used the Spell/Write Revised workbook (Staff, 1976), The Alphabet Book (Eastman, 1974), and Spelling (Henderson, Coulter, Templeton, & Thomas; 1982). For writing the boys practiced by authoring theme papers. The themes usually covered areas they had recently studied or feelings they may have had about an experience or a friend.

During this time, math was not one of the children's favorite subjects. Though Anne used a wide range of workbooks and manuals like Return of the Jedi Multiplication (Conway, 1983), Arithmetic Made Simple (Sperling & Levison, 1960), and Numbers, What They're Like and What They Do (Reed & Osswald, 1978), it usually was a struggle to persuade the children to work on their math. However, she always seemed to manage to get them to do some math by saying, "Sit with me and we'll do two pages together." Her sitting with them seemed to make the task more palatable. Based on the results of the Stanford Achievement Test, Jesse and Reuben were still able to match grade level in math.

Period 3.

The Cohen family moved another time at the end of April of 1984 because the four months had come to a conclusion. They found a home about 15 miles south of Provo, located at the base of one of the large mountains in the area. They moved their belongings to this house and then prepared for a one to two month trip into Mexico. I felt this would be a good time to interview Isaac as we worked to move their belongings to this new location.

I asked Isaac what he thought was necessary to successfully operate a home school? Isaac answered, "One must have a wife who is a good teacher to successfully operate a home school. Anne is a good teacher. I help direct the process and provide the resources to buy the musical instruments, the bicycles, the cassette tapes, the books, and all the other supplies, but she makes it operate successfully." He went on to say, "We weren't sure if the home school would work, at first. Our first child was kind of an experiment. Jesse became a large influence for Reuben and so on down the line. When we saw it begin to work we just kept on going."

Soon after they finished moving, the Cohens left for Mexico, becoming nomads for the next two months. First, they traveled down the Pacific coast of Mexico to the small pueblo of Kino Bay on the Sea of Cortez. They set up their tent and made camp on a marina about a quarter of mile from Kino Bay. There was one other family, native Mexican, living in the marina. Their children and the Cohen children, who were about the same age, spent a lot of time together.

Anne enrolled the three older boys in the local grade school for two weeks, hoping it would help them have more opportunity to use their Spanish. She also mentioned, "We also figured it would help them appreciate our home school even more." According to Jesse, it did.

They also visited the open-air market as well as the local fishing boats. The tutoring they had during the Orem period, their conversations with their Mexican neighbors, the grade school experience, and all the other local opportunities to speak Spanish helped the children pick up quite a bit of the language. This was especially the case with Caleb, who became the most fluent of the children. After about a month in Kino Bay they camped and toured their way home. Soon after they arrived, the Cohens invited my family over for dinner. Everyone had a wonderful tan and was full of stories about the open-air market and the fishing boats.

They had already organized their belongings in their white home situated at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains. Just north of their home were some extensive apple, peach, and cherry orchards. To the west were vegetable gardens the whole Cohen family weeded and cultivated. To the south were more fruit orchards and to the east the mountains rose abruptly in their natural beauty. The native forests, streams, canyons, etc. began next to the house and continued into the mountains.

Immediately surrounding their home was a lawn with some large shade trees. These lawns functioned as a primary location for all sorts of games and activities. On the south lawn was a set of swings, slide, and trapeze. On the north lawn was a large sand box, a tree swing, and suspended from two trees, a hammock. Next to the north lawn were some sheds, one of which was a chicken coup Isaac and the three boys had built.

The road, which gave access to the home, came up from the south, traveled past the north side of the house, and went into the orchards on the north. This private thoroughfare was the Cohen childrens' bike path as well as a useful location for many other street games.

The framed home consisted of a living room, a library, the master bedroom, a bathroom-laundry combination, a country kitchen, a large childrens' room, and work shop. Anne held the main part of the home school in the living room, the library, and the shop though all of the house was used at times as part of the school.

The main entry went right into the living room. The piano was on the same wall to the left. There was a large sofa with two end tables on the left wall. On each side of the sofa were windows which faced to the west. On the far wall was a wood stove and the hall way which lead to the rest of the house. On the right of the entry was the library which was completely open to the living room. The floors were covered with carpeting and the wall were painted an off white.

The home school schedule changed when the Cohens moved to this home. During breakfast, Isaac read scriptures to the family. From 8:30 to about 10:00 formal home school was conducted. For the rest of the day, the children worked on personal projects and the mother and father each worked on their writing. Anne was still functioning as an editor of a health food magazine, working at home in her library. Isaac was finishing up a major concordance on part of the Old Testament. During lunch and dinner, Isaac played a math game with the children, drilling them on their times tables. According to Anne, Caleb was doing better at the drills than his older brothers.

A typical formal home school period was much like one recorded in January of 1985. I arrived about 9:00 in the morning after carefully driving up the snow and ice covered road. Anne and Miriam met me at the door. Anne had just finished accompanying Reuben on the piano as he practiced the violin. She was complimenting him on how well he had done. Reuben sat at the piano to practice for the Suzuki lesson he and his two brothers were going to have in the afternoon. The Cohens had hired a music teacher to give them the lessons. Anne asked him to try and play Twinkle Twinkle Little Star with both hands. He got upset and said, "I can't do two hands. I don't want to do both hands until next week." Anne relented and he started to practice first the right hand and then the left hand. As he did so, Anne complimented him saying, "Good, good, nice curve in the your hand."

During this time Jesse came out of the library and picked up a book to study. He sat down on the couch where Miriam was sitting, coloring in a coloring book. Isaac was in the bedroom typing and Isaac Jr. was walking around playing with some cars.

Anne asked Caleb if he would like to do some school work. He answered, "Uh Uh." She then asked him if he would like to do some math on the Little Professor computer. He nodded his head and Anne got it for him. He worked on it for a few moments and then proudly announced that he got ten out of ten right.

Anne sat on the sofa between Jesse and Miriam asking her questions about what she was coloring. Anne pointed to one thing and asked, "What's that?" Miriam accurately responded with such things as, "Mittens! Peter's hat! Chicken eggs in a nest! Bed!" Anne then asked her to find two chickens which she promptly did. This interaction between mother and daughter continued for another five minutes.

After about ten minutes, Reuben finished practicing the piano and Jesse began. Upon sitting on the bench, Jesse asked if he could play Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in a minor key. Anne told him she'd like him to do it straight, first. He agreed, starting to play it with both hands. He then swung into London Bridge is Falling Down and Mary Had a Little Lamb, playing each with both hands and from memory. He started to play Twinkle Twinkle Little Star in a minor key but Anne stopped him because Isaac called out that it was disturbing him in his work. Anne suggested he work on a musical piece so he could get the fingering right. Jesse opened his piano music and began to work on the fingering. He still had some difficulty so Anne went to the piano and showed him how to do it. She stayed with him until she was sure he could do it correctly.

During this time Reuben went into the library and finished reading Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea for the second time. While he read, he hummed along with Jesse. Miriam and Isaac Jr. started playing on the floor with a basket full of small toys Anne brought out for them.

Anne also got a Phonics & Consonants manual (Klawitter, 1983) for Caleb. Caleb said he didn't want to do it. Anne responded, "You don't have to write anything. Just sit with me." He agreed and they sat together on the sofa. At first, Anne just pointed at some things and he responded. After only a few minutes Caleb seemed to get into it and he started filling in the blanks.

It wasn't more than a few minutes before Reuben finished his reading. He came out of the library, picked up the Little Professor computer, and sat on the other side of Anne on the couch. Anne asked Caleb if he wanted to stop? He said he wanted to finish the page first. Reuben turned to Anne and told her that he just got ten out of ten on the computer and she praised him for the accomplishment.

After fifteen minutes on the piano, Jesse finished. He immediately went to the library and got his journal. Reuben also got his journal. They both sat down, Jesse on the sofa and Reuben in the library, and began to write. Soon after Reuben started, he asked his mother what he should write about? She suggested he write about the fine violin playing he did earlier in the morning. He responded with a cheerful, "OK!" After a minute, Reuben called out to Anne to tell him how to spell "violin". Caleb chimed up with "v, i, .." Reuben began screaming that he didn't want to hear it from him, but from his mother, instead. Anne calmed him down saying, "The way you spell violin is v, i, o, l, i, n." Reuben went on with his writing.

Caleb completed his grammar work and climbed up on the piano bench. I remember anticipating that he would probably only plunk out a few notes, being five years old. Instead, using both hands, he played every piece Jesse had just played, doing so as easily and fluidly as Jesse. He played about ten pieces, all from memory. After about five, Anne asked him to play Book of Mormon Stories. He did, kneeling on the piano bench so he could reach the keys.

I later asked Anne about Caleb and his piano playing. She said that when they first started the Suzuki piano lessons Caleb kept wanting to play but the teacher hesitated because of his age. However, it became clear after only a few

lessons, he had a special gift. Therefore, Caleb was enrolled in lessons just like his older brothers. Thus, he has developed as much as his oldest brother. Having taught piano lessons myself, I was frankly amazed at Caleb's virtuosity.

I asked Anne how that affected Reuben who was not as far advanced as Caleb or Jesse. She responded, "We were concerned about that ourselves so we kept Reuben playing the violin. He's the only one that plays the violin so this helps him feel good even though his younger brother plays the piano better than he does."

After Caleb finished practicing and Jesse and Reuben finished with their journals, Anne asked the children whether they would like to do exercises indoors or outdoors? They said they wanted to do them outdoors if Pete would go sledding with them. I consented so we went outside for the next hour and climbed up and slid down on a nearby hill which could hardly have been more ideal for sledding.

The Cohens also addressed some interesting project during this period. During Christmas of 1984, Anne taught the children how to make stained glass windows. The boys became so proficient at it they made enough to earn twenty dollars at a few dollars a piece from sales to neighbors and friends. I saw a few pieces they had kept for themselves and was amazed at the intricacy, artistry, and delicacy of their work. It was quite believable they earned twenty dollars from their work.

Jesse's focus on robotics had also changed. He had become very interested in the electric motors which propelled them. Because of this interest, Anne had directed him to a number of books on electric motors. Based upon the descriptions in the books, he made a variety of simple motors. He seemed to enjoy experimenting with different windings and magnetic cores to develop a variety of strengths in his motors.

For Reuben, astronomy had become an area of great interest. Anne also shared this interest so they would study the subject together. The Cohens' home, next to the mountains, gave him and his mother a perfect place to view the skies, being up and away from all the lights of the city. They would look at the star maps in their books and then search the skies until they found the matching constellations.

The variety and quantity of interest in the Cohen home school seemed to be endless. In some instances the interests were shared by both a parent and a child such as with astronomy and Spanish. In other instances, only the child had the interest as was the case with robots and electric motors. In either circumstance, Anne would help direct the child to the sources of information, allowing the child to flourish in the subject. Thus, the Cohen home school has continued to progress, change for gradually, and move on to new interests.

Summary & Conclusions

Achievement.

The level of achievement has traditionally been a standard measure for the success of an educational institution. So it should be when measuring the success of the Cohens' home school. During the 18 month study, Anne administered a Stanford Achievement test to Jesse and Reuben. The results are portrayed on Chart 1:

Chart 1
Cohen Home School Achievement
Based Upon a Stanford Achievement Test

Child	Age	Area	Tested Level	Norm for Age
Jesse	8	Grammar	9th grade	3rd grade
		Math/apply	4th grade	"
		Math/calculate	4th grade	"
		Reading skills	12th grade	"
		Science	11th grade	"
		Social Studies	10th grade	"
Reuben	6	Spelling	8th grade	"
		Grammar	8th grade	1st grade
		Math/apply	4th grade	"
		Math/calculate	2nd grade	"
		Reading skills	11th grade	"
		Science	9th grade	"
		Social Studies	8th grade	"
		Spelling	7th grade	"

It was clear from the results of the standardized test that, at least in the areas measured, the levels of achievement were above average. In the case of the reading skills, the level of achievement was outstanding for both boys. Based upon this measure, as an educational institution the Cohen home school has been successful. (It was interesting that Anne was quite disappointed in the math results. Consequently, after the test was administered, the Cohens placed a greater emphasis upon the math skills than they previously had.)

Time & Subjects.

The Cohens organized their home school time in a ratio of two to five. Only about two hours per school day were used in structured learning. The other five hours were used in unstructured learning, allowing the child, with Anne's guidance, to pursue interests of their own. (The term, structured learning, has been construed in this report to mean that kind of learning which is organized and often premeditated by the teacher. Unstructured learning has been construed to mean that kind of learning which is not organized or premeditated.)

The Cohen home school addressed a wide variety of subjects. These included aeronautical design, animal husbandry, art, art appreciation, astronomy, church beliefs, cooking, Egyptian hieroglyphics, electric motors, English composition, English grammar, ethics, family history, handwriting, health, horticulture, literature, math, music, music appreciation, physical education, reading, robotics, science, scripture study, sculpturing, sewing, shop, social studies, Spanish, spelling, stained glass design, stained glass manufacturing, stained glass marketing, and typing. Often, these subject areas were decided upon by both the parents and the children jointly.

Socialization.

Anyone thinking back on their public school days realizes that most socializing which took place was fairly random and haphazard. Fads and peer pressures came and went with little or no formal control by the educational institutions except to prevent disruptions in the classroom.

In the Cohen home school, a lot of one-to-one tutoring is done in the social skills area. The parents feel that it is their responsibility and duty to coach their children in proper ways of conducting themselves with each other, with other children, as well as with adults. Since the parents are with the children virtually all the waking hours of the day, the opportunities for such coaching are plentiful.

Not only are the skills addressed by the parents more directly, but basic valuable characteristics are promoted such as personal initiative and self motivation. Skills in negotiation and compromise are also required just by the children's participation in the home school.

Within the home school environment, the children in the family became very close and attached to each other. Jesse, Reuben, and Caleb were almost inseparable. They often shared the same friends, going together to a friend's house to visit. In like manner, they seemed to know how to share a friend when he or she came and visited them. Friends came over because they seemed to be welcomed and the harmony which prevailed as well as the variety of interesting things to do seemed to make the Cohen home a local neighborhood after-school play center.

Problems.

It was not all rose petals running the home school. For instance, the children were not always willing to do what they were asked, at times, having small temper tantrums. Most of the time, Anne was able to remain calm while persuading the children, but sometimes the children's explosions caused too much stress on her patience and she got upset, as well.

Another challenge for Anne was keeping her energy up. Anne mentioned many times she wished she was less tired. Running the home school, taking care of a new baby, looking after the other four active children, and working at home as a professional editor exhausted her strength. She was also aware that this tiredness made it more difficult to remain calm under the normal stresses of the home school.

Moving two times in the last year didn't make things any easier, either. Their residences over the past year have not been adequate facilities to hold all their home school supplies. This has meant going to a rented storage area to pack and unpack needed items. Even the latest move to the house in the country which included a number of storage sheds has presented some difficulties. The severe demands on the parents' time to earn a living and, at the same time, operate the home school has left little time to finish unpacking the rest of their study materials. Therefore, organizing the materials in storage has become a very slow process, causing some frustrations.

Finally, the home facilities have not been ideal for what Anne wanted to do in the home school. Even in the most recent residence, which Anne quickly

explained was the best of the previous ones since selling their own home, all was not ideal. For example, she wished the kitchen cabinets were lower. As they were, they were a nice height for an adult but way too high for the children. With the cabinets lower, the children could work in the kitchen more independently because the items would be more reachable. Consequently, she must be there to hand down items, taking more of her time and energy.

Home School Commitment.

Despite difficulties and stresses, the Cohens appeared to be very committed to their home school. As Anne explained:

First of all, we feel we are the stewards of our children. Therefore, we feel obligated to personally make sure the children receive the best preparation and training possible. We feel that no other institution should be given our responsibility unless we are unable to provide for our children, ourselves.

Since I have taught in the public school system, I know that lots of time is wasted. The children lose their agency in the schools often resulting in dreadful unhappiness. The kids don't learn responsibility so they wait for the teacher to compel them to learn. The teachers, therefore, are under a constant pressure to keep things moving. We just didn't want that unhappiness and irresponsibility for our children. For these reasons we decided to incorporate our own private school when the children started to become school age.

For us, the commitment to operate our home school is very much an on-going thing. It is not something that is on and then off and then back on again, at a whim. Instead, it takes constant discipline and vigilance.

Anne mentioned their personal social lives have been affected by the requirements of the home school. She doesn't feel they can go off to plays and parties like so many other couples do, leaving their children behind, without severe disruption to the processes of the home school. Their resources go into home school materials instead of into the multitude of social entertainments available for adults. As Isaac also added, "It's a matter of what is more important to you, your family or your amusement." From watching the Cohens, it appeared the Cohens had made their family their focus of attention and amusement.

Hypotheses.

1. Given the concern over the social development of home school students, it is hypothesized that the home school provides a rich social experience for the children, allowing for a high degree of social development.

2. Given the high achievement levels of the Cohen home school, it is hypothesized that the level of achievement is obtained because each child receives a large amount of one-to-one tutoring, has excellent parental support, learns in a favorable environment, and uses highly effective study materials.

3. Given the ratio of two to five hours per day of structured and unstructured learning, respectively, in the Cohen home school, it is hypothesized that such a time mix permits the children's agency to play a major role in the learning process, allowing greater personal involvement and potentially higher achievement.

4. Given the extremely high commitment of the Cohens (as evidenced by their continuation despite the difficulties they face) to successfully operate their home school, it is hypothesized that those parents who start a home school with a low to moderate commitment, acting on a whim or a fad, will, if their commitment doesn't increase, give up and opt for a more manageable approach by enrolling their children in a public or private school system.

Educational Importance.

The Cohen home school functioned as a learning laboratory. Many instructional methods and materials were used, investigated, modified, and created in this home environment. Because of the necessary high commitment required for the successful operation of a home school, it will probably remain a rarity in our society, presenting no substantial risk to the continuation of the public school system. In fact instead of being a risk, there is much to be learned about the art and science of instruction through further research of the modern home school. Through continued study, there is a strong possibility that greater understanding and improvement can be achieved with regard to the composition and nature of education not only within the family specifically, but in education generally.

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